

COMMENTARY

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Homophobic hate speech does count as violence

Guest commentary

I am responding to a commentary by Vincent Martorano ("Homosexual men should hide their disgusting acts," ODE, May 9) and another by Emerald editor in chief Michael J. Kleckner ("Commentary about homosexuals doesn't rise to the level of hate speech," ODE, May 12). As I am currently writing my thesis on the effects of homophobic language on queer women, these commentaries touched a sore spot.

First, because Martorano is so convinced that he is not homophobic, here's the definition of hate speech created by scholars who spent years researching the subject:

1) Hate speech has a message of social group inferiority, 2) is directed against members of a historically oppressed group, 3) is persecutory and degrading (Nielsen, L.). So, Martorano wants gay people to stop expressing affection and wishes our culture still considered homosexuality an illness. Sounds like hate speech.

He also mentions that he is "not one of those people who thinks they have some sort of authority to preach about what is right and wrong." Because his entire commentary is about how homosexuality is wrong and gay people should be closeted, I would certainly say he feels entitled to preach about right and wrong. But we will not go away. You will see more gay people making out and being out and proud.

In response to Kleckner's commentary, after researching the legalities of hate speech, I am torn about free speech issues. I can see the dilemma in deciding whether to print the commentary when, as the editor of a newspaper, he is obligated to promote free speech.

Nonetheless, I am dismayed by the reasons for his decision. He wrote Martorano only needed to be silenced "if he had told others to be violent." Maybe Martorano is inciting violence and Kleckner is condoning it. Here's a quote by a hate speech scholar: "Homophobic language perpetuates anti-gay violence by suggesting that it is socially acceptable to exhibit bias against gays" (Leets).

Hate speech and hate crimes are on the same spectrum of violence, beginning with subtle homophobic language and ending in murder. Martorano encourages ideas about gay individuals' inferiority in society and leaves room for more comments or physical actions to be made in agreement. Each incident like this is an encouragement of more anti-gay sentiments, physical or verbal. When people believe that anti-gay abuse is acceptable, there is precedence for violence to occur.

Can Kleckner say that Martorano is not indirectly encouraging violence? Who is to decide what constitutes violence? How about the astronomical numbers of queer youth who attempt suicide because of verbal harassment? When will the people who are sufficiently harmed by homophobic language be able to decide that it needs to be censored?

Can we really count on legal authorities, like the U.S. Supreme Court that Kleckner says he agrees with, to protect minorities from hate speech? The ACLU even states that "only a handful of several thousand" of their cases involve "offensive speech." The only time courts acknowledge or prosecute hate speech is when someone yells "faggot" or "dyke" at a queer individual while murdering or raping him or her.

When printing commentaries in the future, Kleckner should acknowledge the danger of condoning hate speech and set a new precedent for what constitutes violence.

Kristina Armenakis is the co-director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Alliance.



Steve Baggs Emerald

Bye, not-so-great state

It's my time, my shining moment... to say goodbye to Oregon. Oh, wait — I guess it was just wishful thinking. Nonetheless, I am leaving Oregon for the summer. I am saying goodbye to all of the things I've come to love and loathe in the not-so-great state of Oregon. I can't wait to say hello to the wide-open spaces of the Midwest.

Don't breathe relief just yet because come fall 2003, I'll be back, bolder than ever.

In keeping with the times of farewells and final moments, I'd have to say I didn't hate everything while I was here — but I'm still debating. So here are the things I love:

5) I love being at a liberal college so I can "say it loud." After all, if I weren't in such an open community, I wouldn't be able to write about all the things that have pissed off so many.

4) There are women here that define the phrase, "tough girl." I didn't think many women existed with a "stand your ground, don't mess with me, it's my-way-or-the-highway" philosophy — until I came here.



Salena DeLaCruz
Say it loud

3) I love the variations in classes and sequences I can take to explore my major, not to mention my ultimate career.

2) It may rain almost all year, but when it's one of those rare, sunny days, it is so beautiful. I just want to put a blanket on the lawn and forget all of my cares.

