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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Take some initiative: Help those in need

A member of the editorial board was leaving Gerlinger Annex a little after 10 p.m. Saturday when she saw a woman lying on the ground near Knight Library and two men standing above her in what appeared to be an assault. One of the men yelled at the gathering crowd to leave, and stated that everything was "under control." Most onlookers obeyed and began to walk away, but a few stayed and called the Department of Public Safety.

Even though DPS arrived and determined the event was not an attempted assault, it is startling that most of the witnesses, apparently not wanting to get involved, walked away. Perhaps they felt that getting involved would have seemed nosy, or maybe they just figured that someone else in the crowd would call the police.

Whatever their reasons for walking away, the situation could have been an actual assault and it would have been a terrible thing to not offer assistance.

It may seem uncomfortable to get involved, but if a situation appears suspicious at all, it is important to not walk away. This doesn't mean witnesses to possible crimes must get involved physically; just calling DPS is important. Even if the incident doesn't turn out to be a crime, reporting it is worth the potential embarrassment of being wrong, because bringing attention to suspicious behavior could possibly save a fellow human from becoming a victim of assault, or worse.

Taking action in these situations is important any time, but especially now, when assaults and attempted assaults have become more frequent on campus. It's true there hasn't been an attempted attack reported on campus in many weeks, but that doesn't mean we should be reassured or lulled into a false sense of safety.

Anyone who witnesses a threatening situation on campus should realize it's important not to just turn away. It's imperative to notify DPS immediately at 346-5444 or 6-6666 from a campus phone. It could save someone's life.

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.

Nothing is certain but death in Texas

On May 8, two men were executed for raping a woman in Saudi Arabia. The rapists were beheaded in public with a sword, as is the Saudi custom. They were the 12th and 13th individuals to lay their heads on the chopping block so far this year.

The justice system in Texas is falling behind. They've only killed 11 people so far this year. Last year the number executed reached only a paltry 17. The Saudis whacked 81 in comparison. But fear not! 'Tis an election year. Gov. Rick Perry, Dubya's former lieutenant, is trying hard to set things right. Seven men are set to die this month alone. Seven more will feel that final prick of the needle by the end of July.

An explanation for the comparatively tiny number killed last year on death row, as cited in a New York Times article, is the "rhythms of the appeals process." It seems the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals stayed a "handful" of cases last year while considering whether or not inmates have the right to "competent counsel" during habeas corpus appeals. They decided that, while defendants have the right to a lawyer, they don't necessarily have the right to a competent one. So the slaughterhouse, err, death row facility in Livingston (right next to the soccer fields where I used to play away games) is chugging along at full speed once again.

So, by the end of July, 25 men will have died in Livingston. That's 25 men in a little over half a year. Only 17 died during the whole of 2001. The difference here is a little more than a "handful." During 2000, Dubya's last year in office, 40 people got the needle.



Steve Baggs Emerald



Aaron Rorick
 Columnist

The next most execution-happy state was Oklahoma, with 11.

The only thing I can determine from this gob of information is that Texans want a hard-assed mo-fo in the governor's mansion, and, so far, Perry is coming across as soft on crime. The solution is obvious, and it appears to have already been set in motion.

Here's where the moral dilemma arises for me. I don't have a problem killing people who deserve killing. The opening paragraph offends me not in the slightest. The Saudi system of beheading is quick, efficient and cheap, three things the American criminal justice system most certainly is not. Furthermore, rape is a crime so base that any perpetrators, in my opinion, forfeit their humanity and the rights that go with it.

No, my problem is the fact that the number of people being executed in Texas magically goes up in an election year. Surely crime didn't actually go up, at least not in those proportions.

Criminals don't change their behavior based

on who's governor. No, there must have been a conscious decision within the administration to step up the rate of execution, to appear tough like George. Texans like toughness.

