

Japan denounces rape, wants U.S. troops out

■ **OUR OPINION:** U.S. military should leave Japan, let island nation defend itself

Last month three U.S. servicemen stationed in Okinawa apparently decided to demonstrate their collective cruelty by allegedly raping a 12-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl.

Leave it to the military, with its ancient and unacceptable boot-camp habits of teaching recruits how to degrade women, to really mess things up with an important ally.

Today we'll refrain from discussing how this tragedy brings to light the need for men to grow up and learn how to keep their hormones under control. The viciousness of rape is a topic we've covered before and will cover again. It's a national epidemic and yet another symptom of a society with some very serious problems.

Instead, we're going to look at the resulting fallout over this nasty international incident.

Three days ago about 60,000 angry Okinawans staged an anti-U.S.-military rally on their southern Japanese island. Even after years of growing tensions between the U.S. military and the Japanese, the polite Asians couldn't quite get riled up enough to tell all the damn Yankees to go home.

They just want some of the damn Yankees to go home.

As they decried the rape of the schoolgirl, protesters voiced an opinion which may finally be a good thing to consider. They want the number of U.S. troops on Okinawa reduced.

It's a reasonable request. Why are we still in Japan?

The U.S. has maintained military installations there since the end of World War II in order to counter the possible threats of China, Korea and Russia during the Cold War years.

However, that war is over and it might be time to bring some of those troops home or send them to other parts of the globe where war is either underway or threatening. Can we all say Bosnia?

The biggest argument could be that it is high time for Japan to build up her own full-scale military. Of course that would mean rewriting the agreements signed by the U.S. and Japan at the close of the World War II, but again, that outdated charter speaks for itself: it's 50-years-old. The international landscape has changed and Japan has changed — besides, creating an entire national defense might just give Japan's stressed economy a much-needed boost.

On the other hand, America can't overlook its national interests and commitment to its allies — and, of course, we won't.

China, with its nuclear capability and one-million-person army, would be a very scary opponent if war were to break out, and it seems that volatile, unpredictable North Korea presents a more immediate threat to peace in the Pacific. If hostilities did erupt, America would quickly move to defend its interests and allies.

Until then, there are approximately 30,000 U.S. troops on Okinawa and it's time to bring a lot of them home.

Maybe we can even teach some of them how to keep their pants on.



Enough already with the 'random' acts

I knew there was something about Pinkman I didn't like. Now, after reading about him in *The Register-Guard* a few weeks ago, I know what it is.

No, it's not that he was a child molester. As a matter of fact, I think he deserves a lot of respect for how he dealt with this issue. I'm referring to his purpose in life — the reason why he dons his fuchsia leotard and hops on that unicycle every day: to practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty.

Euchhhh! Of all the simpering, saccharine platitudes that abound in Eugene, that one bugs me something fierce. Practice Random Acts of Kindness.

Well, I say don't do it. I say practice purposeful acts of kindness all the time, not just when it tickles your fancy. Work for justice and equality every single day of your life, be it by voting, writing a letter or just plain opening your mouth when you hear someone perpetuating a racist stereotype. Do anything, but just do something.

What does that stupid saying mean? I know it's just a response to the "senseless" acts of violence that we see going on around us every day. I'll point out here that although the violence we witness is horrific and wastes life, it is not senseless. There is a reason why gang members kill each other.

Perhaps if we look into the causes of these kinds of violence rather than just pointing our fingers, scratching our heads and tsk-tsking about its "senselessness," maybe we would figure out how to end it.

And OK, it's just a bumper sticker; no need for me to get so huffy.

But it seems to me that people here, in their attempt to make nicey nice to everything and everyone, have taken that token phrase to heart. No longer is it just a bumper sticker; it's a way of life. And an unproductive one.

I don't mean to criticize Pinkman, but aren't there better ways to ameliorate the world than cruising around on a one-wheeled bike making goofy faces?

I'm not saying goofing around and making people feel good doesn't have its place. But when clichés become the sole form of political activism, we are in trouble. And if you've looked around this country lately, you've probably realized we're in it pretty deep.

Of course, this sort of Care Bear activism is not just a Eugene thing.

We live in a nation of ribbons — pink, blue, purple, green. For every cause there is a ribbon. That is how Americans think you can solve a problem. Just pin a little bow to your blouse and it will all blow away. Yeah, right.

“ Just pin a little bow to your blouse and it will all blow away. Yeah, right. ”

Activism in this country is for personal gains. We do it for self-fulfillment and satisfaction. But I wouldn't care if activism were actually active, instead of pukingly passive.

Another unique type of American activism is the celebrity form. I don't know what it is, but it would seem that something about Hollywood fires up the social consciousness of its inhabitants. All of them stars have a cause.

Model Christie Turlington decries the fur industry and at the same time poses in ads for a fur company. Ricki Lake gets arrested on an anti-fur protest at the same time her face is on the cover of *People*. Richard Gere totes around a token Tibetan and asks people to send peace vibes to Chinese government officials. Madonna does public service announcements admonishing people to vote even though she doesn't. Every time a natural disaster happens, sure enough a group of second-rate musicians has gathered to make the benefit album.

At the end of the day, I suppose a lot of people are introduced to issues because of the celebs' activism. And this is good if it gets people thinking and acting.

But celeb activism is also gross. It typifies what I hate about American activism in general: narcissistic actors and musicians are active because it helps their careers. Every time Johnny Do-Gooder protests something or other, his career stock goes up.

"Ask not what you can do to help a cause; ask what helping that cause can do for you." That is what we've come to.

Practice random acts of kindness. Do it if it feels good.

Enough already.

Plenty of people out there toil daily to bring justice, equality and peace to this world. And there are even some celebrities who quietly practice good deeds. (Paul Newman gives away all the proceeds of his food products to charity, and he keeps a low-profile about it. Good for him.)

Whether these folks do it because their social consciousness urges them to or because it makes them feel good, I don't care. The fact is, they are actively working to make this world a better place, not just espousing empty virtues on the back of their bumpers.

Now why not practice that.

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