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PERSPECTIVES

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Riots started by stupidity



Students need to stop others from behaving irresponsibly at parties

As the weekend looms a few hours away, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do you feel lucky, punk? Two weekends ago, as you surely know, a Halloween party got out of control. A few weekends before that there was another so-called "riot." If we maintain this pattern, this weekend may prove very interesting. So, do you feel lucky?

OPINION



Jonas Allen

Do you think you'll be able to avoid the party that gets out of hand? If there is a wild mob of drunken vandals, can you keep yourself from joining in? Do you think you can dodge a meeting at high noon with Eugene police?

If you are a University student, you probably can. ASUO President Bill Miner said only one-third of those arrested at recent parties attend the University. But whether you stay out of trouble when you drink is not dependent upon your luck or your University standing. What it all boils down to is responsibility.

Maybe it's bad beer. Maybe it's the unusually cold weather. For that

matter, maybe El Niño is bringing waves of trouble to the party scene. Whatever the case, no matter how drunk people may get, they owe it to themselves and fellow partygoers to keep their cool.

"We party. Everybody parties. It's only once in a while it gets out of hand," said Miner. "Yeah, it gets crazy, but it's party crazy, not riot crazy."

How these parties have been hyped up to riot status has been a hot debate. Partiers blame police for showing up in riot gear. Police blame partiers for being too rowdy. The public blames students for not restraining themselves. The media can't blame anyone so they call the parties "riots." The University blames the media for blowing the isolated incidents out of proportion.

After all the finger pointing, who's really to blame?

The only people to blame for these melees are the few who started them. The reputation of an entire university should not be smudged because a couple of people could not act responsibly when drinking.

People should not need babysitters at every party on every weekend, but that's what has been proposed by Miner and Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey.

The idea of checking on registered kegs has been tossed around because the Office of Public Safety, sheriff of these parts, can only monitor certain areas of Eugene. As a result, if a party more raucous than the previous two erupts outside OPS boundaries, our hired henchmen can only sit by and watch.

So far, they have not only watched street signs get uprooted, but they have also watched the University's reputation go up in smoke. What's most disturbing is that a small number of people have caused this whole problem because they think it's in vogue to throw bottles at police.

The presence of University students at these parties overshadows the fact that anyone in the community can act irresponsibly, not just student drinkers.

Miner is quick to point out that "this is a community problem," deflecting criticism from the University. But he's not just playing politician — he's right. This is a community issue because Eugene police have gotten involved. This is a community issue because Miner met with the mayor to discuss how to curb wild parties. But this is a community problem because those who started the "riots" didn't have the common

sense to drop their bottles rather than throw them.

And anyone, regardless of age, race or economic standing, can act irresponsibly. It is merely coincidence that this craziness has surfaced near campus. The University can try as hard as it wants to curb any more "riots." The police can open as many canisters of tear gas as they want. What is going to make the difference is people realizing they must act responsibly to stop any more incidents.

Miner said the University and the city can do everything in their power to keep parties quiet, but "we're still not going to stop the jerk" who throws the first bottle. Who hits the first bystander. Who acts first and thinks later.

So who are you? Hopefully, you're a responsible drinker. Hopefully, you're one of the many University students who don't lose control. But if you go to a party that gets out of hand, whoever you are, don't be the jerk.

Jonas Allen is a columnist for the Emerald. His work appears on alternate Fridays. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Use tandem taxi

If you are not utilizing resources on campus at night, be it ballroom dancing or studying in the library, because of safety concerns ("Students say campus still unsafe after dark," ODE, Nov. 7), I urge you to call us. The Tandem Taxi Service offers free transportation every night of the week. You choose: ride on the bikes with us, ride your own

bike and we will escort you or walk and we will escort you. Our slogan is "Helping to support our community — one revolution at a time." The students who operate the tandem and triplet bikes are dedicated to making campus safer and friendlier. If you think you can benefit from our service, please get to know us. We are here for you: 346-TAXI.

David Niles
 Tandem Taxi coordinator

Punish riff raff

In response to the recent confrontation between police and residents of the West University neighborhood, some officials have recommended a new, "zero-tolerance" policy. I say, the sooner the better. These riff raff have exhausted my patience.

The "dog and skateboard" bans and police sweeps should have gained the attention of these hooligans. It's my understanding that

the police did their best to target the hippies, punks, runaways, homeless and other unwashed nonconformists — to no avail. All attempts to crack down on dope smoking, underage drinking and other so-called "victimless" crimes (I call them crimes of immorality) have so far been fruitless. These "people" are so stupid that even the deprivation of constitutional rights does not seem to earn their respect. They show less re-

spect and more hostility than ever.

Zero tolerance, by all means. What about curfews?! Some governments, to good effect, require their citizens to carry passes. Checkpoints could be established in all questionable neighborhoods. And mightn't the time be ripe to develop a workable set of guidelines for imposition of martial law? Come, let us claim our glorious tomorrow!

John Davidson
 ASUO Legal Services

Thumbs



TO FEDERAL INTERFERENCE IN OREGON'S ASSISTED-SUICIDE LAW:

Why does the federal government think it's okay to leave states alone when we force welfare recipients onto the streets but not when we expand personal liberties? First it was California's medical marijuana law; now, Bill Clinton and the Department of Justice are threatening to take action against doctors who prescribe lethal medication under Oregon's recently reaffirmed assisted-suicide law. The Drug Enforcement Agency has declared it would prosecute doctors who follow the law under U.S. rules requiring that all prescription drugs be distributed exclusively for medical purposes. This move is clearly designed to interfere with a policy Clinton has personal objections to, rather than to express a legitimate concern with the legality of the Oregon law. The feds could easily decide suicide is a legitimate medical purpose; instead, politics have interfered with our personal liberties once again.

TO AT&T:

The telecommunications giant is suing Eugene over a tax the city recently imposed on communications technology. The tax applies to wireless telephone service and to communications facilities. AT&T thinks the tax is unfair and violates the federal Telecommunications Act, which amounted to little more than Congress giving generous perks and free reign to the already profitable telecommunications industry. AT&T's complaint about the specific nature of the tax may be legitimate, but that should have come when it was passed. Eugene, as a community, has opted to tax this company, and neither pressure from corporate lawyers nor bad federal law should prevent a community from enacting taxes and budgets as it sees fit.