

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Readers are right: Yahoo! ad series went beyond bad taste

### COMMENTARY

Jack Clifford

"The Oregon Daily Emerald reserves the right to accept or reject any advertising."

Such simple words for a very complicated issue. That sentence, however, is the beginning of the Emerald's advertising policy, which came under attack last week because of a promotional campaign from Yahoo! Messenger.

Many readers have seen or heard about the crudely-designed, one-page inserts in the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday issues of the Emerald. The content of the ads — supposedly an attempt by Yahoo! to be edgy — ranged, in the minds of some readers, from being sexist and homophobic to sophomoric to outright threatening. Those same reactions occurred amongst a good portion of the Emerald office.

An estimated 20 people on campus, mostly University administrators and mostly women, called the Emerald office or sent in letters to the editor to register concerns and condemn this newspaper for accepting the ads. Another group of approximately 12 students and leaders of several student groups met personally with me to express that the Yahoo! campaign is just a continua-

tion of what they believe is the Emerald's irresponsibility when it accepts money to run offensive ads.

Every reader who was outraged, any person who felt threatened by this campaign and anyone who took time to call or write the Emerald with criticism or concern is right. They're right because that's how they were impacted by the Yahoo! ads, and they're right because they took action, hopefully against Yahoo!, as well.

Many students on the newsroom staff — myself included — were embarrassed or angry for three consecutive days when we saw those ads in the Emerald. So, what's an editor to do? In this case, the best defense is to be up front and explain a bit about how the Emerald operates as an organization.

There are two essential components that keep the Emerald publishing five days a week throughout the school year. Our sales department generates revenue for the paper through its efforts and the newsroom writes stories and snaps photos to fit the space not filled with ads in each day's issue. While the two departments share office space, we are careful about the information we share on a day-to-day basis.

Just as much as a sales representative doesn't want a newsroom editor traipsing around his or her space

questioning each and every ad sold, I don't want anyone from the sales department wandering into my office and telling me what stories should run in the newspaper.

That's not being arrogant or mean-spirited, it just points out that I would rather not be beholden to give any advertiser preferential news coverage based on the prospect of selling an ad to that person or company.

In short, although I was made aware that the Yahoo! campaign was scheduled to run, the sales manager gave me just general information about the content, which is how I prefer to handle that aspect of the operation.

However, ignorance doesn't excuse responsibility, and my name and title go on every Emerald printed. Therefore, it is my obligation to accept and deal with the criticism when someone is offended by something — anything — that ends up on a page. Under the aforementioned division between the advertising and newsroom departments, however, as far as advertising goes, the buck doesn't stop on my desk, even if it does slow down.

Which brings us to the concept of an advertising policy.

There are attempts at any newspaper to be careful about the taste and sensitivity of its readership; what you might read or see in

Willamette Week won't end up in The Register-Guard. Although independent from the University, the Emerald uses a college-age audience to determine tastelessness and sensitivity. College students' definition of what is in bad taste is often broader than society as a whole, which is why Yahoo! chose this newspaper and other college-oriented newspapers across the country to run its campaign.

But several of those students and student leaders who expressed their repulsion and fear to me found the Yahoo! ads to go beyond bad taste, and fall right into an endorsement of what are serious issues in society: rape and homophobia. They also accused the Emerald of endorsing those social ills, and called for an apology in this editorial.

While I am outraged that such advertising flourishes in society and disappointed that it found a place in this newspaper, as just one link on

the chain, I cannot apologize for the Emerald's actions. And I cannot apologize for a newsroom that did not see the ads before they were published. In addition, I am quite comfortable with the belief that no one at the Emerald, in any department, endorses rape or homophobia.

I do, however, commend those readers and students who expressed their outrage, and I call on even more people, especially students, to do the same should a similar advertisement run in the future. According to the Emerald's advertising manager, the amount of response she received has swayed her to reject any future Yahoo! ads with similar content, just as the initial sentence in this editorial states she can do.

That's how changes are made in society and I hope that anyone who wants to comment on the advertisements will call Yahoo! or the Emerald and make your voice heard.

### Ad campaign offensive, demeaning

We are writing to address the outrage that we felt as we returned to the University for our first day of classes, only to be confronted with the message that our most valuable asset, as women, is the ability to take our shirts off for men.

As if this was not offensive enough, we were then confronted, the following day, with another ad that degraded and humiliated us as women by poking fun at the health and safety of all women.

And now, the most recent Yahoo! advertisement in Thursday's Emerald not only demeans and reduces us to mere sexual objects but also reinforces, just one more time, that homophobic ads and comments are acceptable on campus. Sexist and homophobic attitudes and comments are not new, but it is time that the ODE reflect and see the decision to run this ad campaign as a sign of irresponsible journalism.

Organizations like the ODE must realize that ads like these contribute to the lack of safety on campus as much as poor campus lighting does. As a student-run newspaper, the ODE should be wary of alienating and objectifying more than half of the student body, as well as many other constituents of the campus community.

Nilda Brooklynn  
 Multicultural Advocate  
 ASUO Executive

Marian Fowler  
 Events Coordinator  
 ASUO Women's Center

I have had the pleasure of seeing the wonderful Yahoo! ads that the Emerald has been running this week. I have to say that the Emerald has really outdone themselves this time. The ads have been an insult to women and also to the University culture.

