

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Quacks & smacks

Quacks to House Judiciary Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wisconsin, who said April 17 that the USA PATRIOT Act will be made permanent "over my dead body." It's a relief that at least one elected official has questions about how the act is being used, and U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft should be offering answers.

Smacks to Rev. Franklin Graham, son of famed preacher Billy Graham, for demonizing Islam and then hosting Good Friday services at the Pentagon. So much for American government's neutrality toward religion. No, tell us how you really feel.

Quacks to Keizer resident Gary Boyles, who filed suit against the Salem-Keizer School District for forcing his son and daughter to watch commercial advertising on Channel One during school hours. Hurrah for Boyles! Not only are the commercials a sick form of brainwashing to hoist on kids, but Channel One's programming isn't so special, either.

Smacks to the Lukes potentially being split up because of the NBA. There ought to be a law that would make Ridnour and Jackson a Draft package-deal, and our hearts break to think of having only one curly-haired baller on campus next year.

Quacks to the ASUO Executive for all of their work on legislative issues and their recent award for it from the United States Student Association. Representing student voices to demand more funding, more access and a better education is one of the most important things student leaders can do.

Smacks to the mainstream media (especially television) for resuming their usual soap-opera style coverage of murders and pop culture within seconds of Saddam Hussein's statue being toppled in Baghdad. Never mind in-depth features on international relations or the causes and consequences of war, every detail of the Laci Peterson case must be told over and over again!

Quacks to Golden State Warriors center Adonal Foyle, who started Democracy Matters, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization encouraging college students to get involved in politics. Here's an NBA player being a great role model and giving back in a way that can make a huge difference to the future of our democracy. Find out more at www.democracymatters.org.

Smacks to the Chinese government for covering up the extent and nature of the SARS outbreak. Saving face and handling issues internally is well and good in many cases, but this was a matter of much greater importance than any one government. Shame on them.

Quacks to the ASUO elections being over. We value student government more than do most students, probably, but still, it's nice that the hot air front has passed, and our new leaders can begin the task of preparing for their jobs. Plus, we're stoked that the University has a first-generation college student for an out lesbian redneck student body president.

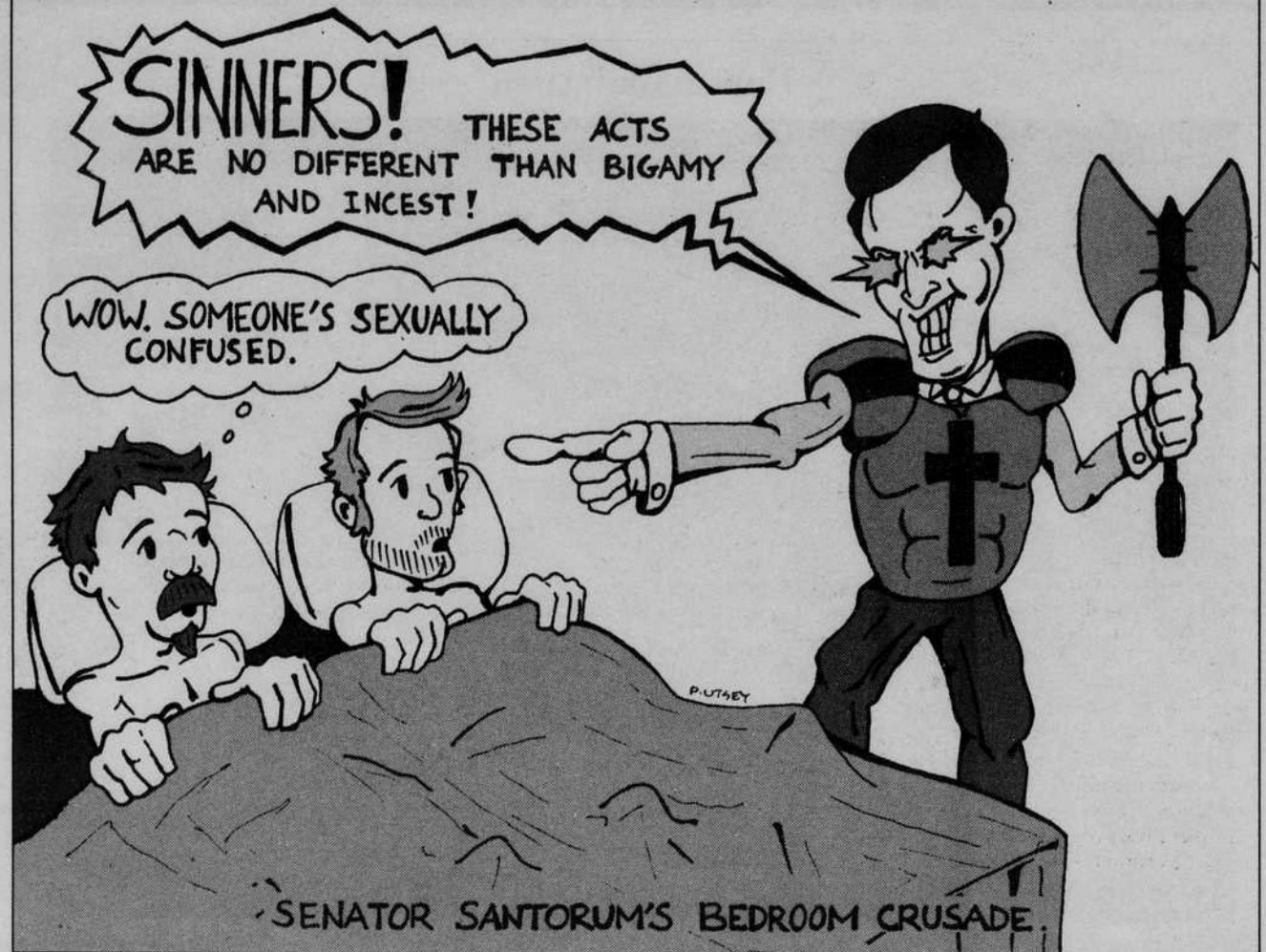
Smacks to Richard Perle for making the rounds of news talk shows in the past week, angrily telling France and Germany that the sanctions against Iraq should be lifted and declaring his disgust that commercial greed would trump international policy. It is hard to imagine a person who could be more hypocritical in taking this stance; Perle has loads of commercial interests that profit from war. Shame on him.

