

# PERSPECTIVES

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**said**

"UCLA"  
— Stanford head football coach Tyrone Willingham's choice as the most underrated team in the Pacific-10 Conference. The Bruins are ranked second in the nation by both major polls, Tyrone. What more do you want?

"Where did I go so wrong?"  
— Jeremy Strohmeier, after being sentenced to four life sentences the 1997 murder and rape of a seven-year-old. Well, Jeremy...

"(NBA games) could fall off the end of the earth. They could be replaced by midget wrestling."

— Sports fan Leo Connolly, quoted in an Oregonian story on the cancellation of the first two weeks of the regular NBA season. But would the midgets have a salary cap?

"We're not going to tolerate any violence from these homosexuals. They are the most violent people in the world."

— Fred Phelps, leader of a church that plans to protest the funeral of Matthew Shepard. Just nod and back away slowly.

## Mourning one of our own



Chris Hutchinson/Emerald

*Matthew Shepard's death should strike a resonant chord in college students*

Matthew Shepard was a gay man. The majority of students cannot, never will, relate to him on that level.

That he was also a student, only 21 years old at the time of his death, gives us something to empathize with. The 200 students who gathered in the EMU Amphitheater to honor his memory, as well as all the others on campus who were touched by the tragedy, had at least that to connect them to Shepard. Something small, but something nonetheless.

Neither of those things are particularly good reasons to feel sorrow at his passing. The best reason for any one of us on this campus to feel any compassion for who Matthew Shepard was and what happened to him is the fact that he was a human being. And he will always be referred to in the past tense.

We have had time to absorb the fact of Matthew Shepard's murder, to process the horrific reality of a young man subjected to inhumane brutality and a death less shocking than the fact that he clung to life for so long.

Because hatred is at its root illogical, hate crimes are especially jarring. Instinctively we seek to make sense where there is none, and almost all of the time we are disappointed.

One of the ways we as a nation deal with the frustration that stems from being confronted with things that just don't make sense is to try to fit them into the comforting, static paradigm of law. Already, Shepard's death has launched a flurry of debate about tougher laws against hate crimes, both within Wyoming and nationally. And all political cynicism aside, any effort to hold the perpetrators of this kind of atrocity, of any hate crime, responsible should be applauded.

That being said, we must make sure that we don't fool ourselves

into thinking legislation is the definitive solution to the problem.

College campuses nationwide have been sites of hate-motivated violence and harassment. Just last Saturday, as Shepard lay dying in a hospital bed, a float decorated with a scarecrow and homophobic slogans appeared in the Colorado State University homecoming parade.

Naturally, the school has launched an investigation, and the fraternity that owned the float has taken action against those responsible. Neither of these things, however, address the larger issue.

Shepard's murder and the thousands of other hate crimes that occur in this country each year are a result of the culture of fear and intolerance that simmers within this country. If we intend to make any kind of inroads in combatting this climate, then the work must start with us.

The Wyoming case is of particular significance to students all across the country not only because of its appalling nature, but also because the victim was our age, as are the people who were arrested and charged with his murder. This underscores the need for our generation to take action.

Try as we might, we can no longer deny that we are the next generation of leaders. To do this, we must admit to our collective outrage but not deny our individual biases. Most importantly, we cannot allow Shepard's death to be marginalized by not acknowledging that it could have happened here, to any one of us.

Matthew Shepard's death should serve as a message to all of us that we all need to step up and take responsibility for other human beings. It has become incumbent upon all of us to take the anger, sorrow and confusion that this incident has inspired in so many of us and turn it into positive action.

*This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Greeks portrayal unfair

Ashley Bach's editorial (ODE, Oct. 9) paints a bleak and dreary picture of greek life on our campus. In actuality, his op-ed piece barely delves past the superficial rendering that most media give to greek organizations. It is easy to stereotype a group of people by how they dress.

It is easy to look in on a community of people from the periphery and criticize, without having any real knowledge of what it's like on the inside. Most students can't distinguish between greek letters, making it very easy for them to lump all greek students in the same boat. Greeks become an easy target for criticism because the members represent the organization in everything they do. Fraternities and sororities are not all the same.

Elliott P. Dale  
Vice President, Interfraternity Council

The trouble with Ashley Bach's column (ODE, Oct. 9) is simply his own short-

sightedness in an issue far more complex than his presumptions. Mr. Bach does not realize that greek members and alumni as a whole provide more financial support to this university than any other organization. Maybe he does not realize that greek members are required to uphold a level of academic excellence through the university as well as their international organizations. Perhaps Bach does not see the full potential that the greek system offers each graduating individual through the leadership workshops, international conventions, and alumni contacts. Just maybe he was unaware that greek houses offer scholarships to incoming freshmen to promote a greater level of excellence in University students. It may be that Bach does not realize the greek community respects other opinions and personal choices. Maybe Bach is unaware that a greek community is a group of friends, brothers and sisters that choose to be a part of something bigger and longer lasting than just college itself.

So it seems Ashley Bach does not realize these facts, and that we will choose to do what we do — not by what we're told, what we wear or the color of our skin, but by what we are and wish to become.

Jason Diamond  
Delta Upsilon Fraternity

### Vigil brings out diversity

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in the vigil held on Monday night in response to the senseless murder of Matthew Shepard, an openly gay college student who chose to live his life with honesty and integrity. I also want to thank those who were unable to attend the event, but who sent along their thoughts and support of the event in other ways. The success of that special night can only be attributed to the hundreds who showed up to support one another and seek solace in a confusing, frightening and vulnerable time.

No one's presence at that vigil was any

more or less important than anyone else's. We came together as a community of people joined by the sheer shock of this horrific incident, I was reminded of our diversity as I looked up and saw a number of students from the ethnic student unions as well as the large group of fraternity and sorority members who took time from their Monday night dinners to attend the vigil as a group. My thanks to these individuals whose presence made such an impact on me and many others in attendance.

I challenge each of us to continue to find ways to honor the diversity of all those around us in our daily lives. Ending the violence that results from fear and hatred can only end if each of us is willing to make a commitment to live our lives as Matthew did, with courage, honesty and integrity. You have my word that I will work to live my life this way, do I have yours?

Stephanie Carnahan  
Director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Educational and Support Services Program