

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

DPS, religious group both acted correctly, respected free speech

"The world is going to hell in a handbasket and all of you will be riding on top." These were just some of the words students were bombarded with on their way to and from classes on Wednesday.

A big sign pointed to the heavens, and big bold letters that read "Repent" were seen before students could even tell who was trying to guide them into the light of righteousness. As students got closer, shouts through a bullhorn reverberated the need for students to repent or they'd be given a one-way ticket to hell.

Their message was loud and clear. Even if students ignored it, the religious group continued their barrage of words at students. Many people endured while the group berated them for their decision to go to college and have someone "tell them how to think." The group's speaker continued shouting through his bullhorn, repeating if students continued their current direction, they'd be first in line to hell.

Freedom of speech is a powerful notion, and even more so when people feel attacked by the very words that are so protected by the First Amendment. Two grievances were filed against the religious group as they fumed in the faces of students while marching in front of the EMU. The complaints filed were from students who felt threatened by the speaker getting in their faces and yelling in their ears with a bullhorn.

According to Department of Public Safety Associate Director Tom Hicks, DPS responded to the first complaint about the group's conduct, telling the demonstrators they could not use the bullhorn because it was not authorized. The group immediately toned down its demonstration, but continued rallying in support of Jesus and the need for people repent their sins.

The group's compliance with the DPS request to "tone it down" showed great tact on their part. Considering some students were very offended by their mere presence, the group's actions showed common courtesy and a certain respect for individual rights.

The second complainant was offended by the content of the religious group's speech. DPS responded once again, but this time officers stood back without addressing the religious group, to see if members were being confrontational in their address. According to Hicks, they were not, so the officers advised the complainants that the group was in its rights as protected by free speech and the First Amendment.

The editorial board commends DPS for sitting back and taking the entire situation into account before going to the group with their concerns, and the group, as well, for heeding requests of the officers who responded. Upon further observation, officers were able to see that the group did nothing other than shout out its message — which is their right. This kind of behavior is an excellent example of how other groups should act in exercising their free speech rights.

Editorial policy

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

Health care for ALL

Finally, an unborn child's voice will be heard — at least, it's a step in the right direction. Effective Nov. 1, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCRIP) will be expanding rights to include the fetus.

Now, before anyone starts going off about how I could feel this way, given that I'm a woman, too, and it is my body. Well, think on this for a moment — it would also be my baby.

I am not by any means saying that a woman does not have the right to get an abortion — after all, it's her own body. However, it would never be something I'd do myself. A child is a life, from conception to birth, and no one is ever going to make me believe differently.

I agree with the proposal that "amends the definition of a covered child to include the period from conception to birth." Some argue that by giving the unborn child coverage it takes away the protection of the pregnant woman. I don't see the logic in this thinking. Women are

already covered during their pregnancy under most insurance plans. If women don't have insurance, they can obtain the Oregon Health Plan for a low co-pay, which is based on their family income. Other states provide similar coverage.

The coverage for everyone is sorely lacking — not just women who are pregnant. Everyone deserves coverage, including "unborn children."

Many can and will argue that a baby is just a lump of tissue until it's born, and that it has no life. I don't see how they can say that. At just 28 days of life in the womb, the fetus has already formed a brain, nervous system and a heartbeat. If you don't consider that a life, then what is?

Yes, this proposal is fraught with legal and practical problems, but at least it's a first step. I know some may argue that it's just a first step to lead to the downfall of the Roe v. Wade decision because it defines unborn children as persons. I could see where this could be a concern. By identifying the fetus as an "unborn child" under health care coverage, it legally signifies the fetus is a living being — which could in turn be used by the government to outlaw abortion.

The way I see it, the government just needs to make the wording a little tighter. For instance, they need to

say that abortion is the exclusion to this rule, such as is stated in the Violence Against Unborn Children Act. This gives identity to the unborn child, but does so to ensure people who assault pregnant women can be held accountable for the death of the unborn child, as well. However, this specifically excludes abortion.

