

# COMMENTARY

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## Editorial

### *GOP needs to use action, not just words, to heal racial divisions*

If there was ever time for responsible people in the Republican Party to rise up, denounce and eject the racists who have hijacked the former Party of Lincoln, it is now.

Certainly, we don't believe that the entire Republican Party is racist. No one could convincingly argue that. However, when Republican leaders like former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and California GOP vice-chairman Bill Back make statements that lament the 1948 loss of a segregationist presidential candidate or that say the country would have been better off if the Confederacy had won the Civil War, we have to wonder about the commitment of some GOP members.

It is not hard to cheer the downfall of Lott, who lost his position after generating controversy by saying that the country would have been better off if Strom Thurmond had been elected president in 1948. Further, Lott has been one of the larger civil rights obstructionists in the Senate, even going so far as to oppose a holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

Part of the problem with Republicans and race relations is that since the 1960s, they've had to cater to a new constituency: Disaffected southern white Democrats who were the old-line pro-segregationist wing. These Democrats left the party between 1947 (when President Harry Truman began modern civil rights reforms) and 1965 (President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society). Strom Thurmond was one of them, having led the unsuccessful "Dixiecrat" run against Truman in 1948. It is this constituency, which still hold racist beliefs, that Republicans have to forcefully say should not be a part of the Republican Party.

We've heard the Republican leaders denounce both Lott and Back, and this is a heartening start. However, the Republican party still needs to do more to reach out to black Americans — through policy initiatives. Words are cheap, especially when politicians continue to make speeches that give a wink and a nod to Southern bigotry. Dropping opposition to hate crimes laws and affirmative action policies would be a step in the right direction.

Certainly, when only 50 out of 9,040 elected black officials are Republican, there is a large image gap to overcome. We hope the new crop of emerging Republican leaders can break the trend of their elders and offer substantive change, rather than just reassuring rhetoric.

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## The road to Detroit

In the hit movie "8 Mile," rap star Eminem plays Jimmy "Rabbit" Smith, an aspiring white rapper who lives in a black neighborhood. 8 Mile is the name of the road separating that neighborhood — in Detroit — from its white suburbs. This road also separates Rabbit from the success he wants to be. But his inner-city experiences lend his music power and credibility that will lead him beyond 8 Mile. This is really the story of Marshall Mathers III, before he was Eminem, and the oft-maligned city that created him.

Detroit has never been a glamorous city. Instead, it was a proud working-class town with the biggest and best factories that attracted people of many ethnicities: Poles, Greeks, Albanians, Arabs, Mexicans. In the first half of the 20th century, several million African Americans had migrated north to escape poverty and oppression in the South.

Many found work and hope in the factories and neighborhoods of Detroit. Former autoworker Berry Gordy founded Motown Records — and produced hits like cars off an assembly line. Just think of some of the famous names: the Temptations, the Supremes, Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye. Even when the hitmakers went Hollywood, the Motor City kept creating innovative sounds. It gave birth to techno music, fostered rap-rock hybrids such as Kid Rock and nurtured the garage rock of the White Stripes. The motor of Detroit's success also proved to be its undoing. Millions of people left the big industrial cities for greener pastures in big American cars. Some of them commuted to Detroit. Others simply never came back. The prospect of having their children attend school with kids of the recent migrants also caused many whites to flee city limits.

Courts tried to fashion a school desegregation plan for the whole metropolitan area. But in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Milliken v. Bradley that courts could not order desegregation between Detroit and suburban school districts as a remedy, because the school districts did not cause the segregation. The decision preserved suburbs as segregated havens for whites, who had more incentive to move. In five decades, Detroit's population fell from two million to below one million, a sad first for an American city.

"8 Mile" is hardly a visual advertisement for the city. Its opening scenes of burned-



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out desolate buildings and abandoned cars all but proclaim, "Welcome to Sarajevo." But in this urban crucible, streetwise kids forged authentic rap music. Out of this gritty landscape emerged the Real Slim Shady. Why did it take so long?

