

Letters to the editor

Affirmative action provides opportunities

Affirmative action continues to get a bad rap, despite the evidence that recruitment and retention programs have clearly increased opportunities for people of color, women and other underrepresented student groups. Unfortunately, due to regressive politics and ignorance about the nature of privilege, effective programs are still few and far between.

The phrase "leveling the playing field" may be a bit cliché these days, but it still makes an important point. Contrary to some opinions, affirmative action is not about giving some people an unfair advantage over others or students of color taking the "spots" of white students — an attitude that is both racist and ignorant. It's about allowing people to have concrete opportunities in a system that continues to disadvantage them in more ways than can be catalogued.

Austin Shaw-Phillips
sophomore
undeclared

'Thank God for cannabis'

I strongly support veteran Leroy Stubblefield's right to use the plant cannabis (marijuana) for health reasons ("Search and Seizure," ODE, Nov. 8).

It defies integrity and rationality to cage humans for using the plant cannabis, and to cage sick citizens using cannabis for relief of pain is vile, immoral and spiteful for a civilization in the year 2002.

At the very minimum, North America must legalize cannabis, especially when you consider the worst side effects of cannabis are police inflicted. Do cannabis prohibitionists even comprehend that they're admitting a desire to cage humans for using a plant?

Instead of caging humans for using cannabis, thank God for cannabis. Accept cannabis (known as *kaneh bosm*, before the King James Version) for what it is, as described on literally the very first page of the Bible (Genesis 1:11-12 and 29-30).

Stan White
Dillon, Colo.

Herbs surrounded by misinformation

Guest commentary

I would like to respond to the editorial ("FDA must be popping pills: Yellow Jacket ban nonsensical," ODE, Oct. 22) and accompanying column ("The paralyzing truth about beauty," ODE, Oct. 22) by Kathryn Petersen.

I would like to first ask the (respective) authors a question: Do either of you know any herbalists? You must not, otherwise you wouldn't have allowed the falsehoods about herbs to be printed.

In Petersen's column, she erroneously compares Botox, a preparation made from botulinus toxin, a bacteria, with *ma huang* (ephedra *sinesis*), a plant and medicinal herb, putting them both in a category she terms "miracle drugs."

Her first mistake is to think of herbs as "drugs." Herbs are not drugs — they are natural, botani-

cal, living beings, that, when harvested ethically and used properly as medicine for healing or prevention, have many beneficial effects.

Drugs are human-created substances; things like television, gasoline, alcohol and Prozac are drugs and, as we know, can be highly addictive. Drugs, especially pharmaceutical drugs, can have, and in fact, frequently do have, unwanted and unhealthy "side effects." If herbalists do their jobs correctly, the overall effects of the herb(s) they prescribe will match their clients' needs perfectly, without any "side effects."

"Once thought of as a miracle weight loss drug" — traditionally, *ma huang* is an effective decongestant, antihistamine and stimulant, and is useful for some types of asthma. I do not advocate nor have I ever advocated (because I do not agree with most ideas surrounding the need for weight loss) the use of

ephedra for dieting or weight loss.

If Petersen had taken the time to do a more thorough search, she would have found accurate, indisputable data that clearly refutes the FDA and the AMA's false accusations that herbs like ephedra are dangerous and unsafe. Check out the American Herbalist Guild's Web site for starters.

I wonder if Petersen and her editor are aware of the tens of thousands of people who are killed each year by iatrogenic (look it up) illnesses, misuse of Tylenol and other preventable mistakes? Compare those statistics with how many deaths occur annually from herbs, not deaths from some specious "supplement" that may or may not contain the herbs listed on the ingredient label.

Taking the FDA and the medical establishment to task is beyond the scope of this letter, but to continue to mindlessly parrot

the falsehoods spewed by these power-driven institutions is irresponsible, misleading, and seriously marred what was otherwise a fine editorial and column.

As a practicing clinical herbalist, I simply cannot let damaging misperceptions about herbs and herbalism go unrefuted. Every time another lie about herbs is printed, my job becomes that much more difficult.

If you are going to present an informed opinion, please do your homework first. And if you're going to write about herbs, try consulting with your friendly, local, neighborhood herbalist. I'm sure any of us would be happy to help inform you and guide you through the disinformation trail on the truth about herbs.

Lawrence Birch is a senior majoring in fine arts and a certified clinical herbalist.

Football, beer are American traditions

Guest commentary

In regards to the sports column, "Drunk Ducks," (ODE, Oct. 24), we find it pathetic that a student at the University, a "liberal" college, is so close-minded. It's sad that a personal complaint made it into our student newspaper. As a journalist, she should have considered both sides of the story before forming such a strong opinion. It was juvenile and completely unprofessional.

For example, the people surrounding her who were "overly friendly" could easily have been 21, therefore giving them every right to drink. For all she knows, they could have bought their drinks at the Moshofsky Center.

As for the supportive pat on the back when she hung her head, all we have to say is, get over it. We Ducks are a community. When we score a touchdown, we give "high-fives" to anyone, friend or stranger, around us. If something goes

wrong, we support each other.

With regard to children attending football games, we've been attending them since the age of five, and don't have any memories of alcohol. If the parents had a problem with the alcohol, obviously they wouldn't bring their children to the games. We find it hard to believe that a child is able to "differentiate the smell of beer from vodka by their 10th birthday" from going to a few football games a year.

This is yet another unprofes-

sional assumption from an unresearched article. As for the smell factor, what about people with body odor? Or strong perfume? Deal with it, everyone else does. If you had a problem, you should have taken it up with the people around you, instead of making a public complaint about it.

Football and beer go together — it's an American tradition. If you don't like it, watch the game at home.

Marisa Haworth and Kristin Mellum are undeclared sophomores.

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