

Thursday, March 11, 2004



**Brad Schmidt**  
 Of chief concern

## Chavez editorial misconstrues important point

As I've said before, as I'll say now and as I'll say again, accuracy and credibility are the most important attributes a newspaper can possess. Both go hand in hand: Consistent accuracy builds credibility; Ongoing credibility means readers can believe and trust what's in the newspaper.

Wednesday, the Emerald Editorial Board presented an opinion that, on behalf of the board, I am now clarifying.

In "4] Chavez campaign must look beyond race," the Emerald misrepresented Javier Ayala's opinions on the matter of naming the new Southside school. The issue has been contentious, and about 150 people gathered Friday to encourage the school board to name the new school after Cesar Chavez. The Editorial Board based part of its editorial on a news story that appeared in The Register-Guard on Saturday. Here's a portion of what the story stated:

"I'm real worried that the message that some of the adults are sending is that (school board members) are being disrespectful of you, and that is not the intent of the board," (board Chairwoman Beth) Gerot said. "I think that the message that our community needs to hear is that we are listening, we appreciate the thoughtful input we have been getting from our community, we appreciate the input and we're trying to make the best decision. It's not helpful when people tell us that we are being racist, that we are not caring about our community. That's not who we are."

But several people at the rally questioned how deep the board's commitment to diversity really is.

"It's time that they really walked the talk," said Javier Ayala of the group Educaci3n y Justicia.

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Here is what the Emerald Editorial Board wrote Wednesday:

Beth Gerot, the chairwoman of the embattled board, addressed claims of implicit racism, telling The Register-Guard, "I think that the message that our community needs to hear is that we are listening, we appreciate the thoughtful input we have been getting from our community, we appreciate the input and we're trying to make the best decision."

Javier Ayala, of the group Educaci3n y Justicia, is dissatisfied with the board's efforts: "It's time that they really walked the talk."

In what is some of the worst rhetoric to date, and one of the worst plays of the race card the Editorial Board has seen in recent memory, Ayala effectively equates any board decision (other than the one he favors) to racism, drawing attention away from the more meaningful issue at hand.

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After receiving calls from Ayala and other community members Wednesday, the Editorial Board reevaluated its opinionated statements on Ayala's position. It is clear to all five members of the Editorial Board that Ayala's position was misconstrued in Wednesday's editorial. The Editorial Board regrets making these statements because they possibly led readers to draw an improper conclusion.

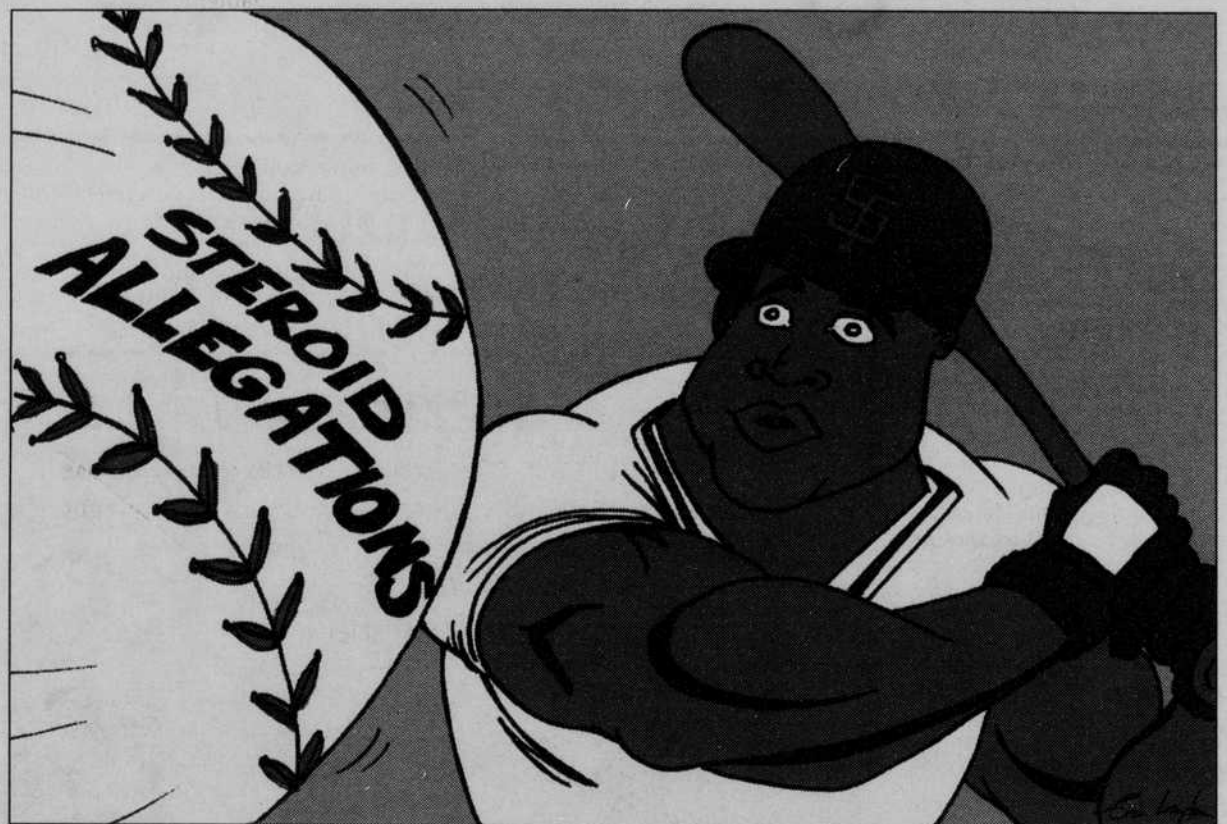
Ayala told the Emerald on Wednesday that his statement, "It's time that they really walked the talk," means this: It's time the school board be inclusive to everybody in the community, and be more inclusive in curriculum, policy and the naming of schools. Ayala was not advocating for these things based on race.

