

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Equality turns hypocritical in slave labor suit

(U-WIRE) STORRS, Conn. —

The recent filing of a lawsuit in a Brooklyn federal court highlights the hypocritical argument upon which the claim for slave reparations is based. Activist Deadria Farmer-Paellman filed a lawsuit seeking billions of dollars against three corporations that benefited from slavery before the Emancipation Proclamation. FleetBoston Financial, railroad firm CSX and the Aetna insurance company have all been named. Farmer-Paellman has promised to name more than 100 other defendants. She filed the suit on behalf of 35 million African Americans.

Her claim is that the three companies were either built upon the assets acquired through slave labor or profited directly from it. The lawsuit, according to the Associated Press, alleges that CSX, formed in 1980, has roots in slave labor resulting from rail lines built by slaves that are still utilized today. It alleges that FleetBoston Financial descended from Rhode Island Bank, founded by John Brown, who financed the bank with profits earned through the slave trade.

These actions, and the claims upon which this suit is built, are tantamount to nothing more than a racial witch hunt. Proponents of slave reparations argue that repaying living African Americans for the horrible injustices of crimes committed more than 140 years ago is a necessary step in correcting the atrocity that slavery was, and the legacy of hate it undoubtedly carries with it. In reality, it does nothing more than draw further lines of division between those people advocating reparations and those opposing them. Farmer-Paellman is basing her claim against people living today and on the culpability of others who have been dead for one and a quarter centuries. This does not advance the cause of further equality for African Americans; it serves only to segregate the population further by pushing the blame onto living people who did no wrong. This claim is based on nothing but skin color and a weak historical connection to the ugly institution of slavery. As such, it is harmful and not helpful to the plight of the African American communities that are still suffering today from the racism that undoubtedly continues to have an insidious effect on the quality of their lives.

In order to truly make things equal, we must erase racism as much as possible and provide all citizens with the same opportunity for upward mobility. Activists like Farmer-Paellman must be proactive and work toward creating a world in which equality is the standard. What she and her supporters are doing now is attempting to punish people who are not guilty for a crime they had no part in. This is racist in the sense that she is holding people responsible based on their affiliation with a company and the color of their skin. This creates more racial walls than it breaks down. This makes Farmer-Paellman a hypocrite, as she is an African American activist. In order to help other African Americans, she should not use racism against whites as a tool to stamp out racism against minorities. In no way will winning a lawsuit for reparations and punitive damages help underprivileged minorities achieve anything but temporary and minimal financial compensation.

Racism is a terrible, awful reality of our world, as slavery once was. In order to stamp out the effects of each, society needs to embrace policies that are not founded in racism, as Farmer-Paellman's is.

This editorial is courtesy of the University of Connecticut's newspaper, the Daily Campus.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

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.

Many students suffer from 'bipolarity'

GUEST COMMENTARY

Mark Grant

There's a sickness afflicting universities worldwide, a form of bipolar disorder where the student body's collective mind is severely split. Oregon is by no means immune, and may be among the most afflicted by this seriously retarding condition.

This illness is partly the cause of the traditional teaching approach in higher education. For four years, most students are inundated with books and lectures that inevitably converge on a very particular (although unstated) political ideology — the one preferred by key members in the department in which the student is majoring. Such inundation must eventually affect the outlook of the student. Advertisers and Ivan Pavlov would surely agree to this. So would educators, whether they'll admit to it or not.

While bipolar disorder is a hemispheric dysfunction, it has nothing to do with holistic versus linear differences in the brain. My position is "right"-wing faculties do little or nothing to ensure that their students are adequately exposed to ideas that critique certain aspects of business. Conversely, liberal arts schools tend to produce twisted forms of "left"-wing indoctrination that encourage an absurd bias against a vast array of mainstream concepts like the "corporate elite" and "globalization."

In both cases, the so-called ideal of de-

tached education becomes muddled with partisan propagation. Little wonder one half of the collective mind dismisses the other as a "bleeding heart" or "tree-hugger" while that side regards the former as "uninformed" and "self-centered."

Thanks to bipolar disorder, we have legions of "practical" students coming out of business programs with no serious training in concepts like corporate stewardship, ethics or environmental concerns. This is dangerous for society and the planet. Likewise, many educated in liberal arts receive no appreciation of what good the free-market economy brings. Only after the university has pocketed all the student loan money do these "informed" types start really learning about things as basic and essential as compound interest, after they leave school.

This is something anyone in the education business should feel embarrassed about. But they'll try to sell you the idea that nonengagement is really all about freedom of thought.

Yet bipolar disorder is ultimately imposed upon students via a collabora-

tion between faculties and administrations — and these groups have nothing to lose from the ongoing mess they create. The party most responsible is the administration. They could do a lot more to ensure that your education dollars are better invested — if they had the balls to take a serious look at what's actually being taught in classrooms and its residual effects.

Some quick remedies for BPD:

Make all students study business theory for at least one year. This should be essential because our cultural orientation is fundamentally rooted in free-market values.

