

PERSPECTIVES

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Mr. Pfeiffer goes to Washington — and talks



SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

Hi, my name is Eric Pfeiffer. This is the beginning of a new column about politics. I'm a socially progressive, fiscal conservative, and generally considered a shy, sensitive, incredible pain in the ass. My job is to entertain you. I also hope to share some fresh ideas and views on national politics.

Now, let's talk a little about me. There have been a good number of tirelessly bland writers to shuffle and slide through this institution. To the best of my ability, I aim to be a mensch. I can promise you that I will never write about animé, sexual exploits or New Age crap. I will not try to be Hunter S. Thompson.

I will, however, write about that lovely, oftentimes bloated, monolith known as government.

The 18-to-25 age group has been tagged the most apathetic group of voters in America. I don't expect too many of you to run home, proclaiming, "Finally, a column on politics!" But many of you will read, and for you, I am your humble servant.

As this is our first date, I'll keep my hands to myself and politely walk you to the front door. Since I'm asking you for your time and your thoughts, I think it's only fair that you know a little about me. First, the label: I'm a 22-year-old, white male. Statistically, in this town like any way, that makes me the little clone who could.

Why, then, am I qualified to be writing this column?

Since transferring to the University, I've been a student senator, worked for the campus radio station, volunteered on political campaigns, and once worked as an editor for this paper.

Right now, I'm writing for a magazine called the National Journal in Washington, D.C.

I've spent most of my life living below the federal poverty level, and have worked since I was 14 to support my family and myself. I also have an illness called Crohn's disease.

For most of my life, I have enjoyed a rich

and somewhat unusual love affair with politics, beginning as a six-year-old, when I distributed fliers for the Jesse Jackson Rainbow Coalition. I wasn't educated on the issues, but Ronald Reagan scared me.

But those times have passed like so many empty bags of jellybeans, and we're now in an era of unparalleled prosperity, right? Wrong.

These days, Bush 2.0: Project "W", reminds me of a children's Christmas tale. We'll call him "Shrub, the red-nosed Wrangler."

An outsider in the corporate gift empire, nobody expected much out of lil' Shrub. His nose was red from too much snorting, and all the Ivy-Leaguers used to laugh and call him names. Then, one foggy election eve, Daddy came to say, "Shrub, we know you ain't so bright, but won't you guide our campaign tonight?" Then, all the shareholders loved him, and they cackled out with glee, "Shrub, the red-nosed Wrangler, you'll make us a lot of money."

I swear to you, this election isn't as boring as political insiders and the mainstream media want you to believe. They benefit when you don't vote. And even if Bush and Gore appear to be similar on many of the issues, don't listen to the fork-tongued fools who tell you they are exactly the same. Anyone with conservative, liberal, or even moderate values has a stake in this election. If you are a woman who values choice, the candidates are worlds apart. If you value a free market, Bush has the industry-approved plan. And if you really want something different, there are third-party candidates, like Ralph Nader, who literally make every vote count. I'm not telling you who to vote for (unless you ask), but I am saying that anyone who claims your vote doesn't matter is either oblivious to the issues, or a liar.

Of course, most of you won't vote, and who can blame you? But by choosing to

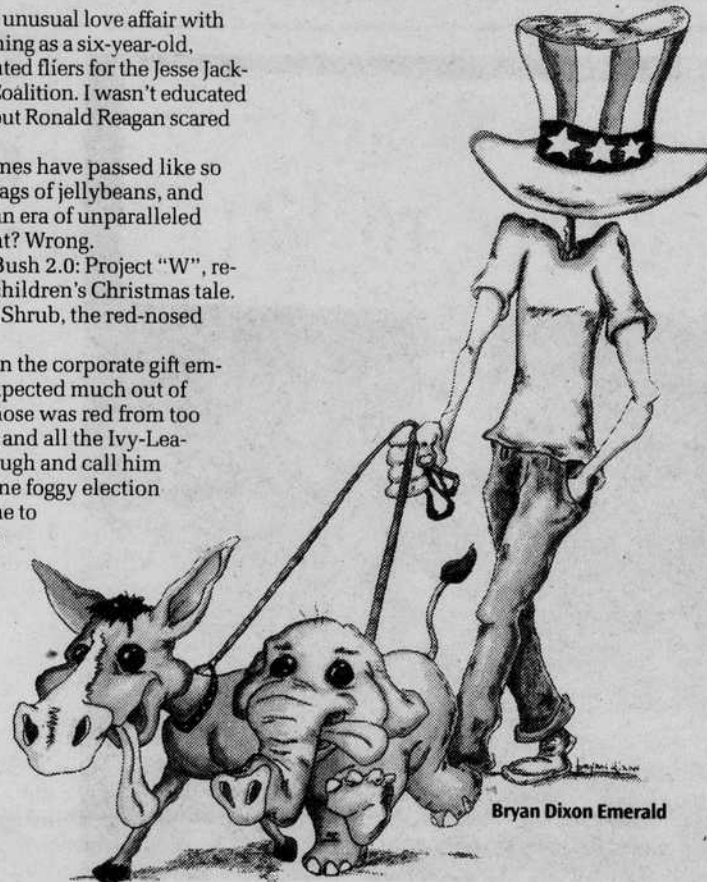
remain in the dark, your vote isn't going to "None of the Above"; instead, you're endorsing the decline of democracy.