As with many editorial boards at papers across the country, the Emerald Editorial Board does not talk to every individual involved in a discussion. Rather, the Editorial Board uses existing materials — verified facts, media reports, Emerald stories — to form opinions. In some cases, the Editorial Board speaks directly to individuals and gathers its own facts.

These processes do not prove problematic until an incident occurs such as Wednesday's. The Emerald Editorial Board's interpretation was incorrect, and it could have misled readers' opinions on the subject. In the future, the Emerald Editorial Board will take steps to clarify opinions that may not be clear, especially the opinions of local figures.

We thank the readers who called the Emerald with concerns about the opinions expressed in the editorial. Accuracy and credibility are all the Emerald has on which to stand. We work tirelessly to get things right, and if we don't achieve that goal, we work to correct the problem.

Contact the editor in chief at editor@dailyemerald.com.



Eric Layton Illustration

## Learning outside the box

College offers us many unique opportunities but none so valuable as the opportunity to study abroad. I believe going to another country for at least one term should be mandatory of all college students, regardless of major.

In fact, study abroad should really begin in high school. I think we all remember what high school was like. Those walls were the boundaries of the entire world and what was happening between them was everything, the sum of life.

The epidemic of depression among teenagers is partly the result of living in such a small world where the tiniest heartbreak seems like a mountain. Spending time in a foreign country is like taking a trip to the moon: Suddenly those high school problems, which loomed so large, are just specks against the horizon. It is a change in perspective both physically and emotionally.

Those who are filled with hate and fear usually never have left their little homogenized communities. We have a lot of hate and fear in this country; not coincidentally, America is one of the most navel-gazing societies in the world.

It's hard to believe, because we also are also one of the most internationalized countries in the world, but it's true. And you realize just how true it is once you step outside of its borders. Americans only seem to care about other countries when our military is being sent there. That is why so few of us know anything about the billion people who are living in the



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 Critical mass

largest democracy in the world, India.

Since I mentioned it, the military is another excellent way to see other countries and be exposed to other cultures, especially for those who cannot afford college.

Of my four undergraduate years the experience I cherish the most is my six months in Sri Lanka. I knew the world had a second side, but I never really believed it until I was standing there on my own two feet. Only somebody who has been outside of their country of origin would understand the feeling: A place you have read about, even dreamed about, suddenly becomes real before your eyes. It no longer exists in the two-dimensionality of a photograph or a map. It is thick.

Learning about another culture is only part of the study abroad experience. Learning about yourself — that is where the real learning occurs. While traveling in Sri Lanka, going through military checkpoints with guns pointed at my head, seeing crushing poverty on city

streets, praying in Hindu and Buddhist temples, talking with villagers in tea plantations, etc. — that is when I learned about my own inner strength. That is when I learned about life and death and faith and the meaning of love and friendship. And humility. And humanity.

There is no excuse for spending all of your college years in this country. Money is no excuse. Depending on where you go, you might spend less and financial aid covers your trip in most circumstances. There are numerous scholarships and fellowships as well.

And with the job market lean in the United States, it is important that we look abroad for employment. The world is a great place to work. After all, the majority of us have the one skill employers in most countries cherish above all others: We speak English.

So take advantage of the unique opportunity you have as a college student. The Office of International Programs offers more than 80 overseas programs in more than 50 countries. Go to the International Resource Center and look through their materials. Then visit the Overseas Study Programs office at 330 Oregon Hall. You can call them at 346-3207 or drop by to set up an appointment with an Overseas Program coordinator.

Contact the columnist at davidjagernauth@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Factory farms mistreat animals

In regard to "Choice of eating meat or not guided by taste, values, diet" (ODE, Feb. 25), I can relate to Yiddish Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer, who stated, "I'm a vegetarian for health reasons — the health of the chickens."

Animals raised for food on factory farms are treated like unfeeling machines. Chickens, for example, are crammed by

the tens of thousands into sheds with barely enough room to move or flap their wings. The birds spend their entire lives in the space equivalent to a standard sheet of paper. They routinely suffer broken bones from rough handling by workers, who grab up eight birds at a time by their legs to stuff them into crates or shackle them upside down at the slaughterhouse. Chickens are often still fully conscious when their throats are slit or when they are dumped into tanks of scalding water to remove their feathers.

As your article pointed out, a vegan diet is appropriate for everyone and offers many health benefits, which can add years to your life. An ethical eater is rewarded with an extended lifespan, as well as a clear conscience. For a free vegetarian starter kit, call 1-888-VEG-FOOD or visit GoVeg.com.

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 People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals