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PERSPECTIVES

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'Passive smoking' actively hurts students

The haze of second-hand smoke that hangs over campus is harming non-smokers

At least 90 percent of University students smoke. While that statistic seems high, the American Medical Association claims nine out of 10 people in the United States are exposed to cigarette smoke.

When the number of smokers on 13th Avenue is combined with the AMA's figures, it doesn't take a math major to figure the statistic is closer to 10 out of 10 people at the University.

OPINION



Jonas Allen

But does that necessarily mean you are a smoker?

Basically, yes. How many times have you been

walking to class and second-hand smoked a cigarette on the way? For many non-smokers at the University, myself included, this is a daily event.

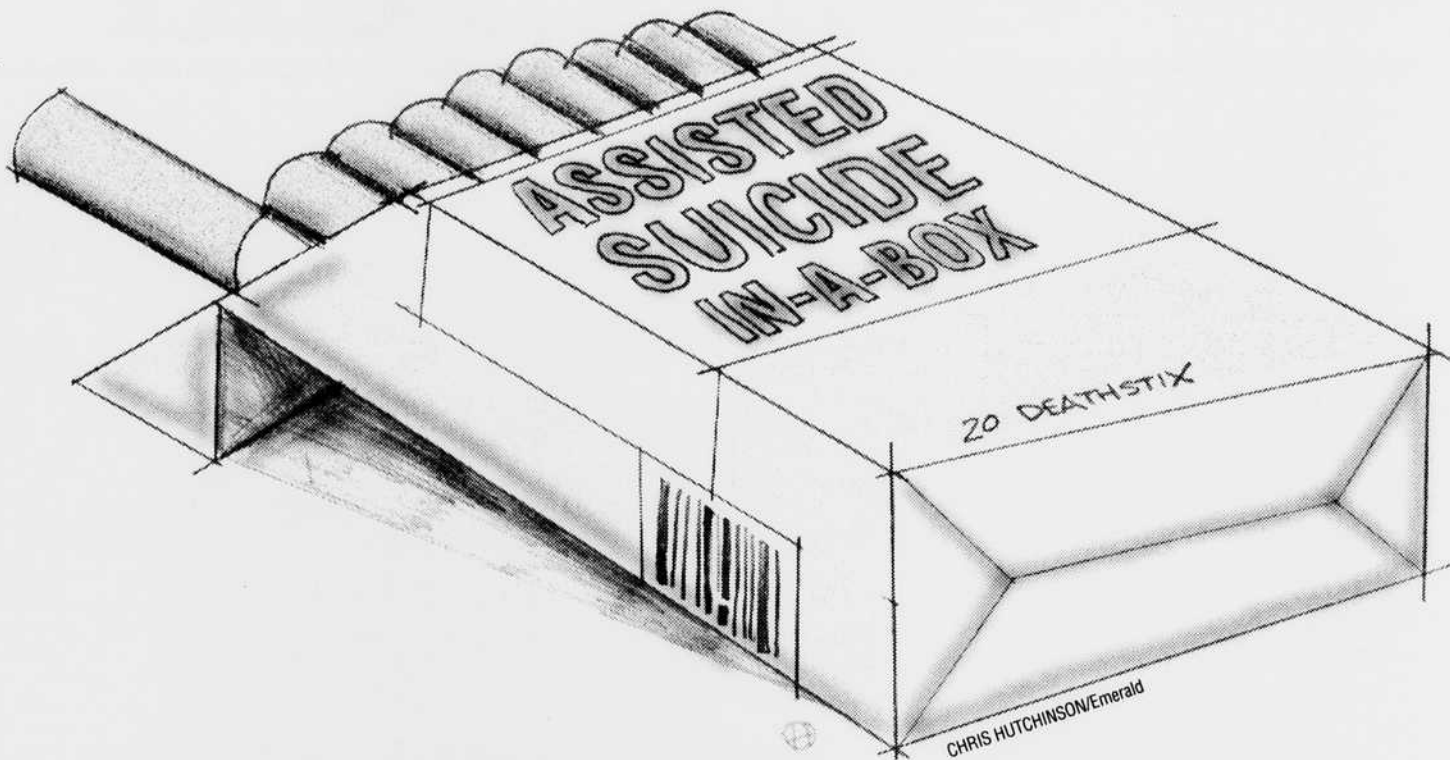
The AMA uses the phrase "passive smoking" to describe this situation.

Passive or active, giving the label "smoker" to non-smoking students is unpleasant. When non-smokers are put at risk because they have no control over what they're breathing, the situation becomes unfair and unhealthy.

The Student Health Center recently surveyed more than 400 people and found that 43 percent smoke at least casually. The health center claims its survey is representative of the University population. Based on enrollment projections, that means nearly 7,400 students smoke on campus. The remaining 9,800 become "smokers" in their own right, although not by choice.

Walking from the Bean parking lot to Gilbert Hall is a good time for those 9,800 to practice being Bill Clinton (in other words, not inhaling). Those "executive exercises" will pay off when the true test comes along — meandering past 150 Columbia.

It's truly a catch-22 situation: You can walk through campus breathing like normal, or you can hold your breath every time you pass a smoker. Either way, you cough, choke and pass out.



Thankfully, the University has heard non-smokers' gasps for fresh air. The residence halls no longer offer smoking rooms to students, a policy that housing director Mike Eyster says "is going pretty well."

