

COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Editorial University shouldn't hop onto pledge bandwagon

There has been a growing movement across the country to institute a pledge among graduating seniors, who promise to be socially and environmentally responsible in their careers. The University of Oregon is not exempt, and the school's proposal would allow seniors the option to sign pledge cards at graduation. But the concept, while well-intentioned, is unnecessary and aligns the University with the political agenda of certain groups that support the vow.

Graduating seniors should already be aware of their social and environmental responsibilities without having to sign a card stating they will do so in the future. The pledge was a common feature at University commencements until four years ago, when student interest fizzled. But now a group of students want to bring back the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility — but why bother? If the pledges weren't working four years ago and the school hasn't been able to drum up enough interest, why would anyone care today?

The pledge tradition was not ours to begin with, although it sounds like an idea born in the liberal woods of Eugene. The pledge started at the equally-liberal Humboldt State University in 1987 and has rapidly been incorporated at schools across the country. But just because other schools are hopping on the pledge bandwagon doesn't mean the University should.

The University should be promoting a diversity of ideas on campus and a pledge of responsibility in the work force defeats this purpose. By incorporating the pledge, the University is upholding the values and views of the people supporting it, namely environmentally and socially conscious Web sites that appear on the back of the pledge cards. The school is supposed to remain neutral on these issues, and with the affiliation of political groups, commencement is tainted with activist rhetoric.

Graduation should be focused on the accomplishments of students after years of study, not misplaced environmentalism. By encouraging graduates to sign the pledge cards at commencement, activists are detracting from what the day should be about — celebrating academic success.

Students should understand their social and environmental responsibilities in the work force by the time they have left the University. Signing a piece of paper that affirms this is not only a waste of time, but an un-needed event at graduation. If students want to sign the cards to affirm their commitments, they should do so on their own time.

Editorial Policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. 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.

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CORRECTION

The story "Police arrest student on felony theft charges" (ODE, April 8) should have identified Benjamin Kelley's middle name as Raymond. The Emerald regrets this error.

Political struggle ... or uncivilized 'bloodlust'?

If you consume any form of news media, you've probably already heard mention of each of the following, maybe many times. I ask you to bear with me anyway. I have something to say at the end. If you're not familiar with the information, I invite you to sigh with the rest of us.

A Palestinian suicide bomber runs into a banquet hall in a Natanya hotel. The ensuing explosion kills 25 Israelis. An 18-year-old Palestinian woman blows herself up in a Jerusalem grocery store, killing two patrons. Another suicide attack kills 14 in a Haifa restaurant.



Aaron Rorick
Columnist

Hundreds of Israeli tanks and troops enter the West Bank in response. In Ramallah, an Israeli sniper kills a 56-year-old Palestinian woman on her way home from the hospital. That same hospital later runs out of room in the morgue and resorts to burying bodies in a mass grave. One of those bodies belongs to a 21-year-old American citizen who died shielding her infant son from a hail of bullets.

In Bethlehem, an 80-year-old man is shot to death outside his home. The body lies rotting in the streets. Ambulances aren't allowed to run, so many of the wounded bleed to death. A tank attack kills a 60-year-old woman and her son. Their family waits a day and a half for someone to pick up the bodies. Another tank attack, in Nablus, leaves a Palestinian girl dead inside her own home, the victim of a stray shell.

I imagine you're thoroughly disgusted by now, but don't stop reading just yet. I haven't even gotten to the worst part. Everything listed above happened during one eight-day period in an area about the size of New Jersey.

The current Middle East crisis exists in a moral vacuum so devoid of decency that I am now officially ashamed to be human. And the more I think about it, the more ashamed I get. Have you ever peered through the scope of a rifle? It's better than having a pair of binoculars. So how did that 56-year-old woman end up dead? Unless she had a beard, I find it hard to believe that the Israeli sniper mis-



Steve Baggs Emerald

took her for anything but a 56-year-old woman. Through the scope of his rifle he could probably see the expression on her face.

And the girl in Nablus — how did she die? Do people aim tanks at private residences? It seems like a couple of machine guns would do the trick. It could have been aimed at another building, perhaps a police station. But how does anyone, let alone a trained soldier, miss a building with a tank? Whoever botched that shot literally couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. Why, then, were they operating a giant, armored death machine?

The acts committed on the Palestinian side are no less revolting to the civilized palate. Blowing up one's military adversaries is one thing; soldiers knowingly put themselves in life or death situations. Blowing up civilians is entirely another. Take a look at the two most

successful bombings in the first paragraph. One happened in a restaurant, the other in a banquet hall. The suicide bombers chose communal dining areas as targets, places where friends and families gather to enjoy food and company. They weren't hoping to catch an Israeli general or politician on lunch break. They wanted a large, civilian body count. That sounds more like "bloodlust" than political struggle.

I guess my only point here is to offend your sense of decency as mine has been offended (yes, I have a sense of decency). Israelis and Palestinians are not only ruining each other, they are doing the world a great disservice by displaying so openly those parts of humanity we would much rather hide.

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

Emerald cartoon lacked thoughtfulness

GUEST COMMENTARY

Jake Shore

American with an arrow pointing toward a picture representing urban decay with the same caption, would the Emerald print it? Why not? I'm sure there are a lot of statistics that could suggest a correlation between African Americans and urban decay in America.

The Emerald (or any significant paper) would not print such an illustration because it's supremely ignorant and fails to take into account a whole host of realities, such as poverty, politics, policy, economics and their relation to race. And most of all, it would be

insulting. So too, is the suggestion that religion by itself leads to war. Human beings don't need religion to wage war. They have plenty of greed, hatred and ignorance all on their own.

Religion and faith are deeply personal to millions of people everywhere and too big of an issue to be discussed lightly. The Daily Emerald is a fine campus newspaper that no doubt has a lot of intelligent and experienced people working for it, and as such, it has a responsibility to show a measure of respect to its audience. That's why the decision to print something so lacking in thoughtfulness or content reflects poorly on the newspaper and the University and insults the intelligence of the audience, religious or not.

Jake Shore is a junior majoring in history.