

# COMMENTARY

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## Letters to the editor

### Upcoming election should prompt student involvement

There are a number of issues and concerns that affect students on and off campus. These issues are felt widely and deeply and can be shaped and cast in many different lights. Perhaps you are of a mindset that there is relatively little that can be done about the problems we face on campus, but perhaps the right people haven't yet had the opportunity to advocate for such priorities. Maybe you can be the change.

Elections for positions within the ASUO Executive, Student Senate and a variety of other committees are rapidly approaching. Your involvement in these areas will not only dramatically affect your personal and professional growth, but will also provide the stage upon which you can play out the action that you want to take to create a better community and university for students.

Additionally, there is an opportunity for you to involve yourself in a particular area of interest by petitioning your fellow students and placing measures and/or constitutional changes on the ballot. I urge you to consider seriously the changes that you want to see, or the positions that you want to take on the things that matter most to you and your fellow students. Step up to the plate and disown the belief that college students are apathetic. You are the only one who can be held responsible for action that you don't take. Application materials are available in the ASUO office, EMU Suite 4.

Rachel Pilliod  
 ASUO president

### Treasonous administration wages hypocritical imperial war

Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien spoke volumes when he asked, "If you start changing regimes, where do you stop? Who is next? Give me the list."

According to the Sept. 2000 (pre-election) Project for the New American Century defense strategy blueprint — whose authors are now top administration officials — that list is long and includes China. Regime change in Iraq was a first step, and here we are.

Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov complains that America's demand for regime change implies "a step aimed at democratic transformations in the Arab world." Now consider defense policy adviser Richard Perle's recent "Meet the Press" comment: "I don't see what would be wrong with surrounding Israel with democracies; indeed, if the whole world were democratic, we'd live in a much safer international security system because democracies do not wage aggressive wars."

Yet here we are, waging an aggressive war.

This isn't just about oil. What most Americans don't seem to grasp is that America is changing fundamentally, becoming an empire bullying the world. Wasn't this the kind of arrogance that caused Sept. 11, 2001?

As far as the administration's response to Sept. 11, 2001, goes, the word "reckless" comes to mind. As far as their vision for America, the word "treasonous" fits. Culturally and environmentally, their policies invite disaster, whether by nature or acts of revenge and despair from the oppressed.

A government that seeks to spread democracy by force, and against the will of its people, doesn't know the meaning of the word.

Brian Bogart  
 first-year graduate student  
 peace studies

## 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.



Steve Baggs Emerald

## UO conveys wrong message with Woods

### Guest commentary

As former felon Rodney Woods stands poised to accept a University football scholarship, it's important that the family and friends of Christopher O'Leary, the 18-year-old who died after a beating in which Woods and two friends were initially implicated, understand that not all Oregon football fans feel good about the program's participation in this young man's attempt to absolve himself of moral and legal responsibility for events that took place May 19, 2000.

Woods pleaded no contest to felony assault for chasing down and beating a man who questioned why two of Woods' football teammates were punching and kicking O'Leary, who had

gone to the party to pick up his girlfriend for a date and was still in the front yard when the beating took place.

Some witnesses said Woods did not participate in O'Leary's beating only because others were holding him back. Woods and his family, who are facing a wrongful death lawsuit filed by O'Leary's parents, maintain he never touched the boy and played no role in his death.

I know from unfortunate first-hand experience following a high school graduation party that there are people who will stand by and watch or even cheer as someone is being kicked in the head — and then there are the rest of us.

By his own plea-bargain admission, Rodney Woods didn't just fail to protect O'Leary from being savagely beaten to

death, and he didn't just stand idly by as it happened; he chased and beat the kid who dared to speak out against his friends' deadly acts.

It's also clear that every time Woods denies involvement in O'Leary's beating — which he must do for legal and public relations reasons — he causes deep pain to the victim's family.

That's the last thing Rodney Woods would want to do if he sincerely felt remorse for his role in the O'Leary family's lifetime of pain.

But if he wants to take the next step in his football career, that's what he has to do. A California judge's decision last week to reduce his felony to a misdemeanor opened the door.

Woods' mother told the court this is her son's only chance to get a college educa-

tion. Given the availability of assistance and the experience of people without means who have found a way to pay for higher education, that statement lacks merit.

Make no mistake, Rodney Woods will be in Eugene — with what would have been two years left on his original felony probation agreement — to live his dream of playing big-time football.

And when you boil down all the justifications, arguments, emotion and fact-spinning, there is one nugget on which we can be certain: A criminal received special treatment and attention because he is also a talented athlete.

That's the wrong message for a university to send.

Pat Malach lives in Hillsboro.

## Voice concerns on U.S. weapons burning

### Guest commentary

Oregon is home to enough chemical weaponry to annihilate the entire population of the United States. The Umatilla chemical weapons depot in Northeastern Oregon is home to 12 percent of the nation's chemical weapons stockpile, which includes nerve agents VX and GB (sarin gas) and the blister agent HD (mustard gas).

An international treaty signed in 1982 requires us to drastically reduce our chemical weapons capabilities by 2004. In order to comply with this treaty, the U.S. military has built several incinerators around the country to destroy stockpiled chemical agents. However, while the destruction of these chemical weapons will greatly improve the safety and security of people in America and around the world, the practice of incineration has lethal potential.

Test burns at Umatilla have shown unpromising results, to say the least. Small test burns were stopped when harmful

amounts of lead, chromium, nickel, antimony and arsenic were being released into the atmosphere. Incinerators have already begun operations in Utah and the Marshall Islands and both have shown results similar to the tests performed at Umatilla. Gary Harris, a former chief permit coordinator at the Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, just outside of Salt Lake City, stated that test burn reports were falsified in order to conceal findings that many munitions could not be burned safely. Harris reported human health and environmental concerns to the U.S. Army and was directed not to report the findings to the state of Utah under the threat of losing his job, according to statements he made at the National Press Club on Jan. 11, 2000.

When these incinerators are not functioning "properly," the situation looks even worse. Both the Marshall Islands and Tooele incinerators have experienced numerous operation accidents including fires, explosions, massive spillage of chemical agents and the release of nerve agents into the atmosphere and facility corridors fre-

quented by workers.

Already, the military has wasted \$1.2 billion building the hazardous Umatilla incinerator. While simply allowing these weapons to sit and corrode is clearly not a good idea, cheaper and much safer means of disposal do exist such as water neutralization/hydrolysis. A hydrolysis facility could be constructed at half the cost of a chemical incinerator. One has already been built at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C. Operations at Aberdeen have been running safely and effectively.

So now that the Bush administration has scared us all witless over weapons of mass destruction, why has this threat not been dealt with within our own borders? Have recent events blinded us to the irresponsibility of our own military? If burning chemical weapons does not sound like a good idea, I ask you to please express your concerns to the Department of Environmental Quality.

David Kurushima is a freshman in humanities.