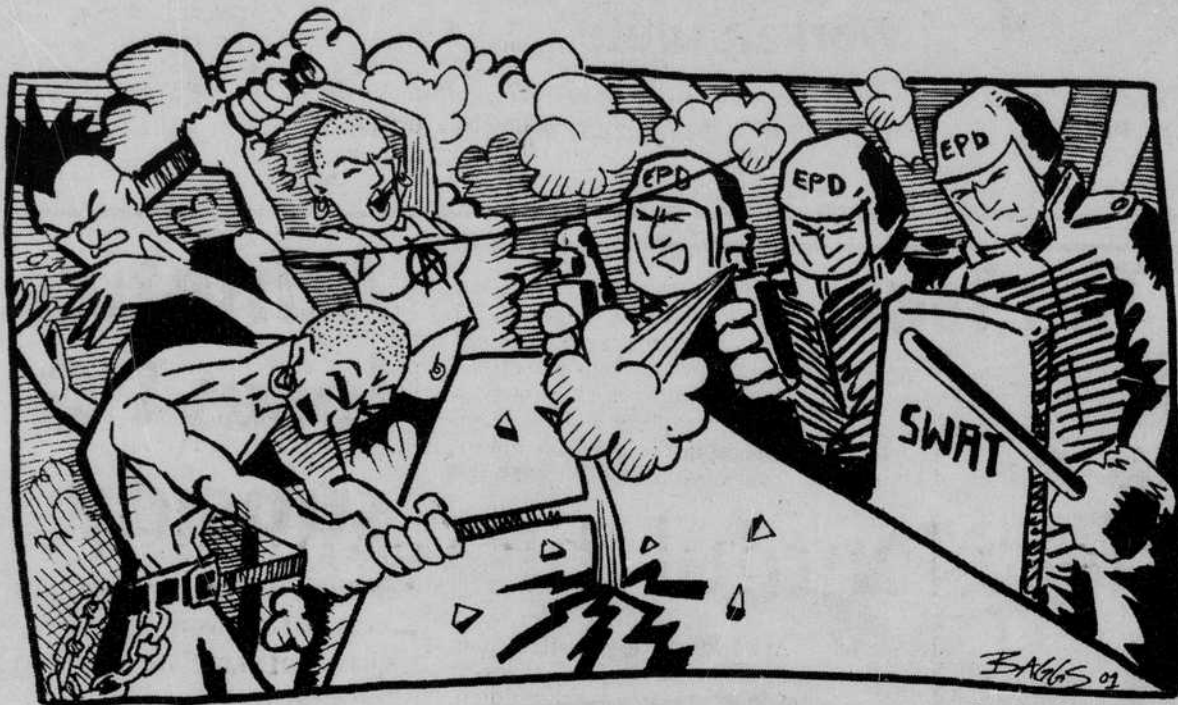


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Steve Baggs for the Emerald

Sit down and TALK IT OVER

By the time you read this, events may already be under way to commemorate the June 1 protest at Broadway Avenue and Charnelton Street in 1997. That controversial protest focused on the cutting of old trees on the property that is now the Broadway Plaza apartments. The event turned ugly because of missteps on the part of both police and protesters, but the police actions took the brunt of criticism in the community. As a result, June has become a month of protest for the last three years, with mixed results.

So what's new this year? Will people be pepper-sprayed and arrested? All the Emerald editorial board knows for sure is that there is a "celebration of resistance" taking place tonight at The Shamrock House, 1080 W. Third Ave. Police are specifically not invited on the fliers. There has been no announced commemoration at the protest site, but if there is, the use of force may be different than in past years. The upside of Eugene protests is that police tactics have changed. The downside is that no formal meetings have been held between police and individuals in the activist community.

One major problem in '97, and at the June 18, 1999, rally-turned-riot, was police presence, attitude and tactics. Their presence made both events feel confrontational. In '97, the police used pepper spray on the crowd they wanted to disperse. Jeannine Parisi, staff liaison to the Eugene Police Commission, said pepper spray is designed to incapacitate; it is useful for arresting people who are resisting, but it is hard for an incapacitated crowd to disperse.

But in the last 15 months, policies for using pepper spray and force have been changed, and some new recommendations have just been made. Parisi said because of the June 1 protest, "the policies of the department are now open for public review, and they are changing with the needs of the community." Three major changes are: not using pepper spray for crowd dispersal; considering the personal

safety of individuals being pepper sprayed; and focusing on de-escalation of events through communication, posture and the number of officers deployed. We think these are all good modifications.

