

Plan to vandalize? Prepare for flogging

Spray-painting cars, throwing eggs and switching license plates would be almost a welcomed spree of crime in crime-ridden United States.

If caught, and after being strung through the ongoing bureaucratic justice system that plagues this country, the criminal would most likely be released with a firm slap on the wrist — but not literally.

However, the same crime in Singapore represents a sentence unheard of to many Americans. Michael Fay, an 18-year-old American, has been sentenced to flogging, a \$2,230 fine and four months in jail for going on a 10-day spree of vandalizing. Pleading guilty to vandalism, criminal mischief and possession of stolen property, he, his family and the senator from his home state are fighting for a lesser sentence for Fay.

Flogging, the practice of whipping the buttocks with a moistened rattan cane, can cause serious and obvious pain. Carried out by a martial arts expert, the first flogging — Fay was sentenced to six — usually tears the skin open. The subsequent one usually sends the victim into a temporary state of shock, promotes severe bleeding and often leaves life-long scars.

The practice of flogging is inhumane and makes a modern, civilized country look as if it is regressing to a barbaric mentality of discipline.

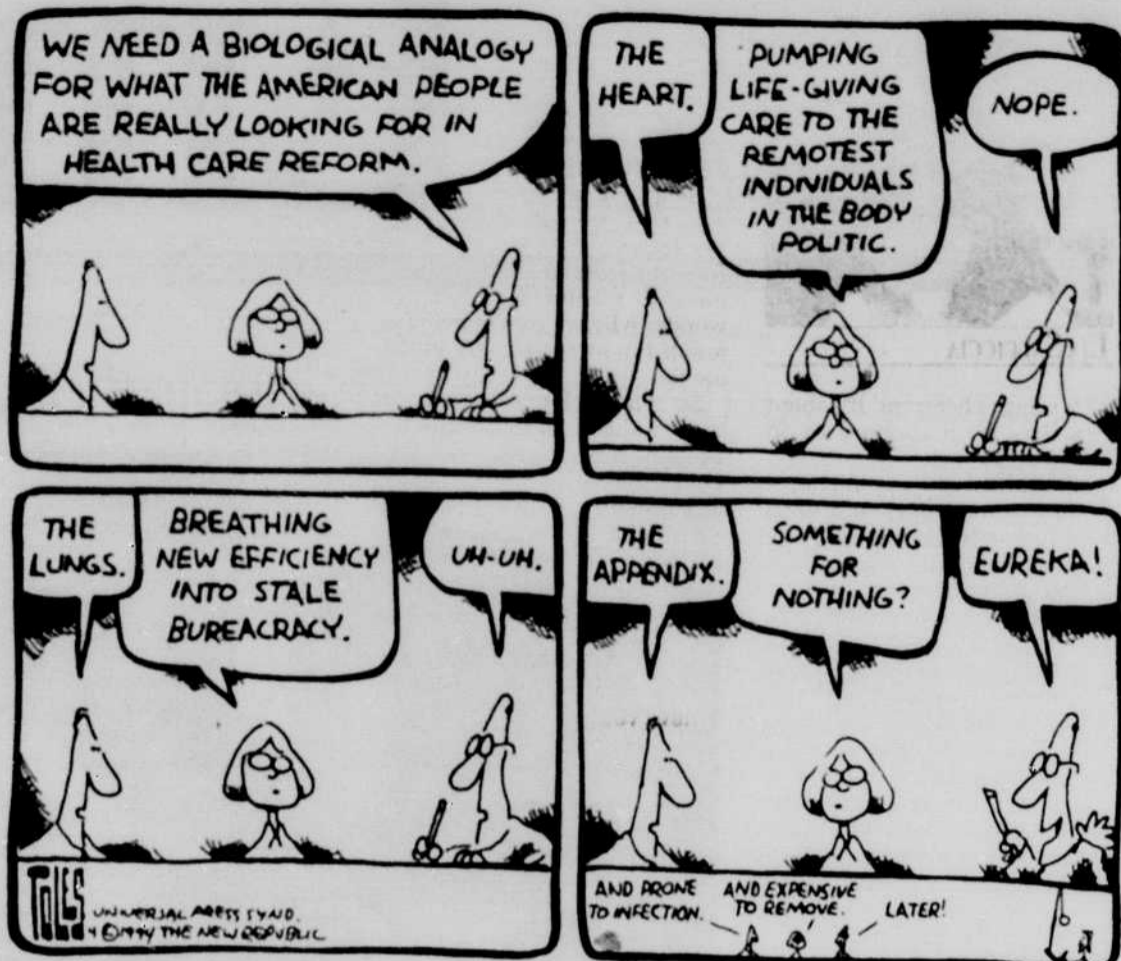
However, in Singapore it is the punishment for many minor crimes. It is not the punishment for American citizens committing minor crimes in Singapore, but it is the punishment for everyone residing in the country. The punishment, like the entire culture, is different.

