

# COMMENTARY

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Editorial

## MISSING: First Amendment freedoms

The Oregon Commentator is crude, sophomoric, misogynistic, sexist and irresponsible. The staff can be abrasive, arrogant, obnoxious and smug to the extreme. Most of their articles skirt the far edge of acceptable taste, and they certainly have gone over that edge in the past.

None of this, however, justifies theft of the Commentator's property. Americans have a right to free speech — even that which others find distasteful and inappropriate — and the censorship implied in last weekend's "missing" copies of the Commentator are a gross disservice to the community and the values we honor on campus.

The current issue is a case in point of tastelessness: In the "Drinking Holidays" article, the Commentator includes Purim (a Jewish festival), which the writer suggests celebrating, with tongue perhaps firmly in-cheek, "by drinking yourself into an angry fury and lashing out at the Jewish-controlled media, the Jewish-controlled government," and so on.

This level of speech goes far beyond the Commentator's usual level of "merely asinine." The context of the paper is always unclear — when are the writers doing parody, and when are they being serious? No one can know. These words, then, calling for people to get drunk and lash out at a specific group of people based on their religion, rise to the level of hate speech, and if the Commentator staff is even capable of feeling shame, they should.

Maybe the writers meant it in jest, but there are still people who would gladly take the opportunity to attack Jews to sate their racist paranoia. In short, this was a thoroughly irresponsible act by the Commentator staff.

For that, we condemn them. We will say they are bad, and the community should express its anger about these words in an ap-

propriate way. Increase the dialogue, tell a different story about Jewish people. But do these words mean that the Commentator should be stolen or silenced or defunded? Absolutely, unequivocally not.

A right to free speech doesn't include a right to not be offended. And as despicable as the Purim segment was, it doesn't seem to fall under the legal definition of incitement to violence, one of the very few criminal acts of speech. If someone wanted to make a case out of it, the courts ultimately would have to decide whether the words rise to that level.

While the Commentator's words were ugly, the stolen papers were even uglier. The theft of newspapers is always wrong, whether it is students on campuses across the nation trying to silence conservative rabble-rouser David Horowitz, or Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates stealing college papers because the editorial board endorsed his opponent. Not only does it bring additional attention to the offensive matter, it's a criminal act.

So, who might be considered a suspect in this case? We certainly don't know, although rumors have been flying around campus. There are certainly plenty of people who could have motive from this issue alone: The Oregon Voice, who this past week began a fight with the Commentator over charges of digital theft; the University Hillel and the Jewish Student Union, who would likely be highly offended by the Purim segment; Students For Peace, who were characterized as "fucking racists" in the same issue; the Commentator's perennial nemesis-in-funding, OSPIRG; Attorney General John Ashcroft; and the entire nation of France.

The rumors we've heard sound so proud, it's almost as though people want to be associated with the act. And we realize that for some



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students, much of the Commentator's speech leaves them feeling disgusted and angry. But to other people on campus (it's likely only a few), the fact that OSPIRG receives incidental fees leaves them feeling disgusted and angry.

There's an easy lesson here: If you feel enraged by other people's speech, speak up yourself. Try to stop them from speaking that

way again. Plead your case to the community. But physically forcing them to shut up leaves none of us with a voice — and that's the really irresponsible act.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

## Reparations are a right that America needs to provide

### Guest commentary

I must say that "Pay one group, pay all," (ODE, March 13) is an uneducated attempt to explain what reparations are truly about. First of all, to deny the existence of white privilege, institutionalized racism, extralegal means of social, economic and political control over nonwhites, is to deny the fact that whites have and still benefit from slavery today.

The convict lease system, installed after the "end" of slavery during Reconstruction, was even worse than slavery. Southern whites could pay 70 cents for prisoners, predominately freed blacks who were incarcerated for violating unjust "black codes" such as "being visibly unemployed" or "being saucy to white folks," and put them to work for a day, and eventually work him or her to death because there was no longer a \$500 investment in the enslaved African body.

