

PERSPECTIVES

Flying Blind

When the world casts its dark shadow, we'd rather stay in the false sunlight

The headlines streamed across the Internet, television and newspapers. "At least 15 killed in Colorado school shooting ... Parents anxiously await word of children ... Hundreds of students trapped inside ... Gunmen giggle as they shoot, target jocks and minorities, witnesses say ..."

On that same Tuesday, the EMU Amphitheater belted terrible Earth Week music as students danced in circles. In the Emerald newsroom, we crowded around the television, eager for graphic photos and an updated body count. Someone joked that it may all be made into a TV movie. Someone mentioned how Springfield may now lose its "pizazz."



Ashley Bach

I was watching, too, but I couldn't smile. I felt sad, not only for what happened 1,000 miles east, but for what was happening all

around me. People were laughing and enjoying the mediocre weather, reveling in collegiate bliss, unaware or worse, dismissive, of the horrific events unfolding three states away.

Life doesn't stop when something bad happens. But the fact is that all of us college students stopped caring a long time ago. National issues are a mere footnote on our agenda; politics are a joke and anything outside our proud American borders is usually ignored completely.

I'm as bad as anyone. When the Kosovo conflict began, I was only slightly interested in the photos of families forced out of their homes and country. I was intrigued by the mass graves that came out later. But as the headlines became more repetitive, I thirsted for new news and phased out when none came.

We spend more time thinking about the latest line at Gap or the last episode of "South Park" than what's happening in the real world, where not everyone has designer jeans, shirts from Structure and a college degree in the pan. Surrounded by theories, theorems and theses, the one thing we're never taught is compassion. Professors wouldn't know where to start. Maybe they shouldn't have to.

The most frustrating thing

about our apathy, however, is it's unexplainable. People like to lay the blame — "I was a latchkey kid ... My parents divorced when I was five ... I'm disillusioned." Yes, more of us are coming from broken homes, supposedly dealing with a tougher, more mature world, but so what? We may be able to hide behind our generation, but there are still no excuses.

If we're into comparisons, we actually have it better than our parents or grandparents. Unprecedented economic prosperity, no wars or draft to dodge, relative domestic peace. Life is good. We should be the ones who are happier, more hopeful, even idealistic. If anyone can afford to tap in, it's us.

To be fair, some of us are afraid we'll be ridiculed if we act for any greater good. And with the way activism works on this campus, this ridicule is often understandable. But for the most part, those in student government, environmental crews, student unions and other groups should be com-

mended, despite their occasional incompetence or disregard for reality.

At least they're trying. At least they see something greater than themselves that needs to get done. At least they're thinking not just about whether the line at Subway will be long today, but about their campus, city, country or world.

Yes, we're a fortunate bunch, and we should enjoy what we have. We don't need to feel guilty. Caring doesn't mean sending your life savings to the orphans in Yugoslavia or catching a flight to Littleton to comfort the masses, but it does mean recognizing that when a Gothic outcast shoots up his library or a Serbian soldier kills his countrymen, the bullets hit all of us, crossing every boundary, including the stagnant, placid borders of a college campus.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



Giovanni Saltmena/Emerald

Senator responds to Emerald article

First, I would like to apologize to the students of the University. I am not the type of person you may think I am after reading Thursday's article "Student senator faces trial today."

I am not proud of my actions because it is not the way I was taught or raised. The charges mentioned in the article are alleged, meaning nothing has been proven and nothing will happen until so. I believe everyone makes mistakes and most importantly everyone learns from their mistakes.

I have learned a great lesson that will stay with me forever, and I have changed my outlook on how I live the rest of my life.

After dealing with the Lane County Court, I sought ways to better myself and give something back to the community that I disregarded. By taking powerful leadership positions, I could put myself in a better light and prove to people that I am trying to make something good out of a bad situation.

I joined the Black Student Union as a volunteer and took on many needed responsibilities. The co-director, Jamila Singleton, felt that my volunteering was an asset to the organization and gave me a permanent position.

I then had the opportunity to be on the ASUO Student Senate. I was amazed that my efforts from the BSU had been noticed and that I was offered a seat to represent the students. I quickly jumped at the opportunity and started feeling better about my situation and myself.

I was so happy that things were starting to turn around that I decided to run for senate next year, but little did I know that the Oregon Daily Emerald was watching me.

After winning my seat again in the elections last week, a reporter approached me with questions about my upcoming trial and wanted me to comment on my feelings. Later it was brought to my attention that background checks were done on other candidates.

I asked why they felt the need to print personal information about an individual after the elections and their response was that "it is the right of the students to know."

You have the right to know what I ate for breakfast yesterday. Nothing. I was too sick with the notion that the Emerald can and will write anything on anyone just because they feel like it. I was also sick that the Emerald felt the need to bash a hard-working student who was trying to change his life by doing positive work for the University.

Many of you know me personally and others may not, but I will always be Michael Dixon and the Emerald cannot change that. I will always be a positive community leader and the Emerald cannot stop that.

My main concerns are the intentions of the Emerald on printing that article. Are they trying to become a tabloid student paper? Are their stories not compelling enough that they need to dig into the background records and seek information that could ruin someone's name? Are they trying to split the community and make people appear to be something they really aren't?

I feel that you, the students, need to know both sides of the story, and the Oregon Daily Emerald has not, is not, will not give it to you. The Oregon Daily Emerald is not taking into consideration the feelings of students and is disregarding everything we say.

Commentary

Michael Dixon

Letters to the Editor

Senate supports Dixon

Prior to the publication of "Student senator faces trial today" (ODE, April 22) Michael Dixon, as a leader, addressed the Student Senate regarding his indictment.

As students, our common goal is education. Education is a process of learning through experiences and challenges. With these experiences and challenges, we often make mistakes, but we also learn a lesson

Michael Dixon has been a positive asset to the senate and student groups. Since his indictment, he has been involved with numerous programs and services on our cam-

pus.

We, as a senate, understand that he has made a mistake and realize that he has made a tremendous and sincere effort to put it behind him and work to better himself. Michael has done a good job on the Senate and should be commended, not reprimanded. We trust that Dixon will continue to be a wonderful asset to this campus. We are writing because we feel that the character of one of our members has been attacked and we would like the student body to know that we support Michael Dixon.

ASUO Student Senate: Sarah Wiley, Jamila

Singleton, Ethan Knight, Eric Pfeiffer, Shantell Rice, Dan Reid, Teresa Tobin, Scott Reed, Jen Luck, Jessica Timpany, Michael Olson, Lani Hoang, Wylie Chen, Autumn De Poe, Spencer Hamlin, Jerome Grzybowski

CORRECTION

In the April 22 article "Elections grievance filed over Nader's appearance on campus," Joel Corcoran should have been quoted as saying the ASUO Constitution Court would probably allow OSPIRG's measure to go to a vote. The Emerald regrets the error.