

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Editor:
 Pat Payne

Tuesday, March 4, 2003

Editorial

Housing's drug eviction torched the bounds of common sense

University freshman Richard Brooker learned a lesson in almost Kafkaesque justice last week. Brooker's room in Thornton Hall was raided Feb. 22 after the Eugene Police Department was tipped off by a DPS officer that Brooker was dealing drugs. All they found was his roommate, a broken scale and some pipes. When Brooker arrived, they found only enough marijuana for personal consumption. On this flimsy evidence, he was charged with being a dealer. The EPD put him in jail for a night, typically not done for a mere possession case that got out of hand.

Which it was. The dealing charges were dropped, and Brooker pleaded guilty to possession.

But the trial doesn't end there. Almost as soon as charges were filed and Brooker was incarcerated at Lane County Jail, University Housing issued a summary eviction notice. Once Brooker was out of jail, he had only one day to get his things together and leave.

With no due process, he was kicked out. To add insult to injury, he has to pay the penalty for breaking the residence hall contract: \$9 for every day remaining.

Summary eviction notices happen without a conduct code hearing — without any process at all — when housing determines that there is an "emergency" that might affect "safety for the residence hall community." Housing officials say that in cases like this, they don't wait for things that happen off-campus.

We think they need to wait. There are very good reasons why the U.S. criminal justice system works the way it does. What if the evidence found at the scene is bogus? What if all the charges are dropped? Theoretically, Brooker could have been evicted for no crime at all. As it is, the reaction by housing far outweighs his transgression.

The description of this freshman as an immediate threat to students in the residence halls is bizarre. Certainly, there have been students who could have been conceivably greater threats who haven't been forced to leave the halls.

Sung-min Kim, who had an actual weapon, a loaded BB gun in his room, wasn't evicted.

David Gantman, who had several boxes of ammo confiscated from his room, wasn't evicted. Neither of these two students had any intention of hurting others, and both had legitimate reasons for possessing the items. Yet ammunition and weapons are still infinitely more dangerous than a broken scale, some bong and an eighth of an ounce of marijuana.

Brooker deserves a fair hearing and a process to determine the threat level he poses. University Housing stepped over the line, and they should step back to reassess the situation.

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries policy

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Letter to the editor

Wine, beer taxes have most impact on poor

State legislators are considering "drastically" increasing taxes on alcohol beverages, according to "Legislature to consider wine, beer taxes" (ODE, Feb. 24).

Don't the legislators realize that alcohol beverage taxes are highly regressive and have their most negative impact on those people least able to afford them?

In tough economic times, government needs to tighten its belt as much as those from whom it extracts taxes.

David J. Hanson, Ph.D.
 Chapel Hill, N.C.

Time to turn our backs on the flag

Events and dialogue leading up to the voting on the peace resolution by the University Assembly on Friday have been largely civil and have been channeled into organized meetings designed for debate. Bush has a large podium on which to state his case, in addition to international attention, and those who disagree with him have largely used their "inside voices" to contest. Bush was quoted by the Associated Press following massive protests against an invasion of Iraq saying: "Size of protest, it's like deciding: 'Well I'm going to decide policy based up on a focus group.'" Bush should remember that he was not elected dictator and thus is still held accountable by the people.

Now, keeping in mind our respectfully-kept disagreements in Oregon, let me turn your attention to the other side of the country: the ominous East Contest. Consider the reasons that Toni Smith, an individual representing her own opinion, has received such a strong response to her quiet, respectfully-disrespectful protest against American foreign policy.

Somebody out there may be asking: "Who is Toni Smith?" For a quick recap, Smith is the college basketball player from Manhattanville College who, during the playing of the national anthem before every game, has turned her back to the American flag. For those who may be confused, Smith's act doesn't provide solace to Saddam Hussein, nor does she, by virtue of her protest, intend disrespect to veterans nationwide. However, once her skewed stance was noticed, many began to openly criticize her for disrespecting the flag ("that is) a symbol of everything that's good about America," as Jerry Kiley told *Newsday* this week. Soon, people began to boo her when she shot free throws or had the ball and small "protests" took place outside the gym.

The disparity between Smith's treatment and the overall apathy surrounding the University's peace resolution is shocking. Hardly any pro-war supporters showed up for the meeting. Only one person, though he opposed the war, spoke out against voting on a resolution. The pitiful attempt to disrupt the meeting by a small group who chanted

"USA! USA! USA!" was drowned out by the cheering of those in favor. Unlike the peace resolution, Smith's refusal to salute the flag was an individual act of protest; she did not gloat over her opinion to anyone nor did she request feedback on whether her interpretation of what the flag "means" is the correct one (and who says there is one?).

One can conclude that the reasons for the hostility revolve around Smith's refusal to face the flag. Those who contested her stance against the flag are those who rally around nationalism as if everyone in the country holds similar views on what "America" — which in any case consists of more countries than just the United States — stands for. One such protester told *The New York Times*: "You can disagree with the government's policies but not the symbols that every American should stand for."

