

Female circumcision: a practice in barbarity

■ OUR OPINION: This painful and sexist "ritual" should be condemned

"The older women from the village surrounded her and held her arms and legs ... [as the procedure began]. She started screaming and then she shouted 'why are you killing me?' — but I couldn't do anything to help her."

Such was the experience of an American photographer who recently witnessed the ritual of female circumcision in one African nation.

The photographer, who related her story on an Oregon Public Broadcasting television program earlier this week, is plagued by vivid memories and disbelief to this day. Her presence at the ritual was compounded by the fact that she had become friends with the young woman being circumcised.

Last Wednesday, the U.S. Senate passed a law that would make female circumcision a federal crime, but repealed a provision in the bill that would have offered political asylum to women who seek amnesty here to avoid the ritual in their home countries.

While the legislation is overdue — yet welcome, the Senate should go one step further.

The United States should present a proposal criminalizing female genital-mutilation to the United Nations.

The proposal would no doubt be met with criticism and slow response, but at least the international community would be exposed to the idea of what this kind of circumcision really is: cruel, demeaning and viciously sexist.

The ritual recently received national attention

after 19-year-old Fauziya Kasinga allegedly fled her native Togo to avoid the procedure. Due to a supposed lack of documentation and evidence that would have given her asylum, U.S. immigration officials promptly had Kasinga thrown in jail where she anguished for nearly two years before being released.

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In the future, when she looks back at her ordeal, she may very well be grateful that while she suffered needlessly in prison, her body and womanhood remain intact. Many others have not been as fortunate.

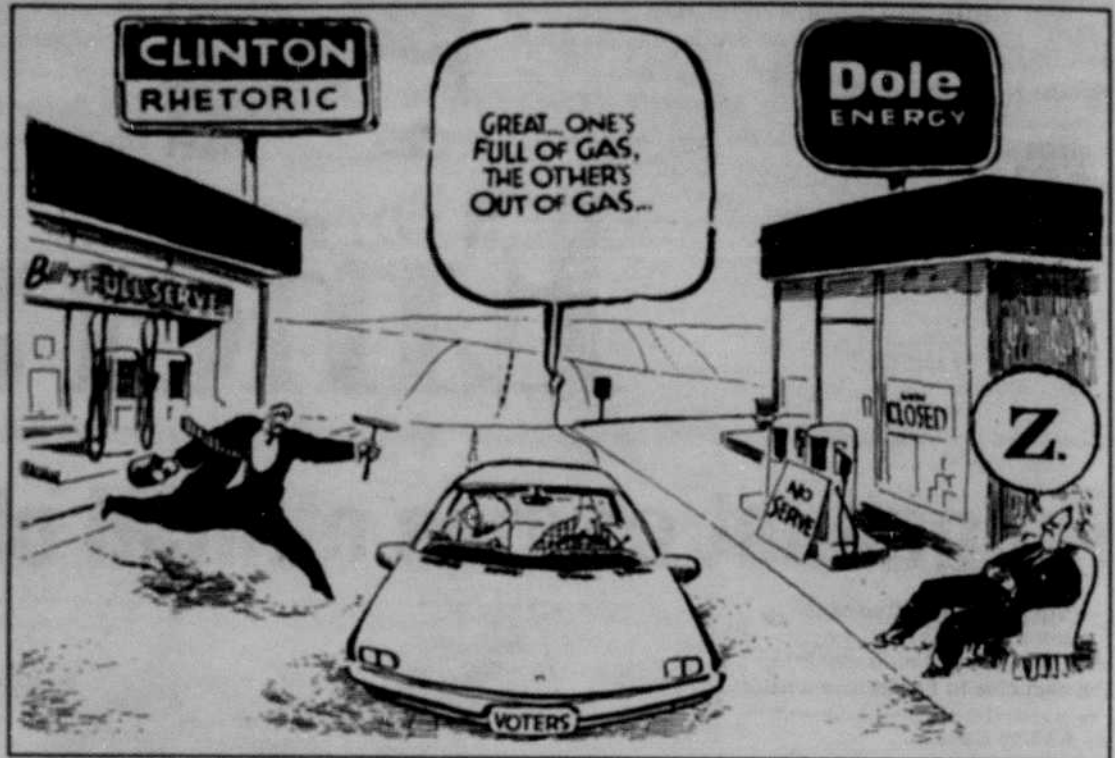
While female circumcision doesn't fall under the other more traditional and political reasons that force thousands of people to flee their countries, thanks to Kasinga's sad plight, the entire political asylum framework is being scrutinized in this country.

In recent years, the procedure has made its way to North America through immigrants who bring the cultural practice from some regions of Africa and the Middle East.

