

No defamation, no bad reputation

Defamation: to attack the good reputation of. That was the basis for the charge filed against the Oregon Citizens Alliance by George Wickizer.

The case evolves from a news release two years ago, stating that the city Human Rights Committee was headed up by a "practicing homosexual man." Not that Wickizer was a practicing homosexual man, but that the human rights commission was headed by a homosexual man. Hours after the news release was made the OCA issued a retraction and an apology.

Scott Lively, OCA finance director, had claimed the news release was directed toward Ron Sinacore, who at the time was believed to have been appointed to the commission, but in reality was not given the position because he was already serving on the human rights panel for the city and the University. Later, it came to light, through city records, that Sinacore was a homosexual.

Who cares?

The news brief stating the human rights committee was headed up by a homosexual could have never even been mentioned, regardless if it was true or not. As long as the job was being done fairly and adequately, the knowledge of the employer's personal interest could have easily been left out.

This seems to be a case where human rights were not really violated, yet a case that was brought to trial only to further clog the already clogged arteries of the judicial system — a case that should have never evolved into the degree of a trial. Putting all things aside (if that is possible simply because of the two titles involved: OCA and homosexual), there was a mistake made in a news brief, but a retraction and an apology was given. Wickizer seems to have attacked the OCA on a basis of defamation simply because it is the OCA. The chances of there even being a case if the OCA wasn't involved are extremely slim.

Regardless of whether Wickizer was on the human rights committee, he is a public official as well as a public figure. The court makes it possible to promote debate of public issues by making it very difficult to collect damages for defamation if working as a public servant. This is no new ideal, but rather one for the benefit of people just like Wickizer, enabling him to bring apparent points to the public's attention. It is an understanding that is to promote free thinking and the possibility for people to speak out.

When the news brief was given there were no names involved. If Lively, the man making the allegations, didn't even know who at the time was on the committee, few other people throughout the community probably knew as well. Defamation was a slight issue and a bad idea for a lawsuit.

This case, however, makes it nice to know that somewhere in the clogged arteries there are jurors seeing through the titles and names that often hinder one's thinking. In most cases, it is probably easier to side with the opponent in a OCA-related case. In this particular one, it seemed to be an attack on the title "OCA"; the facts were evidently clear and the "defendant" won.

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LETTERS

Can't withdraw

Ali Keyhanford's criticisms of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East are misguided (*ODE*, Nov. 8). Reducing foreign policy to black-and-white models may make it easier to protest U.S. involvement overseas, but it hardly gives the issues the proper study needed to make reasonable decisions when we have acted unjustly.

He says U.S. foreign policy is "not doing what it is supposed to do" without fully explaining his alternative. Foreign policy for the United States (or any country) should consist primarily of promoting human rights, which is best achieved by promoting world stability and democratic governments. The situations in both Kuwait and Somalia fit these criteria, so we become involved. Bosnian involvement would have been justifiable a year ago, but little could be achieved now by jumping into a civil war that is almost over.

Hosni Mubarak is struggling to keep a democracy alive in a country that is threatened with Islamic fundamentalists who preach human rights while promoting Iran as a model government. He may not be a model leader, but he is assuredly better than what would most likely be the alternative. As one North African moderate pointed out, the fundamentalists only want democracy once.

The United States must not withdraw from a world it helped build. U.S. isolationism is the post-Cold War era would lead to an unstable and undemocratic world — hardly the place for fostering recognition of human rights.

Scott Crosson
Political Science

Solomon says

The best lesson college teachers is: Don't accept as gospel anything you hear until checking it out. No one tells us why better than syndicated writer Norman Solomon, who speaks on campus Thursday evening, Nov. 18.

Whether the source is the University president, your dean, or a respected teacher, don't "buy" before you question data

or opinions. These men and women usually have integrity. Don't question their integrity. Always question their information.

Solomon's target usually is the mass media, which too often accept information from the power structure and pass it on to us without asking questions. What he says has special meaning for journalism students. But it applies to all of us as we try to protect an open, democratic system against lazy or unthinking leaders.

George Beres
Eugene

Turkeys, sinners

The upcoming Thanksgiving holiday had its beginning with turkey farmers who simply wanted to sell more turkeys, not unlike Christmas, which was begun by merchants and preachers who lobbied Congress to put "In God We Trust" on our money. That's what happens in a society without any integrity.

So, as we wait for the release of the turkeys from their cells to be taken to the slaughter, sinners may visualize their own freedom coming later when their spirits leave their corpses to be recycled into a lower life form by God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom./Rev. 3:6,22).

John-Wayne Johnson
San Diego

Big blade

With respect to the recent police beat (*ODE*, Nov. 4): I wonder how the naked 42-year-old man managed to conceal a 50-inch knife, or for that matter, where he got a knife of such prodigious length. Perhaps this incident should be reported to the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Joe O'Brien
Corvallis

Unity vs. truth

Beverlee Patton-miller, by establishing "the promotion of amity and concord" as the function of religion (*ODE*, Nov. 8), makes religion a thing of utili-

ty. When "peace and unity" become our ultimate goals, or our standard of judgment, then he means become arbitrary; injustice works as well as justice at times as a unifying force. Look at the creed of Nazi Germany that unified that people so well. When "the highest standard of personal conduct" is anything that promotes unity, virtue and goodness become relative to the situation, creating an ethical limbo that is hard to exist in.

Further, if we are concerned with truth at all, we will never desire a unity based on the lowest common denominator of political usefulness. True Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, etc., know fundamental distinctions exist that cannot be reconciled without eradication. Excess of unity will destroy not only the freedom of ideas and thought, but also culture and distinctive ethnic backgrounds which are grounded in their religious beliefs. We can't unify religions unless they are exactly alike, which they are not. Truth, unfortunately, is not that kind. We can only hope that by allowing religious difference we arrive at a unity of mutual belief — not the other way around.

It may well be that due to the brevity demanded by the *Emerald*, I have misunderstood her true meaning. If she means "Virtue and goodness will bring true peace and unity to our world," we are on the same side. But arguing religion from utility will only lead to futility.

Matt Fox
Greek

Squirrels

The last few years I have noticed crews of people filling bags with acorns around campus in the fall with obvious commercial interests. Should the University allow this? The many squirrels around campus and in the cemetery need these acorns for survival. Hopefully those of us who care about the campus squirrels will call campus security and ask them to take care of the problem whenever we see these commercial gatherers.

L. Verano
Romance Languages

Oregon Daily Emerald

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. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

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