Post-World War II benefits, such as the G.I. Bill, were the biggest affirmative action program for white male veterans, distributing more than \$4.5 billion for housing, education and employment, which nonwhites were systematically denied access to, making up only 2 percent of the beneficiaries. We all know that owning a house and obtaining an education are key to social and economic mobility through the accumulation of net worth over time. Ask yourself: "Has my grandfather or any other member of my family benefited from the G.I. Bill?"

The Jim Crow South during the '50s and '60s used violence and extralegal means to intimidate black Americans fighting for economic, social and political justice. If you don't believe me, consider James Meredith, the four girls killed in a

Birmingham, Ala., bombing, the Little Rock Nine, and the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Not to mention the black working class struggle for political power in their own communities facing voter registration questions like "How many bubbles are on a bar of soap?"

Now, in 2003, the prison system still feeds off racial profiling and fear is distributed through crime-related TV shows and the media, leading to the criminalization of people of color, targeting our communities to fill up prisons and turn prisoners into slave laborers. This is just a brief synopsis of the institutionalized racism still present in our American society that is constantly promoting freedom, justice, equality and democracy for all.

We must not look at reparations as a monetary solution. America needs to fix our public schools in the inner city, fund more social services and provide decent housing to those who have the self-determination to succeed but who are denied the same access to benefits as white Americans.

One might say, "I'm not responsible, I didn't own slaves." However, we must realize that the racism we face is systematic and not individual, and for as long as you live in this society that promotes equality and freedom, you are responsible.

Reparations are a right, not a privilege. If the information I have put forth seems illogical or biased, examine yourself and challenge yourself to discover information other than what you see on TV and prove me wrong. Or you can be like Salena De La Cruz and prove me right.

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## Are colleges spending too much money on athletics?

### Guest commentary

Advertising in the Emerald is an effective way to reach an audience, especially with a quarter-page ad. But one never would have known it from the 23 people who looked almost lost in Columbia 150 the afternoon of March 5. The subject was Ducks athletics, a topic that normally draws crowds. But the program title was a turnoff. In big bold letters at the top of the ad was: "UO Task Force On Athletics." "Task force" might describe movement of U.S. aircraft carriers into the Persian Gulf. But it doesn't attract students and faculty to a discussion of athletics.

I'm task-oriented. So I attended. Few others did, even though the panel had impressive members and some headliners, including the track and field coach, Martin Smith, and Professor James Earl. In recent weeks, Earl has been featured in The New York Times and The Chronicle of Higher Education for his role in starting a movement that is sweeping the nation.

Explanation of that action likely could fill 150 Columbia with the help of only a classified ad. It deals with concern over excessive spending on varsity athletics that often dwarfs funding for programs essential to the University's academic mission. Earl was president of the Faculty Senate when, in 2001, it passed a resolution to rein in spending on the athletics "arms race."

Within months, seven other Pac-10 faculty senates passed the resolution. After a year, it took hold in the Big Ten

Conference. In April, Earl will be in Chicago for a meeting of the National Collegiate Athletic Association that will address the question, which could result in the most significant changes for intercollegiate athletics in a century.

If forum sponsors can afford another ad, why not use this as a heading that pulls no punches: "Are Colleges Spending Too Much Money on Varsity Athletics? Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?" Another boost for the crowd would be to import speakers with dynamic identity. For a program on the money issue, the top speaker would be one with a University identity — the new NCAA president, Myles Brand. He went to the NCAA in January from the presidency of Indiana University, where he had moved after being president at Oregon.

Other topics that would fill 150 Columbia and stir the pot that needs stirring could be:

- Are Corporations Gaining Too Much Influence Over College Athletics?
- Did the University Drop WRC Membership to Get Money for Autzen Expansion?
- Should the Oregon Sports Network Exclude Stations that Carry Other Programs Which Demonize Minorities, Including Black Athletes?

Good topics can dramatize the issues and attract audiences. They can, that is, if they don't scare away the crowds with a name like Task Force.

George Beres is a former University sports information director.