

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Olympics not the place for patriotic zealots

(U-WIRE) LONG BEACH, Calif. — The Winter Olympics are upon us. Friday night we were witnesses to an opening ceremony that was poignant and exciting. President George W. Bush tried to portray himself as a man of the people, sitting in the stands among America's athletes and even speaking to one athlete's mother.

The Olympics are the greatest showing of athletic prowess that the world knows. But the coverage of the events on NBC show that this is more America's Olympics. This is wrong.

On the rebound from Sept. 11, Americans feel that we need to show we are still the top nation in the world in all aspects. We are.

But the Olympic Games should not be looked at as some sort of showcase of America's superiority. The Olympics should be a showcase of the athleticism of the greatest athletes of all nations.

With medal counts and human interest stories about American athletes, NBC is trying to show that America is still the best. This remains to be seen though and when the final medal count is tallied, it is doubtful that America will be on top.

The Olympics are a showcase for amateur athletes from all nations, not just ours. It is important that Americans recognize the Olympics not as America's games, but as the world's games.

The mish mash of patriotism and rhetoric only helps to detract from the idea that the Olympics were built on: that the world can come together as one for 16 days and everyone will be happy.

At the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Adolf Hitler hoped his German team would solidify the superiority of the so-called Aryan race. American hero Jesse Owens proved Hitler wrong, winning four gold medals.

The situation now is much different, but somewhat the same. In both circumstances, the host nation is at a great turning point and is trying to show its national unity and superiority on the track or the ice or the slopes.

But there is no place on the track or slopes or ice for national superiority. There is only room for honest competition between the best athletes in the world. A showing of the physical and mental potential and dedication that everyone can strive for.

The Olympics should not be America's attempt to display any sort of overt superiority, but to bring to light the fire of athleticism that resides in all athletes.

The Olympic Games are the best chance for our world to come together as one, unhindered by preconceived notions and armed only with power and wits of the world's greatest athletes.

This editorial is courtesy of the California State University at Long Beach's campus newspaper, the Daily Forty-Niner.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. 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.

Letters to the editor

ODE shouldn't play name game

I was greatly puzzled at the editorial note prior to Brian Stubbs's guest commentary on Feb. 7 (Abortion supporters must use facts, logic to persuade, ODE). Exactly how is it "standard newspaper" practice to call those who hold to a pro-life position "anti-abortion"? Whoever creates the "standard newspaper practice" clearly doesn't think about the issues, but likes to begin the dialogue with slick rhetoric that places preconceived notions into the reader's mind.

For example, being pro-life does and always will mean being pro/for the life of the fetus/child. If there was a method of abortion that terminated pregnancy but kept a fetus/baby alive someone with a "pro"-life position would support that.

When the Emerald or any editorial force sways an opinion by using a new name like anti-abortion, or even more absurd, "anti-choice," they are not sticking to the issues but playing off of human emotion and a cultural distaste for perceived oppression. Not only do these names not accurately represent a pro-life position, they change the argument to one where we are not even arguing about the same things.

Pro-life simply means for the life of the child, period.

