

Military-like boot camp could beat prison blues

OUR OPINION: Camps for young criminals will work if other programs are implemented

Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do? Whatcha gonna do when they come for you?

Stand at attention and shout "yes sir!" for starters.

Beginning next year, some of Oregon's bad boys will get a free trip to a location near Tillamook where they'll get a short haircut, put on black leather boots, and experience many of the joys of military life as part of a new alternative to conventional incarceration.

By early 1997, a boot camp facility for some 52 nonviolent juvenile criminals will open just south of Tillamook as part of a state plan to rehabilitate young offenders.

While the facility is a good idea, all the military discipline in the world can't replace the positive effects of a stable and healthy family environment, associating with law-abiding friends, and having access to an education and career choices.

These concepts, and others, will have to be added to the Oregon Youth Authority's operating plans if they hope to be successful in their work with the 15 to 18-year-olds.

The project, which begins with the construction of a \$2 million complex, will put young inmates through a rigorous six-month schedule of physical conditioning, academic training, drug and alcohol counseling, community works projects, and instruction in decision-making skills. Organizers say a strong follow-up support program will also need to be included.

No kidding. Imagine how hard it would be for a young person to make intelligent life-decisions if they were put through a reaffirming program like the boot camp, only to be dropped off into the same dysfunctional home and bad neighborhood they managed to escape from just six months before.

To head off repeat behavior, officials should think about providing inmates with positive role models and bringing peer counselors into the institution. Every good example would help.

Other ideas include offering a variety of classes from computers to outdoor sports and teaching such basics as filling out resumes and job hunting skills.

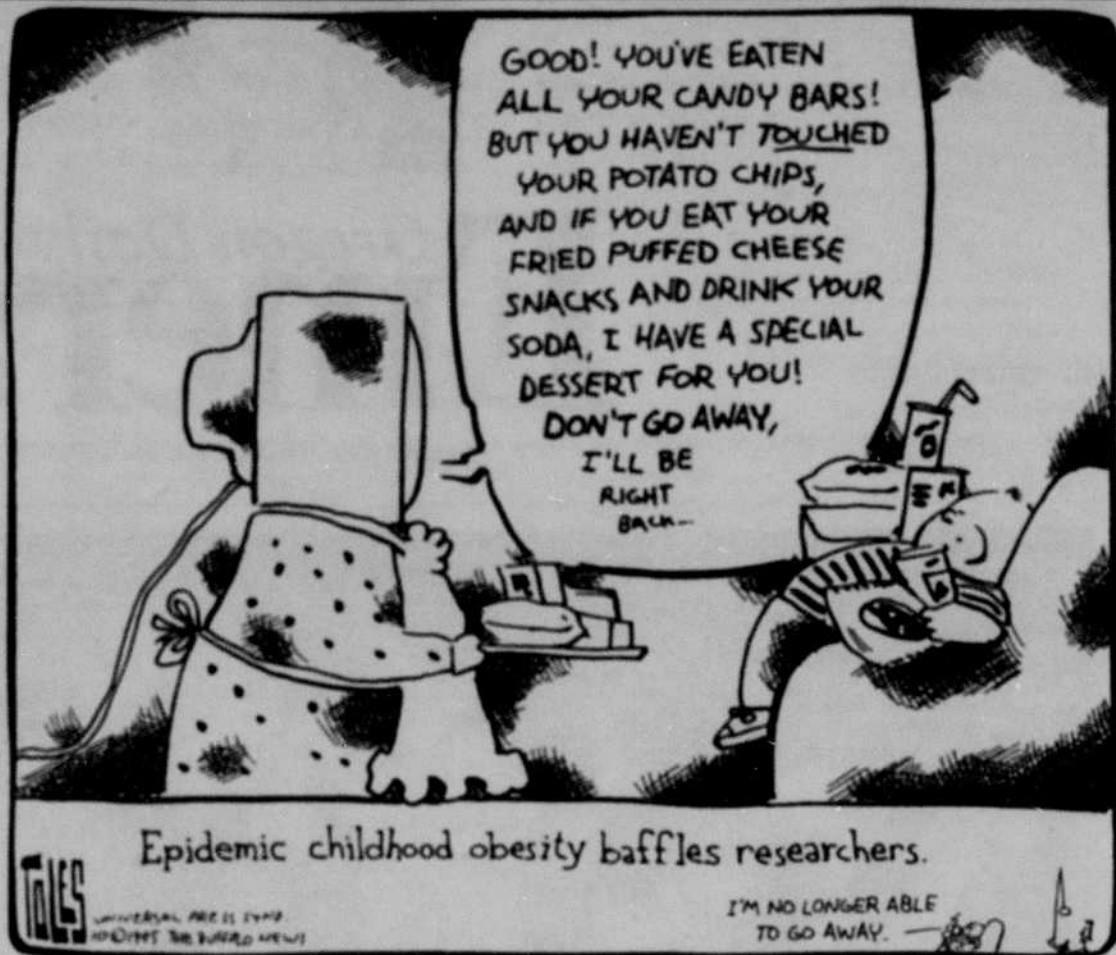
The goal, of course, is to return the former criminal back to society with skills marketed more toward legal endeavors than illegal ones.