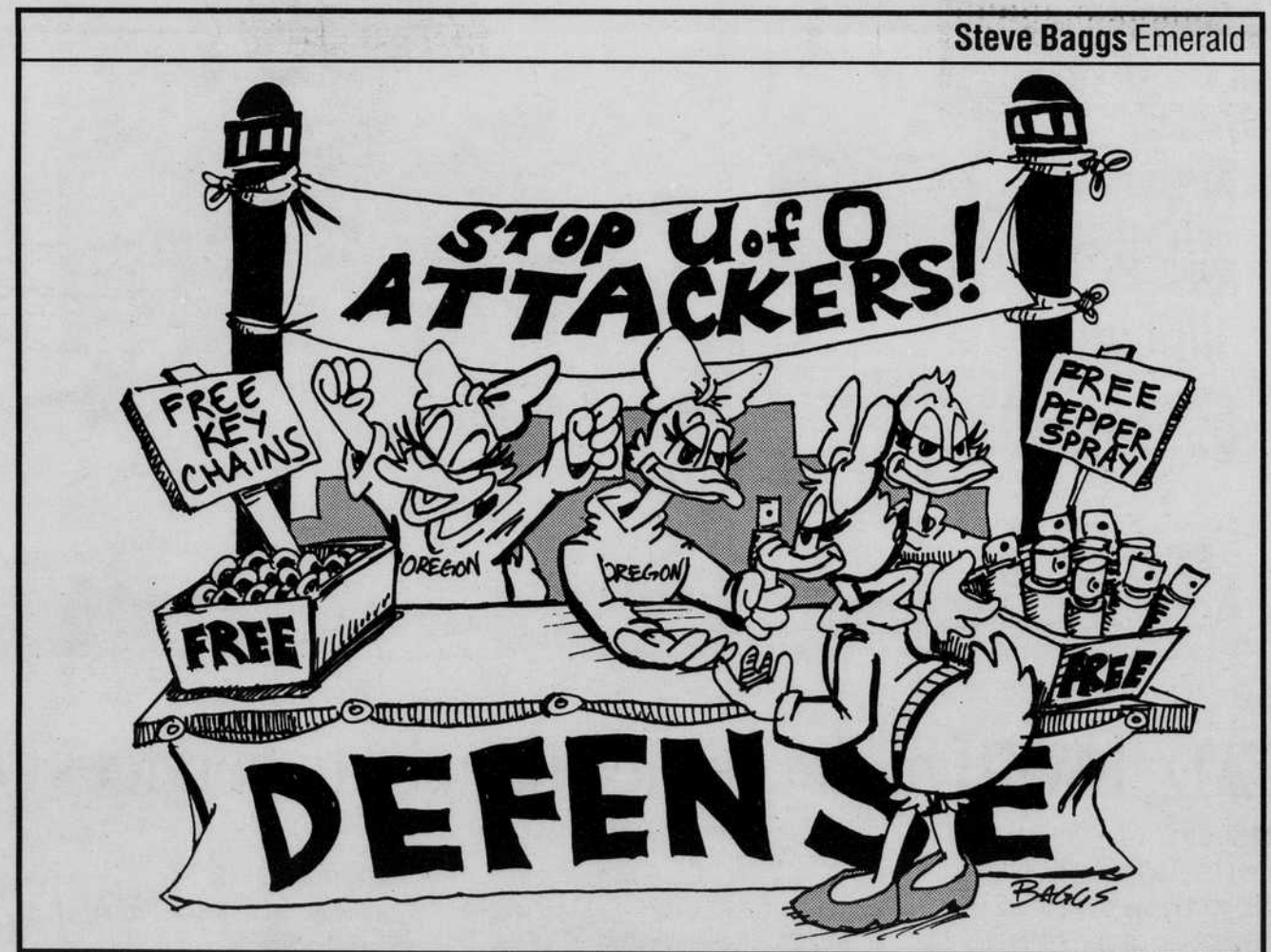
Make all students explore the effects that politics has on the free market, from the microcosmic level of office politics on to the regional, national and international levels.

Finally, for every course that engages any sort of social commentary, let a professor holding the opposite view teach the last two classes of the course, alone. Then let there be a town hall debate with mandatory attendance. This will elevate the quality of teaching on all sides, as surely as it will expedite "real" learning.

Which is something bipolar disorder actually retards.

Mark Grant is a 1985 graduate of the University of Oregon. He lives in Victoria, British Columbia.

Steve Baggs Emerald



Letter to the editor

Financial aid regulation disgraceful

John E. English's recent letter is sure to draw a lot of feedback ("Druggies don't deserve financial aid," ODE, 03/18). It is so easy (and even gratifying) to criticize absurdities as great as English's that I suspect many will respond.

The fact of the matter is obviously that the regulation, which makes some students ineligible to receive financial aid if they have a former drug-related conviction on their record, punishes only those of a lower economic standing. For example, a former murderer who can afford to pay for his/her education out of pocket has no problems to do so.

Further, it "punishes" in the most inane way conceivable — denying education.

If we truly think denying education is an intelligent punishment, all individuals who have had previous drug convictions should be forbidden from attending a university or college. This is, of course, equally ludicrous.

Personally, I would like to see this financial aid condition removed and those responsible for it fired. It is a disgrace to students that those responsible for our "higher education" could possibly have been so short sighted.

William Moglia
 senior
 German and international studies

CLARIFICATION

The article "Come Go with Me" (ODE, March 18), should have identified Myungji University as a university in Korea.