

PERSPECTIVES

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A WASTE OF space

The controversial urinal screens from three and a half years ago showed up briefly again last week, at least in the men's bathroom by the EMU Ballroom. The screens are an old issue, and they only popped up briefly, but they're worth a mention. The screens are printed with a message smiling out at you from the urinal: "You hold the power to stop rape in your hand."

No one is sure who put the screens in the bathroom last week, as the University stopped using them a couple of years ago when they proved unpopular. The Emerald editorial board can understand why the screens created a ruckus. They were inappropriate, and we're glad they're gone.

To begin with, the bathroom is neither the time nor the place for "raising awareness." When urinating, men are generally zoning off. Post issue messages on bulletin boards — right outside bathrooms, if you wish. But leave the toilet as one place safe from propa-

ganda (except for those graffiti artists who love "grout" so much).

Perhaps the idea of the screens sounded like a cute and clever way to bring attention to a very important issue. Rape and "rape culture" needs more attention, and more men need to be involved in helping to dispel the atmosphere of objectification and sanctioned violence against women.

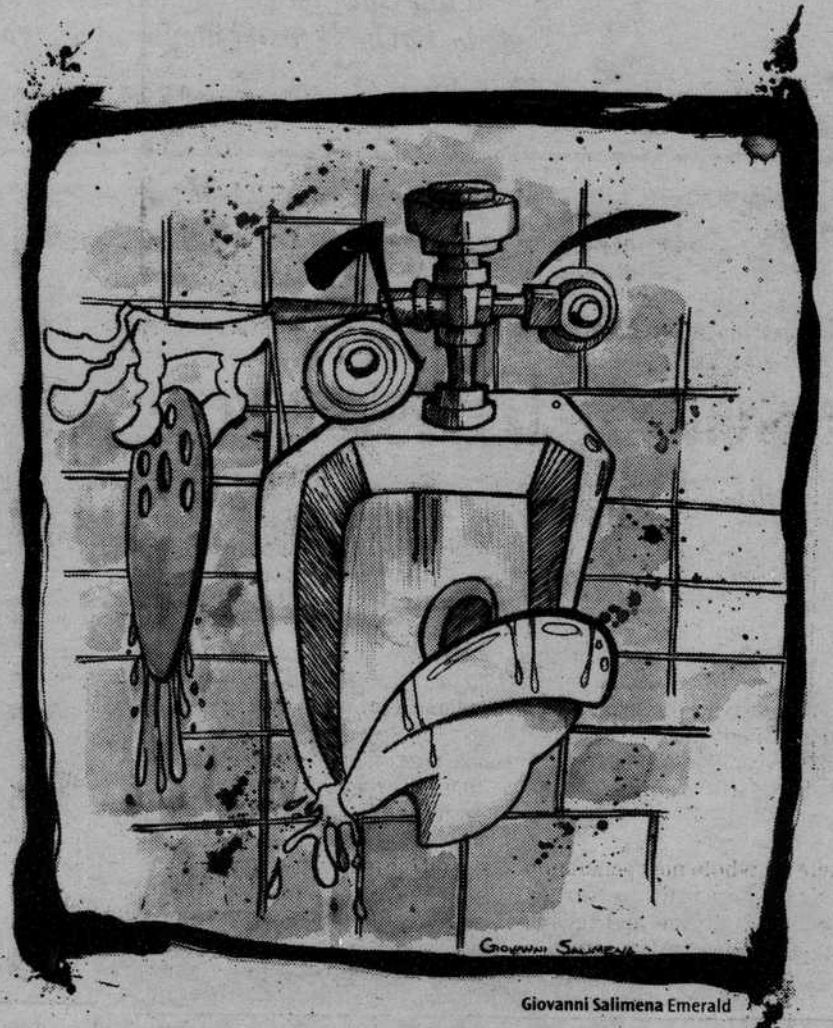
But honestly, a "cute" or "clever" approach is incredibly insensitive in this case. I can't imagine that women's groups want men to be having a little chuckle as they contemplate rape. And if all men need to be involved in stopping rape, they'll have to be involved with more than just their penises. We imagine they'll have to use their brains, too.

Further, we agree that all men need to be involved in the effort to eliminate society's negligent acceptance of belittling images and stereotypes of women. But the message on the urinal screens doesn't address men's role in stopping sex-

ist comments in the workplace or deconstructing violent imagery involving women. The message is quite clearly saying that all men may be rapists. If that's not the case, then explain this: How does a non-rapist man have the power to stop society's mistreatment of women with his penis?

