

Oregon Daily
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Perspectives

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Praising the power of **PROTEST**

It's hard to believe now, but you could very well miss all of the Eugene protesters when you are finally gone.

As the protests drone on around campus — the latest being the attempt to reshape Eugene's TransPlan and fighting for the freedom of convicted murderer Mumia Abu-Jamal — it isn't unusual for the average student to become jaded into wishing all of the malcontents would be quieted. But it is the fact that the Eugene community and University campus promote so vigilantly the rights of free speech that is so heartening.

Make no mistake, there can be some pretty questionable protests. While they can be silly gestures to some of us, at least some people are exercising the right of free speech, keeping it warmed up for a necessary message in the event one becomes necessary. But in the end, it's far more important to respect the rights of speech and gathering than to wish an occasional annoyance would be silenced.

Instead of calling the protesters funny names and mocking them in a laid-back, bemused fashion, maybe people should exercise their rights and protest the protesters. If they really bother anyone, there's always action people can take. Anti-protesters can give chants of "Hell yes, you should go," as an interesting twist. Or perhaps, "Hey hey, ho ho, this monotonous chant has got to go."

There is some validity to the fact that protesting every day is a bit akin to crying wolf inasmuch as that creating a population callous to protesters will learn to ignore any who find their cause worthy of public speech. The way New York subway riders make an art of avoiding eye contact with each other, some Eugene residents have learned to look right through protesters as if they were just part of the scenery.

In a way, they are indeed a big part of the city landscape. Would it really be Eugene without at least one protest a week? Don't think so. And that's part of the city's charm. That business people, politicians and protesting anti-establishment types can get along so merrily in one small town is remarkable and one of the amusing enchantments of Eugene. The two parties form a nice symbiotic, perpetual motion relationship that keeps each other amused and frustrated, but always interested.

Because protests are as much a part of Eugene as organic apple pie with nondairy soy ice cream, it would be hard to imagine the blandness of the area if political activism in its most vocal sense were to be quieted

through listlessness or debilitating contentment. City Hall would have no one out front to decorate the landscape, leaving only the fallen leaves to occupy the area. The EMU Amphitheater would be left unused almost the entire year round and leave nothing for students to be amused and informed by, except the occasional garage band showcasing themselves before they get their big break.

While the protesters vary from uninformed to necessary reminders of social conscience, they are a wonderful part of Eugene and the University because they demonstrate that the rights of free speech and assembly are alive and well in the area.

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



**Protestus Everythingis
 Habitat
 Eugene**

GIOVANNI SALLIMENA

Giovanni Sallimena Emerald

THE WEEK IN **THUMBS**



To easing bureaucracy in favor of the hungry

Springfield city officials helped out the Community Family Soup Kitchen organizers by releasing it from an \$8,000 fee it was required to pay before re-opening in the First Baptist Church Nov. 4. The soup kitchen had been forced to close operations one month ago and would have remained closed if the fee had not been lifted.

To retaining good memories

The first step in defeating Alzheimer's disease appears to have been completed as a California biotechnology company has isolated the enzyme that starts the process leading to the disease. The isolation of the enzyme will enable scientists to focus on ways to study and control how the disease grows.



To a good candidate dropping out

GOP presidential hopeful Elizabeth Dole, who encouraged many young women to enter politics, dropped out of the race last Wednesday in part due to insufficient finances and a crowded candidate field.

To circumventing Oregon voters

The U.S. House will most likely pass the Pain Relief Promotion Act, which would revoke licenses of doctors using federally controlled drugs to assist in a patient's suicide, a law that will gut the Oregon's Death With Dignity Act.