There are no symbols or unifying interpretations that "every American should stand for." Many groups and persons have

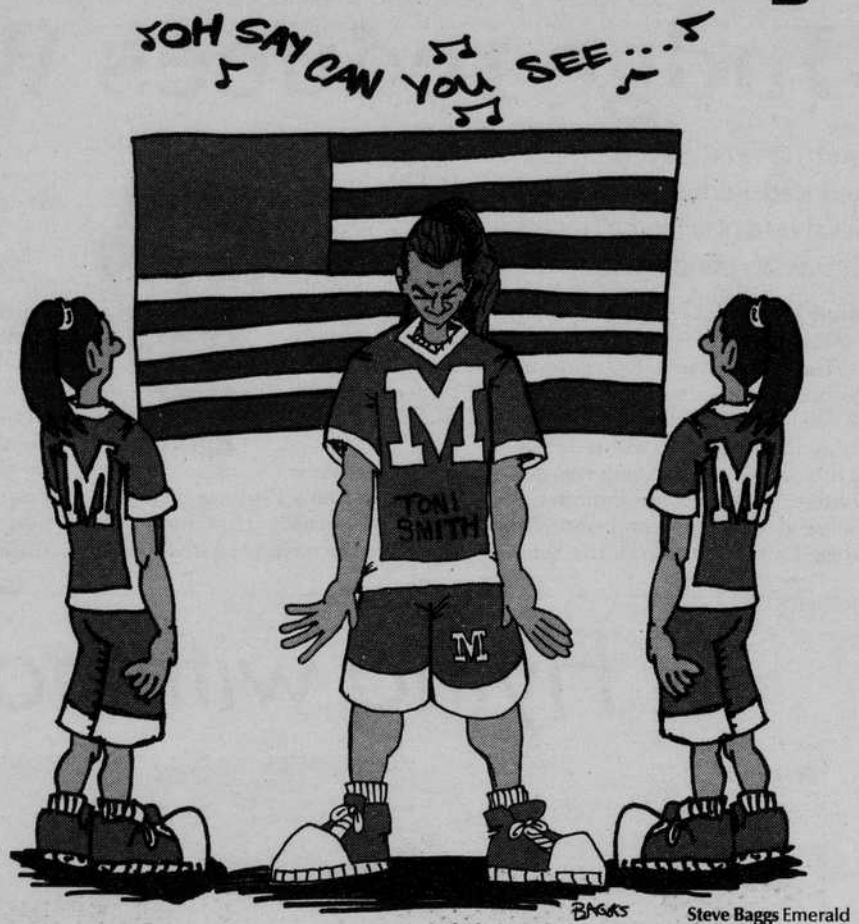
been oppressed under governments and persons allegedly upholding the values of "America." Where are the protests against certain Southern states' continued use of the Confederate battle flag? The Confederate flag represents a time of slavery and apartheid in America. Although we've legally abolished those forms of injustices, the fallout from slavery still continues to this day.

Maybe it is time to, as Smith has done, turn our backs to the American flag — not in disrespect, but in acknowledgment that this country does not stand for liberty and justice for all, save a small minority. In our search for liberation and peace abroad, maybe we should instead turn our eyes back on ourselves and reevaluate the real international threat.

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



Meghann Farnsworth
 Just think about it



Anti-war sentiment borders hate speech

Guest commentary

Free speech — on which this country was founded — is the right and privilege of all individuals. With this freedom comes responsibility, which was jeopardized on Feb. 18. At the intersection of 13th Avenue and University Street, a swastika, a symbol of atrocity and anti-Semitism, was depicted with "Bush=Hitler" written nearby. As Jewish students, we feel that incident warrants commentary.

First, using a swastika for political discourse is offensive and unacceptable. The swastika, as utilized by Nazi Germany, is the symbol that was used to unite a nation for the systematic extermination of our ancestors. This was not only the symbol to pool hatred solely against the Jews, but also many other minority groups which were thought to be inferior. The Nazi swastika has forever become the mark of anti-Semitism and hate.

There is no denying that President George W. Bush is a controversial political leader. However, the comparison of Hitler to Bush marginalizes the horrors the Nazis committed. Any objective view of recent

history and current events will show that this analogy is flawed in many ways.

Those responsible should be more aware of the implications of their actions and understand that what they did forms a basis for the resurgence of hate on campus. There is already concern among many that the revitalization of the anti-war movement has brought around hateful thoughts in the masses that are hard to quell once in progress.

One example of this is the subtle but strong cartoon depiction of Ariel Sharon in the Emerald. Although wearing a tag labeled with his name, the artist felt it necessary to further his drawing with some rather tasteless and offensive additions. In the drawing, Sharon is wearing a kippah, or Jewish skullcap — which he doesn't typically wear — accompanied by a Star of David which has certainly never been styled by Sharon. Sharon is compared to Saddam Hussein, who bared nothing of his religious or political affiliation in the illustration.

The blatant signs of Judaism cheapen the attack on Sharon and expand the assault to include all Jews, no matter what their political beliefs. Although this cartoon is not the specific matter in question, it is

obvious that the anti-Israel movement is broadening to include anti-Jewish thought. This all goes back to the line between free speech and hate speech.

This is a difficult scale to try to balance because free speech is held so dearly in this country. There is the case that any censorship is a distinct violation of free speech and will just lead to further suppression of free expression. This rationale is valid most of the time, but there must be an awareness that not all speech is conducive to critical thinking and sometimes has the reverse effect.

Using hate to rally others behind your thoughts just creates more mindless following and doesn't recognize that there may be people who are deeply offended by this absurd demonstration of insensitivity. If you don't like someone's public policies, then let them know loudly and forcefully. This does not mean resorting to juvenile and unreasonable actions.

The time is now to think seriously about the repercussions of one's actions and what the result may be if hateful speech is allowed to continue on campus.

Masha Katz, Joel Sokoloff, Robert Galinsky, Dan Gruber and nine co-signers are all students at the University.