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COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, October 9, 2001

Letters to the editor

West, Islamic world need perspective

Those who have learned history from the point of view of the West would likely be surprised if they read Amin Maalouf's book, "The Crusades Through Arab Eyes." While the English word "crusade" means an enterprise filled with high ideals and heroic deeds, the people living in the countries that represented the military objectives of the crusaders saw the Crusades as foreign invasions to be repulsed as quickly as possible.

The long history of strife between Christianity and Islam has created two conflicting collective memories. Past confrontations have produced the two communities of "Islam" and "the West" and have caused the West to view Islam as a source of antagonism. Muslims are aware of the decline of the Islamic world since the Renaissance. Looking at the world from the exact opposite perspective, Muslims feel themselves under attack from the West; there is a sense from both camps of being under siege (see Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, "A Sense of Siege").

The opposite sides have an ignorance about the experience and perspectives of the other camp. A solution to conflict not based simply on superior force requires people to use empathy and imagination in an attempt to figure out how their antagonists see things. Everything depends on your point of view.

Milton Takei

Master's degree, Class of '92
 Eugene

Emerald should show respect for Springfield

It was with sad amazement that I read the Emerald editorial, "Eugene healing needs to begin" (ODE, 10/01). What were you thinking?

Painting Springfield residents as low-class folks who spend their time driving around in pick-up trucks with monster wheels undermines any message of healing. At a time when community, in the broadest sense, is so important to all of us, cheap shots, ridicule and misinformation are unacceptable. We must all work harder to find common ground, bring our hearts and minds into our efforts and resist the temptation to label anyone as "less than" or "other."

For the record, students, faculty, staff and administrators who call Springfield home contribute daily to the success of the University. They teach and attend classes, participate in our governance, plan, attend programs and solve a myriad of problems on behalf of our community. They work across our entire campus — in our buildings, academic departments, residence halls and, yes, in Johnson Hall and the EMU. They are an integral part of the teamwork keeping our campus warm, welcoming and working.

There is no "shame" in being born in Springfield. Can you understand the damage that such a remark causes? Does it not occur to you that in making such statements it is your integrity and credibility that suffers?

The University of Oregon is a state institution, not a city college. Our local home is the Eugene/Springfield metropolitan region. The city leadership of Springfield is a valued partner as we strategize and work with other public entities to solve problems around local, state and federal issues, public safety, economic development, diversity, transportation and more.

The University community works hard to provide a safe, inclusive, respectful environment for everyone; we expect and deserve more from our campus journalists.

Jan Oliver

associate vice president for institutional affairs
 University of Oregon

Tips for cyclists

Cyclists new to Eugene shouldn't have to learn the following the hard way (by accident!):

- Bike lanes are one-way
- Sidewalk cyclists yield to everyone else
- Trust no driver — consider yourself invisible, night and day
- Hang up your "cellys," snuff out your "ciggys," keep your hands near the brakes.

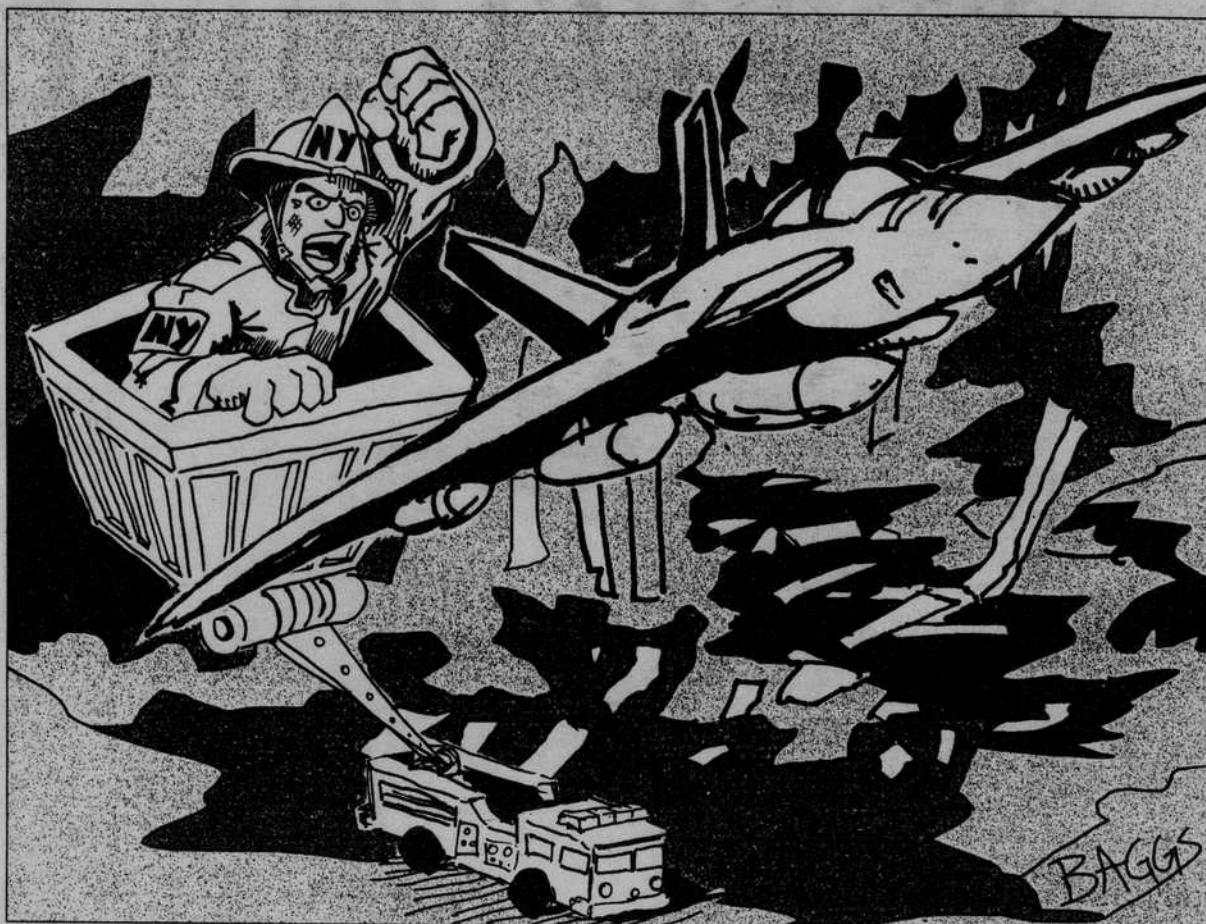
Go play in traffic!

