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■ In my opinion

Trumping common sense

Like more than 10 million other Americans, I tune in every Thursday night to see who's going to get the ax on "The Apprentice." I, however, take my enthusiasm for the show to levels far beyond the casual viewer — stopping just short of obsessive fan-dom, à la trekkies.

I've seen every episode aired thus far and thanks to the wonders of DVD, I've seen the first season a couple of times. I've also read all six of Donald Trump's books. But most disturbingly, I've allowed "The Apprentice" to affect some of my major life decisions.

Last winter term, during the first season of "The Apprentice," I was beginning to absolutely despise school. Like the agnostic who says, "I love spirituality but hate organized religion," my attitude at the time was, "I love learning but hate organized education."

In high school, we are indoctrinated to believe that anybody who wants to be anybody has to go to college. But I couldn't stand the thought of going further into debt every year for the privilege of being part of an unmotivated mass of adolescents "learning" at the speed of the slowest common denominator. Perhaps I would have been content to simply hate school, go through the motions and get it over with, but "The Apprentice" was about to change all that.

First-season candidate Troy McClain had developed a successful real-estate



GABE BRADLEY
THE WRITING ON THE WALL

business, became a fan favorite and went to the inside track to win the whole enchilada despite having only a high school education. And then there was Nick Warnock, the brassy full-commission copier salesman who brought the floundering Versacorp team its first win.

Inspired by the antics of these illustrious capitalists, I summoned the courage, or foolhardiness, to drop out of school and get a job as a full-commission insurance agent. I took a lot of flack from friends and family, but life was good. I worked hard and always got home in time to catch "The Apprentice" on Thursday nights. Perhaps I would have been content to spend my life trying to work my street smarts and sales skills for all they were worth. But again, "The Apprentice" was about to change all that.

Episode 12, two weeks before the finale, Troy McClain went head to head with his friend, Kwame Jackson, whose primary qualification is an MBA from the Harvard School of

Business. It was the epitome of book smarts versus street smarts. When the dust had settled, book smarts won out, and Troy was fired.

That was when it hit me: No matter how smart, skilled or experienced you may be, if you can't prove it, you can only get so far. It's not fair, but life's not fair. I tucked my tail between my legs and limped back to the University, having only delayed my graduation by a term or so.

For the third season of "The Apprentice," the Donald has added a new twist by pitting a college-educated "book smarts" team against a high school-educated "street smarts" team. It's like revisiting Troy versus Kwame every week. So far, "The Apprentice" has seemed to confirm the glass ceiling in the business world. Both seasons have been won by college-educated white guys in their mid-30s. We'll see if this season bucks the trend.

Perhaps in the future they'll get even further into the nitty gritty by having a "useful degrees" versus "useless degrees." Who wouldn't want to see philosophy majors and art history majors face off against MBAs and JDs? Or how about graduate school versus bachelor's degrees? In any case, there's plenty of room for Mark Burnett and Donald Trump to beat "The Apprentice" into the ground, just like "Survivor."

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■ Editorial

Apathy in youth sets dangerous precedent

One day after the people of Iraq took a collective, courageous, inspiring step toward democracy and freedom, a disturbing study shows that Americans may be taking a giant apathetic step backward.

A survey of 112,003 high-school students by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has found an extreme lack of awareness and even contempt for the rights and freedoms they enjoy everyday.

Only 51 percent of high school students surveyed said they agreed with the statement, "Newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories." In other words, half of students believe (or simply don't care) that the government should be allowed to censor news reports; they do not believe in, or are apathetic toward, free press.

It is even worse than that: 83 percent of high school students surveyed agree with the statement, "People should be allowed to express unpopular opinions." Or 17 percent of students feel that if a belief is "unpopular," you should not be allowed to legally express your belief. In other words, 17 percent of students do not believe in freedom of speech.

When we only count students who have never taken a media class in high school, the number who don't believe in freedom of speech leaps to 33 percent!

