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# COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, February 12, 2003

## Letters to the editor

### Eugenics should be considered evil

I am outraged by the guest commentary "Selective euthanasia can save the world" (ODE, Feb. 7). The article reflects badly on Peter Sur's own character and on your publication for presenting his views without a disclaimer.

Eugenics, a term with which Sur seems unfamiliar but provides an excellent definition for, is not a new concept but rather has reared its ugly head a number of times in human history. While its most notable incarnation was in Nazi Germany, it has appeared in many nations and was recently a focus of litigation here in Oregon.

In the present climate of limitations on human rights, eugenics is certain to become an issue among the less tolerant in our nation. To suggest that it deserves consideration invites the attention of political crackpots. In an era when the term "evil" is used to describe nearly everything outside of our own value system, it is not too much of a stretch to suggest this is the rare issue to which it actually can be applied.

There is a chance, of course, that Sur thought his piece would amuse readers. He was wrong. Maybe, if it appeared in a satirical journal such as the Comic News or The Onion. In the Oregon Daily Emerald, it garners undue credibility and offers not the slightest hint of humor.

I rarely read the Emerald. Perhaps I should look more closely so that I know what other students are thinking and just whom I should avoid on campus.

Jan McCoy  
third-year graduate  
educational leadership

### Bush lacks compassion for minority education

In the past several weeks, we have read that President Bush filed a brief to the Supreme Court to block affirmative action plans at the University of Michigan Law School.

As an African American, I resent this president denying the opportunity for a few Americans to have an equal education. How dare he? A man born with a silver spoon in his mouth, given every opportunity to do as he pleased, who only made it to Yale on his daddy's money, moved up the political ranks by way of his daddy's money and influence — and yet he resents a mere pittance of allowance of entry to a few minority students.

This is a president who touts "compassion" while attempting to shut the door to a few minority students. This same president is willing and eager to send young minority and poor men and women to fight for corporate largess and oil.

Compassion? Give me a break!

Edwin L. Coleman  
professor emeritus  
English

#### CORRECTION

In "Students attempt to define love" (ODE, Feb. 11), LGBTQA volunteer Gregory Campbell was misidentified.

The summary accompanying the article about a toxic groundwater plume ("Neighbors meet to hear about toxic groundwater," ODE, Feb. 11) should have said that 60 wells were tested to discover the shape and extent of the plume — not that all 60 were contaminated.

The Emerald regrets the errors.



Steve Baggs Emerald

## University's neutrality shows support of Iraq war

### Guest commentary

University President Dave Frohn-mayer has made it clear that he did not think it was the University's place to take a stance against war in Iraq — correctly pointing out, after all, that the University community is not in agreement about the war. At the Jan. 31 University Assembly meeting, some of the faculty members concurred with Frohn-mayer and said that whether to take a stance was a matter for individuals to decide, individually.

Seriously, would we prefer the cold eye of history to judge this community of educators by its adherence to protocol, or by its stance against the annihilation of an already annihilated people?

The previous Gulf War was the first all-out war the United States had engaged in since the Vietnam War ended some 17 years earlier. I

remember how skittish the American people were about going into Iraq in 1991 — the memory of Vietnam, with its 58,000 American soldiers dead, still burning in our collective memory. George Bush, the elder, was well aware of this, too, so he delayed sending in American ground troops until air attacks could demolish Iraq's military infrastructure.

The United States dropped thousands of bombs a day, for weeks on end, from an altitude of 30,000 feet, in that "remote-control" war. I can clearly recall our military leaders bragging about the accuracy of our "smart bombs" being somewhere in the range of 80 percent.

But, I wondered, if 80 percent of the thousands of bombs dropped daily hit their targets, where did the other 20 percent land? Some estimates place the death toll of that war in excess of 100,000 Iraqis. If I'm not mistaken, most of those

killed were not soldiers in Saddam Hussein's army. Errant bombs do not discriminate. They kill anyone unlucky enough to be in their paths. They kill grocers, mechanics, housewives, soccer players and yes, even college students, professors and administrators.

We must take a stance against war not because we doubt that Hussein is a threat, but because we know that the vast majority of those who will be forever scarred by war are not. The last time we went to war with Hussein, we killed perhaps a quarter million Iraqis — and none of them were Hussein. Isn't there a certain madness in that?

We should take a stance against war at every opportunity, just as a matter of principle. If an institution of higher learning teaches us nothing else, it should be that rarely is killing more innocent people the path to a lasting peace. War breeds more war. For every

innocent person you kill, you create several new enemies.

Not taking a stance does not prove objectivity or neutrality. Not taking a stance implies support for the status quo — even if that status quo happens to be pushing for war. Not taking a stance is tantamount to saying that we, as a community of educated people, support the mass killing of thousands of innocent people — with the understanding that this genocide, somehow, is a path to peace.

And how can a community of educators, whose mission statement declares it to be striving to educate through "a commitment to international awareness and understanding" and "by welcoming and guiding change rather than reacting to it," take a neutral stance?

Todd Pittman is a junior journalism major.

## White privilege allows no concerns for other races

### Guest commentary

I don't think much about my white privilege, but given my white president's recent criticism of affirmative action, I must pause to appreciate some of my advantages. One thing that is nice about being white is that I'm not confronted by racism all the time. I hang out with my white friends, go to white classes, I work in a white office and watch my white TV newscast, and I don't see racism anywhere.

The whole issue of second-class citizenship in this country doesn't seem to come up. I never get pulled over because of the color of my skin. I mean, why would I? I'm white. I don't even know what a "skin tax" is. Being white has never been a reason that I've been denied anything.

Let's face it: If African Americans really wanted to make things fair, then aren't we long overdue for a hundred years of black privilege in America? White folks would be the servant workforce for a while, sitting in the backs of the

buses, giving up their executive, administrative duties until the year 2102, and then get back to that fictitious "level playing field" we whites are so proud of.

But we all know that a hundred years of black privilege is not going to happen, let alone one year. So, let's stop talking about what would be fair in this country. I'm not giving up my green-light privileges, not for civil rights, not for equality or affirmative action.

The University of Michigan's attempt to give advantages to non-white students threatens the status quo. This small symbolic gesture to level the playing field against white privilege status — and give some black students their only chance to have advantages over whites — becomes an easy legislative target. With the president's help, the Supreme Court will decide whether or not to do away with affirmative action at universities, just as it was taken off the books at California schools a few years ago.

To be white is to remain exempt from concerns outside of my own race and to say that af-

firmative action is not my fight. I don't have to ask any of the non-white students here on campus if they've gotten less opportunities than I have. I don't have to question why it is that some work twice as hard for things that have come easier for me. I can take my white privilege and cash it in for all that it is worth, and never wonder how I have been so fortunate. In fact, I don't have to feel fortunate at all.

And when my children and grandchildren ask why non-whites get less than we do, I can say that is just the way it's always been here in America. I just don't have to feel guilty for it. To be white is to remain exempt from concerns outside my own race and to say that affirmative action is not my fight.

All I have to do to insure the future of white privilege status is to do nothing; the rest will take care of itself. Thus affirmative action will be no more, and that is the power of your white privilege.

Jason Blei lives in Eugene.