

COMMENTARY

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Homosexuality isn't the illness — bigotry is

Guest commentary

I am writing in response to the guest commentary entitled "Homosexual men should hide their disgusting acts" (ODE, May 9). I am ashamed that the Emerald, after recently winning an award as the best college paper in Oregon, would print such hate speech.

I put the words "black," "disabled," "woman" or "foreign" in the place of "homosexual" and think that 10 to 50 years ago, an article written in the same light about any one of those groups would have been acceptable. Times have changed, and people are learning that bashing any identity group is not OK.

The group that is under attack today is homosexual men. Some people hold the idea that unless a person is straight, white, male and upper-class, they do not deserve the freedom to walk comfortably through the streets. People who have hate and contempt for others are encouraging oppression.

It is not appropriate for a public institution, this newspaper, to embrace this hate speech. The language being used and the outright hatred harbored are dangerous and do not encourage dialogue.

To the commentary's author, Vincent Martorano:

I understand you may not like homosexuals. There are people I do not like; however, writing an article in which you openly bash a group of people is frightening. We all have to live in this world.

A person can either acknowledge difference or embrace it, or they can hate. Do you realize what an unsafe, potentially violent environment articles like the one you wrote create? Do you realize the culture of violence in our society and how you are adding to it?

By aligning yourself with "conservatives" you make it sound as if all conservatives think homosexuality is "disgusting." Hatred and bigotry are not "conservative values."

Put yourself in the shoes of a person reading your article who is either homosexual or has a friend, relative, parent or professor who is gay. How do you think you made them feel?

Please think before you vocalize hateful feelings. Think about how it makes people feel; think about the kind of world you are encouraging and creating by writing and speaking such ideas.

Think about the murders, rapes, oppression and other violent acts committed daily because people think it is OK to hate. Violent actions are condoned by your words.

Think of the people who battle with becoming who they are or the people searching for happiness, who may read your article and harm themselves or someone else because you define them as worthless and abnormal.

Think of someone else beside yourself. Think about the kind of world you want to create for your children and your children's children. If at the end of the day you feel the same, there is always the saying we were taught in kindergarten, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."

Finally, we all have a right to a safe place on this planet. If someone's actions do not harm anyone else, leave him or her be, live your life, and let others live theirs. I hope you find peace within yourself.

And remember: Hate, not homosexuality, is an illness. Homosexuals have as much of a right to this planet and this country as you do.

Daisy Perkins is a senior philosophy and women's studies major.

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's war debate must be remembered

Guest commentary

The 500 or so people who attended the Feb. 28 meeting of the University Assembly in the Student Recreation Center witnessed high academic drama. There were three principals: biology Professor Emeritus Frank Stahl, who proposed to put the University on record as being opposed to the war in Iraq; linguistics Professor Tom Givon, who challenged this; and University President Dave Frohnmayer, who presided over the meeting but did not join the debate.

Inexplicably, Stahl's proposal for the politicization of the University failed for the lack of quorum. While this was disappointing to many, for me the action played out in this aborted meeting has grown in significance with each passing day. I now see it as a drama in which the three principals conspired to deliver a message of foundational importance for the University.

Politicization was opposed by five arguments:

1. The mission statement does not authorize the University to engage in partisan politics. ORS 352.010 states that "the president and the professors have the immediate government (of the University)," but it does not give them political

responsibilities or rights.

2. The mission statement proclaims that "freedom of expression" is "the bedrock principle" of the University and that its first commitment is to "undergraduate education" with a goal of "helping the individual learn to question critically, think logically, communicate clearly, act creatively and live ethically." However, if the University is politicized, the orthodoxy endorsed will compromise academic freedom and the development of the intellectual and moral virtues.

3. Politicization would place enormous burdens on the faculty. If the assembly were to endorse an anti-war (or pro-war) position, then it would soon be subjected to demands on behalf of every conceivable cause. Soon it would be debating abortion and gay marriages, affirmative action and reparations and the rights of cats, dogs, tree-sitters and pot smokers.

4. Even though the assembly consists of many highly educated people, most do not have an expertise in the normative sciences. As a result, the assembly lacks the competence to issue authoritative political pronouncements.

5. History predicts that the tragic destiny of the politicized university is to become an instrument for state indoctrination. Such was the case with the Roman

and Napoleonic imperial universities and the Soviet and German universities of the 1930s. For example, the National Sociologists required teachers to demonstrate their personal, moral and political "fitness." Part of the Dozenture examination was attendance at a "Teachers Academy" for training in "correct" political attitudes. Also required was a loyalty to the Fuhrer.

These arguments assuredly saved the University from politicization. In the past, when time or crises were apt to cause the loss of a collective memory, people created memorials (statues, paintings, plaques) to honor their heroes and to extend their collective memory.

We could do as they did. This memorial would be in honor of Stahl for his courage in challenging the status quo; of Givon for his courage in stating the case against politicization; and of Frohnmayer for the courage for refusing to choose between antitheses — thus demonstrating the University can guarantee due process in the contest of ideas only if it refuses to act as a litigant in this contest. The memorial would also remind our successors of a drama whose message should never be forgotten.

Henry Crimmel lives in Eugene.

Letter to the editor

Visual distaste cannot justify universal responses

I am writing, like so many people have, I'm sure, in response to Dan Johnson's letter ("Pro-life" pictures show 'crimes' of abortion," ODE, May 6).

Specifically, I wish to address Johnson's argument that the "eww," "gross" and "I don't want to look at that" responses elicited by the pictures of aborted fetuses is a "deep instinctual recognition of those babies' humanity," and, therefore, proof that, deep down, all humans are against abortion.

To see the major flaw in Johnson's thin logic, considering the following: You would probably have the same "eww" or "gross" responses if someone showed you a picture of a heart transplant (I know I would), and I seriously doubt that anyone, even Johnson, would consider themselves "anti-transplant."

Elizabeth Parr
 graduate student
 art history

Turning the page on abortion debate

The Emerald has been pleased to present many opinions about the graphic photos displayed in the EMU Amphitheater by the anti-abortion group Survivors, but we have run out of room to continue printing responses.

We recognize this is an important debate; however, it is an ongoing one with many outlets on campus, including in student groups and in some classes.

Here is a summary of the opinions we have received but will not be printing:

Four were in support of an "unborn child's" right to life, including two written by women and one by a man emphasizing the pain abortion causes a father

Three were in support of showing the pictures

One was in support of a woman's right to choose

One was in support of both sides, emphasizing the difficulty of such a decision