

Monday, November 18, 2002

UO should not censor embattled KUGN shows

Guest commentary

A recent editorial, ("Ducks should find their voice, demand an end to KUGN contract," ODE, Nov. 12) argued that the University should "break its contract" with the station because several of KUGN's syndicated talk show hosts engage in "hate-filled diatribes" and "don't promote a culture that rejects bigotry, discrimination, violence and intimidation of any kind."

The statements attributed to the talk show hosts identified in the editorial are deeply offensive. If they are accurate — and my limited exposure to the programs suggests that they are — it is critical that members of our community voice their outrage.

We should send protest letters to KUGN expressing our differing views. In addition, we as individuals should change the channel. If no one is listening, these talk show hosts will disappear quickly from the airwaves. But the University is not and should not be in the business of using our sports broadcasting contract to drive speakers off the air because we disagree with their views or the way they express those views.

The University is a public agency and cannot use its authority to directly or indirectly censor speech. Any effort to do so would be in conflict with Oregon University System policy, state and federal free speech provisions and with the fundamental values of this University.

The principle that the government may not censor a speaker because it disagrees with the speaker's viewpoint is central to our understanding of free speech. It protects professors and students in the classroom, editorial writers, itinerant preachers in the EMU free speech plaza, protesters marching in front of Johnson Hall and conservative radio talk show hosts. And any effort on the part of the University to engage in such censorship strikes at the foundation of free exchange that the Emerald has defended for generations.

On numerous occasions when faced with angry readers calling for the University to exercise control over the content of the paper, the Emerald has rightly argued that the First Amendment protects the publication of controversial speech. Emerald journalists have understood that protecting free speech means defending speech that we find offensive from government censorship.

Given this history, it is surprising and disappointing to see the Emerald editorial board call for the University to use its contractual relation with KUGN-AM as leverage to silence speakers. If the University administration were to follow this course of action, it would be on very shaky legal ground and it would be making free speech victims out of the talk show hosts.

Voice your opinion, reject the ideas, change the channel, but do not ask a state institution to join in censorship.

Tim Gleason is a professor and the Edwin L. Artzt dean of the School of Journalism and Communication.

Boycotting objectification

Apparently, the T & A show must go on. Although some beauty queens threatened to boycott the 2002 Miss World contest in Nigeria with good reason, organizers say the show will continue and have simply pushed the event back one week. Contestants already have started arriving in Abuja to prepare for the Dec. 7 broadcast.

The traditional skinfest was marred when some contestants objected to the rulings of Nigerian Islamic courts that sentenced four people to death by stoning for extramarital sex and rape. Most notably, 30-year-old Amina Lawal bore a child out of wedlock and was sentenced to the same dastardly fate by a northern Nigerian court practicing Sharia law last March.

Finalists from Denmark, Spain, France, Austria, Iceland, Kenya, South Africa and Costa Rica announced they would boycott the country to protest Lawal's fate. The Miss World Web site lists the United States as a participant in the contest, but there was no American contestant indicated for the 2002 event.

Miss South Africa, Vanessa Carreira, branded the contest an abomination and said the Lawal case was "a shame to the continent of Africa." Prince Edward, who pulled out of attending a Miss World gala dinner last week, agreed with her sentiments.

Although beauty contests inherently objectify women as prizes and Barbie dolls with Vaseline on their teeth, the pageant's worldwide broadcast only contributes to body image genocide that is snuffing out young girls' self esteem across oceans. But by some stroke of luck, participants seem to have some degree of symbolic political clout; if only because they look great in bikinis.

Since the controversy began, CNN has reported that Nigerian officials insisted they will not permit the stoning sentences to be carried out, but they refused to intervene directly. When 82 contestants arrived last week, Dubem Oniya, Nigeria's minister of state for foreign affairs, said the stoning issues had been resolved.

"You have no fears in this country," Oniya told contestants who arrived last week. "Your safety is guaranteed. And I assure you, no Nigerian has been stoned or will be stoned."

Letters to the editor

University, KUGN need to compromise

KUGN-AM is an independent radio station, and is in no way controlled by the University. Because of this, it is not our place to tell KUGN what they can and cannot air on their station. However, because they do air Duck sporting events, we do have some, limited say in what the station says.

