

Commentator, funded programs, increase intellectual campus debate

I was both amazed and insulted by Keith Cunningham's *Commentator* column (ODE, Feb. 7). As a woman, I was insulted by his overtly sexist words.

Cunningham personally attacked Edwina Welch and me, and also wrote that the *Commentator* intimidated us. This was the lowest of blows. To attack women in a piece that claims to be promoting feminism is ludicrous.

I find it odd that Mr. Cunningham only asked women their opinion about the piece. He never asked Zach Kelton, ASUO vice-president or University President Dave Frohnmayer about what could be done about this issue. Are these issues only the responsibility of women?

As a responsible journalist, Mr. Cunningham should be aware that under our fee-funding guidelines, as well as state law, freedom of speech is equal to freedom of funding.

The only way a publication can be defunded is on the basis of hate speech. Had Mr. Cunningham sought a legal opinion about this issue, he would have been told the *Commentator* has never printed anything near the legal definition of hate speech. Once a campus publication is funded, it is a violation of free speech to de-fund it based on content.

Our campus has been a hot bed of political debate around the funding of student groups. The Women's Center, OSPIRG, and Saferide have all come under attack. Mr. Cunningham does not seem to make the connection that calling for the de-funding of the *Commentator* is no different than calling to de-fund the Women's Center.

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Jennifer Williamson

These are all student programs that are funded by student fees to increase the intellectual debate on campus and to increase the number of services for students.

I do not agree with the content of the *Commentator*, but I refuse to censor it, just as I refuse to allow OSPIRG or Saferide be de-funded. Students are the only ones who can vote to fund or defund an organization — and students need to vote. Only 14 percent of University students voted in last year's ASUO election. The ballot box is where decisions like these are made.

For those of us who do disagree with what the *Commentator* publishes, there are several ways that students can be pro-active to affect the *Commentator's* funding.

For starters, don't read it. You can also let the *Commentator* know about what you feel is offensive. Write letters to the editor to make your opinions known to the entire campus. Participate in programs dedicated to changing the root causes of sexist and racist messages in the *Commentator*.

I urge Mr. Cunningham and other students to think about these issues. We can't afford to jeopardize the checks and balance system that protects student groups from reactionary de-funding. If we do, women and other organizations will be the groups that suffer the most.

Jennifer Williamson is the ASUO president.

Slicing Oregon Commentator funding violates First Amendment

We took a few minutes away from our schedule of "intellectually raping" the campus minorities and women to respond to Keith Cunningham's column (ODE, Feb. 7) on our magazine o' love.

We would like to hear from anyone, anyone at all, if before he or she mail-bombed us, he or she actually read the article that was next to the infamous list of 75. Strangely, silence. When Cunningham came to me, I told him we should have run a disclaimer with the list of 75, but figured, "Nah. People have the intelligence to read the article right across the page."

People who disagree with our politics don't read us. They hear about us from their enraged friends and begin following the rest of the sheep. They read our headlines twice a month, look at our comics in the back and get fired up for another month of whining and being offended.

Fuming, they put the magazine down. They see it. The evil back cover! Home of satire, bane of the thought-police, the back page is a place where we can let it all hang out. No one takes it seriously. Everyone understands that our back page is humorous.

Well, almost everyone. I guess we'll start running a big, red headline on the back that reads: "This is only satire. It can't hurt you unless you slide it along your wrist." Learn to take a joke. If you can't laugh at

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Thomas Schoenborn

yourself and life in general, you're going to die of a brain hemorrhage before you graduate, anyway.

We catch all sorts of flack for what we print. People throw drinks in our faces, slap us, send us weird mail and even deliver death threats. So what? If you believed every person's opinion of you were valid, especially the bad ones, you'd never leave the house.

If this is Cunningham's opinion of the magazine that has become the life of every man and woman on staff, then this is mine on him: Cunningham is clueless, but he's got real balls suggesting that we're "intellectually raping" the campus. I guess no one on campus has the mental capacity to defend him or herself from our satire.

