

Students, society hurt by book bans

The Color Purple by Alice Walker is a book often read by high school students in English classes. Some might have read it in college literature classes or on their own. But if some parents in Junction City classes get their way, the book might not be read by anyone at Junction City High School.

Several parents objected recently to the inclusion of Walker's book on a reading list for an elective English class for seniors at Junction City High on the grounds that the book is "saturated with... filth." A committee appointed by Don Anderson, district superintendent, voted to keep the book on the reading list. Now the debate will move to the school board, with parents threatening to vote out those members of the board who don't vote to ban the book.

Junction City High School is just one of the latest schools to be targeted by a group of parents claiming to represent community values in the quest to remove literature from the reach of teachers and students. From *Huckleberry Finn* to *A Catcher in the Rye*, books are being challenged and in some cases removed from public school curricula.

Book banning is dangerous. There's no question about that. But even more of a threat is the attitude of some Junction City parents who apparently think that their children should only read items that fit in with their religious or social norms and shelter them from the rest.

No student is required to read *The Color Purple*. Students in Junction City have the option to read different selections in lieu of Walker's work. The idea that "pornography," as several parents call *The Color Purple*, is being forced upon unsuspecting, innocent high school students — 16- and 17-year-olds, no less — is preposterous.

Reading, being a form of education, presents all with new ideas and experiences that someone might not otherwise be able to relate to. Reading also helps students to challenge their own thoughts and beliefs, something that is essential for students about to step out into the world as citizens for the first time. Students should have the right to read a wide variety of materials during their education and throughout life.

The students in question are not young and it is unlikely that the contents of the book would come as shocking to even the most sheltered adolescent. Students need to hear, see and experience different points of view and experiences as a way of bettering themselves as people.

Students will lose if *The Color Purple* is removed from the list, but they will not be the only victims. Society will be the ultimate victim if parents decide to pick and choose what literature that their children get to read, what opinions they get to see or what experiences they get to participate in.

Junction City should keep Walker's, and all, books on the shelf. Reading promotes learning. Banning perpetuates ignorance.



THE EXPLODED MYTH

COMMENTARY

Not all men potential rapists

Michael Endicott

The current display in the EMU about rape awareness is the second attempt by one group or another on campus to link the objectification of people in the media and rape this school year. They presented the images of seductively clad women and men selling mainly women's products to mainly women in major (mainly women's) magazines edited by (you guessed it) mainly women. The wall display goes on to ask questions and asks for a response. Two of the questions deal with the subject of media objectification and rape but the question presented in the middle panel of the wall does not. That question asks, "Are all men potential rapists?"

That question is the most bigoted, sexist, offensive question I have ever heard. In the first place, the answer is no! Not all men are potential rapists. To think that even a small fraction of men are potential rapists displays a profound ignorance of the male condition and our society. The person who could even entertain such a question displays a level of feminist conditioning unsurpassed by even *The Manchurian Candidate*. It is apparent that the level of inflammatory rhetoric concerning gender issues has escalated to the point where it would share even the lawyers in the O.J. Simpson trial.

Beyond being an absolutely ludicrous question is the fact that its answer could never be yes. It directly impugns the character of all men everywhere by implying that it could be true. The question is a simple yes or no question where yes is not a valid answer and the no answer merely states the obvious fact that all men could not be potential rapists.

What possible insight into rape could be gained by such an obvious attack on men? How does the question relate to the objectification of women and men in the media and the possible link to rape? Why the question at all? The question is not

rhetorically informative because the only possible answer is no! The question does not ask for information nor is it relevant to any discussion about rape or its causes. The question is, however, pejorative, offensive, inflammatory and slanderous. There is no possible scenario under which the answer could be yes.

The question "Are all men potential rapists?" does not promote debate, discussion, or awareness about rape. It is a naked attack on the character of the men of this University and the world, it is hateful speech and harassment, it creates an intimidating and hostile environment that presupposes guilt based on gender alone.

This is not the environment I had in mind when I came to this University. The ODE typically runs 100 percent more articles and editorials supporting or defending women's issues than men's. Every bulletin board on campus has at least two sexual harassment notices and more ASUO Women's Center-supported activities than you could shake a stick at. There is a women's studies curriculum, the gender-exclusionary Saferide program and a massive intrauniversity support system solely for women. The Women's Center has a paid staff to research women's issues and receives a huge amount of funding for gender specific activities. When I look around the University for an equivalent support structure and advocacy group for men, I see none. But I am asked if I am a potential rapist. All in all, I would say that this University spends a huge amount of money supporting women and their issues and very nearly nothing on men and

their issues.

I think maybe it is time for an ASUO Men's Center. Men need a well-funded center to research men's issues and maybe dispel some of the common misconceptions, like all men may be potential rapists or the majority of men are batterers. We need a place to communicate amongst ourselves and make common cause against the problems we face that no one on campus seems willing to address. We need to reach out to young black men who will most likely be shot, go to jail or commit suicide before they are 20 years old and given them back some hope. We need to address the fact that the highest rate of suicide in America belongs to young white males. We need to make sure that gay men have a place of acceptance and to know that they are not lesser men due to their sexual preference. We need to find solutions for domestic abuse, fight for our reproductive rights and demand equal and fair treatment in the courts with respect to custody and support for our children. We need to increase the level of our commitment to the education of our children and the prevention of social injustices due to the ignorance of others.

The answer to the question, "Are all men potential rapists?" is no! If you do not believe that, then contact me at mee@gladstone and I will explain to you whatever part of no you do not understand.

You may also contact me at that e-mail address if you are interested in forming an ASUO Men's Center.

Michael Endicott is a chemistry major at the University.

COMMENTARY POLICY

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.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3150, 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.

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

Editor-in-Chief: Kaly Soto	
Managing Editor: David Thorn	News Editor: Rebecca Merrill
Editorial Editor: Robbie Reeves	Sports Editor: Chris Metz
News Art Editor: Jeff Paslay	Supplements Editor: Trista Noel
Freelance Editor: Lori Bellnesski	Night Editor: David Thorn

Associate Editors: Amy Colombo, Student Government/Activities; Marcelene Edwards, Community; Colleen Pohlig, Higher Education/Administration

News Staff: Steve Asbury, Regina Brown, Melody Conroy, Amy L. Devenport, Primo Fontana, Gayle Forman, Matt Garton, Joe Harwood, Kris Henry, Trevor Kearney, Shannon Kiduff, Adam Kincher, Samantha Martin, Matt McBride, Mark McTyre, Patrick Minterford, Ben Moebius, Natalie Montgomery, Anne Moser-Kornfeld, Sherry Rainey, Natasha Shephard, Paul Van Sickle, Sean Smith, Matthew Stiffler, Mara Stone, Jeremy Stinson, Kim Weiss, Brian Womack, Les Zaczek

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Advertising Director: Mark Walter

Production Manager: Michele Ross

Advertising: Anne Amador, Anita Borgaes, Marco Ching, Tony Fox, Nicole Herzmark, Kelly Lyon, Jeremy Mason, Sarah Mitchell, Tom Mittelstaedt, Kelsey Wekell

Classified: Becky Merchant, Manager: Kyle Davis, Joli Setten

Distribution: John Long, Ferenc Rakoczi, Graham Simpson

Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor: Judy Connolly

Production: Dehila McCobb, Production Coordinator: Shawna Abele, Tara Gaultney, Brad Joss, Molly McCanta, Jennifer Roland, Clayton Yee

Newsroom: 346-5511

Display Advertising: 346-3712

Business Office: 346-5512

Classified Advertising: 346-4343