Like it or not, we have a contract with KUGN in excess of \$1 million to air Duck football and basketball games. It is our duty to keep our side of the contractual obligations. Ending a contract before it's complete over the language presented on the Savage and Medved shows, however horrible, would be bad business and an infringement on free speech rights.

That being said, there is something we can do. KUGN claims to be "the Voice of the Ducks," where it clearly is not. KUGN, in fact, is simply "the home of Duck football and basketball." I'm sure the recent concerns raised by students and faculty at our school have raised fears among KUGN's executives, which gives us some leverage. I say we use that leverage to force KUGN to stop calling themselves "the Voice of the Ducks."

This is a fair compromise. KUGN wins because they get to keep broadcasting Duck games, and the University wins because we get to keep the money that KUGN is giving us while also making the community know that what is aired on KUGN doesn't necessarily represent how the students or faculty think.



Julie Lauderbaugh
 Judge Julie



Peter Utsey Emerald

Sure ... nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

The Nigerian government has been guilty of double-speak on death sentences for months. Despite the rhetoric by officials (who are coincidentally gearing up for presidential, general and state elections next year), Lawal still does not have a date for a hearing. Her death sentence appeal was denied three months ago. And Amnesty International reports that punishments such as flogging and amputation are being handed down regularly in Sharia courts in northern Nigeria.

Even Lawal, likely pressured from her country's bad public relations, pleaded for the contestants to participate. "Let them come," she said through a translator. "I have no dreams. Only God can decide."

Oh come on. It's doubtful that a woman, who is living in shame, has an infant to care for and is facing imminent death, really, truly gives a rat's derriere about a superficial beauty pageant.

The only good that can come out of the Miss World boycott is that some socially aware beauty queens have succeeded in bringing the condition of Muslim women worldwide to the front pages (at least in Europe). Until the world stops tolerating inhumane death penalty practices, at home and abroad, innocent women like Lawal will continue to play victim to barbaric paternalism.

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

"Sin tax" column reeks of recycled ideas

I was disappointed when I read M. Reilly Cosgrove's column ("Smoke-Filled Logic," ODE, Nov. 11). The first thing that put me off about this article was that it was a lackluster version of the March 12 column, "Taxing a pound of flesh," by Aaron Rorick. Did you think that your readers would not recognize a recycled argument from last year? Cosgrove didn't even bother to change the offending food (good ol' Twinkies) that, according to Cosgrove, should be taxed as heavily as cigarettes.

The point of Cosgrove's article was to say that cigarettes (or anything that could be construed as "bad" for one's health) should not be taxed, but he got to that point way too late in the article, and only after he touted the preventative properties of selenium, a dietary supplement.

And I'm not sure Cosgrove bothered to get his facts straight. He cited the case of Jean Calman, the "oldest human ever to live," who died at 122 and was a lifelong smoker. That's fine, but who is this beef rancher in the Himalayas who lived to 141? Why isn't he in the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest living human? And how in the world did he get two packs of cigarettes a day living way the hell out there?

Is this an article about "sin tax" reform, or is Cosgrove using the Emerald as a platform to justify a clearly dangerous "pursuit of happiness"?

Kara Westervelt
 senior
 English

Eric Bailey
 ASUO student senator

Online poll

Each Monday, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: Should the DEA seize medical marijuana plants in Oregon?

Results: 127 total votes
 No, legalize marijuana use! — 57.8 percent, or 73 votes
 No, the feds should stay out of state searches — 19.5 percent, or 25 votes
 Yes, national law supersedes state law — 10.2 percent, or 13 votes
 Yes, drugs ruin lives — 10.2 percent, or 13 votes
 Don't know — 1.6 percent, or 2 votes
 Leave me alone! — 0.8 percent, or 1 vote

This week: How should the University handle KUGN's promoting itself as "the voice of the Ducks"?

Choices: Do nothing — it's a censorship issue; Make KUGN change the slogan; Make KUGN drop the Medved and Savage shows; End affiliation with KUGN; Don't know; Leave me alone!