

PERSPECTIVES

Editor in chief: Jack Clifford
 Managing Editor: Jessica Blanchard
 Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

EDITORIAL EDITOR: MICHAEL J. KLECKNER opededitor@journalist.com

Slavery reparations should be made — systemically

The Oregon Daily Emerald ran a full-page advertisement Tuesday, paid for by David Horowitz, listing 10 reasons why he opposes slavery reparations. The ad was also an attempt to sell membership in his Los Angeles-based conservative think tank.

Although the newsroom doesn't have the power to allow or reject advertisements, the Emerald editorial board supports the newspaper's decision to run the ad, as we think it brings an important issue to light to be discussed in an academic setting. We do think Horowitz is wrong — but in some small way he's right. We'll explain that below.

Horowitz said he is running this ad in college newspapers because academia is supposedly a bastion of reason and rational thought. Let's use reason and rational thought, then, to prove Horowitz wrong, if he is so wrong. Let's embrace rationality to win the war of ideas in the world.

Similar to guest columns or letters to the editor printed on this page, the publication of an ad does not mean that the newspaper, as an organization, thinks the content is good or right. It simply means that it met our standards for publication. Especially in a college environment, more freedom should be given to more ideas. This does not mean that we would support printing hate speech or bigoted language that targeted any specific group of people.

But Horowitz's ad doesn't rise to the level of hate speech or bigoted language. It is examining, perhaps with some specious arguments, an issue that is beginning to be discussed more openly on a public level nationwide. It is political speech, and it would have been unwarranted censorship for the Emerald to choose not to run it simply because some people will disagree with the content of that speech.

In that spirit, then, we move to a discussion of the issue itself. We encourage everyone in the community to do likewise.

The anger that publication of Horowitz's ad has caused at a few other college campuses around the country should make us all realize that the battle isn't over. Only 37 years have passed since blacks were legally given all the rights of whites. Change does not and cannot happen overnight. During our conversation, one of the editorial board members expressed frustration that it seems as if the playing field will never be level, that racism will never completely end.

With a lot of work, Americans can ensure that someday all people will be treated equally simply because they are human, and with no other considerations. Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese human rights advocate, perhaps said it best: "I see my life ... as part of a procession, a dynamic process, doing all that we can do to move toward good and justice ... And I do whatever I have to

do along the path, whether it's sowing seeds or reaping the harvest or tending the plants half-grown."

The problem is, in regard to slavery and equality for blacks, we're all still arguing about which seeds to plant. The wrongs done to blacks have not yet been made right; affirmative action was not handled properly and, as a result, it has not leveled the playing field or corrected the cascading effects of poverty and lack of opportunity that slavery instituted. This is the message that examination of the issue should provide, and we should acknowledge that Horowitz is helping to put this argument back on the table.

So now to the issue of whether Horowitz is right or wrong. We think reparations do still need to be made. But individual payments handed out to individual members of society won't work. That won't fix the systemic problem that slavery caused. The government should be forced to make reparations — but in the form of fixing the social conditions that were caused by slavery.

Poor city-based and rural schools need money now. There are elementary schools in Philadelphia that teach from textbooks predicting man will someday walk on the moon. How will the playing field ever be level when education is so backward?

Businesses need further incentive to invest in poor areas of the country and in primarily

African-American areas of the country. Everyone isn't on an equal footing until opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurship are extended to every neighborhood.

And college educations need to be affordable and available to anyone and everyone who is willing to work to succeed at it. Some progress to this end has been made, but it isn't complete, and the government should be forced to invest in new higher education opportunities for blacks.

In short, the government can't use wage payments to make reparations for what was taken from slaves. Paying descendants back wages could be seen as an insult, because it says that all blacks lost was their labor. But it wasn't. Among other things, opportunity was taken. Slaves were turned free, and what did they have? No marketable skills, no college education, no equal chance at employment. In an environment where laws said they were still unequal to whites, what chance did newly freed slaves have?

Another problem with the individual reparations idea is the uncertainty of opportunity. How can we know what the outcome of different opportunities for blacks would be? Would some of them be third-generation doctors, with incredible wealth? Do we take that away from other people now, who have genuinely achieved success on their own, even though the opportunities they received were unfair?

Perhaps the biggest and most

difficult question in individual reparation payments is, who would we charge for this? One estimate puts payments at several trillion dollars. On whom would the government levy such a tax? Horowitz is right that many immigrants and their families had no part in slavery. Some of those immigrant families didn't receive fair opportunities in building a new life. How does the government find the people who should pay, and how much should they pay?

There are many other questions to explore in this issue. The idea of making systematic reparations for the injustices of slavery is not new. Affirmative action policies were designed to handle some of this reparation, but they didn't complete the job. We need a new look at the problem and some new answers to consider publicly. Perhaps putting affirmative action policies in the frame of reparations can give them some added urgency.

But handing an individual a check would simply be making up, in some sense, for the evil. Fixing the outcomes of that evil, fixing the cascading effect of social problems, would be making it right. We encourage you to examine the issue and think about solutions. Feel free, as always, to send us letters or guest columns that address the idea of slavery reparations. Let's talk about it. We'll all be better for it.

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

Letters to the editor

Thanks for volunteering with Meals On Wheels

This letter is a public "thank you" to the many residents of our community who volunteer their time with the Meals on Wheels Program during the year. We serve a mid-day meal to our homebound older neighbors. Meals on Wheels in Lane County are provided by either Senior & Disabled Services or American Red Cross who work cooperatively to serve different areas.

