

# COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, January 29, 2002

## Editorial

### University must stay out of users' personal files

University students, staff and faculty should be aware that the school's server monitoring is infringing on individuals' rights to privacy. Nothing protects users from having the personal files they transfer on University servers examined on suspicion of illegal activity. The way the University's "Acceptable Use Policy" operates now does not protect students from privacy invasion, and a new policy is in order that specifically addresses users' rights.

A draft policy is currently waiting for approval by University general counsel Melinda Grier, but Grier has been remarkably tight-lipped about the policy's progress.

When considering the proposed policy, Grier should take a cue from the University of California system. Those schools operate under a policy that disallows examination of campus network users' files without consent of the user. Exceptions are made only in emergency situations when there is a threat to person or property, or when there is concrete evidence a law has been violated.

The University of California schools have shown through the implementation of this policy that they respect the privacy of their students instead of restricting what students can and cannot download. The University of Oregon should be protecting students from privacy violations in the same vein. Students and faculty should be treated as adults and trusted to use the University's server responsibly. Otherwise, students are forced to censor themselves in order to avoid raising suspicion among bandwidth monitors.

University of Oregon computer use monitors have every right to observe account users who are using excessive bandwidth, because those people are detracting from server availability. However, monitoring bandwidth usage is different from taking the extra step of checking a user's hard drive and potentially invading their privacy — a distinction that needs to be clarified in the University of Oregon's new privacy policy.

Privacy is an issue that affects everyone on campus, especially those who have no choice but to use the University's server. Action on the current draft policy needs to be taken immediately to ensure the privacy of users. Searching personal files is ethically unacceptable, and students, staff and faculty should be protected from University-led privacy invasions.

### Editorial Policy

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## So liberal it hurts

I was just reading up on John Walker Lindh, the "American Taliban," and I must say I am morally perplexed. How does one pass judgment on such an individual?

The real story of little Johnny Walker (Lindh is his father's name; he evidently prefers his mother's) began in 1997, when, at age 16, he sold his hip-hop collection and converted to Islam. It's hard to fault him here. When I was 16, I converted to agnosticism. A friend of mine became a Taoist and another a Pentecostal, of all things. Still another "converted" from punk rock to techno.



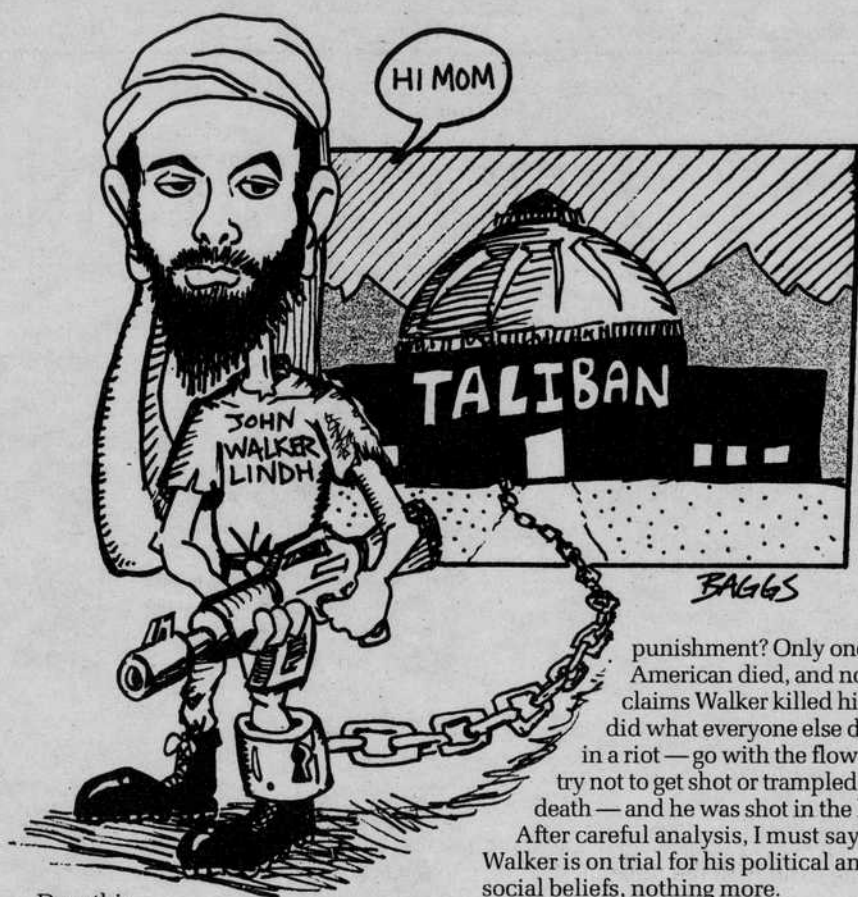
Aaron Rorick  
 Columnist

My point is this: 16-year-olds are freaking crazy. We all went through drastic changes in those years. Most of us were lucky enough not to have ex-hippie, so-liberal-it-hurts parents willing to support and fund our radical tendencies. My mother

