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Editorial

Ashcroft needs to let Oregon voters speak for themselves

Federal District Judge Robert Jones used common sense and ruled against the federal movement to make Oregon's Death with Dignity law illegal. With this ruling, we hope U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft will back off the will of Oregon voters for good and stop imposing his brand of morality on our state.

Ashcroft has been out to revoke Oregon's law since he came into office and challenged it in November 2001, citing he would prosecute physicians prescribing lethal doses of drugs because they were violating the Controlled Substances Act. But Oregonians have accepted assisted suicide as a human right. We've passed the law twice already — once in 1994, and again in 1997 — this should be more than enough evidence for Ashcroft that Oregon wants to keep assisted suicide legal.

Former Attorney General Janet Reno defended Oregon's law in 1998, stating that the Controlled Substances Act did not apply to the legislation. We hope Ashcroft will come to his senses and realize prescribing lethal doses of medication for terminally ill patients is a legitimate medical purpose, as Reno did four years ago.

Despite how Ashcroft may feel about the ethics of assisted suicide, history shows that Oregonians are using the option. About 70 terminally ill patients have ended their lives under the law since its inception and prescription abuse by shady doctors has not been an issue.

Ashcroft should stay true to his Republican ideals and stop stepping on states' rights. The federal government does not need to stick its nose into sovereignty of individual states because it has a moral qualm with its legislation. We hope Judge Jones' ruling will deter Ashcroft from meddling with the will of Oregon voters in the future.

Let us rest in peace.

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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The new faces of 'KIDDIE PORN'

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court gave child pornographers the green light — as long as their subjects aren't "real." The court struck down a federal law that banned computer-generated representations of children engaging in sexual activity.

While the intent behind the court's actions is honorable, this is a misguided and idiotic attempt to support free speech.

The Supreme Court did away with four provisions of the Child Pornography Prevention Act, implemented in 1996 to ban child pornography on the Internet. The question on many minds is why the Supreme Court would strike down a law that actually protects children.



Jacquelyn Lewis
 Assistant editorial editor

The court majority decided that "virtual" child pornography "creates no victims by its production," since it depicts computer-generated or manipulated photographic images, and not actual children.

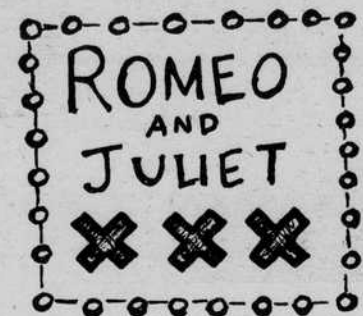
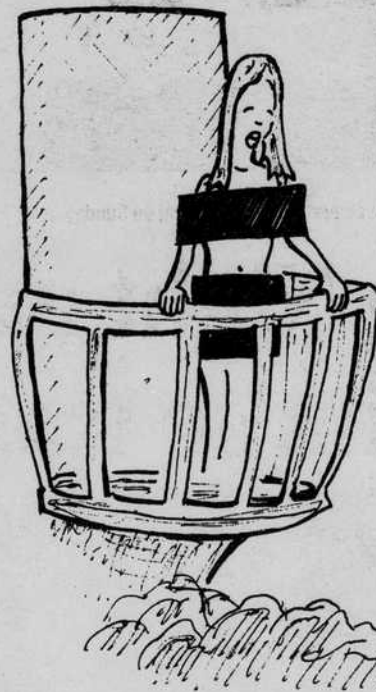
From a narrow perspective, this seems to be true. Of course, no "real" victims are created by the actual production of this type of pornography. But the second a pedophile sees the images, children everywhere are victimized. By allowing any kind of child pornography, we allow an environment that fosters child predators.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy explained the majority opinion with this: "Our society, like other cultures, has empathy and enduring fascination with the lives and destinies of the young."

"Both themes — teenage sexual activity and the sexual abuse of children — have inspired countless literary works," Kennedy said, including "Romeo and Juliet."

