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Perspectives

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Justice Served



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Some events leave permanent scars and need permanent healing. That said, Kipland P. Kinkel should spend the rest of his life in prison, just as ordered by the court on Wednesday.

Kinkel was sentenced to almost 112 years for four counts of murder and 26 counts of attempted murder for killing his parents and going on a shooting spree at Thurston High School in May 1998. While the defense lawyers argued for only 25 years of imprisonment and the prosecution sought 220 years, the sentence imposed by Lane County Circuit Judge Jack Mattison was appropriate because it ensures a disturbed individual will not be let loose on society ever again.

Despite the fact that it would not be too difficult to hope for a rehabilitation for such a young man, issuing a sentence allowing Kinkel to be released before he dies would be a terrible action for both practical and ideological reasons.

Practically speaking, there is no way to definitively say that an older Kinkel would be a safer member of society, and the only way to release Kinkel alive would be to have a good-faith belief that he would be rehabilitated through therapy, medication or treatment. It would be irresponsible, however, to have blind faith that there will be advances potent enough in the mental health field or that a pharmaceutical company will find a wonder drug to fix an incredibly ill young man. No punishment for crimes so severe should ever be based on hopeful whims.

Along with the fact that a free Kinkel would come along with a constant, terrible fear that he could relapse, it is an important facet of the American judicial system that there are appropriate penalties for crimes. Four bodies lie in the ground and countless students and society members have been stricken by one devastating series of actions by the young man. Society demands that those directly injured receive justice. The gravity of Kinkel's misdeeds requires

that he pay with the rest of his life. To require only 25 years would be to ignore the principle of justice in favor of unwarranted hope in rehabilitation.

Lawyers for Kinkel claim they will appeal until his sentence is reduced to 50 years. Because he should not be released alive, a sentence of 50 years should be rejected by the courts as many times as it takes to ensure that Kinkel will not be released back into society.

It would be nearly impossible to fully comprehend the tragedy of this entire course of events, from the young age of the assailant to the final actions of the surviving victims.

It is hard to reconcile that such a young man actually deserves to spend the rest of his life locked away. There will always be questions as to his motives, his state of mind and if there were any signs that should have been detected but weren't. But for all the dehumanizing actions of one boy, we all hope for victims to be able to nobly carry on and thrive.

Victims in this case, however, should take a lesson from the parents of Matthew Shepard, the gay college student killed in Wyoming. The Shepards brokered a deal with one of the convicted killers of their son to spare his life in an incredible display of courageous and magnanimous maturity. That is quite a different note from Thurston victims.

An hour after sentencing a small handful of victims gathered at a news conference and sang a song. Not a tune of grateful closure but a gloating theme song from the Mickey Mouse club because Kinkel had a severe distaste for Disney World. That is not the best step toward healthy closure. With hope, they will learn something from the Shepards.

In the end, the only justice for those victims, even those who don't act the way we wish, is for Kinkel to go away for the rest of his life. He can't be trusted, and he must pay his debt.

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

Letters to the editor

Kudos to ODE

My congratulations to Jeremy Lang for his article titled "Development threatens Alaskan wildlife" (ODE Nov. 9). The article had a local angle (Erin Pursell) and presented many sides of the discussion in an unbiased and informative manner. I hope to see many more articles of the caliber of this one in the ODE. Congratulations Jeremy and whoever helped him with this article.

Dr. Dean Livelybrooks
 Department of Physics

Senators need to set example

I sincerely hope that Senator Andrew Schneider's letter (ODE

Nov. 8) does not discourage or disable other students from filing grievances with the Student Senate. I can only attribute Schneider's statements to this being Schneider's first year on the senate.

It is the senate's job to hear and listen to grievances from students, not individually attack students.

I hope that students can see through the attempts of senators to take the limelight off of the subject at hand.

All programs must hold office hours to maintain a space in the EMU. If senators are not going to do this, they need to give their space to a program that will hold office hours.

In order to receive a stipend, certain duties must be accom-

plished. This is true for all groups, and not just the senate.

Senators need to set an example for other programs and should not hold themselves above the laws that other students and programs must follow. To take a stipend without accomplishing the duties is theft from the students.

I hope the senators in question will take responsibility for their actions instead of trying to put the blame elsewhere. I also hope that the senators will not sink to even lower levels of name calling and blame pushing.

Autumn De Poe
 political science

Alaska not all oil-influenced

I consider myself somewhat of an environmentalist, and I am not in favor of opening ANWR, but as

someone who has lived my entire life in Alaska, I can say that Tuesday's story on the subject was misinformed and under-researched propaganda (ODE Nov. 9). The statement that "... almost every part of the state has been leased, drilled or influenced by the presence of fossil fuels ..." is absolutely ludicrous.

As a person from the southeast region of the state, I have very little experience with the oil industry, but I do have considerable experience with the state. The fact is that a huge portion of Alaska has never seen a pipeline or a drilling site. According to the Alaska Division of Tourism, Alaska contains over half of the nation's parklands. The largest park is the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Pre-

serve, with 24 million acres. Combined with Glacier Bay, and contiguous Canadian parks that are connected to it, it is part of the largest internationally protected area in the world. The state of Alaska manages approximately 120 other parks, with a total of 322 million acres of public lands throughout the state.

Clearly, remarks made in Tuesday's ODE were misleading and uninformed. While other parts of the article may have contained pertinent information, the first impression is false and done in the interest of furthering a cause through loaded language, rather than informing through responsible journalism.

Gypsy Walukones
 undeclared