Finally, Cunningham states that the *Oregon Commentator* had its funding temporarily removed six years ago. But dammit, the *Commentator* got it back. He neglects to mention the reason the funding was reinstated: Removal of funding because of content is censorship.

Oops.
That damn First Amendment...
Happy writing.

Thomas Schoenborn is the chairman of the board of directors for the *Oregon Commentator*.

LETTERS

Author's notes

I am writing in response to the opinions expressed by Keith Cunningham (ODE, Feb. 7) regarding the Jan. 19 publication of the *Oregon Commentator*.

I am the author of the article he attacked, in which the misogynistic list "75 Reasons Why Women (Bitches) Should Not have Free Speech" was published. That list, written by four Cornell freshmen, was published in its entirety on my request.

The *Commentator* did not endorse the list. Evidently I have "journalistically raped" University women. Mr. Cunningham, I am a woman, regardless of what "journalistic" male appendage you seem to think I have.

In my article, I defended the freedom of speech, and I wanted the list included because we do not live in a sanitary little bubble of a world.

Nowhere in the article was it suggested that the *Commentator* advocates raping women. I never suggested that the list was knee-slapping hilarious and should be made into a bathroom-wall doctrine of truth.

Instead, my article suggested that Americans have a constitutional right to the freedom of speech. I know; I must be a radical to suggest that our Constitution is valid.

What those men wrote would fall under a hate-speech code at most schools. Cornell has no such code. The world has no such code.

Even though I find hate speech disturbing, I believe that if you stifle one person, you gag yourself. This trend of halfheartedly supporting free speech by saying, "I am all for

it, but..." is not only appalling, but fascist.

Why are people supportive of having their own rights revoked?

I realize that Mr. Cunningham's theory about all us "boys" and our rape-encouraging behavior would be shot if he had mentioned that the article was written by a woman.

It was checked by our editor and assistant editor, both of the fair gender. Perhaps we were all drunk and contemplating our next rape conquest instead of thinking about the sensitivity of our student population.

Then again, perhaps we thought that people were intelligent enough to see the list as it stands. The point of the article went right over Mr. Cunningham's head in his fervor to denounce the *Commentator*. Maybe next time he will read an entire article before he decides who wrote it and what it means.

Jessica E. Shebley
Oregon Commentator

Diversity needed

Where does the administration and faculty stand on issues of race and culture in our curricula?

I am frustrated that as a student interested in studying ethnic history and politics there is next to nothing for me here. In our society, which denies personal and group identities, it is important for students to have the opportunity to learn about race, gender and culture. The ability for our civilization to work together, respect and support each other depends on it.

Thinking back on my four years here, I've only had one

professor who is not European-American. What does this say about my education? As an international studies and political science major, my studies have been limited by the diversity this school has provided me.

I've learned a lot, but when it comes to other peoples, their traditions and their heritages, all I've learned is what I've been able to read. Experiences, probably one of the most valuable sources of learning, have been nearly non-existent.

All students should question this. Are there faculty of color, women professors, gay,

lesbian or bisexual professors, teaching in their discipline? Does the curriculum include such things as perspectives from different classes, races and religions?

History is embedded in nearly all fields of study and is not an objective process. It is the selective rendition of facts centered around the writer's or teacher's perspective and values of what is important to say and not to say. This school should do a better job of incorporating these views.

Joey Lyons
International Studies/
Political Science

Editor's Notes:

The Programs Finance Committee meeting that will determine the funding for the *Oregon Commentator* will take place Monday, February 19, at 7:45 p.m. in the EMU Boardroom. Any student who would like to comment on this issue may send a letter to EMU Suite 4, Room 28 before that date.

Regarding letters in reference to Keith Cunningham's Feb. 7 columns: Because of the large number of responses and the similarity in the opinions expressed in them, the Emerald will not be printing further comments on this issue. We thank you for your input.

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