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**In my opinion**

## Drowning in politics — get 'Inside the Whale'

"Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism — robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it." — George Orwell, "Inside the Whale," 1940.

If there were ever a week to re-read "Inside the Whale," it was last week. George W. Bush won an election with both the popular vote and the Electoral College vote. Republicans picked up seats in both the House and Senate (including Senate minority leader Tom Daschle's highly symbolic seat), and Measures 36 and 37 passed with clear majorities. Bush will soon have the opportunity to entrench a long-term conservative majority on the Supreme Court. Given that, and the situation in Congress, it's hard to argue with Karl Rove's prediction of a long-term Republican hegemony.

It's become increasingly clear that we live in an age of stark conservatism that stretches across the political, social, sexual and artistic arenas. Janet Jackson's nipple caused a bigger outrage than the Abu Ghraib scandal. Whoopi Goldberg got fired by Slim-Fast for making a sexual pun based on the president's surname. Retail outlets like Wal-Mart either won't sell, or require significant modification of, controversial works of art. And the president pushes abstinence-based education that has been proven ineffective and actually leads to abortions that could be prevented by comprehensive sex education and freely available contraception.

In the face of all this, one wants to retreat. To declare "no more," and live in a cabin in the woods to sleep,



CHUCK SLOTHOWER  
TAKING ISSUE

eat, read and make love. Narcissism — simple, glorious narcissism — has never sounded so appealing. I feel much as I imagine George Orwell did when he wrote his landmark 1940 essay, "Inside the Whale." At the time, the world was still recovering from the greatest economic crash in modern history. Fascism controlled much of Europe, and it was obvious to Orwell that a catastrophic war stood before him and that he could do nothing to stop it.

Orwell's solution to this was to get "inside the whale," to become a willing Jonah swallowed for his own good. For inside a whale, one cannot feel the waves. One cannot feel the cold. One doesn't know or care whether the sea is tempestuous or calm. As Orwell wrote, "The whale's belly is simply a womb big enough for an adult. There you are, in a dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter what happens." Sounds good to me. At least until the midterm elections in 2006.

This marks the 25th year of the conservative resurgence, which gained national power with Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980. Thus I

don't understand the middle-aged pundits who declared the 2004 election to be the most important of their lifetimes. Without Reagan, there would be no Bush. Without Reagan's tax cuts, there would be no Bush tax cuts. Without "Star Wars," there would be no missile defense system. Without Iran-Contra, there would be no Abu Ghraib. And, of course, without Reagan's innumerable, ingenious deceptions, we wouldn't have Bush's innumerable, ingenious deceptions.

It's difficult to see the political pendulum swinging away from the right anytime soon. The population is growing older, and thus more conservative. The baby boomers will continue to dominate politics for at least the next 20 years, and they're not interested in the promises of progress; they're interested in tax cuts. They're not interested in universal health care; they're interested in Janet Jackson's nipple. So I invite you, as Orwell did in 1940, to "get inside the whale" — or rather, admit that you are inside the whale (for you are, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it.

Go play basketball with your friends. Drive out to Sweet Life Patisserie and enjoy a slice of cheesecake and a cup of coffee. Pre-funk like a champ and then go wild in the Pit Crew. Whatever you do, don't think about politics for a while.

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### INBOX

#### 'Moral values' impossible to comprehensively define

"Moral values" is the big post-election buzzword but it is meaningless in this context since everyone votes according to his or her moral values, always. Americans simply have no unified definition of what constitutes the moral position.

For example, for some people moral means "no killing innocent fetuses"; for other people it means "no killing innocent Iraqis." For some, preventing discrimination is the moral issue; for others it is defining marriage as heterosexual. For some, moral means bringing God more visibly into the political process; for others moral means ensuring religious tolerance by not biasing our politics toward one specific group.

