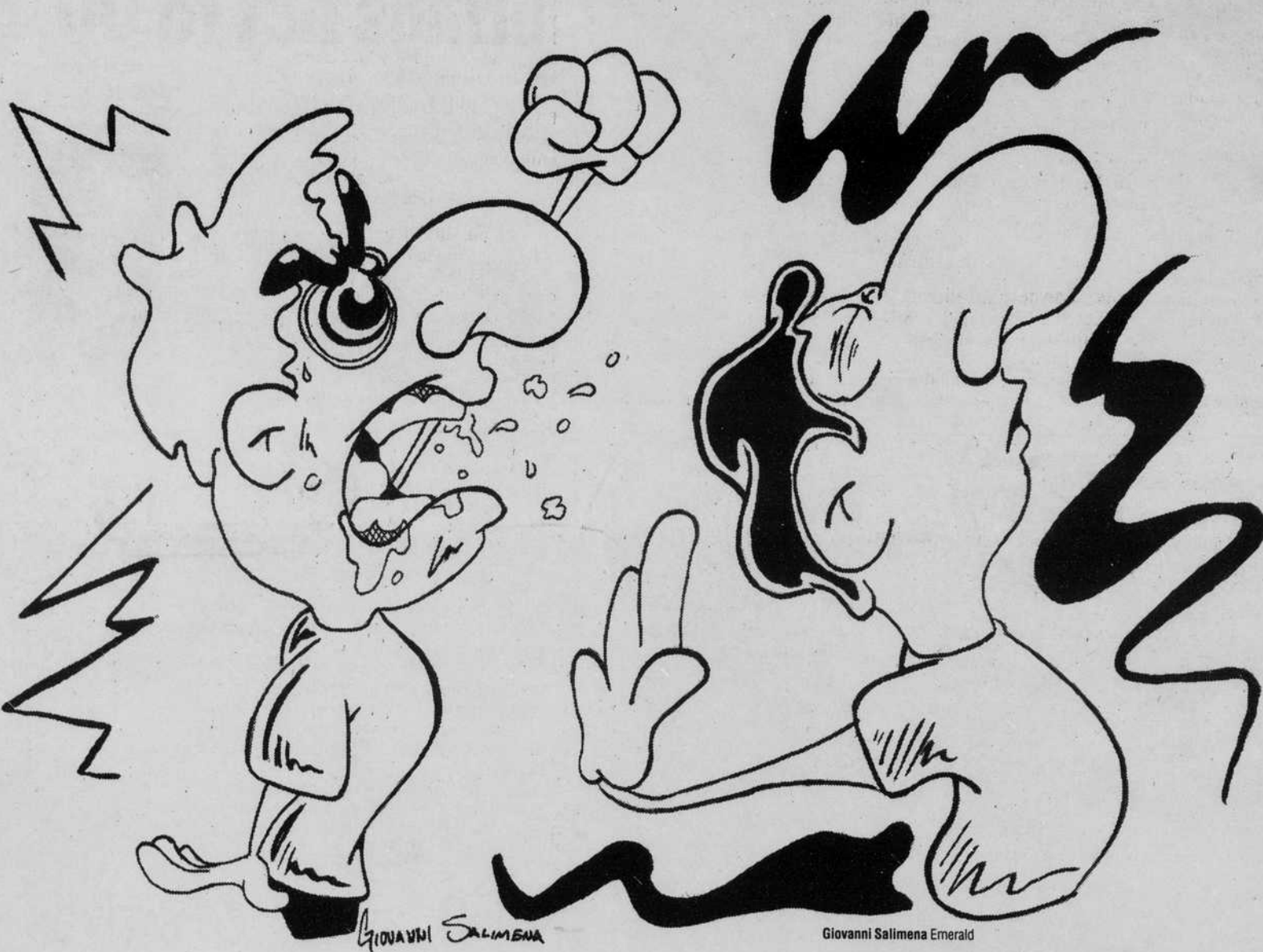


Freedom of Speech Succeeds



GIOVANNI SALIMENA

Giovanni Salimena Emerald

A graphic display in the EMU Amphitheater sparks debate without the use of violence

Let's be frank here. Sometimes things disturb us. Sometimes things excite us. Sometimes they make us cry. And sometimes they make us happier than we could have ever imagined. Our responses to such stimuli are as unique as we are.

The freedom to express our thoughts, feelings and ideas is a precious right the writers of the Constitution had the forethought to commit to paper. It is part of the foundation of our country, the humanity inside us.

While those founding fathers probably envisioned people speaking out against an oppressive government, they could never have imagined the recent ways in which the First Amendment has been applied: the right to publish nude pho-

tographs in magazines, the right to publish books on how to make bombs — even the right to associate abortion with the Holocaust, just as the Genocide Awareness Project has been doing at the University since Monday, displaying pictures of aborted fetuses.

We're not rehashing the issue of abortion or even free speech; you've heard the arguments before. We're actually just pleased that the University community has held its poise so well. With few verbal assaults and no physical ones, the event at the University can be considered a success: It sparked debate.

GAP has visited other universities. At the University of Kansas, one protester ran his car into the display. Others tore signs, and one man ended up punching a man from GAP. At

Ohio State University, one protester was arrested after she charged at the display with a knife. Unlike people at other schools — where peaceful protest and calm discussion were not the norm — the students and staff here have, if somewhat uncomfortably, proved that these principles can work.

The letters to the editor in the Emerald this week are representative of the discussion, and there will be more to come. Each has its own point of view.

As for what happened at the EMU Amphitheater specifically, even when one side felt the other "misused" the First Amendment, the intrinsic beauty is that the amendment in its entirety and spirit is available for both opinions.

In this, we have proved that no matter what someone ex-

presses, all sides can have their say. No one was really prevented from viewing the pictures or talking to the GAP representatives. The display was not torn down. Students in protest were allowed to turn their backs to the event in silence. The peace says a lot about maturity and poise. It says that free speech can work.

While the city of Eugene has decided to erect a free speech platform outside the Lane County Courthouse, we at the University already have one right here. The Amphitheater has served, this week, as a perfect platform for constitutional rights. The right for a crowd to peaceably assemble. The right to free speech.

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

QUOTED

"A population the size of Germany is being added to the world each year, which would be fine if it had the resources of Germany, but it doesn't."

— Alex Marshall, U.N. Population Fund. MSNBC.com, Oct. 11.

"When I hear the question 'How many people can the earth support?' what I hear is 'What level of environmental degradation and human suffering are we willing to put up with?'"

— Brian Halwell, Worldwatch Institute. MSNBC.com, Oct. 11.

"It always bugs me when people win awards and thank God. God could give a rat's ass if you win an MTV award."

— Bill Maher, Politically Incorrect. Entertainment Weekly, Oct. 8.

"We're looking forward to the next step, which is getting some players and really putting a name and a face on the new team."

— Sandi Bittler, vice president of Portland's new WNBA franchise. The Register-Guard, Oct. 12.

CORRECTION

The article "Consecutive protests spark debate" (ODE, Oct. 12) should have read: "ASUO President Wylie Chen said he supported the protest for the same reason." The Emerald regrets the error.