And now for my tirade. No one's life should depend on the whims of a politician, especially not a Republican one. While some crimes are definitely worth dying for, like forced child-molestation or murder in some especially cruel or unusual way, giving the government the power to kill its own citizens is just plain irresponsible on the part of the public. These people are influenced by so many factors not related to the good of the community (or state or nation, as the case may be) that there is no way they should ever be entrusted with such a high power. The very fact that the rate of executions fluctuates depending on the political climate is testament to this.

I'll leave you with one last factoid. Gov. Anne Richards, Perry's and Bush's democratic predecessor (and a grand old lady), signed off on only three executions in 1996. That was her election year. In 1997, the number of dead reached 37.

Columnist Aaron Rorick can be reached at aaronrorick@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Letters to the editor

Kulongoski can get the job done

There are a number of candidates running for governor, but Ted Kulongoski is the most qualified for the job. He is endorsed by many of the leading Democrats across the state, and has a common-sense plan for Oregon's recovery.

Kulongoski can get the job done in Salem. He has served the state well as a legislator, attorney general and an Oregon Supreme Court justice. In addition, he has been endorsed by Oregon's past three governors.

Former Governor Neil Goldschmidt says, "Ted can persuade people to work together when nobody else thinks it can be done." Kulongoski has the character attributes necessary to succeed as governor. He is willing to work with the legislature in order to avoid political gridlock and make sure that substantive work is getting done for the people of Oregon.

A wide variety of groups and newspapers have endorsed Kulongoski, including the Sierra Club, Oregon AFL-CIO, The Oregonian, The Salem Statesman-Journal and many others.

Kulongoski is the only candidate who has the common sense to get things done, and do them right. He has an extensive plan to cut down government bureaucracy in the area of education, to make sure more money is given to classrooms and teachers. This plan alone is estimated to generate an additional \$80 million for school funding.

Kulongoski is willing to find a long-term solution to solve Oregon's budget problems. He is

by far the most qualified candidate for the job. I encourage you to vote for Ted Kulongoski.

Eric Bailey
 junior
 planning, public policy
 and management

Wash your laundry — vote!

Maybe you vote as often as you do your laundry — not as often as you should. Today's college students hold within their grasp a phenomenal power — the power to vote.

As a student, I know too many other students who choose to forgo empowerment by not voting. Many college students are neglecting to participate in our democracy. A washing machine without quarters will not work, just as a democracy without voters will not work. Voting is the greatest form of interest articulation, one which is very easy and affordable for all college students.

Voting is an investment in the future of not only our schools, but our community, state and nation as well. The 2002 Oregon Primaries will come to a fast close on Tuesday, and you will have missed out on the opportunity of affecting Oregon's future political makeup.

Until college students put forth the effort to show their concern for decisions that could have tremendous effects on higher education and their quality of life, elected officials will continue to feel little obligation to listen to college students on other important issues. Today is laundry day — it is time to vote!

Mena Ravassipour
 freshman
 pre-business

Stop with the false charity

Does the mascot resolution really help American Indians? One view claims that passing the resolution will help show courtesy toward American Indians. The other view claims that not passing the resolution will help honor American Indians ("Point/Counterpoint," ODE, May 8). Both views of helping American Indians amount to nothing more than false charity.

False charity is an attempt to help without truly changing the unjust social order that perpetuates helplessness. In this case, students have attempted to help American Indians by supporting or not supporting the mascot resolution.

The end result is that these same students who claim to help American Indians instead maintain helplessness, because the passing or not passing of the mascot resolution does nothing to change death, despair and poverty in American Indian communities.

False charity means doing nothing substantive, which is the foundation of the mascot resolution. Courtesy will not help American Indians pay for college; honor will not improve the substandard living conditions of American Indian reservations. Both proponents of helping American Indians do nothing to end the unjust social order that oppresses American Indians.

Let us stop pretending that supporting or not supporting the mascot resolution will help American Indians. Enough with the false charity.

Javier Ayala
 Eugene