As a final note, with a nod to grammarians everywhere, we would like to point out that the message on the screens contains a ridiculous misplaced prepositional phrase. "Rape in your hand" is an impossible scenario. The sentence should have read, "You hold in your hand the power to stop rape." This is a college, after all.

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



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Legislature shouldn't mess with university curriculum

State Rep. Betsy Close recently introduced three bills in the Oregon House she claims will protect "student academic freedom." The bills are designed to allow students to opt out of required classes if they find the course material objectionable or if the material doesn't relate to their major.

This is a scary proposition that threatens the integrity of higher education, and the bills must be stopped.

Close, a Republican from Albany, said her idea came from a case at Southern Oregon University. A freshman there, enrolled in the required core colloquium, was offended by some of Karl Marx's writings and a depiction of rape. Under Close's main bill, the stu-

dent would have been able to either do different coursework or not take the class. But how would the student have known the material was offensive without reading it? Perhaps the student's parents were aware of the potentially offensive material in advance.

No matter how one identifies ideas one doesn't like, the notion that a student, or the Legislature, should be allowed to determine what constitutes a college education is frightening. The possibilities for abuse and extremism are endless.

A fundamentalist might object to any material that doesn't promote a Christian God as the sole creator of the universe. That could rule out philosophy, literature and science. A Krishna devotee or Taoist adherent could find

the promotion of capitalism, economics and Western history morally offensive.

The point here is that the value of a public college education comes from learning about a vast panorama of ideas. This is not a private school, where the administration and teachers can promote only one set of beliefs about the world. A public degree means something because it implies a well-rounded individual who knows a little about a lot of subjects and a lot about one or two areas of study.

Close would like to eliminate the value of our universities and allow students to pick and choose what's OK for them to learn. One of her bills would allow students to opt out of classes not relating closely to their major.

Wait one moment: That's the point of college! If students want to take a narrow selection of courses all designed to train them in one field, they are free to go to trade or technical schools. A liberal arts education mandates courses outside one's major on purpose.

The bottom line is this: The Legislature doesn't need to be meddling with the state's university curriculum. It's micro-management, it's bad politics and it's an offensive idea. Close's bill is currently sitting in a House subcommittee. Legislators should let it die there.

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Letters to the editor

Bret and Matt will re-energize the ASUO

Before my roommate Bret Jacobson began his campaign for ASUO Executive, I didn't care about student government. I didn't know what student government really does. Although I've only helped place posters on campus, I've realized during this election how vital the ASUO is — and can be — to students. I've also seen how hard Jacobson and his running mate Matt Cook will work so everyone realizes what student government can do for them. In this year, I've never seen them so excited or dedicated.

The ASUO goes beyond giving student fees to other groups. It's the starting place for new campus ideas. But as past presidents can attest, it's crucial that the president bring more voices in and make people outside of student groups interested in what happens in government.

I like that Jacobson and Cook have a handful of specific ideas that will start bridging gaps among student groups. But most importantly, I think his enthusiasm can rub off on other students like me and they will care for the first time about what happens in the ASUO office

because they will see how it affects their experiences at the University.

I just have to live with the guy. I don't have to like what he does. But Jacobson and Cook's ideas and specific campaign plans have energized me about student government. And if elected, I believe they will actually — finally — take the first steps to connect the ASUO with the larger campus community.

John Erickson
 senior
 business administration

Kyoto Treaty decision shows importance of OSPIRG

More than 100 industrialized nations have joined together to slow global warming. These countries signed the Kyoto Treaty, which seeks to lower the world average output of carbon dioxide by 5.2 percent. This seems like a positive, reasonable and achievable goal. That's because it is. Our nation's president disagrees.

President Bush refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty despite urgings from Britain, Germany, Italy and others. Bush claims he won't do anything to hurt the U.S. economy. Where was he

when NAFTA sent millions of jobs across our borders? Oh yeah, Texas. The point is, keeping rich people rich is the name of the game, and the environment makes little difference.

America produces 25 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions, yet our president refuses to join international efforts to ensure a future for the future. Many Native American cultures believe that one should consider the impact of decisions for seven generations. Maybe Bush could start with an easier number — like two.

In fairness, Bush has a valid gripe with the treaty. He claims it's not fair because developing countries don't have to comply. To be truly fair, other countries should be granted the same head start we had before taking responsibility for pollution, right?

At any rate, we come off as arrogant and selfish to the rest of the world. Situations like this emphasize the importance of watch-dog groups such as OSPIRG. Vote yes and support an organization that fights the degradation of our earth.

J. J. Burkart
 senior
 journalism

CONTACT US!

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