

Oregon Daily
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Perspectives

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On-line edition: www.dailyemerald.com

What's in a NAME?

An organization's name will sometimes become its definition, whether or not the name is telling us all we need to know

**Jonathan Gruber**

Imagine that you are a high school student on the East Coast somewhere. You are assigned to write a report about Oregon's Measures 9 and 13 from the early '90s. That's all you're told.

Maybe you're really bad at researching, so the teacher hints that you to look up the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA). Before you even do that, what would you think about the group, based on its name?

"It's an alliance of Oregon citizens. Duh," you might say.

But those of us who are Oregon citizens might resent being associated with the OCA. The fact is, an organization's name — in itself — is the first wave of spin and disinformation. The OCA is just one example of how "namespin" hurts the public debate.

My geography professor would be so proud that I listened to his comments on the power of names. But I think he's right. The power to name oneself is a huge opportunity, and with that comes responsibility. This is especially true for any company or organization that interacts with the public.

The OCA is not shy about what its positions are on gay-rights issues (they're bad), as well as its other conservative concerns, like abortion (pro-life). And well it should be. No organization that wants to affect public opinion can hide what it wants that opinion to be.

So why did it choose such a noble, yet vague — and mildly inaccurate — name? Those of you on the left side of the political

spectrum might think it has everything to do with the conservative mentality of OCA members. Think again.

Because on the other side of the gay-rights debate is Basic Rights Oregon. Its Web site bears the slogan, "Working to Promote Fairness and End Discrimination."

Just as much as the OCA is in fact composed of Oregon citizens, Basic Rights Oregon is concerned with basic rights. Also, its slogan is equally "true." It is concerned about basic rights, fairness and discrimination but primarily in a subcontext. As its own Web page says: "Basic Rights Oregon is dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation in our state...." If this is its only concern, then the organization should take on a name that is as "true" as possible.

Don't get me wrong, gay-rights are basic rights. But the organization exists because of a certain venue in which rights are not being acknowledged, and it should not try to usurp the moral high ground of working on all fronts for all rights.

In contrast, I love the LGBTQA. The acronym is impossible to say fast, and if you don't say it very often, the Gs and the Bs and the Ts can get a little confused. But at least the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered Alliance is exactly what the group is. No smoke screens.

But, it's obvious why an organization would choose a name like Basic Rights Oregon. Not everyone thinks that the rights in question are basic rights, and so the group is making a point through its name. Maybe you don't buy my argument that this is detrimental to discourse and debate. Maybe some more examples will sway your opinion.

The World Church of the Creator is an organization that I would characterize as white supremacist. Its Web page (and believe me, I got a bunch of disgusted looks from other students when I was looking for it in the computer lab) is pretty clear about

that. But do these members constitute a church? Why must they screw around with a name like that? They are trying to spin their issue through their name, and it reeks of dishonesty.

I experienced another prime example of how namespin works about a month ago. As I pondered in the newsroom what to write for my column that week, I overheard conversation about the Genocide Awareness Project (the abortion equals genocide display in the EMU Amphitheater on Oct. 11-12). All I heard about, however, was that it was graphic and that some groups on campus were offended by it. OK, genocide=graphic=offensive. How was I supposed to know it was about abortion just by hearing the name?

In the end, namespin is troubling because its spirit is dishonest. Some groups do it purposefully, I'm sure, and others do it without really thinking about what a name says about the character of the group. Before I can believe that people or organizations are being honest with me, I need to believe that they are honest with themselves. An accurate name is a fundamental first step.

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Letters to the editor

Emerald independent?

I'm wondering if the Emerald is really as independent as it proclaims. Judging by the choice of advertising supplements this week (Nov. 15), the Emerald condones pornography that exploits women, chewing tobacco that causes cancer and anti-choice media that tells women not to have an abortion but fails to give them advice on how to raise a child as a young, single and often

poor mother. I can't believe this! What's next — NRA ads? Focus on the Family? Bacardi and Marlboro? Advertisements are a reflection of what the University community, not just the paper, stand for. I, for one, think it's outrageous that the Emerald is supporting Playboy, tobacco and anti-choice. As of today, I am no longer reading your right-wing, misogynist, tobacco-chomping paper and am encouraging others to do the same.

I think it's sad that at a University known for its liberalism and social responsibility these kinds of advertisements are plastered

all over our right to "free speech."

Jenny Phillips
Journalism, Art History

Simply irresponsible

While thumbing through the U. Magazine insert in your Nov. 18 issue I was surprised to find a photograph of several naked college students accompanying one of the articles. I am amazed at your irresponsibility in allowing such an insert to be distributed

with your paper. You should keep in mind that the Emerald is distributed free of charge at several unmonitored off-campus locations, including an elementary school bus stop and the entryway to a daycare center. I understand that you are not directly responsible for the content of U. Magazine, but you ought to be more considerate of the community that you serve when you choose your advertisers.

Jake Jensen
Chemistry

STREET WISE

If notes for all your classes were available online, would you ever go to class?



Yes. All the time. I enjoy the classes I like and I enjoy the interaction.
-Rachel Bowen



Depends on the class. If it's a big lecture I definitely wouldn't have to go, but maybe to smaller classes occasionally.
-Chad Nakanishi



"Not as much, but maybe to ask questions if possible."
-Foluso Akinradewo



Depends on the class. If it's basic, like math, where the answers are the same, no. If it's theoretical you can get a different perspective every-time.
-Nathan Walters