I find this defense disgusting. Since when did the sexual abuse of children inspire anything but future therapy bills? And yes, "Romeo and Juliet" was inspired by a pair of teenage lovers, but not by adults watching them have sex and becoming aroused by it. I must have missed the "porno" version of Shakespeare's masterpiece.

The court also mentioned movies like "American Beauty" and "Traffic," saying it



Peter Utsey Emerald

feared the provisions would prevent film makers from creating films depicting minors involved in sexual activity. However, these provisions have been in place since 1996, and both movies were made after that year. The law hasn't had much of an effect on the nonpornographic film industry.

Kennedy's representation of the court's reasoning seems eerily reminiscent of what U.S. News & World Report columnist John Leo calls "apologists for pedophilia," or those who argue that child sexual abuse isn't always negative. The Rind Study, which appeared in the Psychological Bulletin in 1998, even demanded that the term "child sexual abuse" be replaced with less "judgmental" terms, such as "intergenerational intimacy."

According to Leo, the Rind Study and its supporters have allowed pedophilia advocates to advance in society. Famous advocate Tom O'Carroll's pedophilia book is actually on a Cambridge University course list.

Of course, the Supreme Court had nothing to do with the Rind Study, and its decision centers around the production of child pornography, and not the actual molestation of children. However,

the court's changes to the Child Pornography Prevention Act, coupled with sentiments like those expressed in the Rind Study, create a scary, volatile environment, teetering on the edge of toleration for child pornography and sexual abuse.

This is unacceptable. Pornography should involve consenting adults only. Unlike grown-ups, children have no real say over whether they want themselves depicted in pornography — actual or virtual.

It's encouraging that not all members of the Supreme Court supported the decision. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justice Antonin Scalia dissented on the entire decision, admitting that computer-generated child pornography is simply "high-tech kiddie porn."

However, the majority concluded that "the mere tendency of speech to encourage unlawful acts is not a sufficient reason for banning it."

In most cases, I would agree. But when children are endangered, directly or indirectly, that's a "sufficient reason" in itself.

E-mail assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis at jacquelynlewis@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailyemerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

This week's poll question: Should the University schedule athletic games with teams that have American Indian mascots?

Yes — 69 votes or 61.4 percent
No — 27 votes or 23.7 percent
Don't care — 15 votes or 13.2 percent
Don't know — 2 votes or 1.8 percent

Next week's poll question: What do you think about the controversy over the Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts?

The choices:

- Not offensive, but T-shirts should remain in stores
- Offensive, T-shirts should be pulled
- Don't know
- Don't care

Letter to the editor

Don't persecute others' viewpoints

"... Nazis, the Klan and others ... deserve no First Amendment protection that we rightfully give to more constructive speech," wrote Pat Payne in the April 16 Emerald ("Absurdity about the 'n' word"). Apparently Mr. Payne thinks that some speech is so offensive that it should not be legal. And while the speech of neo-Nazis and the KKK might be extremely distasteful, a free society must defend its right to say it. Once we begin picking and choosing who deserves the right to speak their mind, we begin heading down the slippery slope toward totalitarianism.

If we say neo-Nazis don't deserve First Amendment protection, then what about anarchists? Socialists? Environmentalists? It is

not our job, nor should it be, to determine the social acceptability of someone's viewpoint. Many great scientists, theologians and innovators have been burned at the stake because their viewpoints were deemed "unacceptable." It is critical to an enlightened society that everyone be exposed to a wide range of new ideas and opinions, so as to accept the most rational, and reject the most irrational.

Many great ideas in history have come from unlikely or minority sources. Galileo was imprisoned for offending the dominant sensibilities of his time, even though he was right. I am not suggesting that neo-Nazis are right, but no one deserves to be persecuted for their views. It is essential, in an enlightened society, that all voices feel free to speak their minds without fear.

Chuck Slothower
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