

CONTACTING US

NEWSROOM:  
(541) 346-5511  
E-MAIL:  
ode@oregon.uoregon.edu  
ONLINE EDITION: www.uoregon.edu/~ode

ADDRESS:  
Oregon Daily Emerald  
P.O. BOX 3159  
Eugene, Oregon 97403

# PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
Sarah Kickler  
EDITORIAL EDITOR  
Mike Schmierbach  
NIGHT EDITOR  
Carl Yeh

## Swarming COVERAGE

*Is media coverage of school shootings perpetuating the problem? And if it is, how do we stop the cycle of coverage?*

It seemed like things were winding down. There were 11 issues left of the Emerald for spring term as of Thursday, and we were beginning to feel like the year was easing to a close.

And then all hell broke loose. The radio stations started reporting shots fired at Thurston High School, possible fatalities and many injured. On my way to the office, I started wondering how on earth we were going to cover this and how we could do it appropriately. My mind was swimming.

OPINION



Sarah Kickler

Why would someone do something like that, and why did it keep happening over and over again? Within the last few months, it seemed like a couple of magazine covers a

month were telling of the Southern gun culture and kids screaming for attention.

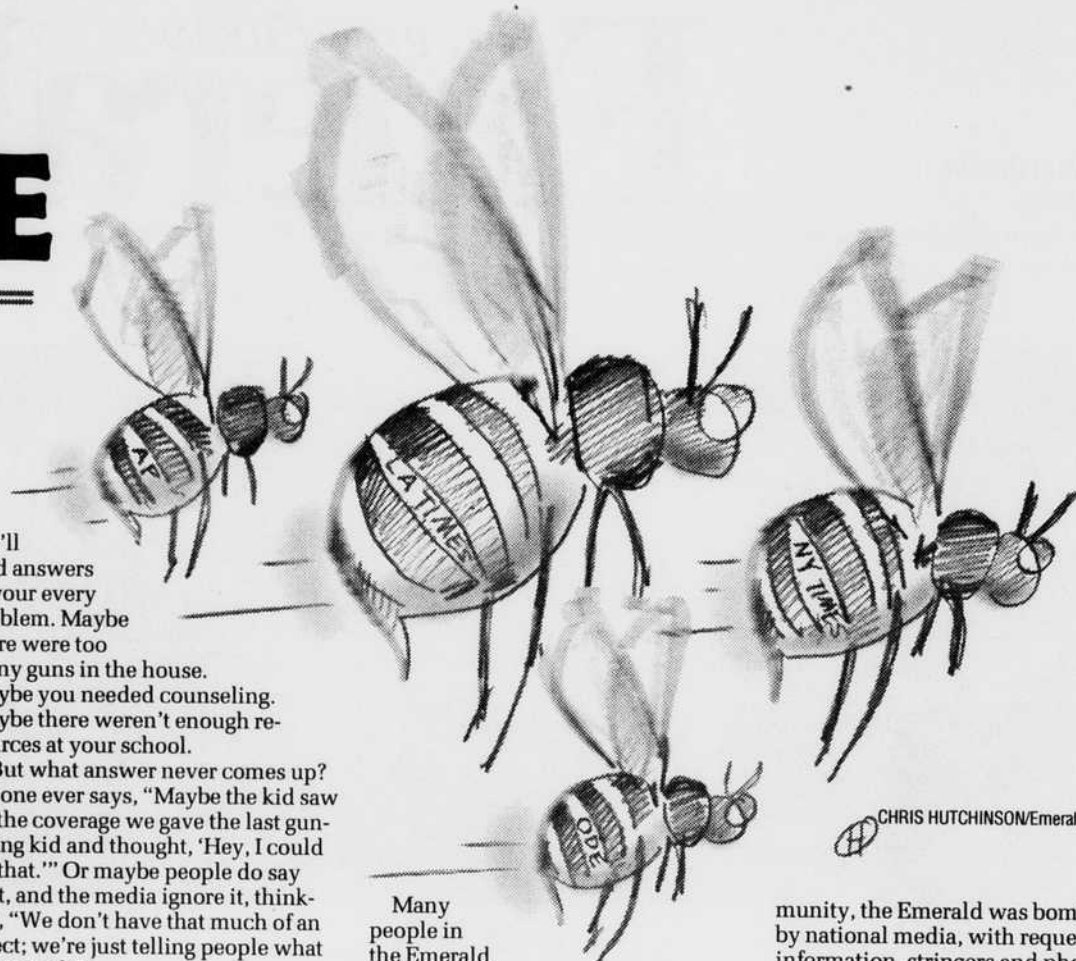
But attention is exactly what the kids were getting. Think about it. What message have the media been sending to kids with the coverage of these previous incidents? We're telling kids that if you feel like you have some problems and you are being ignored, pull out a gun and mow some of your schoolmates down and we will give you more attention than you've ever dreamed of. We'll splash your faces on the cover of Newsweek, Time and U.S. News and World Report and analyze the hell out of you.

We'll find answers to your every problem. Maybe there were too many guns in the house. Maybe you needed counseling. Maybe there weren't enough resources at your school.

But what answer never comes up? No one ever says, "Maybe the kid saw all the coverage we gave the last gun-toting kid and thought, 'Hey, I could do that.'" Or maybe people do say that, and the media ignore it, thinking, "We don't have that much of an effect; we're just telling people what happened."