Fay took the opportunity to travel abroad. Like any American, he subjected himself to the laws that govern the country he chose to reside in. Therefore, he is entitled to the punishments of that country — even the inhumane ones. By American standards the punishment of flogging is cruel and unusual.

For Singapore to let Fay off with a lesser sentence would undermine their judicial system. A little country choosing a rigid system, it does not cater to petty crimes and chooses to treat them accordingly.

Fay picked the wrong country to go on a crime spree, but he should be reprimanded as the people of Singapore see fit. It is their country. The responsibility of those visiting should not be left up to the people of the country itself. It would be nearly impossible for every country to educate every guest as to the ways of their culture.

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OPINION

Don't you want to have a say?



ROBBIE REEVES

Isn't student government a wonderful thing? No, no, no. This will not be another column that beats up on the ASUO for all of its shortcomings or for some new controversy — although there are plenty of those for other columns. I want to complain about something else. Namely, most probably, you.

Remember back to about a month ago. Late winter term, the ASUO had a special election to decide the fate of the Incidental Fee Committee, among other things. Publicized with numerous fliers around campus and even more ads in the *Emerald*, the election was something that you had to consciously try to avoid in order to be ignorant about it.

And wouldn't you know, that was exactly what happened.

About 4 percent of the student body decided to vote in that election. That's just less than 1,000 people. More people voted in my high school elections.

For all anyone cared, the *Emerald* probably could have asked for money to take a month-long staff retreat to the South Pacific and it would have sailed through to approval on the ballot.

I wonder why people didn't vote. True, it is possible that students were too intimidated by the awesome task of filling out the ballot. After all, it was pretty difficult to do. (It included marking all of less than 10 little boxes on a ballot.)

Maybe people couldn't find the poll booths. For some this might be true, though it seems like I kept running into them no matter where on campus I was. And there was never a line at

any of them. Most of the time, there was no one voting at any of the booths that I saw.

There is also what is probably the No. 1 reason why people didn't vote.

Maybe they just didn't care.

That is the worst excuse I have ever heard for not voting, and yet it is the one that I hear most often. I know of virtually no one who voted in the election. Students just don't seem to think that their vote will really count that much in a University election. Combine that with the fact that the issues involved are complicated (and, for that matter, fairly boring) and there is a perfect formula for a low-turnout election.

I'll admit that I'm not the greatest fan of the ASUO. I'm not the biggest supporter of the Incidental Fee Committee either, or, for that matter, a lot of the things that happen with either of the two organizations.

On the special election ballot, I voted "no" on everything on the ballot. A protest vote? Kind of. It seemed to me that the ASUO was trying to ramrod a whole bunch of things down the throats of students, which is fine. If students voted, maybe some of the things wouldn't have passed. But almost no one voted, and almost everything passed. A coincidence? Hardly. If all of the ASUO (and friends, roommates, etc.) voted, one could almost account for all of the "yes" votes.

I bring this up not to rehash old news or to fill space in the paper (though both are noble journalistic endeavors), but to make a point. Another election is coming up soon, one that has

even bigger implications for the University. Candidates for office will be elected, and important issues will be on the ballot as well. Do students really want to leave those decisions about the future of this University to a few hundred people?

Maybe the ballot needs to be lightened up a bit. Perhaps the Oregon Duck can run as a candidate for ASUO president so that people who don't like any of the other candidates could vote for someone else. I don't know. But something needs to be done to get more people out to the polls in the next election.

It is obvious that there is a substantial amount of apathy on campus concerning student government. Maybe people don't like participating in anything that is remotely connected with the ASUO. Maybe people don't like University policies or elected officials. Whatever the problem is, nothing is solved by not voting. Students are cutting off their own voices when they willingly choose to forgo their right to vote. And that sounds pretty damn stupid to me.

If you don't like the candidates, run yourself. Want money? Get a proposition on the ballot. Really want to get involved? Volunteer to help with the election. But most importantly, vote. If you're really enthused, vote a couple of times. Vote a whole bunch of times. I'd love to be able to write columns about election fraud.

Just vote. It's your money, and it's your university. Don't you want to have a say?

Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.

COMMENTARY

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes commentaries from the public concerning topics of interest to the University community.

Commentaries should be between 600 and 800 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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