

PERSPECTIVES

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Finding common ground



SCRIBBLES OF SANITY

JAYNA BERGERON

You've probably seen him, but you may have never really noticed him. On the corner of 13th Avenue and University Street stands Doug, with his black cap and white signs. You might remember him mostly from the signs propped up around him. They proclaim in bold letters, "Jesus Loves You" and "Free God News," and that is all. No gimmicks, no multicolored advertisements for a local church. They are just simple, black-and-white messages.

He doesn't consider himself to be an evangelist to the University. In fact, Doug has little hope for the salvation of the student body or the salvation of the state of Oregon. But he does have just enough hope in the possibility of reaching a few students that he continues to stand on the street corner and wait. His signs are an invitation for anyone to come speak to him, and perhaps they also stand as a reminder to those who have forgotten a faith they once had.

With his hands in his jacket pockets, Doug just stands silently next to his signs and watches the students rush by him. He doesn't call out for attention or repentance. If you do stop and talk to him, he will talk about whatever you want.

Want to talk about the world? He might tell you about his travels throughout the western United States. He might even show you his pin that says, "Don't Californicate Oregon!" Curious about religion? He will oblige your curiosity. But regardless of whether you talk to him, he is still there. Quietly present, but present nonetheless.

Doug's manner is quite unlike other evangelist hopefuls of the past. Many of us are still reeling from the religious rantings of "Bible Jim," who made it a point to visit the campus during fall term every year. With his bullhorn in one hand and a Bible in the other, he would scream at the students, "Repent!" Beside him was his group of supporters with sandwich boards, which said, "All of you lesbians, fornicators, drunks (etc.) will burn in HELL!" Needless to say, his demonstrations riled more than a few students and eventually led to his disappear-

ance from campus.

At that time, Oregon Daily Emerald columnist Kameron Cole wrote about the religious demonstrations of Bible Jim. In the column, she offered this advice: "People don't like being told that they're going to hell, even if it's true. Furthermore, you do the biggest disservice to your cause by alienating those you seek to enlighten."

Unfortunately, like any group in society, the most vocal and fanatical receive the most attention, and thus give the rest of the group a really bad name. After seeing Bible Jim's antics, it's no wonder that views on this campus about religion, particularly toward Christianity, range from benign indifference to all-out hostility.

If Bible Jim had actually read that Bible he waved about so frantically, he would have understood the true characteristics of his religion. The savior, whose name Bible Jim preaches about and refers to, had a completely different way of reaching out to those around him. He didn't use a bullhorn

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DIARY OF A MALCONTENT

MICHAEL J. KLECKNER

I recently interviewed Bonny Bettman for a class assignment, and the experience showed me a lot about our community.

Bettman is the Eugene city councilor for Ward 3, which covers the downtown core, the East University neighborhood, some of North Eugene near Coburg Road and the campus proper.

That is one amazingly wide swath of diverse areas of Eugene. Representing all those interests must be impossible, I thought before I interviewed her, and especially in Eugene, where middle-of-the-road ideologies often get shut down.

Some others I interviewed for the project had harsh words for Bettman, or at least they chose their

words mincingly. I wondered why she didn't get gleaming reviews, until I spoke to her. Then I realized that it's because she's doing her job.

This piece isn't really about Bettman, but it's about a sense of community that she explained. First, be involved. There's too much happening that affects us all to not do something. Second, talk to as many people with as many opinions as possible. Listen to the reasons they give for how they'll be affected. Then, find out the facts: Do research and discover the things people won't tell you.

A well-informed and active approach does more than simply let you bolster your own ideological position. It makes you realize you share values with the supposed "opposition." And given that we all live together, whether we're in opposition or not, finding those places of agreement is critical.

For someone who makes policy (like a city councilor) or for someone who analyzes policy (like an editorial writer), looking past the artificially constructed walls of "opposition" is necessary. A lot of students, young and pas-

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Giovanni Salimena Emerald



A STEREOTYPE REBELS

REBECCA NEWELL

When we set off for college, we are psyched to try new things, meet new people and in general, experience much more than our parents ever did. And in the beginning, we do.

As freshmen, we're pretty eager to stretch our wings, familiarizing ourselves with the things to do around campus, trying to drink without getting busted by our resident assistants, and of course, meeting new people.

During those first few days on campus, we often breathe a sigh of relief (or gasp in fear) at the absence of the ever-frightening high

school "cliques." College presents us with a medley of different types of people. However, it often seems that we continue to surround ourselves with those most like us.

By senior year, trying new things typically consists of hitting a new bar or sampling a different brand of beer, actually going to our professors' office hours or even getting a midterm paper finished more than 12 hours before it's due. Whether we realize it or not, we've often set ourselves into a routine that rarely involves meeting new people — specifically, DIFFERENT types of people, not clones of our present friends.

In one of my larger classes, I frequently took notice of a woman who was a little different than most of the people I normally (and yes, comfortably) hang out with. I'll admit that her difference in attire and her very outspoken demeanor didn't make me want to introduce myself, because I saw her as someone who was unpre-

dictable and would likely scoff at the all-American-girl likes of me.

So I indulged myself in my safe place across the classroom, where I wouldn't have to take a risk, until the day we were put into pairs. Somehow, the inevitable happened, and we were paired together. I took a deep breath, determined to make the best of the 20 minutes we would spend collaborating and ... was totally surprised.

I found a humorous, knowledgeable and kind-spirited woman, with whom the 20 minutes seemed to fly. We talked about guys (despite our 15-plus-years age difference), roommates, classes and women in our present society. Once I got over the shock of how much I enjoyed chatting with someone I would have written off days earlier, I realized how much my "stepping out of the box" experience had opened my eyes. And best of all, she didn't even laugh at me when I handed

her my business card and suggested we get together for coffee sometime.

Friday night I had another little experiment with taking risks and trying new things. The place: Rock 'N Rodeo. But I wasn't there to drink or play pool. I decided to take one of the free dance classes, offered Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. Now, I'm someone with a decent dance background, ranging from years of studying ballet, modern dance and jazz to hip-hop (think high school dance team). As it turned out, I was far from prepared.

When I walked in at 8 p.m., the bar was empty, but the dance floor was full. Arranged in two lines were women my mother's age — but my mom can't dance like that. Our instructor, clad in cowboy boots, a skirt and a rhinestone belt, led us through the dance step-by-step during the hour-long lesson. By the end, sweat was soaking my clothes as I kick-heel-tap-mam-

boed to Ace of Base (yes, they played Ace of Base at a country bar). As the hour concluded, our rag-tag little dance group was laughing and already aching from some of the harder moves.

This week, I'm already looking forward to my next dance class and coffee with the woman from class. I know I learned a lot more during the past week than just a new dance step. I realized that breaking out of our routines and opening our minds to the diversity of people and experiences around us is too important to be ignored simply because we already have a "comfortable routine."

Try something new. You have nothing to lose, and if all else fails, you can always show off your new dance step!

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