Mike Alverts
 Eugene

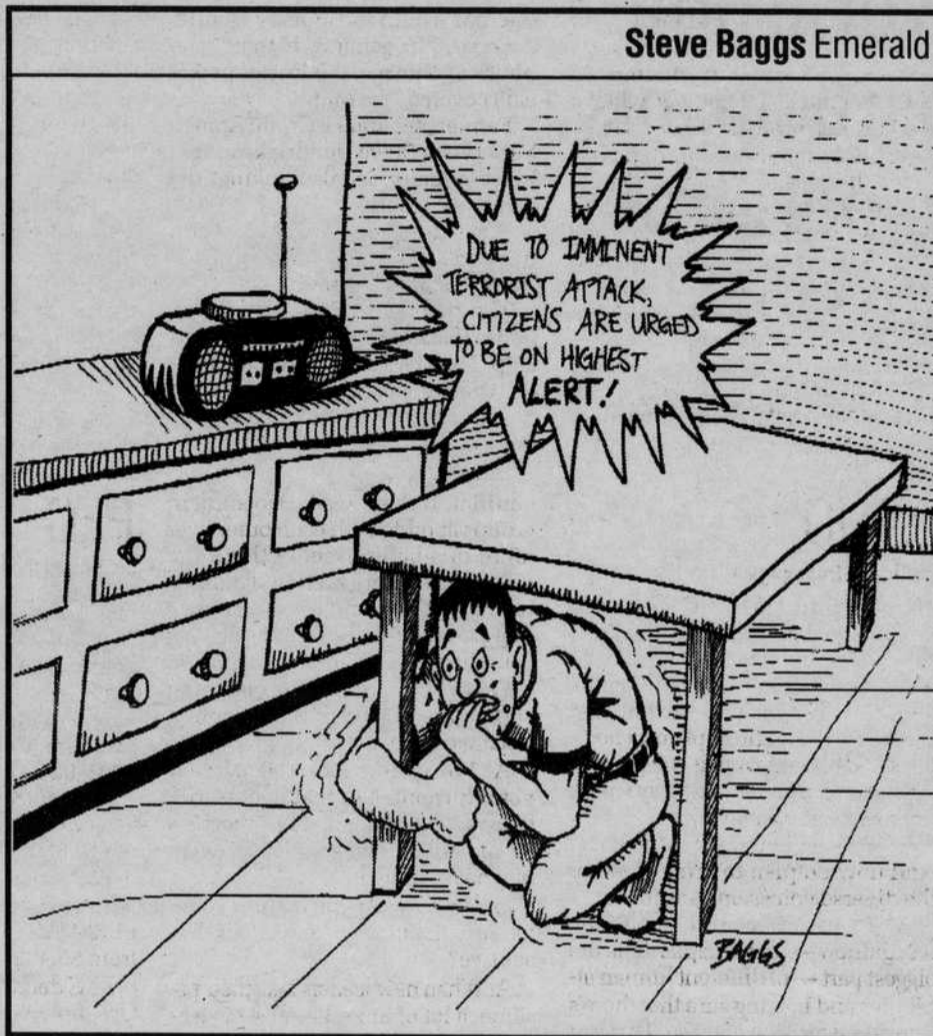
Emerald shows bias again

In reference to "Abortion supporters must use facts, logic to persuade" (ODE, 02/07), doesn't it seem a bit ridiculous for the Emerald, before printing a guest commentary, to qualify the author's word selection, in this case objecting to the term "pro-life"?

Moreover, isn't it a back-handed slap to the guest writer? If the Emerald wants a wide range of viewpoints to appear on its letters page, the Emerald would be well advised to treat its commentators better.

Would the Emerald describe the other side as "pro-abortion"? Of course not; they use "pro-choice," which is not the linguistic opposite. In fact, on Jan. 23, Emerald writer Ben Hughes used the clearly biased phrasing "anti-choice" — in a news article, no less.

The fact is, "pro-choice" is no more semantically descriptive than the term



"pro-life," to which the Emerald so notably objects. Even then, "pro-choice" is less descriptive, because it leaves the point of contention out of the discussion, viz. abortion.

Especially when using loaded words such as "progressive" and "diversity" as a matter of routine, the Emerald is in no position to criticize others' self-applied political designations. Instead of being the unbiased journal of record that it purports to be, the Emerald once again reveals itself to be liberal by default.

William W. Beutler
 editor emeritus
 Oregon Commentator

Let's ... roll?

I have the highest respect for the Office of the Presidency, but (President George W.) Bush is now besmirching that office and insulting the intelligence of the American public by saying "Let's Roll." It's not exactly "When in the course of human events ..." or "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country ..." I'm sure his speechwriters can come up with something better. A truly strong president has no need for a catch phrase.

Chuck Slothower
 freshman
 pre-journalism

The lesson behind 'Black Hawk Down'

GUEST COMMENTARY

Ian Urbina

On Oct. 3, 1993, U.S. forces entered the Somali capital of Mogadishu to capture key officials of one of the main warring clans. The mission was a fiasco, as 18 American soldiers and more than five hundred Somalis were killed that night.

The event, the subject of the recently released Hollywood film "Black Hawk Down" raises an important question. Somalia is a country characterized by factionalism. The running joke is that if there are four Somalis in a room, there are probably six rival clans present. Yet when the two U.S. Black Hawks went down, an entire city seemed to drop its internal differences and attack the very forces that were there to feed them. Why? Did the Somalis rampage simply out of an inherent hatred for outsiders?

Few populations, least of all among the formerly colonized, warmly embrace foreign involvement in domestic affairs, and the Somalis are no different in this regard. But there were specific factors that set the stage for the distinct fury in Mogadishu that day.

One important factor was the massacre of July 12. Three months prior to the downing of the Black Hawks, the United Nations and United States decided to put pressure on the Habr Gidr, one of Soma-

increased, young men arrived to cities with little more than an acute sense of anger toward so-called Western solutions.

It didn't help that the country was awash in arms. In Mogadishu, it was almost easier to buy a machine gun than lunch. For years, the United States kept Siad Barre propped up with \$50 million in annual arms shipments.

None of these factors lessens the tragedy of the American and Somali lives lost when those Black Hawks went down, but there may be lessons to learn.

Short-term stabilizing relationships with repressive leaders have long-term destabilizing consequences, especially when these relationships are bought with weapons. The United States must begin taking human rights more seriously as it chooses its friends, and begin supporting the United Nations in its efforts at international small arms controls. This would be a reversal from the role the United States' gun lobby played at last year's U.N. arms control convention.

Above all, Somalia was a lesson in the danger of ignoring failed states, and political and monetary policies which contribute to their demise.

Ian Urbina is a doctoral student in history at the University of Chicago.