I'm not laying the blame for Kip Kinkel's alleged actions on the media or anyone else; I don't think we will ever know what the catalyst was. I'm just suggesting that we might want to put a little more thought into the possible ramifications of coverage. People are more affected by media images than we assume, and I think we have entered a huge web of catch-22s.

More kids have been shooting classmates in school, and the media have covered each of these events. But what if the media coverage has been causing some of these events? Then have the media been covering or creating the news?



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Many people in the Emerald newsroom complained about TV news coverage of the Thurston shooting. We watched as reporters cornered students and asked them if anything like this had ever happened to them before, and we complained that the students needed some more time to process what had happened before talking about it on live TV. And then we would complain when the reporters ran out of people to talk to and returned to regularly scheduled programming. I don't know what we wanted the TV people to do, but we certainly wanted more information.

One of the worst situations to develop was that in the midst of one of the most tragic events to hit our com-

munity, the Emerald was bombarded by national media, with requests for information, stringers and photos. We fielded calls from The New York Times, The L.A. Times, The London Times, Reuters, Newsweek and The Associated Press. We ended up with an almost excited atmosphere, but that was at the expense of the tragedy at Thurston, and it felt horrible.

All I want to know is whether this is really what journalism is all about. Because if getting photos of people with obvious injuries and quotes from people who are so grief stricken they don't know what they are saying is what this business is really all about, maybe I chose the wrong path.

*Sarah Kickler is the editor in chief of the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Bigotry continues

"Chinese people will run all over you, if you let them," once proclaimed in a memo the newly promoted and appointed assistant director of admissions and coordinator for international recruitment, who has recently come back from a recruiting tour of southeast Asian countries, all with Chinese ancestry.

Such is the attitude and "expertise" of some University administrators regarding race and nationalities, even when the institution admits it badly needs the millions of dollars from international students, particularly southeast Asians.

Several Asian student groups expressed their outrage and requested the dismissal of Peter Briggs at the time. The Register-Guard and the Emerald covered the issue extensively. Most did not think his "apology" was sincere and looked at it as an effort to save his job. Some Chinese scholars simply didn't want to deal with the man any more. But not only did the University not fire Briggs, it has recently rewarded him with a promotion and a new, unfitting title: coordinator for international recruitment, an approximately \$50,000 job. Speaking of adding insult to injury!

Kathleen Bowman, then vice president for international affairs, who is currently the president of a women's school in Virginia, believed Briggs should have been fired as the Chinese scholars had demanded. She would have never allowed this appointment and would probably "turn in her presidential chair" if she heard about this promotion.

Now to appoint such character to this particular position is like sending Bonnie and Clyde to hire sheriffs. It is indeed a shameful display of opportunism and hypocrisy to go after Asian dollars while such stereotyping is shared by many University administrators, from the president

down. Frohnmayer's categorization of Asian students as "Orientals" and their rice-eating habits found its way to the World Wide Web last year. This appointment issue followed suit and will add to the universal "popularity" of the University. A reluctant apology by Frohnmayer, citing ignorance about "connotation," simply didn't cut it.

The sad fact is that the administration is actively covering up the Briggs memo incident; obviously, the potential incoming students, their parents and the alumni organizations in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. are unaware of whom they are dealing with. I believe they should be informed before "ambassador" Briggs' next "business trip" to the region.

Recent economic hardships and high tuition at the University are enough burdens for Asian students; they don't need bigotry on top of that. They should spend their hard-earned money elsewhere.

While this university, according to an Oregon State System of Higher Education report, lags miserably behind in its minority faculty members, even compared to the national average (10.8 vs. 17.3, for which it has yet to provide an explanation), it insists on retaining and even promoting favored administrators such as Briggs who could not have survived such racial incidents in other institutions. Maybe this appointment gives us a clue. Maybe this appointment explains it all.

Tooraj Fooladi  
University Alumnus

### Grant special election

I am writing to express my disappointment with the Constitution Court's recent decisions on the student elections. The court demonstrated poor judgment in ruling it OK for poll booth workers to tell people to vote no on OSPIRG, not admitting that this could have affected the elec-

tion's decision.

Students deserve a special election to express our true feelings about the work that OSPIRG does on campus and across the state. Right now Oregon has big problems. The Willamette and the Columbia are two of the country's 10 most toxic waterways. Air pollution has caused childhood asthma rates to soar in the past several years. These issues directly impact students and are things we can do something about. The only way we can have an impact, however, is on a statewide level because clean air and clean water are not things that originate on campus and spread outward.

OSPIRG is the only student group that gives students this opportunity to affect environmental change statewide. Through OSPIRG's Clean Water Project, students work to safeguard our waterways by joining citizens across Oregon in defending existing clean water protections. OSPIRG takes a proactive stance on these issues in not only defending what we already have, but also fighting for reforms to reduce the amount of toxins going into the Willamette and other waterways.

Students must get involved now more than ever in solving the state's most pressing problems. Working together across the state, we can make a difference on issues that reach beyond the University of Oregon.

I urge the Constitution Court to re-evaluate its decision on the unfair elections process and grant students a special election, if not this year, then in the fall. Our University of Oregon chapter of OSPIRG has provided us as students invaluable opportunities to affect change in the larger society. Re-establishing the UO OSPIRG will ensure that students continue to have a powerful voice at the state level.

Grace Frances  
International Studies