

**COMMENTARY**

# Irony on center stage at Public Enemy show

By Carrie Fenelon

**I**rony — an event or result that is the opposite of what is expected.

A deep feeling of irony crept over me as I watched the rap group Public Enemy in the EMU Ballroom Friday. I found myself entering a trance and when I came out, I wrote down a few conclusions.

**Irony No. 1** — The Public Enemy show was expected to be a problem. The EMU Cultural Forum reportedly hired 30 professional crew members to provide security. The Forum usually uses student volunteers for this purpose. Extra lighting was installed to illuminate the outside balcony. The crowd was filtered through metal detectors. Jesse Jackson doesn't merit metal detectors, but Public Enemy does?

To ask a simple question, what's up? Why the ruckus? I will admit, when I first heard about Public Enemy's appearance I wondered if anything would happen. I had heard that the fans and Anthrax's fans did not mix so well at the Salem show last year. The rap fans

didn't take too lightly to the metal fans jumping on them and each other. And so I wondered if our over-zealous rap-loving fraternity members (not to stereotype or anything) would annoy this racially diverse crowd. Not to worry. Like most classrooms on campus, diversity was to be found only in speech, but not in person.

So, everyone was free to jump up and down, do the me-hip-hop-white-boy dance, and the crowd generally stayed calm. The concert was even a little boring because of the low sound and political commentary.

**Irony No. 2** — Speaking of political commentary, I'm glad it was part of the performance. Chuck D derided George Bush and everyone cheered. He spoke about the new president and everyone cheered. But when Flavor Flav took the mike and said, "Politics never done nothin' for Flavor Flav," very few cheered. Flavor Flav hit us where we live. A personal attack on our beloved political system. He shook us.

My guess is that Flav doesn't believe he owes a system that has a history of oppression and that continues to keep masses of people disadvantaged. I could even go so far as to say that if given the chance, Flav could strike out even more. He might call attention to the racial disparity in the audience. He might call attention to the

irony of his performance on our campus. Or he might not.

**Irony No. 3** — Public Enemy's performance was presumably tailored to a black audience, or tailored to make a white audience feel like they are "in da 'hood."

During an interlude, Chuck wanted to know how many "street" kids were in the house. Most of the people at the show probably clutch their wallets when they see a "street" kids, but tonight they are one? Yeah right! I lived in an inner-city neighborhood this summer and I know that one concert doesn't put one inch of "street" into the blood. I went to the concert expecting certain things. I expected that we would see more blacks. I expected every black south of Salem to be there. That could be ignorance on my part. I assume, because the media tells me, that rap music is part of the black culture. I thought that Public Enemy was the voice of the black people.

Maybe I fell for the trick. Is Public Enemy's joke to see how much they can make off of us? It's not a bad idea, because getting 1,000 people to yell, "F--- Racism!" is a start. Especial-

ly if most of us are giving lip to diversity but don't know what it actually means.

Celebrating diversity doesn't mean using metal detectors because the audience members won't be "peace-loving" hippies. It doesn't mean assuming that there are going to be riots or confrontations.

I think that if I were black and lived in Eugene, I would have run to the ticket booth when Public Enemy's visit was announced, much the same way I get excited when an "alternative" band comes to town and I am spared another rendition of "Blowing in the Wind."

I pose this question to anyone who knows. Please tell me what's up. Tell me what it's like to live here. Tell me what it's like to have everyone spouting diversity when they couldn't give the name of one minority they know on campus. Tell me what Public Enemy means to you, if anything. Because I don't know; my commentary might be way off base, and I may be victim of my own political correctness (Say it isn't so!).

P.S. To those PE goers who said they didn't buy the Vanilla Ice album, everyone liked the song "Ice, Ice Baby." I don't believe you.

*Carrie Fenelon is a senior studying planning and community development at the University.*



Public Enemy member Flavor Flav worked the crowd during the band's concert Friday night.

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