People say Americans are entitled to their opinions. I disagree. We are entitled to our informed opinions, and everything else is sewage rotting across the airwaves. The sign that reads: Welcome to MTV Hell, where a person can use words like Dachau and Iran-Contra and not register a blip on the cultural radar.

I'm telling you, the way things are headed, you're going to long for a president who wore black sunglasses, played the saxophone, and wanted an occasional blow job.

Well, that's enough from me. I promised to keep my hands to myself. Introductions are always the hardest part.

Eric Pfeiffer is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald and is currently serving an internship at the National Journal Hotline in Washington, D.C. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at epfeiffe@gladstone.uoregon.edu



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Letters to the editor

Students don't belong in policy matters

I find it somewhat ironic that the same individuals who were all for University inclusion in the WRC are now totally against membership in the FLA. I still don't agree with the original decision to join the WRC (let's face it — it is an organization funded/financed by organized labor to promote domestic employment only) and to further the opinions of 18 and 19-year-old KIDS. The University should not have ANY political affiliations and until the aforementioned individuals actually get out in the "Real World", I would prefer future decisions regarding University policy be made by the administration.

Stick to sit-ins, bake sales and charity walks.

Andrew McKechnie
 Lumber-Broker
 Portland

Yahoo ad inappropriate

I am writing in response to the advertising insert from Yahoo Messenger in Tuesday's (9/26) Emerald. I feel more thought should have gone into the decision to accept this ad for publication.

Tuesday's ad seems to describe some sort of unconsensual peeping tom or gang rape situation. The ad copy is deliberately vague, and the suggestion that there is a need for secrecy makes an innocent interpretation of what is going on impossible.

Knowing that ads like this one are acceptable to your advertising department make me feel unsafe and unwelcome at the University. A highly regarded publication such as the Emerald would do much for its credibility by taking a stance against ads like this one in its advertising policy, rather than going with the status quo.

Lately the attitude in advertising seems to be: "Boys will be Boys—where's your sense of humor?" I think many men would be equally unamused if advertising focused on penis length rather than the current obsession with breast size. "Come over quick Bob! He's about to drop his pants!"

I hope in the future the advertising department will consider more carefully the impact of its decisions on all of its readers, and not simply sell out for those much-needed advertising dollars. That way, the next time you run an article about protecting oneself from date rape, I won't feel you are working at cross purposes.

Kathleen Ehli
 Pre-journalism

CONTACT US!

The Oregon Daily Emerald welcomes and will attempt to print all letters on topics of interest to the University community. Letters are limited to 250 words. The Emerald may edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar, style and libel. Letters may be mailed, dropped off at EMU Suite 300, or e-mailed to the addresses at the top of the page. Also, please feel free to give your feedback to any individual story or column directly at our Web site. Feedback comments may appear in print at our discretion. Keep in touch!

Wisconsin's distortion makes the big picture unclear for all

The University of Wisconsin made a terrible error in judgment last week, and everyone who works for the media are at risk as a result.

Wisconsin's campus publications office printed a brochure with a photo on the cover of joyous fans at a Badger football game. Because there were no black students visible in the photograph, the office cut-and-pasted the head of a black student from another photo and inserted him in the game photo. It has since apologized and reprinted the digitally-manipulated promotional brochure, but the ethical questions around doctored photographs remain.

We don't want to get into Wisconsin's internal issues of campus population diversity. According to

a Sept. 10 article in The Register-Guard, only 2.15 percent of the university's 40,000 students are black. Maybe the campus community in Wisconsin needs to address that statistic.

The larger question of concern for our campus, and for the media in general, is the idea that someone in charge made the decision to alter the reality of a photograph and present that lie as truth to the world at large. This particular image wasn't in a news publication, but even advertising and public relations need to be concerned with maintaining some ethical line of reality for consumers.

In advertisements, we are often presented with an image or a situation that is patently unreal. No one thinks the Taco Bell Chihuahua re-

ally talks, and we're not worried here with images of unrealistically shaped women lounging on non-existent beaches drinking cocktails. Digital manipulation is used in these ads and the great majority of advertising you see. For the most part, there's no problem with this.

But when a promotional photo or an ad is playing on the audience by purportedly depicting the real world, nothing should be shown except what the camera lens recorded. Otherwise, we have nothing to rely on as readers and public cynicism toward the media will only grow.

Certainly, in some situations, there is gray area between what the camera saw and what actually happened. And we all need to remember as consumers that a great per-

centage of real-looking photographs are staged and posed. But even when reality is pre-arranged for the camera, our human brains tend to assume that the picture is showing us what the camera saw. If the public is forced to throw that assumption out the window, everything journalists do will become suspect, and the power of a reporter's skepticism will be meaningless.

Sometimes, manipulation is done with good intent. Perhaps the person in charge at Wisconsin thought that a greater good would be served by trying to represent the diversity that is present at that campus. But the photo doesn't show 2.15 percent of students as black. The percentage in the photo is much greater. And it didn't happen. The piercing shrill of alarm should

have rung in this person's head. "Whoa, I'm lying. Why? Isn't reality true enough to stand on its own? Is it that important to give lip service to diversity that barely exists?"

That lie is the most frightening part of Wisconsin's gaffe. Someone thought it was acceptable to lie. That puts all of us in the media at risk. Basic ethics tell us that you need a really good reason to lie, and Wisconsin didn't have one. We hope that young people intending to make a career in journalism and communication use this as an abject lesson, and that seasoned professionals address this issue in an on-going manner. The credibility of the media is on the line.

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