1) I'd have to say the greatest thing about being here was the opportunity to be involved with the No. 1 four-year college newspaper in the whole state of Oregon. Hey, I had to give props to the Emerald for giving me the opportunity to "say it loud," which is what I really love.

Now, to the things I love to hate:

5) Step away from the bong! Clear your head and for God's sake, take off the tie-dyed shirt. You tree-hugging hippies only personify the stereotypes people hear about Oregon, but more pointedly, the University of Oregon.

4) I love my opinions. And I love that I voice my opinions because I can, but living here I noticed I get a negative reaction if they aren't like everyone else's. Fire and brimstone to me if I dare utter what people don't want to hear. You're not as open-minded as you thought, are you?

3) You know them well: the instructors that want you at every class but only to torture you with their boring monotone lec-

tures that make you want to fall asleep. I can remember at least two classes where I came out bleary-eyed and couldn't remember what the lecture was about. For the love of God! Please liven it up. I'm not learning anything. I am trying too hard to stay awake; a one-liter of Mountain Dew doesn't even help.

2) So, I'm Mexican-American and my name is Salena. But for the record it's spelled S-a-l-e-n-a. Just because my name is Salena (not like the singer Selena, who was murdered by the president of her fan club) does not mean I can carry a tune or that I automatically know who you are talking about. Quit stereotyping me! Not every person who is classified as a Latino knows every Latino in the world. Geez, I mean not every black person knows who Eazy-E is.

1) Enough with the peace rallies already! I get it. We all get it. People die in war. Innocent people. But as I've said in my other columns, sometimes it's our time to fight.

Out of all of my time here, I've learned to agree to disagree because let's face it, I'll never agree with any of you, and you'll never agree with me, but I will keep "saying it loud."

Contact the columnist at salenadelacruz@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Segregated proms, racism aren't new in South

Guest commentary

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed Salena De La Cruz's column ("Turning back the clock on civil rights," ODE, May 12) about the first integrated prom.

I wanted to inform your readers that it is not only going on just in Georgia. I grew up in Louisiana, and most schools in South Louisiana have never had an integrated anything! (And I do not see it happening any time soon!)

To be honest, I never knew that it was any other way. I just thought all schools had a "white dance" and a "black dance." The reason I say "dance" is because it is not only prom, it is for homecoming, Sadie Hawkins, spring dance... and so on.

I am very sad to have missed out on my 10-year high school reunion, but I am told I did not get invited because I married someone "not white." I am married to a man who is Arab.

In my school, I remember being friends with kids whose fathers were in the Ku Klux Klan. I remember some boys who could not attend the football games because they had a KKK meeting that night. This was in 1999.

For homecoming, we could dress up in costumes. Some people just wore their father's KKK outfits to school... and there would be this one small kid who they would dress up in black (paint his face and all) and call him "nigger," and for the lunch break they would chase him around school. I am not proud of this at all! I am just surprised that the rest of the United States does not realize that the South is like this.

I had lots of friends in the public school system. From what I know, the public school system in my parish, and any parish I know of in Louisiana, has two proms. They claim they do this because of music choice. One dance is for people who like rap, and the other is for people who like top 40 and country. I guess Eminem would give Louisiana a shock they would never forget.

A white boy going to a rap dance? We all can tell what they mean by this!

The students even call it "the black prom" or "the white prom." Funny thing is, in my hometown, you had to join a "club" in order to go to the white prom. Only the club members were allowed to attend and bring a date. All members were white, by the way.

I have lost contact with most of my friends from high school because I do not agree with most of their ideas. The ones I do still talk to agree that we were raised wrong. I am happy to not live there anymore because I am a mother of two and plan on bringing my kids up where they treat people based on how people treat you, not on the color of your skin.

Your column brought me back to my high schools days, and unfortunately, I have a lot of kin who are still living this way. May God show them a change of heart.

Koddie Al-Rahbi lives in Eugene and attends LCC.