According to the American Lung Association, second-hand smoke contains more toxins than actually smoking a filtered cigarette. So while it's great the residence hall program is going well, where does that leave non-residents who walk through clouds all over campus?

It leaves them looking for help.

Unfortunately, they are usually left holding their breath, because the University is unable to do much of anything.

A public campus means freedom to smoke, whether non-smokers like it or not. It also doesn't help that opinions on smoking have a tendency to change.

"A lot of people say they don't [smoke], but when they get here they start to smoke," Eyster said.

So why do people pick up the habit in the first place?

If smoking is as physically and psychologically addictive as many people claim, maybe some non-smokers become hooked after numerous trips down 13th Avenue.

Maybe they succumb to peer pressure that tells them

smoking is cool.

Maybe smoking is part of an obscure initiation rite that some people go through to gain popularity.

The greek system used to have initiation rites, commonly referred to as "hazing." While that word has certain connotations (forced smoking is not among them), hazing also has become the best explanation for what is going on over our heads and in our lungs.

As the number of smokers increases daily, the haze on campus gets lower and darker. These clouds aren't just fall rain-makers, they are lifetime cancer-causers.

Maybe the haze is blurring my vision, but kicking the habit seems the healthiest choice for all smokers, active and passive. The U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services says smoking is not the most dangerous cause of illness and death, but it is the easiest to prevent.

True, quitting is easier said than done, but smokers owe it to the health of everyone around them to try.

Jonas Allen is a columnist for the Emerald. His columns appear on alternate Fridays. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nike whitewash

Michael Hines' whitewash of Nike's labor abuses (ODE, Oct. 15) falls far short of a fair examination of the facts. A number of easily verifiable arguments refute Nike's claims, but it's not the purpose of this letter to list them. I am writing to emphasize the article's shortcomings.

First, it essentially prints the highlights of a "press conference" called by Nike. The article itself points out that Nike, presumably using a small portion of its gargantuan PR budget, "chose to hold" the conference with college publications in a transparent attempt to preempt newly documented criticism.

I don't have a problem with covering press conferences; that's what journalists do. But journalists also have an obligation to make an effort to at least make a cursory attempt to cover the other side. The only opposition Hines' article quotes is a Web page he selected, it appears, at random. He lumps all Nike critics together as expressing claims "similar to" those published on this randomly selected Web page.

There are at least two problems with this: Initially, there are plenty of people on campus who are vocal Nike critics. How about the Student Insurgent? What about the new campus group SALE, which touts

anti-corporatism specific to Nike as its main message? These are sources Hines could have cited with a five-minute phone call or a stroll across campus. Instead, he chose to do a Web search. Why? Also remember that these are only campus sources. A wealth of groups in the community also could have commented. In Portland, a group called Justice: Do it, Nike coordinates many activist projects. All of these people were easily available by phone or in person, yet no phone call was made.

The second problem with this failure to research is that Hines misses two new studies which completely refute Nike's version of events. How hard were these studies to find? They were covered on the front page of the most recent issue of THE OTHER Paper. Relying on a Web page is lazy, but failure to research recent happenings is simply inexcusable. Nike's executives were obviously looking for college reporters to simply regurgitate their version of events — sadly, that is exactly what happened.

I am concerned that the Emerald has, to my knowledge, not yet published a single article critical of Nike. And I'm not just talking about editorials; given Hines' piece, it seems that the Emerald shies

away from quoting real, live, interviewable people in favor of Web sites. I consider this an alarming trend and hope for more in-depth investigative reporting in the future. At the very least, I hope for a phone call the next time the Emerald runs a piece about Nike.

Jeff Shaw
English

Cheap labor

Re.: "Nike labor practices: Company officials say conditions and wages for their workers in Vietnam are good" (ODE, Oct. 15). That Dusty Kidd and other characters on the Nike pad buttress their butts should surprise no one. But Brian Quinn of Harvard says Nike's employees get a better break than other workers in the Third World. Geewillickers, yes, less misery is better than absolute misery. Categorically.

My favorite Kidd quote: "The idea was that we had great design talent in America, but we didn't have great manufacturing, so we would come to Asia to have the manufacturing done." Is it the ancient machinery Americans insist on using that is so awful? Our outmoded technology compared to Indonesia or China? Our unwillingness to launch into the computer age? Or is it the lazy people who just have no incentive to increase efficiency and pro-

ductivity? Why do Asian companies risk setting up production facilities in America, like Hyundai, Sony, etc., locally? These are all rhetorical questions.

Labor is cheaper there. That's all. If U.S. capital could smash unions and discipline labor in America down to a competitive level, i.e. the lowest common-global denominator, then the manufacture of the products of U.S. corporations, e.g. Nike, would not have to go so far from the prime market, i.e. America. If U.S. labor wants to eliminate the threat of outsourcing manufactures to foreign labor pools, then they must either decrease their demands in exchange for their labor, or increase their solidarity with the workers of the world. It would be too ironic to start with Vietnam...

Chris Brady
Graduate student

Mikva lecture

I came away from last night's Abner Mikva lecture reminded of a witty definition I once read of an apple: "An apple is a spherical object containing thirty-two chemicals, dipped in wax and gassed. In the long run, an apple is as likely to bring on a doctor as to keep one away."

Joseph Austin
Eugene