Gary Trendler

junior
 art

How do you feel about the military action?

The Emerald encourages all voices to express their concerns about this sensitive topic and its implications in the future. All letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries are limited to 550 words. Letters and commentaries can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.



Steve Baggs Emerald

CAMPUSES SPEAK OUT

College campuses across the nation are stunned by the air strikes the United States began against Afghanistan on Sunday. Here are a few of the reactions from college newspapers:

Where's the other news?

The news is dominated, as it should be, by the reverberations around the world from the attacks on America. The front page always includes the big developments in this ongoing dilemma for that day. But can't some news exist outside this right now? Is it possible that every piece of news has been touched by the events of the 11th? Is there such a thing as an isolated event?

The biggest news of late is that George W. Bush has sent \$320 million dollars in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. We're flying dangerous missions through possible Taliban anti-aircraft fire and desert storms that spring from nowhere to bring supplies into this impoverished nation. Why?

Well, there is poverty, disease and starvation. Yes, that's all true but that's not really, really why. The real reason is that we're trying to butter up these guys in the Middle East and widen the divide between the people of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

Chris Townsend
 FSView & Florida Flambeau
 (Florida State U.)

Media mustn't settle for a press release war

Sure, there are humanitarian justifications for the bombings. Some 7.5 million lives are at risk from starvation or exposure. Not that we expect cruise missiles and high ordinance explosions to abate the famine in Afghanistan. Not that we expect any of the aid packages we drop to be distributed. Nor should we expect more success in Afghanistan than in humanitarian actions in Somalia.

We run the risk of dropping food

and blankets on people who need other things — like infrastructure and sustainable agriculture. Air-dropping supplies is a patchwork solution to systemic problems and may even create refugees while exposing recipients to further repression.

So, we're at war. At this point, what we must do is challenge the press to refuse to settle for Pentagon press releases. The media should be free to investigate and interrogate the practices of our government. Citizens inside and outside the university community should explore and debate U.S. foreign policy, including the rationale of training men like Osama bin Laden.

Staff Editorial
 Daily Texan (U. Texas-Austin)

U.S. must use force cautiously

The Taliban asked bin Laden to leave, but did not give him to U.S. authorities. The training camps remained open. And Sunday, U.S. forces responded with military action.

U.S. officials moved cautiously, and for this they should be commended. They didn't cave in to the cries for Afghan blood. Instead they were methodical about making sure of bin Laden's involvement and the safe haven the Taliban was providing. Sunday's strikes were calculated and aimed at Afghanistan's military, rather than its innocent civilians.

Now, the United States needs to remain just as cautious as before. Our government must continue to act with jurisprudence. If we stop using good judgment, this conflict will turn into a politically motivated coup rather than a justified retaliation.

Staff Editorial
 Kentucky Kernel (U. Kentucky)

Country's response is becoming vigilantism

The U.S. response to the tragedies of Sept. 11 is turning from shock and anger into a fanaticism that leaves no room for rational critique and analysis. Hate crimes across the nation are

only a glimpse of the emotionality that threatens to plunge the country into blind vigilantism. Everyone knows of someone who has been threatened or harassed since the attacks — Guardian staffers, too, have suffered from the backlash — but few seem to realize that the spirit behind the harassment is perpetuated through other, more socially acceptable means.

Catherine Navarro

The Guardian (U. California-San Diego)

Killing bin Laden will only continue war

Bin Laden would be a martyr like no other. His death in the face of the "American war mongers" would serve as a rallying point for other fundamentalists all around the world. Thousands of young Islamic men would take up arms — young men out to prove something, orphaned adolescents with no one else to follow, and other extremists looking for a reason to terrorize.

Should bin Laden fall victim to a U.S. strike, his followers and new supporters from all over the world will continue his war against America.

Matt Chain

Washington Square News (New York U.)

Keep eating bagels

War is war. It is a scary and morally ambiguous thing. And while it will affect us all in one way or another, it is vital to the running of America to continue with our lives.

Go to class. Eat a bagel. Watch a movie, pay your bills, play a game of football — just keep living. Osama bin Laden wants to disrupt our lives and destroy our "evil Western decadence." If that's not a rally cry for us to eat, drink and be merry, then what is?

We can't live in fear because that means we lose. That makes us cowards and America is not about cowardice — it's about freedom, so enjoy it.

Staff Editorial

Daily O'Collegian (Oklahoma State U.)