

## Letters to the editor

### University "ombudsman" tells it like it is

To George Beres:

I have read your two articles ("Runge v. public opinion: a conspiracy theory?" ODE, April 5, and "University's integrity is suffering," ODE, May 9) regarding the Runge situation. You were right on when you stated in your first article that the groundwork was being laid for a dismissal or request for resignation — it happened.

Your integrity article was right on point. The University is selling its soul for money. Witness the shelving of "Dead Week" and the stonewalling in regard to the outside consultants report.

There is currently an athlete complaint on the softball coach. Will we see the same process applied that was applied to Runge? I have not read any comment from The Register-Guard's Ron Belamy yet.

I have followed Oregon women's basketball since Runge arrived. I thought that she did a great job.

Keep writing. The University needs an ombudsman.

Rich Traynham

Class of '57  
El Dorado Hills, Calif.

### Ignorant and/or insensitive people use "coon"

As a recent graduate and non-traditional student (a senior citizen), I would like to comment on the use of the terminology "in a coon's age." My interest in this matter started with some amusement, which quickly turned to disgust. My perspective, as I stand on the sideline and read of the controversy over this expression is that the defenders of the term live in a bubble and have not experienced the bigotry and hatred connected with it.

Two letter writers have rightfully been upset by this slur. The writers of other letters show their ignorance and/or insensitivity in understanding the issue. I, too, looked up the meaning and the history of the use of the word "coon." Its earliest reference was in the 1830s and was specifically designated as demeaning and derogatory. Nothing has changed since then with the exception of those who live with their heads in the sand and fail to realize a slur when they hear one.

Have either Mark Baker or Earl Gosnell approached an African-American and said, "I haven't seen you in a coon's age"? Or have they asked a person from the Middle East, "How is your camel?" In this day and age, the use of the words in the context discussed above is offensive.

Melvin Cahill  
Class of '00  
Veneta

**Editor's note:** The Oxford English Dictionary first cites the use of "coon" in 1742, meaning a raccoon. The next use cited is in 1832, meaning a "sly, knowing fellow" of any race. In 1839, the word was used to refer to a member of the old Whig party, which used the raccoon as an emblem. The first source the OED cites using "coon" as derogatory slang for an African-American is in 1862 in "Songs for the Times." On the other hand, the OED and numerous other sources list "in a coon's age" as simply meaning "in a long time." No sources could be found which identified "in a coon's age" as a derogatory phrase.

### CORRECTIONS

Urban Moore, owner of the Eugene Skydivers Association, was misidentified in an Emerald photograph from the Memorial Day observance at the West Lawn Memorial Park and Funeral Home ["Crowd remembers fallen U.S. patriots," ODE, May 29].

In Friday's editorial, "Kudos to Ducks for preserving Bucks," the amount of money spent by the EMU on electricity was incorrect. The EMU has budgeted nearly \$250,000 for all utilities next year, nearly \$80,000 of which is for electricity.

The Emerald regrets the errors.



## Subtle alienation still an overt wrong

Take Back the Night, as a whole, is a great event, and this year's May 17 occasion was quite a success. The Emerald editorial board has praised the organizers and those in attendance before, and many more boards are sure to agree with that opinion in the future. But the event has historically been controversial in terms of men's participation, and this year was no different.

True, no students camped in front of Johnson Hall, so the walk through Eugene's streets doesn't stir emotions the same way as some campus controversies. Still, at least one man was upset by a sign carried by a woman at the march, which read "Dead Men Don't Rape." He wrote a guest commentary, which we published ("'Dead Men Don't Rape' sign hinders cooperation, support," May 22), and a woman wrote a response, which we also published ("A man loses his right to life when he rapes," May 23).

The general idea was this: The man felt that the sign implied all men are potential rapists, and it made him feel unwelcome at the march. The woman said that rape victims need to express their pain, and the sign simply meant that if rapists are killed, they won't rape again. We have to side with the man here. At a community event intended to include everyone in the fight to stop sexual violence, the sign is unwelcome.

Earlier this month, we wrote of the need for more events talking to men about sexual violence ("Are women nothing more than victims?" May 2). In the vast majority of cases, after all, men are the perpetrators. Men need to stop the violence. Men need to be taught about consent and reciprocity, as well as the overt and subtle forms of objectification and exploitation that occur every minute in this country.

But men are sure to feel alienated if the premiere event taking a stand against sexual violence is off-limits to them, either outwardly or subtly. And that sign sent a "you're not welcome" message to some men.

The woman writing in defense of the sign suggested that the man was being defensive. The sign didn't mean all men, she wrote. If that's the case, then the sign should have read "Dead Rapists Don't Rape Again." The very scope of the word "men" implies all men. It does not only apply to those who rape. The meaning of the phrase "Dead Men Don't Rape" is sexist and threatening. That is inappropriate at an event meant to end sexism and threatening environments.

The woman also wrote that men shouldn't "presume to tell a rape victim what she can and can not say to express her pain." In private, no, certainly not. At an event organized specifically for women to express their pain, no, certainly not. However, at a community

event during Sexual Assault Awareness Week, which the Women's Center billed as "a coordinated community response to support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable," it's a different story. Again, the scope of the word is involved; "community" means "a unified body of individuals," according to Webster. It does not mean simply "female survivors in pain."

We have no problem with women coming together to share their outrage and anger at rapists, or even their anger at all men, if that's where they're at. But an event intended for expressing anger at men should perhaps say what it is and specifically not invite men. From all indications, including a discussion the next day involving men who had participated in Take Back the Night, men were specifically invited to this event.

Yes, rape creates outrage, pain and humiliation for survivors of that heinous act. But how does an inflammatory sign do anything to stop rape? Society could kill every man who rapes; that won't stop the violence. Or, society could work together to address the underlying causes of rape, both individual and cultural.

From the Emerald editorial board's standpoint, we're all in this together. Could we please all be in this together?

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