On the negative side of the situation, no one is sitting down and talking about this June's possible protests. In Portland this year, authorities (and we hope protesters as well) learned that, while everyone may disagree about the role of government, authority and police, the peace can be maintained if protesters and city officials come together and discuss their plans.

The 2000 May Day rally in Portland turned into a riotous scene, despite organizers arranging for parade permits. So this year, they were not willing to apply for permits. They said the system had failed them, and protesting the system is what May Day is about. They did give police their planned march route, and they did finally have a face-to-face meeting with Portland officials. And the event went remarkably well, with no mayhem.

We wish that local activists and Eugene public officials would have met before today to discuss June events. But Pam Alejandre, spokeswoman for the Eugene Police Department, said, "We have no reason to believe that there will be a repeat of previous years' events." Francisca Johnson with Eugene's Human Rights Commission echoed Alejandre's comments. "We've had no indications that there will be any kind of protest," she said.

We think the EPD should take into account the history of June 1 and try to plan specifically for the needs of the community. It's also disturbing to us that no meetings have taken place. Whether or not events are announced, it's June in Eugene, and city officials should be contacting local activists to discuss the summer.

But as with many things in Eugene, it's not that simple. The core group of protesters here aren't necessarily willing to discuss anything with any officials. Parisi expressed that very sentiment, saying that in Portland, the May Day organizers were a diverse group of activists.

The core group here, Parisi said, has a more narrowly tailored agenda, and it often involves mayhem and disregard for authority. We realize that is a part of some anarchists' philosophies, so perhaps she's right. Worse, she said, "They don't even want to come to the table."

Perhaps then, we should close, not with the usual plea for calm during the hot summer, but with a plea that everyone keep making progress. Police have made some changes. Activists may also have changed tactics, or perhaps they've just been quiet lately. We realize that no amount of pleading on the part of editorial boards will derail someone's ingrained ideology. But if everyone sits down and talks first, the usual summer clash of ideologies in Eugene might actually be beneficial for everyone.

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

Prepare yourselves for anger and discomfort

GUEST COMMENTARY

Lori Brown

Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. — James Baldwin

As one of the organizers of Take Back the Night, I would like to respond to the recent editorial and letters to the editors regarding one of the signs at that event, which read "Dead Men Don't Rape." I would also like to thank the Emerald for providing a venue for exploring this issue. It has spurred some much-needed contemplation on my part about the purpose of this event.

The controversy around men's participation in the march is based on the struggle between providing a safe woman-only space and inviting our allies to join us in our efforts. I admire the men who choose to take action around the issue of violence against women. I admire their compassion, their empathy and their courage. I consider their involvement in this movement to be crucial. If I had to choose, though, between creating a comfortable space for them in the movement and providing a space for women to share their voices and heal, I would choose the latter.

Although I don't agree with the message on the sign, I do not think it carried enough power to create an alienating, unsafe environment for men. This was one woman with one sign out of many women — a number of whom celebrated the fact that the men were acting as allies. We went to great lengths to include men in this event. We are being admonished for not assuring a 100 percent

comfortable space for them.

It is unrealistic to expect us to bring together 500 individuals who all have the same methods and beliefs for how to create change and heal from their experiences. You suggest we should be a "unified body of individuals." We were unified in our desire to end violence against women, which is a great accomplishment.

It often seems as though people in power want those who have been oppressed to just hurry up, bypass the uglier aspects of healing from that oppression and get comfortable again. When I'm doing anti-oppression work with a group of people and I'm in a position of privilege, I fully expect to come up against their anger. I plan to be uncomfortable. In my own experience as a woman and as a survivor, I've learned that anger — and acting out of that anger — is a crucial part of healing. I'm willing to deal with that discomfort because I want to give people the same opportunities that I have had.

If you truly want to end oppression, be prepared to go through some hard times. Creating social change isn't about gratifying your ego and resting easy in what a wonderful person you are. It's messy. It's painful. It's hard. It's about having the courage to stand by people while they go through what they need to in order to break free from the effects of oppression. It means facing the defensiveness, the discomfort and the fear that comes up for you during those times.

Men are most welcome at Take Back the Night. If you're going to join us, however, come prepared to deal with some discomfort. I have complete faith that you can face us in our anger and live through it with us.

Lori Brown is the office coordinator for the ASUO Women's Center.

Leftfield

Frank Silva

