

# PERSPECTIVES

## BEER GOGGLES

Students and administrators fail to see the truth about alcohol

It may as well be poured all over us, à la "Leaving Las Vegas," when we enter campus. Alcohol, for better or worse, is an unavoidable truth in college. Whether you partake or not, you'll no doubt be personally affected in some way by the "juice" — through drunken neighbors, a roommate or your own tipsy self.

Despite its omnipotence, however, alcohol is misunderstood by most people on campus. The University approaches student alcohol consumption with schizophrenic zeal, telling people it's really not that prevalent while spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to contain it.

### Opinion



Ashley Bach

Students, on the other hand, glorify alcohol abuse as an inherited rite of passage and a free pass to wreak havoc.

They're both wrong.

After three straight Halloween riots, the University is on the brink of panic. With pressure from City Hall, University President Dave Frohnmayer and compatriots are working hard to lower student alcohol use, which they presumably see as a problem of epic proportions. But the Johnson Hall gang

is going about this in a strange way.

With deep pockets, including \$236,000 from the U.S. Department of Education to reduce binge drinking and marijuana use, administrators have embarked on a campaign involving outreach to freshmen and student groups, stronger enforcement of alcohol policies and more late-night social opportunities.

But most visible to students has been the message preached by ads in this paper and public relations peons that students really *don't* drink that much alcohol. Based on a 2-year-old survey, the University likes to tell people that 29 percent of students average 0 drinks per week or that "only" 72 percent of students drink at least once a month.

Forget the survey, which does nothing to dispute the fact that a lot of students drink a lot of alcohol. The University is sending mixed messages in an effort to coerce students to stop drinking by presenting numbers in a misleading way. Seventy-two percent of students drinking each month, for example, is nothing to brag about, even if most students think that number is greater.

Students do drink — a lot — and when they do, it's rarely in moderation. The University would do much better to show students the realities of alcohol use, which often aren't pretty.

These hard realities are even more ignored, however, by students. For us, drinking is like the big fish caught; hours,

days and months later, it becomes more exciting, glamorous and admirable when it was never really that great to begin with.

This isn't to say that alcohol isn't fun. It has the power to make an average night memorable, so-so company engaging and a boring location bearable. But it hardly measures up to our innumerable boasts, recollections and legends, which are seen through eyes that would rather perceive ourselves as cooler and more cutting-edge and care-free than we really are.

Alcohol, for all its benefits, is ugly. It leads more often to sick stomachs, drunken driving and painful mornings than any sort of lingering happiness. Riots and other civil disturbances are more infrequent byproducts. And worse, alcohol leads to the most deified social outlet of our time: the bar scene.

Like alcohol itself, the bar scene is labeled as collegiate nirvana, where students can come together with the same bacchanalian goals in mind. But the dark secret that nobody talks about, that floats throughout each crowded bar stool and pool table, is this: Nobody really *loves* going to the bars. They only do it because there is *nothing else to do*.

This relegates the bar scene to top dog among meager competition, including a rousing game of Balderdash in the dorm room or going to the movie theater for the third time this week. With alternatives such as this, it's understandable why students go to the bars, but it's high time they started being honest about their motives.

In the end, alcohol is a study in college student frustration. Contrary to administrative opinion, we've made drinking an unchangeable part of college life. But despite our foolish dreams, lifting a glass will never bring contentment to our languid, uncertain college lives. Let's stop fooling ourselves to the contrary.

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



Giovanni Salimena/Emerald

## Letters to the Editor

### NATO justified

I'm having a little trouble with recent protests on campus (ODE, May 12). Regarding the anti-NATO bombing rally, Jason Wilkinson claims that if the NATO bombing is stopped "everyone is allowed to maintain their human rights."

Last time I looked, the basic definition of human rights did not include the treatment being afforded to the Kosovar Albanians by the Serbs.

Basic human rights includes freedom from the wanton rape and slaughter of your people, and the right to live peaceably in your homeland. This was not something they had before the bombing, and there is no reason to believe things would be better for the Albanians if the bombing were to suddenly cease.

Would the protesters at the May 11 rally care to offer any positive suggestions rather than just make empty criticisms?

Maria Blum  
Eugene

### No whining

I'm writing in response to Michael Dixon's sniveling letter (ODE, May 11). Dixon asks, "Who really wants me to quit senate?"

I do, for one, just based on your self-pitying letter alone. So, "The last couple of weeks have been very stressful, nerve-racking and disappointing."

Hello? Does taking responsibility for your actions ring any bells with you? Why should the ODE support you and your actions?

How was Dixon supporting students by stealing from them? How was he supporting the University by using keys given to him in trust to commit the thefts? Grow up, Michael, and quit your whining self-pity and accept the consequences for your actions.

Marianne Koller  
Fine Arts

### Say no to FLA

The hottest, most unknown issue sweeping our country's campuses is corporate and university ties to sweatshop labor.

Corporate codes of conduct are being created to establish standards for corporations that market university trademark apparel so as to improve conditions and end sweatshop labor.

The University administration is interested in implementing a code of conduct for

the University. Due to the recent publicity on sweatshop labor, our administration feels it necessary to sign onto a code as soon as possible.

Many campuses across the country have adopted the Fair Labor Association code of conduct. I'm concerned that our University will sign onto such a weak code without spending money or time to research a stronger more viable code, leading the way in improving global workplace standards.

The FLA charter document, or code of conduct, was drafted by the Apparel Industry Partnership. The AIP was established through a federal executive order to end sweatshop labor.

This partnership consists of both labor and industry representatives and includes large business CEOs Phil Knight of Nike, Kathie Lee Gifford, AFL-CIO and UNITE, among others.

The three largest labor and human-rights representatives UNITE, AFL-CIO and ICCR, dropped out of the partnership because it's very weak and problematic.

I strongly urge the University to not sign onto any such document but to work with students to create a viable code of conduct.

Please attend a community forum addressing a corporate code of conduct on May 24 at 7 p.m. in Willamette 100.

W. Douglas Serill  
Environmental Studies

### LETTERS POLICY

The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Letters must be limited to 250 words. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar, style and libel. Letters may be dropped off at EMU Suite 300.

### CORRECTION

In the May 20 article, "Protesters demand diversity changes," Huy Ong should have been identified as being from the Multicultural Center.

In the May 19 article, "College students at high risk of abusive relationships," the tips on how to stop abusing and the statistic that 90 to 95 percent of domestic violence victims are women should have attributed to the University Counseling Center.

The Emerald regrets the errors.