sure as heck wasn't sending me off to agnostic camp in Sweden, or wherever agnostics come from.

But Walker's parents were different. Only a year after his conversion, they sent him to Yemen so he could learn the archaic form of Arabic spoken there, the form closest to the original language of the Koran. He came home for a while, then went back to Yemen and on to Pakistan. In 2000, about six months before his capture, he made his way to Afghanistan.

One report says he was given the choice, upon completing his military training, of either becoming an al-Qaida fighter or a Taliban warrior. He chose the Taliban because of that government's immersion in Islamic law. Another report says Walker claimed, during his imprisonment, that he was indeed affiliated with al-Qaida. Neither is verifiable, as far as I can tell. But at the time of his capture, he was only a lowly Taliban foot soldier.



Does this make him a traitor? When he joined the Taliban, they were not our enemies. He did not sign on for a war against America. And when that war came, what was he to do? Respectfully resign his commission? "Hey, Ahkmed, I'm afraid this whole thing with the United States is a bit of a conflict of interest for me. If I could just pack up my stuff and be on my way... I'm sure you understand."

I'm not positive, but I believe our Army can still shoot deserters on sight if they like. I doubt the Taliban was any less stringent.

Then what was John Walker's crime? Choosing a way of life fundamentally opposed to our own? If this is treasonous behavior, half of Eugene should be behind bars. Was participating in the prison uprising at Mazar-e Sharif a crime worthy of

punishment? Only one American died, and no one claims Walker killed him. He did what everyone else does in a riot — go with the flow and try not to get shot or trampled to death — and he was shot in the leg.

After careful analysis, I must say Walker is on trial for his political and social beliefs, nothing more.

But still, part of me wants to condemn him. He chose to participate in a government that routinely brutalized its citizens, shot women for going to school or work and beat people for watching television or listening to music, according to pundits on the news shows. He made himself into an oppressor, so it is somewhat poetic justice that his rights as a free-thinking American are being oppressed.

Walker shunned modern American liberties, abandoned them for medieval fundamentalism, so why should he have them now? At the same time, tolerance for differing viewpoints, even those as despicable as the ones adopted by Walker, is an essential part of the American ideal.

E-mail columnist Aaron Rorick at aaronrorick@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

## The multi-tongued have the edge

### GUEST COMMENTARY

Mike Turay

need bilingual teachers in our public schools. Psychology? Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung are better in German. Art? Appreciate it more with French or Italian. Social work? Everything from Spanish to Somali would be useful. Science? Russian was the language of an incredible amount of scientific research done in the last century. When looking for jobs after college, a second language can give you an edge over your equally qualified — but monolingual — competition.

No academic discipline can claim to have its body of knowledge discovered, researched and categorized solely in English, even if the English language and its literature are avidly studied and written about in hundreds of other languages.

To deliberately limit yourself to English is to practice a form of linguistic isolationism, which is out of step with 21st century realities. It demonstrates poor scholarship on the part of a serious student by refusal of access to a larger share of the world's common body of knowl-

edge, particularly when it comes to majors and fields of expertise.

English is the world's most widely spoken language. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that this makes learning other languages nothing more than a tedious academic exercise. This is an attitude to be resisted when the world's peoples and societies are becoming more interconnected — and interdependent — at a rate unprecedented in human history. Foreign languages are more than sets of strange vocabulary, senseless grammar and frustrating irregular verbs; they are windows into the physical and cultural worlds which their speakers inhabit. Without making an effort to step into the mindsets of other peoples, you end up with a limited, distorted view of your own.

By taking the time to acquire even only a working knowledge of another language — especially one relevant to your field of study — you're able to become a more well-rounded student, develop a clearer picture of the people and societies which use that language, and add to your résumé what can be a very valuable skill in today's tighter job market.

Mike Turay graduated from Portland State University in 2000.