The Meals on Wheels has a bare-bones budget which only provides for a skeleton staff. We would not be able to deliver these meals without the help of hundreds of volunteers who donate both their time and vehicle once a week to deliver Meals on Wheels to older neighbors. Others assist in our dispatch kitchens with the packaging of the food for delivery. In Eugene and Springfield, over 18,400 hours were contributed to the program last year by our good-hearted volunteers. Many, many thanks to you all.

Our volunteers are paid every day in smiles of gratitude from the people they help. People who would like to "light up their life" with smiles of appreciation can join our volunteer ranks any time. Please contact the United Way Volunteer Connection at 741-6000 for information about opportunities at the dispatch location nearest you.

Sandy Karsten
 S&DS Meals on Wheels
 Linn Crooks
 Red Cross Meals on Wheels

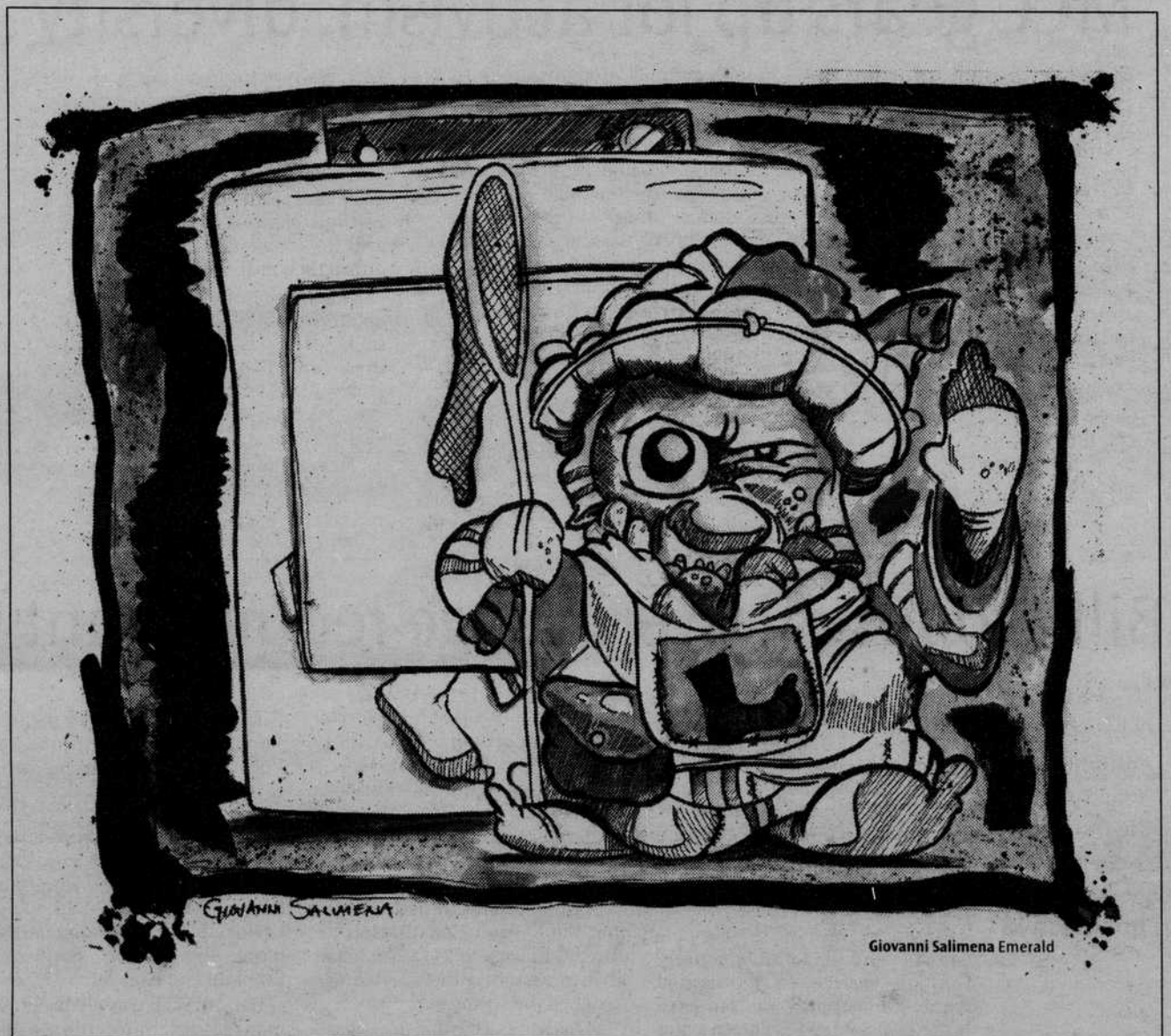
Turn to Letters, page 3

CLARIFICATION

The Oregon Daily Emerald's advertising policy states that we "reserve the right to accept or reject any advertising at any time."

In Tuesday's "Letter from the editors" [ODE, April 17], we stated that part of the policy is to "decline to run ads that needlessly offend a significant portion of our readers." That is not a part of the policy; the comment was a paraphrase taken from an Emerald meeting to discuss publication of controversial ads. There was no intent to marginalize any individuals or groups.

The Emerald regrets the error.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald