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# PERSPECTIVES

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## Freedom US. foolishness

*Student riots in Indonesia put University problems in perspective*

This past Friday, thousands of protesters, mostly students, gathered at Atma Jaya University in Jakarta, Indonesia, to protest anti-democracy government legislation.

When some of the students started uprooting street signs and throwing things at the mass of police that had gathered, the police reacted.

Sound familiar? Well, of course it does, it is a scenario almost identical to the one that played itself out Halloween night on the streets of Eugene.

There are some major difference, though. For one, when the Indonesian students gathered in the streets, they were doing it to advocate the democratization of their country. And when the clash with the police was over, 10 people were dead and hundreds more were injured.

By and large, we are pretty comfortable with the life we live. The chance that this country will see a large scale revolution during our lifetime is pretty low.

Still, it is admirable to see other people do it, especially people our age. Students are the driving force behind much of the political reform sweeping through Indonesia toady. Friday's violence

was only the latest incident related to that movement. Last May, more than 1,000 people were killed in rioting that erupted after two students were shot by the military at Trisakti University. This led to the much-publicized ousting of President Suharto.

Watching these events unfold, we can't help but feel even more embarrassed by the unruly behavior of our peers. Indeed, if the Halloween riots showed us anything, it was that we might just have it too good here. The fact that people here were driven to revolt not by tyranny but by beer says more about the American character than anything written by Thomas Jefferson ever could.

This is not to say, however, that we in anyway envy the situation of our Indonesian counterparts. We are, for better or worse, Americans, and that means it's a good thing that our country is relatively stable socially and economically.

The issues students are facing in Indonesia are not our issues, but they can serve as an inspiration and a reminder not to take our freedom for granted.

We should not be ashamed of our privilege; that's a dangerous trap to fall into. But we shouldn't abuse it either.

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



### SAID & DONE

"I wouldn't miss it for the world."

—Brenda Solomon, on the upcoming execution of Kenneth Allen McDuff, the man convicted of murdering her daughter in Texas six years ago.

"These people loved the South. They weren't looking for some Yankees to come down here and save them."

—Herman White, main lecturer for a class at Randolph Community College in Virginia, speaking of slaves.

"We remain poised to act if there is any evidence that Iraq will not honor the unconditional commitments they made over the weekend. The reconfiguration of forces has enabled us to act quickly and decisively. There is no middle ground for Saddam Hussein any more."

—White House spokesman Joe Lockhart on the possibility of conflict with Iraq.

Giuseppe Salmeria/Emerald