As usual, there is some resistance to the plan.

Critics say boot camp programs, even adult ones, have not yet proven to be more effective than their conventional counterparts. One of the reasons for this is that the boot camp concept is a relatively new one and not enough time has gone by to allow for any long-range studies. Of the 36 such facilities in operation across the U.S., none are more than six years old.

Still, we think military-style boot camps are a good idea.

Not only does society benefit from having young criminals removed temporarily from the streets, but offenders are also put into an environment where they have no choice but to learn how to respect themselves and others.



Epidemic childhood obesity baffles researchers.

LETTERS

Rights for unborn?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said that injustice anywhere was a threat to justice everywhere.

He said this about segregation and discrimination:

"Let us never succumb to the temptation of believing that legislation and judicial decrees play only a minor role in solving this problem. Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless." (from *Strength of Love*).

What might Dr. King have said about our current treatment of the immature members of our species?

Dr. King devoted his life to opposing the choice to discriminate on the basis of race. But one week after his birthday we observe the anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, which freed us to choose to discriminate fatally on the basis of the "wantedness," physical maturity, appearance, sex, health, dependence, sentience, parentage or any other criterion, including race, if it is done before birth.

Are these criteria any less arbitrary or subjective than race? By what logic shall we choose criteria for excluding others from the protection of the human community? What does the acceptance of such criteria for destruction say about the content of our character?

Alfred Lemmo
Dearborn, Michigan

Offensive irony

I'd like to respond to John Fujita, who on Nov. 19, had an "infuriating incident" at the Knight Library (*ODE*, Jan. 11).

His "ears were assaulted by an unruly individual's head-phone clamor." I can surely sympathize with John's desire for silence and a quiet work place. I often find myself in a similar predicament. While his request seems reasonable enough, his correlation between

an insolent individual, a Jerry Garcia T-shirt and "... what Jerry taught you?" is not!

He goes on to say that the lack of respect this man displayed is a direct manifestation of Jerry's image.

I don't think so.

The rationale behind this thinking is simply ludicrous. Does he mean to say that all Jerry Garcia followers fit a predisposed attitude of rudeness and lack of consideration for others? Maybe this specific person really "didn't give a f--- about [Fujita]." Nevertheless, I believe his disrespect of you hardly stems from his appreciation of Jerry Garcia or the Grateful Dead.

The irony here lies in John's own impudence to all Garcia followers, while he claims to be the victim of a discourteous offense himself.

I thought we were in college, John.

Claudia A. Villena
Sociology

Pro-Wyden

I applaud Ron Wyden's decision to try to put a stop to the negative nature of the campaign. It is so easy to take some small detail and grossly distort and magnify it so as to give a wrong impression of how a candidate is likely to cast many votes over six years in a given area of public policy.

I am going to vote for Ron Wyden because he has been a consistent progressive Democrat over the years and, as such, he has given the interests of the average person and the disadvantaged top priority.

In our increasingly winner-take-all society, we need someone in the Senate to look after the needs of the "little guy."

If Gordon Smith is elected, his overall record for six years will be to make the overpaid rich even richer at the expense of the present and future situation of the average person and the disadvantaged. I deduce this from his own overall background and the philosophy of his party.

So I hope that voters will look at the big picture and not vote for who touched a nerve with his latest clever, nasty "hit piece."

Dan Weiner
Eugene

Can't judge a book

Miss Williamson, allow me to answer your accusation of bigotry of the members of the *Oregon Commentator* (*ODE*, Jan. 8) with a short story:

There once was a young boy of blue eyes and snow-white-blond hair, and his parents moved to a remote town in a foreign country where he was the only child without dark skin and dark eyes.

There he learned the language of that foreign nation better than his own for the years they remained overseas. Upon the family's return to the United States, they sent the young boy school.

For the child it was a strange experience. Despite the language difficulties he suffered because of his refusal to use English, he also was horrified at the pale-skinned children he saw, his own skin becoming deeply tanned while in the tropics.

Over time the child grew older, and the differences in skin color no longer skewed the vision of the young boy, and he did learn to accept English. And as a result, the boy made, and continues to make, an effort not to let differences in culture and race skew his perception of other human beings.

Miss Williamson, that boy is myself.

I am thoroughly distraught that you can lump every member of a production into the same group so quickly. The *Oregon Commentator* is a journal of opinions, and it doesn't mean an individual writer will agree with the writings of another staff writer, just as in any other publication containing editorial pieces.

Gordon Gilbert
Staff Writer
Oregon Commentator

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