The procedure needs to be sanctioned globally before other women are mutilated.

The photographer ended her OPB segment saying she couldn't believe that this kind of thing still happened in the world.

Neither can we.
It's about time it ended.



LETTERS

Party advice

It's that time of year again, and despite the joy of seeing the sun again after the Oregon monsoon, we cop-types know the seasonal change heralds the call of the wild party.

Now you may think it's the high point of our week to bust campus parties, but I'm writing this to say that it's not.

In spite of declining crime statistics nationwide, the crime rates for the West University and campus are alive and thriving.

We are aware of this and would prefer to spend our time concentrating on the thieves, pervers, robbers and the assaultive idiots we have no shortage of in this area. But we don't have much choice when we receive complaints, and illegal behavior is blatantly "in your face."

You can help yourself, and (no matter how you define it) your community by considering ways to avoid making these errors.

- If you are under 21, you can be charged with "MIP by consumption" if we have evidence you have been drinking alcohol illegally (\$150 fine).

- If you walk down the sidewalk drinking a beer, you may be arrested for "Open Container" (\$115 fine).

- If you buy a keg and fail to follow the information you provided on the form, you may be charged with "False Swearing", and the keg will be seized.

- Holding an open party and charging "donations" for beer is a recipe for trouble. Among other charges, you may be cited as a person being in control of a property knowingly allowing a minor to drink alcohol (\$350-\$1000 mandatory fine).

These examples are cited because they are common offenses. There are many additional ways to get in trouble, but the real question is how to avoid legal problems.

The best answer is not to break the law. If you choose to do so anyway, it doesn't take a genius to realize you might want to be low-key about it.

Blasting your stereo, yelling in the street and fighting on the sidewalk are subtle signs we are trained to recognize.

If you get caught, don't blame the police.

Your friends, and especially your date, won't think less of you because you calmed down, answered questions and took your ticket without bellyaching.

Sgt. David Poppe
Eugene Police

No sympathy

I just finished reading, with some amusement, Bart Alexander and Jay Lininger's sympathetic take on Eugene's street people.

Although their logic is convoluted to the point of being ludicrous, it appears they believe the primary function of "the law" is to uphold the social hierarchy to benefit those on the most powerful "social rungs."

Bart, Jay, wake up! The year is 1996, the Berlin Wall has fallen, the Iron Curtain has been lifted and the tired Marxist rhetoric you espouse has been rendered irrelevant.

Have you two ever stopped to think that perhaps those losers you defend may be guilty of more than just "slouching around in our midst"?

When my fiancée and I moved here last fall, we were victimized twice by petty criminals.

Interestingly, since "the law" has cracked down on the slime you lovingly embrace, we have had no further problems.

One night, our apartment was broken into, and my fiancée's backpack and contents were stolen (while she was home, no less). A few weeks later, the grill was stolen off our barbecue.

Because only the grill portion was stolen, I am led to believe the thief intended to start a cooking fire in town somewhere. Gosh, these poor people need some way to cook food, regardless of the fire hazard!

After all, only the highest "social rungs" own real estate, so who cares if a private home or business is accidentally burned down. Right guys?

Check out the cover story on Tuesday's *Register-Guard*. Eugene's crime rose 11.7 per-

cent in 1995. Any guesses who the perpetrators are?

John Niendorf
Eugene

Vote Rust

The other day, I was watching a debate between the candidates competing in the Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate seat that is being vacated by Mark Hatfield, when I heard something that made me stop and think.

Jerry Rust, the candidate who has always worked hard for the people of Lane County, simply said, "Vote as if your life depended on it."

This statement made me realize that if I wanted to see a change in the current political arena, I must get out and mobilize the vote for the candidate that will best represent Oregon.

For years, Rust has been approached by lobbyists from both sides of the spectrum in relation to a thousand issues. He has never wavered in his service to his constituents.

Rust speaks out on the issues specifically and precisely. His honesty is legendary and he has a special knack for better explaining issues to the public.

Today, it seems as if people think money can buy an election. Now, more than ever, we must not allow our Senate seat to be parceled out to the highest bidder by a Republican or a Democrat.

These millionaire candidates have been recruited by corporate interests because they know that these recruits can be trusted to represent *their* interests.

We Oregonians should elect a candidate who will represent our interests, withstand the heavy pressure of lobbyists and tell people the truth.

Jerry Rust is by far the best candidate in the race for the U.S. Senate seat.

His constituency re-elected him four times because they know and trust him, and they will vote for him again because they know where he stands on the issues. They know he delivers.

Nicole Justice
Political Science

Oregon Daily Emerald

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Newsroom: (541) 346-5511

Display Advertising: (541) 346-3712

Business Office: (541) 346-5512

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