

Mention of 'athlete' significant to article

Media coverage of the arrest of three University of Washington student-athletes on Sunday, and subsequent reports of the case that have appeared in the pages of the *Emerald* and elsewhere, has generated another round of accusations that the media are operating with bias against certain groups of people.

There are charges, for instance, that the repeated inclusion of the word "athlete" in connection with the suspects was unnecessary and that by including the word, the media demonstrated a negative bias against athletes, which in turn could result in an increasingly negative view of athletes by the public as a whole.

Obviously, the actions of the three suspects are of more importance than their status as athletes — more important, even, than the fact that they were Washington students, or, for that matter, students at all. But that doesn't mean that those other facts (and they were facts — that's irrefutable) are totally irrelevant, either.

Calling the three men athletes was not an attempt to malign athletes in general, nor was it merely a thoughtless way of adding length or meaningless detail to the story. Rather, the suspects were called athletes because they were athletes and because it matters.

Athletes are representatives of the schools for which they play and, to a lesser extent, the state where that school is located. It's an overused description, but athletes really are "ambassadors," especially when they're away from their home campus.

The attention that is focused on athletics, and therefore athletes, at most major universities is a double-edged sword. Athletes are showered with more appreciation than non-athletes could ever hope for. (Who won the Rose Bowl last year? Now, who won the *College Bowl*? A-ha! See what we mean?)

As a result of all this attention, athletes are placed on a pedestal by their schools, their communities and, yes, the media. It shouldn't be at all surprising, then, that the media make a big deal about it when those athletes lose their balance and fall off the pedestals they've been placed on.

Furthermore, many athletes (particularly those who play football and basketball) receive benefits that are not extended to most non-athletes: scholarships, choice living arrangements, expensive treatment on road trips, not to mention the intangible perk of getting their faces on television and in the newspaper. Taken together, these benefits offered to athletes represent an investment by the universities for which they play. It is not unreasonable to expect the athletes to behave appropriately; it is also not unreasonable for the media to make a note of it when they don't.

It would be unfortunate if the actions of these three individuals cast a bad light on athletes. If that is the result, however, it will be the fault of those three athletes and not the news sources that reported the information. After all, the media are not obligated to omit significant facts just to keep people from building their own stereotypes.



LETTERS

Bad tax

The problem is money. This is what has constantly been the problem with education. Along comes 1990's state Ballot Measure 5 — a complex measure, which I don't believe many people understood fully at the time. They saw dollar signs and all the money they'd save.

The truth is, individuals paid very little (a few dollars a year). Big business saved a large sum of money, but the businesses were of such size, it mattered little to them. Measure 5 was a measure of greed. Big business' way to squash the public and keep money.

After the measure's installation, schools lost a large majority of their income. Now, we deal with a sales tax? This simply won't work. A sales tax hurts everybody.

It hurts both the middle class, the lower class and Oregon's economy. It will practically kill small business. People will simply spend less money. Contrary to what the bill says, the tax is not temporary. Once money is generated, it is not reversible.

Then comes the most famous reason: increase. Once a sales tax is in place, it is very easy to watch it climb. California's sales tax climbed from five and a half percent to eight and a half percent in just four years! It is a vicious chain tax that causes less money to be spent, which in turn causes a higher tax.

M. Tilden Moschetti
Biology

Racial rape

Concerning the Nov. 2 article in the *Emerald*, once again the newspaper lacks empathy and promotes the negative stereotypes society ascribes to black men.

Rape is a continuous issue on college campuses, yet when it becomes racial, there is more attention drawn to the fact that the assailants are black.

We are not condoning the alleged actions of these three

black students, but the simple fact that you would print enlarged pictures on the front page is outrageous and inconsiderate.

In the past, there have been similar and even worse incidents. There have been students from this campus convicted of rape and other crimes, yet we are not warned nor do we have printed photographs of assailants of various racial backgrounds.

In the future, the *Emerald* should not make criminal incidents a racial issue. If there are going to be pictures printed of black criminals, then there should be pictures of all criminals, of various backgrounds.

Johnson, Sanchez, Dawson
Eugene

Fire Jake

The *Emerald* participates willingly in the vilification of black males. Such efforts not only reflect the raging white supremacy apparent in society, as do similar undertakings by the nation's collective news media, but also shame this fine institution of higher education. Its student-run newspaper should be in the vanguard of changing America into a color-blind society instead of perpetuating vestigial and deleterious ideologies that threaten to destroy our nation and many of its inhabitants.

The photographs in the article involving the University of Washington athletes had only two effects: to reveal the suspects' racial identity and to reinforce the stereotype that all black men are rapists, drug-abusers or thieves and lack respect for the law. The news value of the photos was minimal, the individuals were in custody and posed no harm to the community.

The editor can claim the photographs were featured to get readers' attention, that the shots were an integral part of the follow-up report, that the photos' ability to grab the reader's atten-

tion warranted their use. Any claim the editor might make in support of the photographs should be disregarded because the prejudicial effect clearly outweighs any beneficial effect.

Such irresponsibility, especially when it deals with a vexing sociological dilemma that threatens to consume society, should be addressed harshly and swiftly. The editor of the *Emerald* should be fired.

Patrick Patton
Law

Multiculturalism

Has anyone bothered to answer the most fundamental question? It often seems that my own ideas of what multiculturalism should be, in fact, are not the same as those of many people with a more prominent role in the debate.

If "multiculturalism" simply means a multiplicity or mix of different cultures, we must then ask the question: What exactly is culture? Of course to many people, "culture" is a term that automatically assumes racial or ethnic connotations, but this need not always be the case. Here are my suggestions for some basic elements that characterize culture: customs and tradition, art, ethnicity or race, religion, language and bacteria found in yogurt.

To me, multiculturalism is any number of these criteria (except, perhaps, yogurt) applied to specific, mostly geographically based groups of people. While none of these factors is mutually inclusive, many of them are fundamentally related to one another in a complex system of relationships.

Because of the breadth of meanings encompassed, however, it becomes clear that to define multiculturalism in terms of these criteria is to render a one or two course curriculum requirement inadequate, especially if the intended purpose is to make students' understanding of culture multifarious.

David Moon
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