

Verdicts offer relief; problems still exist

Guilty.

That simple word, uttered twice, brought a finish to the emotional roller coaster ride that began March 3, 1991, when black motorist Rodney King was brutally beaten by officers of the Los Angeles Police Department.

A little more than a year later, on April 29, 1992, a jury found four of those officers, Theodore Briseno, Timothy Wind, Laurence Powell and Stacey Koon, not guilty of assault and use of excessive force in the videotaped beating.

The nation was left in a state of shock, reeling from the unbelievable verdicts and from the sight of LA burning in the aftermath. Fifty-three people died during the next several days as more than \$1 billion damage was done to South Central LA.

Saturday's verdicts in the federal civil rights trial involving the same four men were significantly more gratifying — guilty verdicts for Koon and Powell, but not guilty verdicts for Briseno and Wind. The results were better than many expected, and less than what many had hoped for.

However, the beating, the trial and the verdicts all need to be put into perspective. For all of the publicity the King beating generated, the beating of one man was just that — the beating of one man.

The difference between King's beating and the way minorities are treated by law enforcement in general is that King's beating was videotaped. It was not an aberration. It was just another day in the life of urban America.

The only message these verdicts send to law enforcement officials is: "Make sure there are no cameras around before you cross the line."

Many are saying justice has been served. Justice for whom? Justice for the poverty-stricken families forced to live in the ghetto? Justice for the baby of the mother addicted to crack? Justice for the families of the 53 people who died in last year's riots or whose businesses and livelihoods were destroyed?

The four defendants were not the problem, and they are inappropriate targets for public anger. Rather, they are microscopic examples of the greater problems facing urban America and law enforcement.

Directing our anger toward the four defendants, or police in general, is a waste of time and effort. The problems that need to be addressed begin with each and every one of us. Now is the time to focus our efforts to improve our neighborhoods and better the lives of the people who live in them and the police who protect them.

America cannot sit back and wait for the next videotaped beating before taking action. The beating of King was not a wake-up call, it was a reminder. Let's try not to forget it.



OPINION

Write-in candidate offers salvation



Here we go again — another round of insipid ASUO elections where the only curiosity lies in guessing how few votes the winners will get.

Sure, the current ASUO prez and veep, Bobby Lee and Karmen Fore, have promised to shave their heads if 25 percent of the campus votes, but I would suggest to both Bobby and Karmen that they don't forget to buy shampoo this week. Somehow, I expect they'll still be needing it.

No doubt like many of you, I've been worried to the point of nausea over what I can do as a responsible student to improve my student government. Who should I vote for? What issues are important to me? What does "ASUO" stand for, anyway?

After much deliberation and soul searching, I've come up with a solution to both my problems and your problems. Therefore, I am hereby officially announcing my write-in candidacy for an ASUO position. Any position. Every position. Write me in wherever you want.

As any good candidate should, I must now appeal to your special interests. To do so, I first need to determine who my constituency is and what it might expect from me. Then I need to determine who I actually care about and what I can expect them to do for me.

The latter groups shall remain anonymous and, should I win, will form a shadow government of which I will be the figurehead leader in exchange for Snapple and pens that work.

So now, I must appeal to you, the masses yearning to be free, the proletariat seeking equality, the apathetic wanting to be left alone. I embrace you all — my children.

Why vote for me? Good question. Allow me to share my platform with you. (Actually, stay off my platform. This only works if I can look down at you.) If I'm elected to the ASUO Executive, that's president for you laypeople, I pledge to do my best to find the office, return

some phone calls and pose for pictures with University President Myles Brand. Also, I will never shave my mustache, unless somebody pays me to.

Further, I will have open office hours every Friday at the EMU Beer Gardens (when they have them). I realize this may be unfair to those of you under 21, but so what?

Also, I promise to never wear a tie, except for this real cool Loony Tunes tie my wife bought me a couple of weeks ago. You see, we were going to Portland to see *Phantom of the Opera*, and I decided to make a statement (albeit kind of stupid) by wearing this silly tie. So when we got there ... uh, well, just vote for me, then you can come by the office and I'll tell you all about it.

Of course, you may not feel any particular motivation to vote for me. You may not feel any particular motivation to vote for anyone. Well, do it anyway. Vote for me. Remember, "A vote for Martin is a vote against them." Isn't that good enough?

And if for some bizarre reason you take this election seriously, consider this: As an editorial editor for this multi-award winning publication, I have gained valuable insight into the twisted inner workings of student government. Also, I've done a real good job of getting just about every special-interest group to hate me, so you can be sure I'm in no one's pocket. And if I was, it would be none of your damn business.

One of the tickets running for ASUO Executive came up with a nifty slogan, "Your agenda is our agenda." Somehow, I doubt that that agenda is my agenda. And it seems pretty simple of them to assume we all have the same agenda.

But a slogan without the word "agenda" just isn't a slogan, so I've had my crack staff work around the clock to come up with this equally catchy Orwellian slogan: "My agenda is my agenda."

Short, simple and to the point. There's no confusion, no wondering about where I come down on the issues. I come down squarely on the side of whatever suits me at the moment. At least I have the courage to admit it up front.

But there are other offices up

for grab, and I need to make an equally powerful and moving pitch for them, so please, bear with me (or at least vote for me).

There are several vacant seats on the Incidental Fee Committee. (Quickly, by a show of hands, how many people either now or at one time thought IFC stood for Interfraternity Council?)

I really don't want to sit on the IFC (actually, I wouldn't mind sitting "on" the IFC), but I'll do it if you the people call me to your service. I'll be your servant. I'll spend your money. I'll write you from the Caribbean.

Actually, the IFC needs me. Why? Because I have a calculator and I know how to use it. I'm the committee's worst nightmare — a rational person with a brain.

If I were on the IFC, I'd vote to fund only those organizations whose members voted for me, demonstrating their unswerving loyalty. Also, I'd vote to fund those organizations that didn't vote for me, demonstrating their clear-headedness. But at least I already have friends, so, unlike some IFC members, I wouldn't need to fund groups in a pathetic attempt to buy friends.

But again, if you're taking this whole mess seriously, this is for you. If elected, I would push for setting fees before allocating money. (Novel idea, huh?) Also, I would never, ever, ever allow a group to get money for karaoke parties.

I would lower funding to the athletic department significantly. I figure if students had to buy their tickets, say, to football games, the guaranteed drop in attendance (and revenue) would be noticed by the team, which might then actually feel some pressure to win a few games. In effect, the athletic department would need to "sing" for its "supper." How quaint.

And finally, I'll also accept votes for Student Senate. Not that I really want to serve on the Student Senate, but what the heck. Besides, does anyone really know who serves on this illustrious body? Does anybody care? Of course not. So vote for me.

Hey, you could do worse. I guarantee it.

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Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 1154 EUGENE, OREGON 97407

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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