The first ad requests that a "stoned" guy come look at a woman taking her top off. If that wasn't bad enough, a second ad ran with a guy telling some

woman to call her because his rash (STD?) came back.

The Emerald has really outdone themselves this time. These ads are demeaning, while additionally perpetuating violence and objectification of women, and at the same time insulting men as lowlifes who can't even write legibly (basically insulting the entire college culture). Is the purpose of this ad campaign to actually relate to the culture? Is the college culture as pathetic as these ads imply?

Are you that desperate for advertising dollars that ultimately denigrate the value of your publication while creating litter everywhere that someone else has to clean up? It's unfortunate that a college publication would go to such great lengths to hurt so many while the actual result is a negative impact on their own image. Is this the model of professional journalism that the Emerald would like students to take with them into their careers? And can you believe it? Someone actually got paid to create those ads.

Shyla Yearby

I wanted to express my concerns over the ads running in your newspaper about Yahoo! mail. I find it interesting that while we try so hard to work on campus diversity, women's rights and campus safety we are bombarded with tasteless ads about "crotchless panties" and women "taking off their top." I sure hope that the decision to run this ad campaign was a mistake that you are deeply regretting. There are other ways to promote or advertise a product, Yahoo!. On that note I would offer my version of this ad.

'Yahoo! — Start apologizing for your behavior and start treating women like they should be treated: with respect and equality. Thanks.

— Daniel

Daniel Valle  
 Senior

### Letters to the editor

#### Support fair trade through consumerism

As mentioned in the Sept. 25 ODE article, Starbucks is to be applauded for responding to socially-minded consumers and developing a fair-trade line.

But before we labor/environmentally-sensitive consumers go rushing to support this newly progressive company, be aware that Starbucks is currently only selling this coffee packaged: you cannot buy a fair-trade brand in a cup! Until Starbucks provides brewed fair-trade alternatives to caffeine-hungry students, our only alternative is to buy sweatshop coffee from them or (what I will be doing) continue to support the Duck Stop, the only consistent fair-trade vendor on the strip.

We can work to change this policy by showing a presence at Starbucks and insisting on being served the Mexican shade-grown variety over the counter — or taking our business elsewhere. Some Starbucks shops are willing to french-press cups of the brand upon request, and the more customers who ask, the more likely that fair-trade brands will be offered in the future (and show Starbucks that there is profit in fair-trade.)

To those who still wonder what all the fuss is about, my personal view is that at two cups per school day, at \$1 a cup, I spend \$522 a year on retail coffee and can make a sizeable personal impact on one of the most exploitative industries by choosing to buy fair-trade brands over sweatshop brands. It's easy, cheap and convenient socially-responsible consumerism. Who wouldn't want to switch?

R. Charli Carpenter  
 Graduate student  
 Political science

#### Vote no on Measure 9

Save the Chess club! Vote no on Measure 9! The OCA is at it again, this time with the "Student Protection Act" which would eliminate any non-negative mention of homosexuality or bisexuality in public schools through the college level. Whatever your feelings about these issues, it is important that you be aware that this law, if passed, could eliminate all extra-curricular clubs.

It is clear that any gay-friendly extracurricular club would be prohibited under this measure. If that sounds like good news to you, read on. A student in a Utah school requested formation of a gay-straight alliance club. The school district denied the request, and the student sued. The court ruled that federal law did not allow schools receiving federal funding to discriminate based on club content. The school board was faced with allowing the club or disallowing ALL extracurricular clubs. Or losing federal funding. They chose to disallow all extracurricular clubs.

If Measure 9 passes, every school district in Oregon will have to choose between eliminating all extracurricular clubs or losing state or federal funding. That's a choice we can't afford to make! Don't let the OCA's poorly-crafted bill hurt our schools. Vote NO on Measure 9.

Shasta K. Wilson  
 CIS

#### Booing unsportsmanlike

Coach Len Casanova didn't want any booing from students at football games. Back in fall of 1950, as a newly-elected yell king, I asked for an interview with our new football coach, Len Casanova, and he made it very clear that he considered booing unsportsmanlike, and firmly stated that he did not approve of that kind of conduct — so, we complied. It was a good call.

Our student body was in the neighborhood of 4,500, and I recall reading of University President Newburn praising the spirit of the fans, but I dare say the spirit of the fans at the recent UCLA game in Autzen Stadium was deafening and awesome. Congratulations to the cheerleaders and fans. If booing were eliminated, the sport would be elevated.

Ron Symons

#### WRC requirements not too restrictive

You should really take a look at what the Worker Rights Consortium is about. Yes, they ask for a living wage, but they admit that the definition of a living wage is still unclear and so they don't require it at the schools, and they haven't yet had to deal with the living wage in apparel companies. The requirements are the same whether at home or abroad. The most important things that they do require:

- Freedom to organize without threat of job loss/other penalties
- Overtime cannot be required
- No discrimination (including in pay) based on gender, race, etc.
- Maximum work week of either 48 hours or the national maximum, whichever is less
- Maternity leave and no required pregnancy testing at any time
- No forced labor (indentured, bonded, or prison labor)
- Release the information about compliance to the public (wage, hours, health/safety conditions)
- Are these requirements too restrictive? It doesn't seem like it to me. Want to actually see what they do require? Read at their site: <http://www.workersrights.org>

Eric Anholt  
 Portland, OR