

COMMENTARY

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Since when have elections become fair?

As the implications of Tuesday's election slowly become more clear, I thought I would revisit the paper's political coverage.

We received a letter ("Democratic rally story misrepresents facts," ODE, Nov. 6) upset with our coverage of the Halloween rally featuring former President Bill Clinton. We struggled to cover this event fairly, but it was all Democrats, and where's the balance in that?

The author's first point was that our headline, "Scaring up votes," (ODE, Nov. 1) could be interpreted negatively to mean that Clinton was using "scare tactics." We did consider that. We chose to run the headline because the spread also featured Republican gubernatorial candidate Kevin Mannix, so we felt any inference would be nonpartisan.

Also, the common meaning of "scare up" — to produce quickly or with considerable effort — is exactly what politicians do in a campaign's last days. And it was fun because the two stump events happened on Halloween.

I think the headline was a fine line to walk, as is all election coverage, but the boisterous political discussions in the office testify that no ideology was overrunning another in our news coverage.

Of more concern to me was the author's implication that Jan Montry, our political reporter who covered the event, was purposely skewing the facts when he wrote, "unlike Kulongoski, Bradbury focused on personally attacking his opponent." I saw Montry work to write the story fairly, and I spoke with him about it afterward. The story was his observation of the event, not a veiled political opinion.

Granted, observation is always open to interpretation, but what I heard from Secretary of State Bill Bradbury at the event was, indeed, much more personal in tone when contrasted to Governor-elect Ted Kulongoski's speech. Perhaps Montry could have made that point with a bit more subtlety.

But I disagree with the letter writer's opinion that Bradbury's speech was "focused" on what he wanted to do for Oregonians. What I heard at Mac Court was constant repetition of the idea that the Republican candidates were not really moderates. That's a fair message, if true, but it's not focused on constructive ideas.

Finally, the Emerald does not decide who to send on an assignment based on political affiliation. Journalists should be able to cover any event fairly, and that's one of the reasons there are multiple editors above a reporter: to be a check on balance and accuracy.

I think we did have fair election coverage, but I'd like to hear more from people who don't agree. Given our time and space constraints, it was difficult to decide what races and issues to cover. We did make sure to give opponents in different races equal space and positioning. We also had every county in the state fax or e-mail their election results so we could crunch our own numbers.

I just wish there had been space to cover more issues in more detail. But I still fear that too much election stuff — like in this column — may make readers turn the page.

Michael J. Kleckner is the editor in chief of the Emerald. Send your concerns about Emerald coverage or content to editor@dailyemerald.com.



Michael J. Kleckner

The editor's office

Undercover hate

My first recollection of what I considered to be a hate crime at the University was during my freshman year in the residence halls. Outside two Muslim students' door, some insolent fool placed Christian Bibles and other fundamentalist paraphernalia along with a note that suggested they'd go to hell if they didn't convert.

The two students bravely shrugged the gesture off, but the rest of us were morally offended. After all, what kind of person would have the gall to impose their prejudices so obviously?

Four years later, I've learned that a lot of people have carried the torch for intolerance. Bigotry quietly lurks on this campus in classrooms, e-mails and most recently, underneath the office doors of unassuming professors.

Students of Rob Proudfoot's classes may already know about the hate mail he receives every term. Proudfoot courageously tells his classes about the notes and asks his students to write a response. I call this act courageous because the notes are highly offensive to his American Indian heritage and surely must wear on his pride, although he doesn't show it.



Julie Lauderbaugh
Judge Julie

The latest cryptic hate letters came in the first week of fall term. One read, "Drop the Indian shit ... you're a conquered people. We're all Americans." The note was unsigned.

A second letter stated, "Foreigners who can't speak English should not be allowed in this class." Again, the person writing did not have the backbone to leave a name.

The hatred, fear and anger of the authors are evident; so is their abject ignorance.

The author who penned the first letter should be aware we have not gotten to a point here we can huddle under the equality umbrella labeled "American." And we'll never reach that point until we stop qualifying each other's identities with prefixes like African American, Mexican American or Japanese American. Heck, if white people immigrated to this country from Europe, why don't we classify ourselves as European American and give equal opportunity hyphenations to every soul on the planet?

As for the note suggesting we expunge "foreigners" from the University, I assume the author did not realize international students think their native counterparts are equally foreign, too. International students and faculty are an asset to this community, and I'm sick of sheltered whiners assuming they're worthless because some can't articulate fluently in a language that isn't even their own.

Speaking perfect English is not exactly indica-

tive of American intelligence, either; I've witnessed plenty of my peers struggle to communicate properly (read: like, yeah, um, you know, ain't, anyways, whatever!), but apparently it's futile to slip nasty notes about mall-speak.

I know a little bit about hate mail myself. As a columnist, I've gotten e-mails over the years praying for my soul or informing me that, "Your brain must be full of bong resin. ... You are a dumb bitch." Even the furry OSU mascot, Benny the Beaver, sent me a drawing depicting a beaver suffocating a duck. Thanks for the constructive criticism, Benny...

These items do not compare in severity with the incidents above and arguably go with the territory of the commentary page, but the odium behind the comments is the same.

Who are these disgruntled torchbearers of hate? And why don't students hear more about these acts?

Issues of discrimination will never go away, and neither should the discussion of them. Hate crimes do exist on this campus. That's easy enough to prove. The real challenge is figuring out who is behind them — and more importantly, how to banish the bigotry altogether.

Contact the columnist at julielauderbaugh@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Steve Baggs Emerald

OUS 'Deal' works out better for students, Oregon

Guest commentary

What is "the Deal" that folks in higher education keep talking about and what does it mean to students? I want to encourage the readers of this paper to check it out for themselves. Please visit <http://www.ous.edu/thedeal/> for the full report.

Here are some important aspects of the deal for students to consider:

Tuition will increase, but under the deal, it is capped by inflation and will not outpace inflation over any three-year period. Tuition investments will be matched by the state, unlike now. Currently, we pay more as students while the Legislature slashes their financial support fairly regularly.

Instead of paying more for less, under the deal

we will pay more but get more from the University and the state. Part of the tuition increases will go to fund scholarships for needy students, addressing the problem of the price-sensitivity of our most financially challenged peers.

A quality index will ensure that the University will not simply thin the soup during financial difficulties, spending less and less on students individually, contributing to such problems as huge classes and more and more graduate students teaching classes.

Valuable investment into research will help fuel Oregon's new knowledge-based economy. Overall, this has the long-term potential to increase the tax base in this state by creating jobs and needed economic activity.

Enrollment capacity will increase to 100,000 by 2010, enabling more Oregonians to attend our state

universities, helping to create greater long-term access to higher education through our and the state's investments. That's about 25,000 more students who can get a higher education without cutting into the costs of any one student.

Overall, I believe the deal is worthy of student support. We, as students, have an interest in the value of our degrees; we will take it with us, and its perceived value will determine some of where we go in life. "The Deal" will add value to students' diplomas in the long run, and I voted to endorse this proposal with that in mind. Check it out for yourself, and if there are any questions, contact me at psu17692@hotmail.com. If I can't answer your question, I will try to find someone who can.

Tim Young is a student representative on the State Board of Higher Education.