

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511  
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union  
 P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403  
 E-mail: editor@dailyemerald.com  
 Online Edition:  
 www.dailyemerald.com

# COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:  
 Jessica Blanchard  
 Managing Editor:  
 Michael J. Kleckner  
 Editorial Editor:  
 Julie Lauderbaugh  
 Assistant Editorial Editor:  
 Jacquelyn Lewis

Friday, October 5, 2001

## Beauty pageant sends wrong message

### GUEST COMMENTARY

By Julie Ann Matonis

**"T**here she is, Miss America. There she is, your ideal. The dream of a million girls who are more than pretty can come true in Atlantic City. For she may turn out to be the queen of femininity."

Stop. Back up. That is what the lyrics to that song really say? What kind of symbol does that make Miss America? Last week in Atlantic City, N.J., Miss Oregon Katie Harman was crowned the 81st Miss America. The pageant went on, despite the recent terrorist attacks, because pageant officials hoped the show would be a reminder of American spirit and patriotism. It was a lofty goal that fell short of expectations because the telecast focused on gimmicks and glitz, at the expense of the 51 contestants and the American public.

The pageant was created in 1921 to promote the true American way — making money. Hotel owners along the boardwalk needed a way to attract tourists after Labor Day. Of course, to do that, females had to parade around in bathing suits.

Thankfully, some of the barbarity has diminished as the pageant has evolved. Scholarships have been offered since 1945, and pageant officials stopped giving out the contestant's measurements in 1986.

But in our culture, skin sells — and even helps raise ratings. Making money in television is dependent on ratings. Higher ratings lead to higher advertising revenues.

Reality TV is the latest ratings blockbuster. Hoping to capitalize on that success, the Miss America pageant incorporated elements of "Survivor" and "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."

Contestants "thrown off" the telecast (aka, not one of the top ten) were put in a room with microphones as they watched the rest of the pageant.

What is even more aggravating was the pageant's focus on reality TV during a time in our nation when all the public sees is reality on television. You can't get more real than firefighters mourning their fallen colleagues or a husband listening to an answering machine message from his wife while she was trapped in the World Trade Center. It is a slap in the face when Miss America tries to be more "real." Or as real as you can get onstage on national television in an evening gown and plastered-on smile.

The Miss America Web site says the pageant has "reflected ideas about national identity, community and moral standards, as well as beauty, femininity, and the roles of women." If the pageant was really about national identity, there would be more minority representation. Of this year's contestants, three women were African American, one woman was Asian American and one

woman was Hispanic. Not a very accurate picture of the composition of the United States.

If the pageant was really about upholding moral standards, viewers would not have to sit through song-and-dance routines and gawk at women in two-piece bathing suits as they parade in high heels. That is not relevant to moral character, nor does it demonstrate leadership ability. If the pageant was really about the roles of women in society, there wouldn't be a swimsuit competition to begin with. (My mistake, they're calling it poise and fitness these days.)

Despite the pageant's questionable standards, the contest went on in times of war. During World War II, pageant officials refused to cancel the event, saying it strengthened the American spirit. This year's pageant attempted to do the same.

Since the pageant itself did not accomplish the swell of patriotism it intended, let's hope the new Miss America has better luck during her reign.

There she is, and she is not moving out of the spotlight.

Editor's note: Katie Harman, Miss America 2002, is from Gresham and is the first Miss Oregon to win the pageant.

(U-WIRE) FORT WORTH, Texas  
 Copyright ©2001 Daily Skiff via U-Wire

## Columbus Day celebrations must be ended

### GUEST COMMENTARY

KRT FORUM

By Ward Churchill  
 (KRT)

**O**n Oct. 12, 1492, a lost ship's captain stumbled upon a Caribbean isle, thereby revealing a whole "New World" to Europe. Christopher Columbus was half a world away from where he thought he was when he hit the beach on "Espanola." The "Great Navigator" reported to his employers in all seriousness that he'd located the biblical Garden of Eden.

