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COMMENTARY

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Thursday, September 27, 2001

Editorial

We are happy Knight is back

What an enormous, flooding sense of relief. Phil Knight loves and trusts the University again. At first, it may seem like a small thing, especially in relation to the horrifying events of the last 16 days. But it isn't a small thing. The entire University community should be in support of the Nike CEO's gesture of reconciliation. Knight is supporting us again, and we are glad.

Our sense of happiness shouldn't be mistaken, however. Inhumane working conditions are never acceptable. American companies that do business in other countries should do their best to help incorporate benevolent standards for overseas workers and their economic situations. Americans should not be the only people in the world who can expect safe, respectful working conditions.

We are also concerned about the University's willingness to do business with just anyone. Perhaps if taxpayers were more supportive of higher education, universities across the country wouldn't have to depend upon multi-millionaires for academic improvements. The Oregon State Legislature is equally stingy about appropriating money, forcing state institutions to seek fiscal help from just about anyone willing to give.

But Knight isn't just anyone. Perhaps Nike could do more to provide improved working conditions in its subcontracted factories across the globe. Perhaps there is more the University could do in its relationship with Knight to bring that about. But Knight is the University's largest donor ever, and his consideration reaches both academics and athletics. The Knight Library is the state's largest library, and that's Knight's money. The Knight Law Center has allowed both our law school and other departments to grow and expand, and that's Knight's money. In short, Knight is a close friend of the University, and the whole community benefits as a result.

If the campus community does indeed want to help change the world — especially as regards workers' rights, global trade or manufacturing standards — it is more effective to engage those that one wishes to influence rather than alienate them. Knight isn't going to listen to anything the University Senate, the ASUO or student activists have to say if he is disassociated from the University. Our contracts for athletic and trademarked apparel aren't enough of a carrot to dangle in front of Nike's nose. We must work together.

In light of the recent attacks on America, it is a grand feeling to realize that one of the most contentious issues of the last school year has achieved some resolution. It isn't over, though. Concerned students, faculty and alumni should continue to speak up about their belief in human rights and fair trade. We share those concerns; we are just thankful that the campus community once again has Knight's trust and support — and his ear.

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. The editorial board members are editor in chief Jessica Blanchard, managing editor Michael J. Kleckner, editorial editor Julie Lauderbaugh, assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis, community representative Gabe Shaughnessy and community representative Jessica Southwick. Responses can be sent to editor@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Fighting off post-attack ignorance

The Sept. 11 terrorist attack was the largest single loss of life in the United States since the Battle of Antietam during the Civil War, and it has cultivated a fear and loss of security unlike any our generation has experienced.

In the past two weeks, those intense emotions have turned into hostility targeted at Americans with Middle Eastern heritage, especially Muslim and Arab communities. Though the anger, pain and frustration experienced in the aftermath of such a devastating event is natural, the display of retaliation stemming from ignorance and fear makes the loss even more tragic.

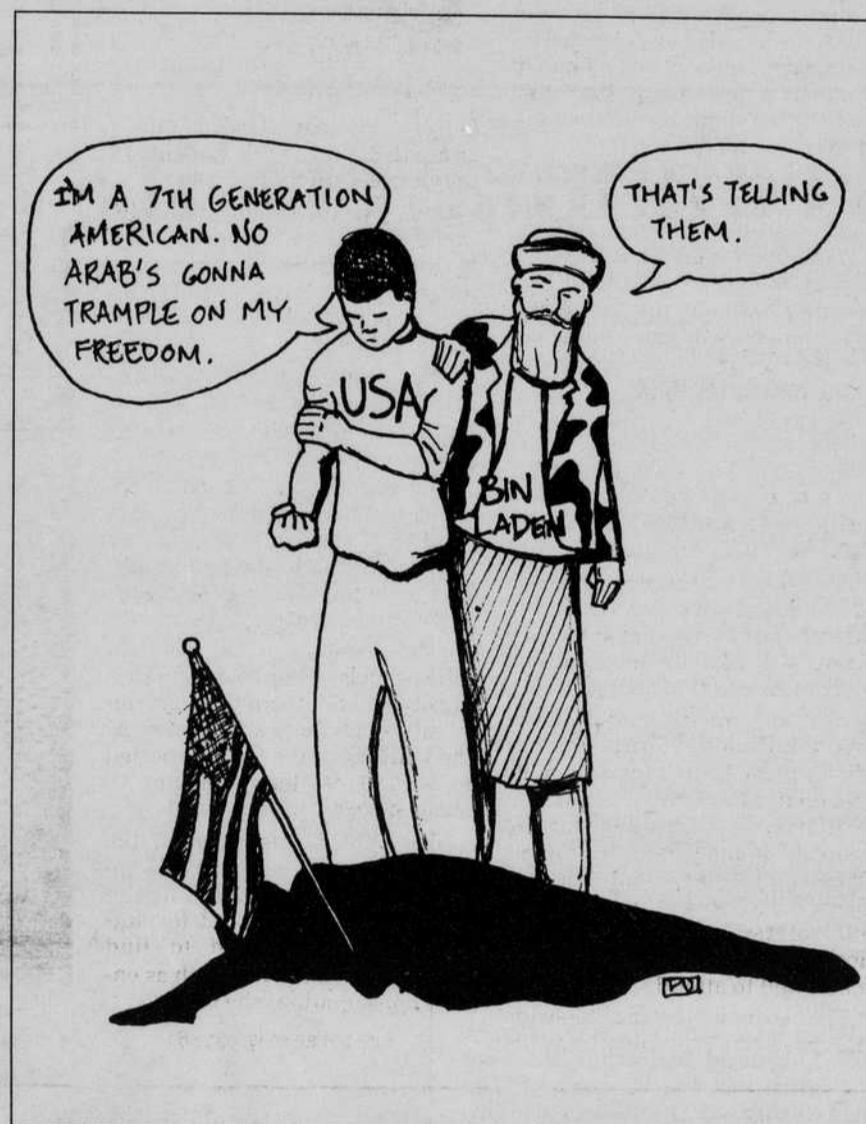
There are six to seven million Muslims in America, roughly the same number as Jews, making up the second or third largest religion in America after Christianity. The Koran is similar to the Bible, at least in that it can be easily manipulated by extremists.

