

EDITORIAL

Negative campaigns ruin GOP chances

Oh, the pleasures of democracy.

With only a few weeks to go before the primary on May 17, things have just begun to get interesting — and sleazy.

Craig Berkman and Denny Smith, Republican candidates for governor, are joining forces, in a show of party unity. Their objective? Apparently, they want to guarantee that, just like in 1990, the Democrats will win the governorship, as the Republicans blow their chances by engaging in another pointless debate over "family values."

Flailing in the polls at no more than 15 percent, Berkman has begun a vicious negative campaign against rival Smith. Smith, a former U.S. congressman, was favored by 42 percent of polled Republicans in a survey conducted by *The Oregonian* and Portland's KATU-TV last week.

A political commercial financed by the Berkman campaign, which began airing last week, blasts Smith for alleged instances of "bad judgment." For evidence of this bad judgment, the commercial states that Smith's printing company, Eagle Web Press, prints a guide to topless bars and strip joints known cleverly as the *T&A Times*.

In his commercial, Berkman describes the *T&A Times* as "pornographic," although the newspaper itself isn't specifically named. Defenders of Smith have described the guide as "tastefully done," presumably because it has the tact to use the euphemism "T&A."

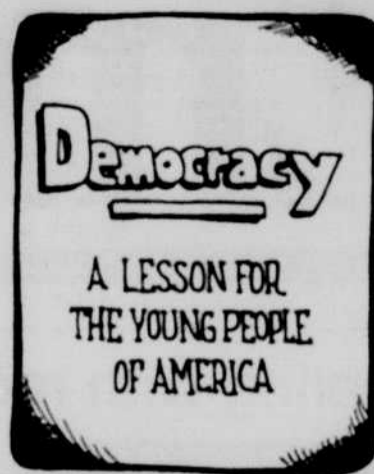
It should also be noted that Smith's company has no control over the guide's content. That responsibility belongs to publisher Phil Yoder, who over two years has paid Smith's company \$250,000 to print the guide.

At a press conference in front of a Eugene sexual novelty store on Wednesday, Berkman called Smith a "family values candidate profiting off the smut industry."

Great. In 1990, Barbara Roberts slipped to an easy victory in the race for governor, primarily because her Republican opponent, Dave Frohnmayer — now dean of the University law school — lost much of his Republican support to independent conservative candidate Al Mobley.

Fortunately, this is just the primary. If Smith hangs on in the face of Berkman's attacks and wins the Republican nomination, then there might be enough time for him to shake off the mud before the general election in November. That is, unless Berkman or some other "family values" type decides to screw things up all over again, by running an independent campaign.

If the Democrats are going to win the governorship — favorite John Kitzhaber being a strong candidate for the job — then they should have to earn it. The state's Republicans ought to have enough sense to leave each other alone, rather than give away the state's highest office for the second time in a row.



OPINION

However you swing, pride's a good thing



LIA SALCICCIA

Hats off to the queers for Pride Week. The work done by the University's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Alliance is commendable because of its celebratory tone and its positive focus.

If I were to say that I had attended all of the campus events of Pride Week, I'd be lying. But from what I did get a chance to see, and from hearing others talk about the panels, speakers and events that were offered, I'd have to say I was impressed by how the week seemed at once non-apologetic and searching.

One of the most powerful things any political movement can be is proud of what is. It sends the message, "We won't be messed with."

I got that message loud and clear when I saw Eden Ajrian-Omari dancing in drag and lip-synching to Whitney Houston in the EMU courtyard Monday during the Pride rally. Whatever your opinions on drag may be (some find it offensive, some think it's silly, some say it belittles women), you have to admit that few of us have the courage to do it. I won't say that it took balls; rather, it took guts.

It took a sense of pride that I think exists in every movement, but comes across more clearly in the gay and lesbian movement, at least the one that's here now. Every underrepresented group — whether you call its members minorities, the oppressed, the marginalized, whatever — has a lot to say about victimization. Oftentimes it has a lot to say about it, precisely because it has experienced it.

Unfortunately, telling people

how they have victimized you isn't going to get them to want to understand your culture. Sometimes, understanding isn't the goal and it's more effective to say, "Look, I think you're screwing me over."

But the gay community really can't afford not to be understood, lest ballot measures like 9 and Son of 9 gain enough popular support to vote away its civil rights. Nor can it afford for the world to think that AIDS is only a gay disease. If it wasn't for consciousness raising done largely by gay communities across the globe (Act Up, for example), probably most of us would still think AIDS affected gays only.

The truth is, queers are punished routinely by society. Many religions decree homosexuality a sin, people make fun of gays all the time, and even some of the most openminded straight people get queasy about what homosexuals do beneath the sheets. LGBA member Troy Shields commented that before coming out of the closet, most gays, lesbians and bisexuals have had to deal with the homophobia they have inside of themselves. And to think, they probably wouldn't have felt that they were somehow sick and many of them probably wouldn't have entertained thoughts of suicide, if society hadn't sent out the message that they were sick and better off dead. It's enough to inspire a real and passionate anger.

But as Shields puts it, being angry all of the time equals one big rut.

"We're finally identifying who we are," he said. What's more, "once we come out, we are free" of the oppressions caused by internal and external homophobia, he said.

Freedom should be both examined and celebrated.

That in part explains the educational and the celebrational focus of the panel discussions, from Tuesday's "Ask a queer ...

everything you wanted to know about queers but were afraid to ask ..." to Wednesday's "Color Me Queer," which explored coming out in minority communities, to Thursday's "Growing up Gay in a Religious Household."

I learned a lot at the panel about coming out in a religiously charged atmosphere, and couldn't help marveling as one woman told her story of a church experience where the words of someone speaking in tongues were translated to state that there were homosexual people in the room with devils inside of them, and this woman thought, "Oh, they're talking about me!"

It's important to note that not all queer people think alike and not all of them get along. Part of the process of universal acceptance is looking at the differences between us and understanding them without judgment. There's still a lot of stereotyping and cattiness going on in queer communities about race, gender, political and religious affiliations, and bisexuality.

Pride Week doesn't deny this, but rather makes a stab at trying to resolve some of those opposing perceptions.

All of us — from those who are straight as a corset-bound rib cage, to those of us who entertain thoughts and actions on both sides of the fence, to those who are so flaming they could toast a marshmallow just by walking near it — could benefit from a little pride in who we are. Every movement is strengthened both inside and in terms of public visibility when it's clear that the people who make up the movement express glee with who they are and eagerness to share it with others.

So if you're curious, check out the events that are left on this last day of Pride Week (noon today in the EMU and a dance tonight at 9:00 p.m. in the EMU dining room).

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

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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