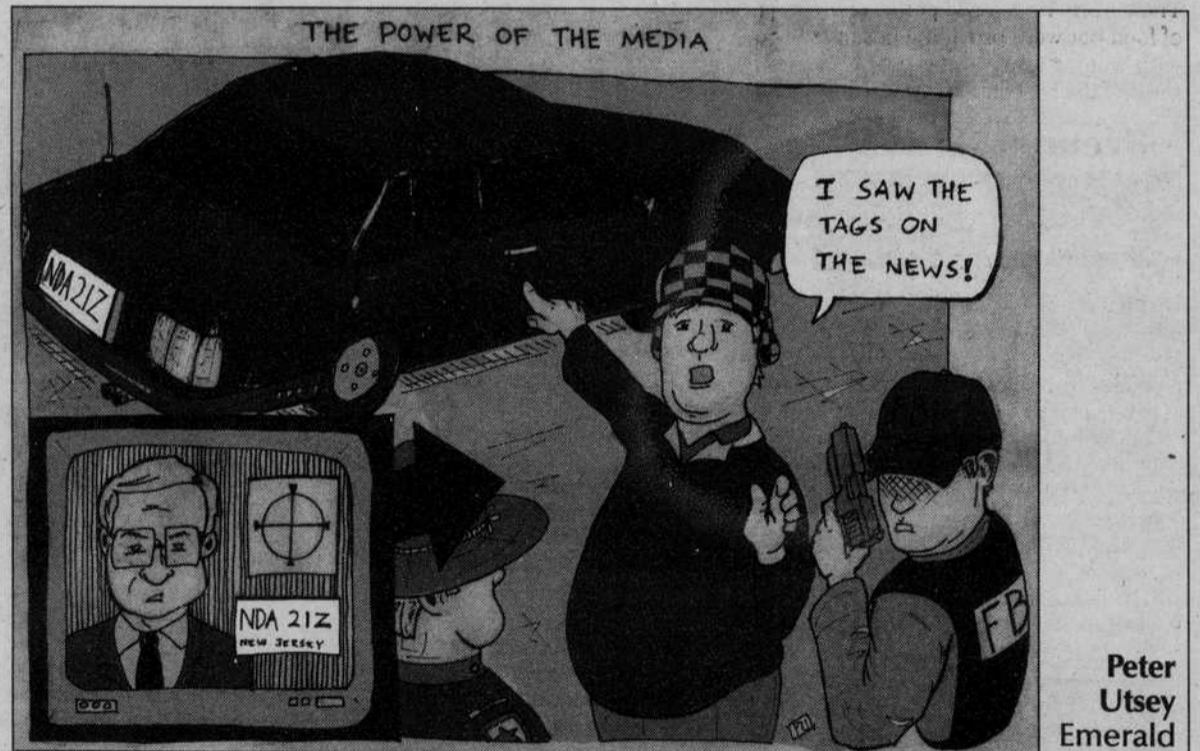
I would like to see health care doing a little more for coverage of abortions so women who can't afford one are better provided for. Granted there are some insurance companies that offer coverage for abortions, but they don't advertise that. Chances are that same insurance coverage isn't the same one that college students use. The Family Planning Expansion Program is a grant with the government set up for more of a contraceptive measure to help prevent unwanted pregnancies.

We are one step closer to giving identities to the lost faces of unborn children. I hope the proposal is a success because I don't believe babies are just a lump of tissue. They have an identity the day they are conceived — they just don't have a name. Give them a name.

Contact the editorial editor at salenadelacruz@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Salena DeLaCruz
Say it loud



Peter Utsey
Emerald

Is it offensive? Is it acceptable? Is it free speech? Is it art?

My topic today isn't really about the newspaper, because apparently our coverage is stellar, we're fair and balanced in every word we write, and our genuine mistakes haven't offended a single person. At least, it hasn't come through on my e-mail.

OK, we did get one complaint recently, regarding the Oct. 8 article "A Spot in the Sun." Our first mention of the former sorority house had the correct sorority name, Sigma Kappa. Then two subsequent references transposed the names. This was an error that we do regret.

We didn't run an official correction, however, because we generally run errors only in situations where the correct name or fact was completely omitted and readers would have no way of knowing it. To explain other situations can be cumbersome and run the risk of further confusing readers. Again, the

transposition was an error that we regret. And with that, on to my real topic.

Art is sometimes offensive. And who decides if it's art or not?

This question is at the heart of Wednesday's situation in the EMU Amphitheater (see "EPD halts performance in amphitheater," ODE, Oct. 24). Don Goldman (you may have seen him singing and speaking — he has flowing white hair) recently has been performing what he calls his "Fuck Speech."

I have been assaulted by this performance a few times while walking to

and from classes. Consisting largely of that all-purpose swear word, he also peppers the curses with "Die! Die! Die!" and "Sit on your fat asses! Sit on your fat asses and watch TV!"

However, the first time I encountered this performance, I heard only the four-letter words and the "Die! Die! Die!" There were few people in the amphitheater, and it looked possible that Goldman had been giving a speech and was now engaged in an angry shouting match with an onlooker.

The second time I saw it, I was walking close by, and I wondered if he was pissed at me. As editor of the Emerald, I sometimes carry a bit of paranoia that certain community members hate me.

But here's my real question, one I'm hoping our readers will respond to, because I think it's an important social question: Does Goldman's performance qualify as art?

The artistic-freedom supporter in me wants to say, "Yes, of course it's art! Screw you! You can't judge my art!" But I'm going to take a different position, at least provisionally. I'm open to being convinced otherwise.

Goldman's "Fuck Speech" may be art, but I don't think it should be allowed in the amphitheater as is.

Other offensive art is easily identifiable as art. If I walk into a gallery and see an offensive painting, I don't say to myself, "Oh my gosh! It's the real Holy Virgin Mary, smeared in elephant dung!" I know it's art, however offended I may be.

With Goldman, however, I had no way of knowing this was a performance. Sometimes random people just step onto the amphitheater stage and start spouting off. I was never sure if Goldman's tirade was directed at someone or if he might step down from

the stage and start attacking people.

And telling me to "Eat shit and die!" — whether he intended to direct it specifically at me or not — really isn't OK in a public place that we all have the right to transverse without verbal assault.

Why couldn't Goldman have a little sign near his feet, identifying his art as such? Then I could stand, sip my coffee, enjoy the "shock" value of the performance, examine the potential for social change and artistic value, and generally have a snooty good time.

Well, I've said enough. Maybe I've offended some of you "free speech" types with your sniveling sympathies and your disregard for the rest of us walking to class. Write in and tell me about it.

Contact the editor in chief at editor@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



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