

We must allow free speech — even offensive photos

Guest commentary

I've been around the University of Oregon campus since 1996, and I remember when the EMU Amphitheater was opened and dedicated in the name of freedom of speech. Since then, I've seen the space used for many things including Student Alumni Association events, rock concerts, folk concerts, corporate-sponsored sports marketing campaigns, political campaigns, religious messages, Holocaust remembrance and various presentations for or against different causes.

I've seen my share of famous people come to the amphitheater, as well.

In what seems to be an annual event, people demonstrating against abortion have come holding large photographs of fetuses. There's no doubt that these photos are intended to shock and spark debate. The debate should be about opposing or supporting the choice to have an abortion. Every year, the debate deviates to one of censorship and free speech.

Some argue that the large photographs should be shielded from general view because it might offend or

traumatize innocent passersby. They say (and from what I've witnessed, adhered to) that if people want to pass through and see the photos, nobody will stop them.

Why are photographs, these in particular, held to a higher standard than other events at the amphitheater? Nobody "warns" me when I'm walking through that there's going to be music played when I walk by. It "might" offend me to hear your political views or to see your favorite speaker up there (it doesn't, but it might).

Thanks for thinking about me. But

I'm an adult, and I can decide for myself which views I support, what images I find offensive and what music I want to hear ... but only if you allow it to be presented to me.

Please, please, please, share your views. If you oppose the message sent by those who hold photographs of abortions, tell me *why*. Don't tell me it's gross. I can judge that for myself, and it doesn't help your argument.

Finally, I'm sure somebody will argue that children may see these images. I don't see many unsupervised children running around on

this college campus. Supervised or not, the parents of these children should know that at this institute of higher education, where free speech and challenging thoughts are supported — there's a chance their children may encounter adult issues or something that offends.

If it's truly going to be an amphitheater of free speech, then it must apply to all who choose to use it. Short of breaking laws, nobody should qualify what we see and hear at a free speech forum. Even if it offends.

Erik Talbert is a Class of '01 alumnus.

Campus attacks need to be revealed

Guest commentary

I wanted to respond to Julie Lauderbaugh's column ("Attacking Assault," ODE, May 1). Her article could not have been more pertinent to the needs of many on this campus.

I'm currently taking a women's self-defense course at the University and cannot believe all of the statistics I have been learning about unreported incidents. If only all of the victims out there who feel alone and helpless knew how many others shared their dilemma.

I think Lauderbaugh's column should be followed by another giving specific information to men and women who decide to seek help or simply report their assault.

Maybe someone was inspired to speak up after reading the column but doesn't know where to go. The point about not being informed of the hate crimes and rape on campus during IntroDUCKtion because of campus ignorance of the subject was a good idea to point out. I wouldn't have a clue about some of the things that go on at this campus if I wasn't in the women's self-defense course.

By the way, the paragraph about Measure 9 seemed a bit accusatory. Who's to say that those who voted for Measure 9 are not open-minded? Maybe many of those voters were parents who thought it best to inform their children about homosexuality issues on their own. How is a parent to know that the teacher giving information to their child is not ho-

mophobic themselves, giving biased opinions/facts?

It's not fair to judge the way someone votes. Each person has reasons for their motives. Also, it would have been a good idea to give a little background on Measure 9 itself in the column. I doubt those who need to be educated about the subject matter have a clear sense of what Measure 9 entails.

In terms of valuable information, I thought this column was quite wonderful. I agree that it will take time for the majority of people on campus to become educated about assaults that occur. I look forward to seeing more columns like this one getting the word out!

Bronwyn Corry is a sophomore biology major.

Letter to the editor

Non-traditional student attack is unfair, incorrect

As a non-traditional student, I feel obligated to respond to DJ Fuller's commentary ("Counting down to graduation," ODE, May 6). He lists gripes with the University and other odd crap that is mostly the same old garbage most graduating students feel the need to vent.

The point that irked me is the attack on non-traditional students. I am not old, and I am not that stupid geezer in class who doesn't remember anything from high school. As a matter of fact, you wouldn't even be able to pick most of us out as your stereotypical non-traditional students. Some of us are married or have kids, others are returning students or simply transfers from other two- and four-

year institutions, among other factors.

I think the stereotype of the annoying old person in class is the No. 1 hardest thing to overcome when identifying yourself as a non-traditional student. Every time you ask a question, you wonder if it is appropriate enough because you are under a microscope just by being you. The fact that the Emerald even printed this shows a gross insensitivity to a minority community.

If they had allowed an editorial saying that African Americans on campus are all gangsters and annoying, they would be driven out. That analogy is about as accurate a portrayal of that group as the annoying old person is to the non-traditionals. Before casting judgment on a very diverse group, I ask that students take a closer look.

Gabrielle Guidero
junior
geophysics

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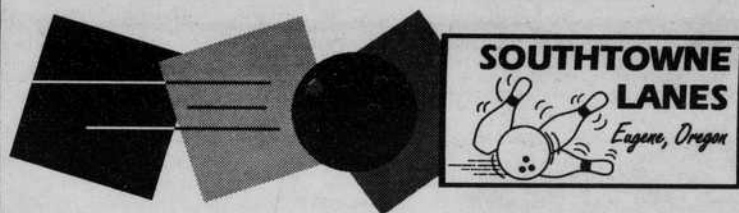
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