So how do Islamic fundamentalist terrorists fit into the larger picture of Islam? The same way that fanatic David Koresh fits into the Christian religion? Obviously not. As Americans, we would be outraged if people from another culture assumed we were all potential Unabombers or Timothy McVeighs.

Yet only hours after the attacks, Islamic schools and businesses were threatened. During the following week, a mosque in Texas was bombed and numerous assaults against Arabs have been reported. In our own community, residents of Middle Eastern descent have been threatened and ugly graffiti bearing hateful comments directed ridiculously at the entire country of Afghanistan or "Arabs" has appeared.

Turning the loss into anger and directing it at a group of people based upon their cultural heritage is ignorant. And it's ignorance that is lumping Muslims, Arabs and other people of Middle Eastern descent into a group that many Americans see as threatening.

With all of the TV-watching and newspaper-reading that America has done in the past two weeks as details continue to unfold, why are so many



Peter Utsey Emerald

Americans in fear of other Americans, for the sole reason that their parents were from the Middle East, or that they attend a mosque rather than a Christian church? Have they missed the articles reporting that Muslim leaders are condemning the attacks and the Muslim community is calling the terrorism irrational and un-Islamic? Do they realize that the Islamic religion prohibits terrorism and attacks against women, children and civilians? Or that a large number of Muslims in America are African American?

America prides itself on standing for equality and open-mindedness, so why is it that, throughout our history, there are countless examples where we continue to discriminate against our fellow citizens based on the actions of a radical few?

Do we assume that all Italians are

linked to the Mafia? That all African Americans are in gangs? That all Irish are drunks? Of course not — even the mention of those ridiculously generalized statements is ignorant.

Americans of Middle Eastern descent take pride in their heritage, but also in the fact that they are Americans. They also feel the pain and loss of Sept. 11. As a country, we've pulled together in patriotic protest to what happened, but we need to make sure we don't also pull ourselves apart by isolating a large group of Americans. If we continue to point fingers and allow fear and ignorance to cause us to turn against our neighbors, we have let the terrorists win.

Rebecca Newell is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. She can be reached at rebeccanewell@dailyemerald.com.

Don't treat Earth like it's invincible

GUEST COMMENTARY

Joe Kinney

As people are becoming aware, there does appear to be signs emerging that the planet Earth is demonstrating finite capabilities to support the continued existence of life. The atmosphere appears to be heating. The oceans appear to be declining in their ability to support life. Also, many species of wildlife are disappearing.

The reason this situation should be of interest to people is that all prevail-

ing thought in the social sciences regards the planet having infinite capacity to support the continued existence of life as an important premise. All theology, philosophy related to governments and philosophy related to the cultural habits of people were developed with the belief being that the planet had infinite capacity to support life, ages ago, when the planet truly appeared to be as big as the universe to people. The philosophies being respected at this time largely determine how people judge questions of right from wrong. Also, although most people may not realize it, the philosophies being respected at this time motivate couples to have large families to a very significant de-

gree. As a consequence, the world population is growing in an exponential fashion. The world population grows in number similarly to how bacteria grows under favorable conditions. Every generation is bigger than the generation preceding it.

Without a major change occurring at this time regarding the philosophies people respect, I believe life on this planet will be rendered a non-surviving future. This is because the currently respected obsolete philosophies are motivating the world population as a whole to behave very destructively toward life's long enduring survival interests.

Joe Kinney is from Plainfield, Indiana.