Editorial policy

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

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Peter Utsey Emerald

Killing during an unjust war is murder

Guest commentary

We are veterans of the United States armed forces. We stand with the majority of humanity, including millions in our own country, in opposition to the United States' all-out war on Iraq. We span many wars and eras, have many political views and we all agree that this war is wrong.

Many of us believed serving in the military was our duty, and our job was to defend this country. Our experiences in the military caused us to question much of what we were taught. Now we see our *real* duty is to encourage you as members of the U.S. armed forces to find out what you are being sent to fight and die for and what the consequences of your actions will be for humanity. We call upon you, the active duty and reservists, to follow your conscience and do the right thing.

In the last Gulf War, as troops, we were ordered to murder from a safe distance. We destroyed much of Iraq from the air, killing hundreds of thousands, including civilians. We remember the road to Basra — the Highway of Death — where we were ordered to kill fleeing Iraqis. We bulldozed trenches, burying people alive.

The use of depleted uranium weapons left the battlefields radioactive. Massive use of pesticides, experimental drugs, burning chemical weapons depots and oil fires combined to create a toxic cocktail affecting both the Iraqi people and Gulf War veterans today. One in four Gulf War veterans is disabled.

During the Vietnam War, we were ordered to destroy Vietnam from the air and on the ground. At My Lai we massacred more than 500 women, children and old men. This was not an aberration, it's how we fought the war.

We used Agent Orange on the enemy and then experienced firsthand its effects. We know what Post Traumatic Stress Disorder looks, feels and tastes like because

the ghosts of more than 2 million men, women and children still haunt our dreams. More of us took our own lives after returning home than died in battle.

If you choose to participate in the invasion of Iraq, you will be part of an occupying army. Do you know what it is like to look into the eyes of a people that hate you to your core? You should think about what your "mission" really is.

You are being sent to invade and occupy a people who, like you and me, are only trying to live their lives and raise their kids. They pose no threat to the United States even though they have a brutal dictator as their leader. Who is the United States to tell the Iraqi people how to run their country when many here don't even believe their own president was legally elected?

Saddam Hussein is being vilified for gassing his own people and trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. However, when he committed his worst crimes, the United States was supporting him. This support included providing the means to produce chemical and biological weapons.

Contrast this with the horrendous results of the U.S.-led economic sanctions. More than 1 million Iraqis, mainly children and infants, have died because of these sanctions. After having destroyed the entire infrastructure of the Iraqis' country, including hospitals, electricity generators and water treatment plants, the U.S. then, with the sanctions, stopped the import of goods, medicines, parts and chemicals necessary to restore even the most basic necessities of life.

There is no honor in murder. This war is murder by another name.

When, in an unjust war, an errant bomb dropped kills a mother and her child, it is not "collateral damage," it is murder.

When, in an unjust war, a child dies of dysentery because a bomb damaged a

sewage treatment plant, it is not "destroying enemy infrastructure," it is murder.

When, in an unjust war, a father dies of a heart attack because a bomb disrupted the phone lines so he could not call an ambulance, it is not "neutralizing command and control facilities," it is murder.

When, in an unjust war, a thousand poor farmer conscripts die in a trench defending a town they have lived in their whole lives, it is not victory, it is murder.

There will be veterans leading protests against this war on Iraq and your participation in it. During the Vietnam War, thousands in Vietnam and in the United States refused to follow orders. Many resisted and rebelled. Many became conscientious objectors and others went to prison rather than bear arms against the so-called enemy.

During the last Gulf War, many GIs resisted in various ways and for many different reasons. Many of us came out of these wars and joined with the anti-war movement.

If the people of the world are ever to be free, there must come a time when being a citizen of the world takes precedence over being the soldier of a nation. Now is that time.

When orders come to ship out, your response will profoundly impact the lives of millions of people in the Middle East and here at home. Your response will help set the course of our future. You will have choices all along the way. Your commanders want you to obey.

We urge you to think. We urge you to make your choices based on your conscience. If you choose to resist, we will support you and stand with you because we have come to understand that our *real* duty is to the people of the world and to our common future.

This statement was prepared by U.S. veterans and signed by more than 1,000 U.S. veterans. For more information, visit www.calltoconscience.net.