From Pat Boone to Michael Bolton and Vanilla Ice, white "interpreters" of R&B and rap have long created processed cheese — artificial, bland and imitative. And why should it be otherwise? The typical white kid grows up in a community with few black neighbors and friends.

According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, white students attend schools where less than 9 percent of the kids are black. Where would such kids learn to create music derived from the African American experience?

Eminem's unique talent is the product of his unique experience growing up in a black neighborhood. As with the film's Rabbit, they were his friends, peers and

rivals. He matched his musical skill against theirs. Not only did he have to compete against them, he had to win them over. Not only did they cheer him, they cared for him as their own.

Eminem is a poster child for urban, multiracial America — another reason for cultural conservatives not to like him.

Detroit still faces an uphill battle to change outside perceptions. Universal, which distributed "8 Mile," apparently did not want to film there at first. And the Los Angeles Times reported that the folks who put Eminem's childhood home on eBay failed to receive the minimum \$120,000 bid — while a baseball player's chewed gum fetches \$3,000. It will take more than one rags-to-riches story to help the Motor City roar back to life.

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

## LCC is an investment under Measure 28

### Guest commentary

On Jan. 4, The Register-Guard published an article by Greg Bolt in which Bolt outlined the impact that the failure of Measure 28 would have for Lane Community College. Basically, if Measure 28 fails, LCC would have to cut an additional \$1.6 million from its budget. This is on top of the more than \$5 million cut from last year's budget. What impact would this have on the college, its students, and on Lane County?

While not everyone in Lane County is an LCC student, one out of every seven people are, either part-time at LCC locations in Eugene, Florence, Cottage Grove, Elmira, Junction City and Oakridge, or as full-time students. Many of these students are taking courses such as nursing or dental hygiene in order to

prepare themselves for well-paying careers, while others are taking general education courses that will enable them to transfer to a four-year institution, and still others are taking courses for personal fulfillment. How would the cuts which would be forced by the failure of Measure 28 impact these students?

As Bolt's article pointed out, LCC would be forced to cut about 200 classes and raise the tuition again, this time by \$2.50 per credit hour, which would bring total tuition to \$51.50 per credit hour. Both the cuts in class offerings and the increased tuition tend to reduce access to LCC. Why is this a concern to the rest of Lane County who are not either students at LCC or the parents of such students?

Last year, LCC did a cost-benefit study to determine the social and economic benefits to the taxpayers of Lane County and to the students who attend LCC. Some of the results included the fact that

taxpayers will see a return of 18.9 percent on their annual investments in LCC while LCC students enjoy a return of \$4.99 in higher future earnings for each \$1 the student invests in LCC. The state of Oregon, and Lane County also, benefits from improved health and reduced crime and welfare since educated people take better care of themselves, commit less property crimes and are less likely to be unemployed or on welfare.

These are some of the reasons why I, along with the other LCC Board members, voted in support of a resolution of support for Measure 28 and why I am hopeful that Oregon voters will see that an investment in LCC is a wise investment. Please join me and other members of the LCC family in voting "yes" on Measure 28. Remember, taxes are the price we pay for civilization.

G. Dennis Shine lives in Springfield.

### Letter to the editor

#### Pot supporters are blowing smoke

Interesting that Reilly Cosgrove, in "Don't put pot in the joint," (ODE, Nov. 27) did not document where the quote from George Washington came from. I also find it interesting that those who support legalization use the fact that George Washington grew hemp yet never mention the fact that he discontinued it because it was not a viable crop — even using slave labor.

This then, out to expose their agenda. And now pro-pot legalizers promote hemp growing in the United States and Canada even though they have caused farmers — who got sucked into believing there was a market for hemp — to go bankrupt.

Just think about it. Can American and Canadian farmers compete with those Third World farmers who are willing to work for a few cents a day?

Amazing, to what lengths those who want their drug will go to — even stating that legalization has reduced use in Holland (not true) or even promoting it as a medicine.

John E. English  
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