Even were we all to agree on which issues were the "moral values" ones — say, for theoretical example, preventing abortion — different moral codes demand different actions. For some the moral choice would be voting for the man who is "pro-life"; for others it would mean voting for the man who is "pro-family planning."

And for still others, who simply notice that abortion rates went up significantly under Bush's leadership, morality would require voting for his opponent.

The point is, everyone votes according to his or her moral values. Calling moral values the unexpected player, or saying their appearance in the exit polls gives the president a clear mandate, is bologna!

Erica Bolliger  
Portland, OR

#### Freedom on lockdown, discrimination rampant

I believe in rights for all people and all living things. If you're like most Oregonians, and Americans, you wouldn't agree with me, so let me try to persuade you. Nobody in their right mind would lock their dog up in a tiny cage for his entire life would they? No, that would be horribly cruel. Shame on me for putting the idea in your head. So what do other people do for the ones who share my belief? They sell us free-range chickens.

Now, if some wacko put a proposition on the ballot that said all

animals have to be locked in cages, would you vote in favor of it? Of course you wouldn't. Even though you're smart enough not to pay extra for free range chickens, you'd still vote against it because you love your doggie and locking him in a cage would take away his freedom. So you vote to ensure his freedom at the risk of setting the other animals, including chickens, free.

Thankfully that proposition was not on the ballot, so you didn't have to make that tough decision. Farmers can continue to raise free-range chickens and it doesn't bother you. It doesn't affect you. You don't have to buy them if you don't want to. It was all just a bad dream. But, wait, it wasn't just a dream. It was real. It was on the ballot but it wasn't about animals. It was about people and you voted to take away the freedom of gay couples. Why? They're not proposing to you. Honoring their marriage wouldn't affect you. It may not yet be time for you to agree to support all living things, but it is time for you to support all people.

Jacob Werblow  
Eugene

**Editorial**

## Police study racial issue; is profiling a problem?

Racial profiling is so rampant in many U.S. cities that minority drivers joke about being pulled over by police for a DWB (Driving While Black). It might be time to add Eugene to the list. According to a 2002-3 study by the Eugene Police Department, black drivers were pulled over at a more frequent rate than white drivers and black and Latino drivers were more likely to be searched and arrested than white drivers.

The fact that minority residents are stopped, searched and arrested at a greater rate than white residents comes as no great shock to communities of color. Anecdotal evidence has been mounting for years. This study was an attempt to collect the empirical data necessary to spark real reform. Unfortunately, the methodology of the study contains too much uncertainty and is not nearly broad enough to determine whether racial profiling is, in fact, a problem in Eugene.

First, the study was based on incomplete data: Survey cards were filled out by officers in only 70 percent of vehicle stops. Many of the cards that were filled out were incomplete. Furthermore, the data collected covered only a two-year period, not long enough to determine a trend.

Second, it is impossible to verify the accuracy of the collected data. The officers who may or may not be committing racial profiling are the ones filling out the cards. It would be simple for an officer to cover his or her tracks, since everything on the card is based on the officer's perception of race. Furthermore, since the data is not organized by the name of the officer involved, at least not the data provided to the public, it is impossible to know if there are one or two bad seeds in the department skewing the data.

Third, any legitimate study of racial profiling cannot be limited to traffic stops alone, but must also include interactions on the street. Much of the harassment, intimidation and brutality that communities of color in other cities experience from the police occurs outside of the vehicle and is not documented. Cases like Cortez Jordan's (ODE: "Study prompts racial profiling concerns in EPD," Nov. 5) need to be incorporated into any further study of the racial profiling issue.

The Emerald commends the EPD for this first small step. The results, as inconclusive as they are, at least prove that further study is needed. Why are black and Latino residents more likely to be stopped for longer periods of time than white residents? Why do a greater rate of stops for black and Latino residents occur in patrol district five? Why are black and Latino residents disproportionately searched when the data shows that they are no more or less likely to have contraband than white residents?

We hope the police department works quickly and efficiently to begin to provide answers to these pressing questions.

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