One of Columbus's first misdeeds was to kidnap a hapless group of the island's native residents, carrying them off to Spain, thus beginning the transatlantic slave trade.

It was after his second voyage that things got really ugly. Returning to Espanola in 1493, Columbus was no longer the "simple seaman" his apologists present. He'd been named a Spanish viceroy, appointed governor of the island and held the military rank of admiral. In his official capacity, he quickly established the "encomiando," a system of forced labor imposed on every "Indio" in his domain.

The rule was that the Indians would be worked until they died, which they did in great numbers. No one really knows how many Indians perished during the years Columbus held sway. Bartolome de Las Casas, a priest who became the first European historian of the Americas, was on Espanola at the time. He estimated there were 3 million native people on the island when the Spanish arrived. More modern and scientific demographers have offered figures as high as 8 million. Either way, there were barely 100,000 survivors when Columbus departed in 1500, and even those remnants were extinct a few years later.

The record is also replete with accounts of Columbus presiding over the wholesale butchery of the native population. Sometimes the killing was undertaken to "enforce the law" or "send a message" about who was boss. Often, it was done for sport. Sometimes, religious motives were apparently involved, as in the practice of roasting alive 13 Indians at a time the number — signifying Christ and the 12 disciples — on Easter Sunday.

Ultimately, the European invasion and the conquest and colonization of the New World consumed more than 90 percent of the land therein and with it, well more than 90 percent of the indigenous population. That translates to more than 100 million human beings. To say that a holocaust of such dimension is unparalleled in recorded history is to understate things dramatically.

It is one thing to be the inadvertent beneficiary of Columbus' legacy. It is quite another to celebrate it. But this is exactly what happens on Columbus Day every Oct. 12. It's as if the Germans had been victorious in World War II and had decided to conduct triumphal parades each year to commemorate the "achievements" of Adolf Hitler or Heinrich Himmler. One can well imagine the reaction of the Jewish community.

American Indians view celebrations of Columbus in precisely the same light and for essentially the same reasons. Polemics about the First Amendment and how Euro-Americans are only displaying a "legitimate pride in their heritage" when engaging in such activities do nothing to redeem the situation.

Nobody can undo history, of course. The past cannot be changed. Equally true, nonetheless, is that the past can be understood for what it was and that the resulting knowledge can be used to facilitate healing.

In this regard, ending the celebration of genocide, which is Columbus Day, would seem an excellent place to start.

Ward Churchill is professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado. © 2001, Ward Churchill. Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

## Letters to the editor

### Sexist columns create rift between sexes

I am writing in response to the column "Thumbs up to life alone before marriage" (ODE, 10/2). As a married male student, I was offended by the columnist's remarks. I disagree with the analysis of relationships between couples living together and a seemingly loose bond between a couple that is in their situation for pleasure and subservience rather than the love and trial.

The comments about men and their relationship goals are sexist and wrong. To imply that the primary reason men want a relationship that must be proven rather than just given to marriage is based solely on "free" sex and having a maid at his beck and call 24/7 is patently absurd and goes against the very essence of 100 years of "Women's Lib."

If a person continues to carry on in a relationship in which their partner expects them to do things that are against their philosophy, then they need to leave the relationship; something, I might add, that could be discovered the first days of living together rather than in matrimony.

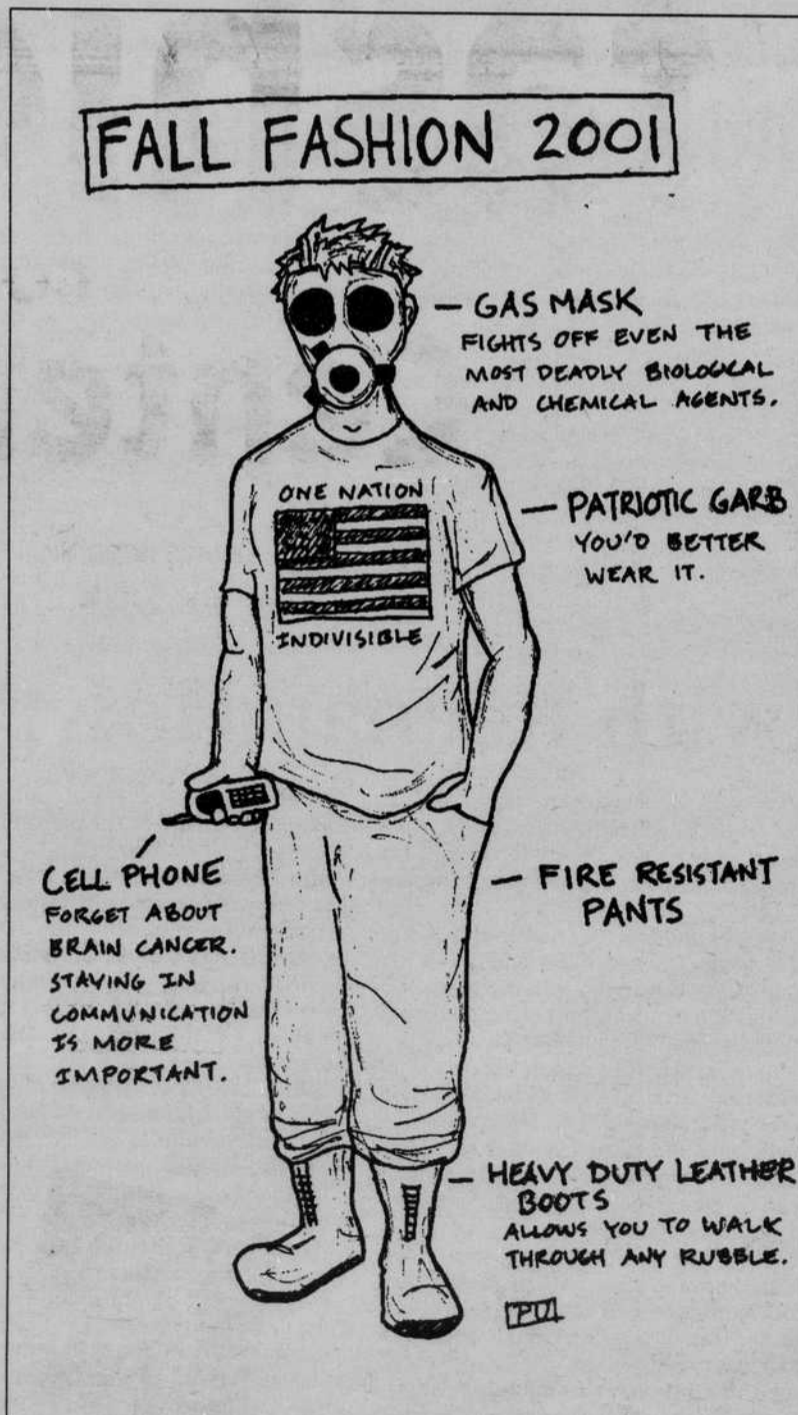
It is a disservice to the columnist, women and men to use stereotypes and statistical information to back up sexism. Hateful groups have claimed that black males are more prone to violence than white males, and there is statistical "evidence" to support their opinions. Does that mean their claims are true? The reason there is a rift between the sexes is because of comments and support for sexist comments — like the columnist's — by both men and women.

Dan Isaacson  
 senior  
 political science

### We don't know Knight's motives for giving

Instead of pop "psychologizing" Phil Knight for his motives of support, as Andrew Adams did in "Always after the bottom line" (ODE, 10/3), maybe Knight gives simply because he is grateful. Oregon track coach Bill Bowerman lent Knight, then an average Oregon runner, start up money and let him market his waffle shoe design. The rest is history. The University of Oregon, for better or worse, is largely responsible for Nike. I am grateful that Knight has a sense of history, even though some students apparently do not.

John O'Brien  
 Eugene



Peter Utsey Emerald