How is it possible that high schoolers could be so indifferent about basic freedoms, the very foundation of what makes America great, the very thing the government says so many young Americans are dying to try to spread to the rest of the world? Are these the beliefs of the incoming freshmen and sophomores to this University?

It is not just the beliefs of these students that are scary. When high-school teachers were asked whether high-school newspapers should be allowed to report on controversial topics without approval from school authorities, only 39 percent said yes. And only 58 percent of teachers believed that musicians should be allowed to sing songs with offensive lyrics.

These are the teachers who are responsible for instilling an appreciation of the First Amendment in their students. Even 30 percent of Americans feel the First Amendment goes too far. No wonder our young people are incapable of outrage about government intrusions in their private lives. No wonder our young people sit quietly as their freedoms are shaved away.

■ Out loud

"I didn't hear any shooting. Suddenly, I heard Norhan screaming. Then she fell down. I looked at my hand and saw blood."
— Aysha Khateeb, an injured classmate of Norhan Deeb, a 10-year-old Palestinian girl who was shot in a Gaza schoolyard Monday. The circumstances of her death are unclear.

"He has joined the more than a million Italians who have come down with the flu."
— Papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls on 84-year-old Pope John Paul II. The illness led the Pope to cancel scheduled audiences Monday — the first such cancellations in more than a year.

— From Associated Press reports

INBOX

PFC's defunding attempts based on a grudge

In rejecting the mission statement of the Oregon Commentator, the PFC demonstrates its complete inability to reason clearly, apply consistent standards or judge groups in a viewpoint-neutral manner. What's more, the PFC attempts to place itself above the law in deciding what is or is not protected political speech.

It seems the PFC has chosen two groups notoriously critical of the ASUO to defund and attempt to silence. Both publications provide very important coverage of ASUO shenanigans and try to make the ASUO accountable not only to the 4.6 percent of the student body who put them in office, but also to the entirety of the student body.

The Emerald does this through often solid reporting and the occasional scathing editorial, while the Commentator provides analysis, in-depth reporting and, yes, biting (often callous) humor. Both are vital to the free exchange of ideas and, in their own way, seek to expose the major failings of the ASUO as an institution. Trying to stifle such important media outlets because what they say puts the lie to all of the ASUO's lofty rhetoric is shameful, childish and, moreover, pathetic.

Are the members of the ASUO really so weak they can't take a little criticism? In 2002 the PFC tabled the Commentator's budget due to the content of

the mission statement. In the early 1990s, the IFC, a predecessor to the PFC, attempted to defund the Commentator for unpopular content. The PFC's habit of abusing the two most important publications on campus must come to an end. If the PFC is allowed to get away with this, the campus environment will be damaged beyond repair.

Timothy Dreier
2003-04 editor in chief
Oregon Commentator

Yellow ribbon removal protects free speech

Are you joking? "Nice job throwing those obscure bureaucratic rules back in the face of that patriotic sucker ... If ever there was a time when the rules were meant to be broken, this was the time ... Sometimes common sense and decency must trump the letter of the law" ("Yellow ribbon complaint — code red free speech threat," ODE, Jan. 26).

That obscure bureaucratic rule you're referring to is actually the same First Amendment that you claim to so honorably uphold in your paper. Every taxpayer in this state contributed, however incrementally, to the purchase and maintenance of the truck. Should we all get to pick a magnet to put on it? In this instance we protect everybody's right to free speech by keeping the truck in its original, politically, morally, patriotically silent mode.

I wish as much as anyone that the "patriotic sucker" could have his magnet on the truck. But then we would have to let the unpatriotic sucker put his magnet on the truck too. One day the Ku Klux Klan sucker would show up with his magnet. Everybody would get mad and say that he was out of line, that nobody wanted his magnet on the truck. Yet, we would have to let him, because we had let everybody else.

The alternative the Emerald editorial board proposes with its "rules are meant to be broken" brand of advice is to designate some lucky fellow to be the arbiter of what magnets are acceptable. I'm not sure who is so enlightened as to be capable of that, but the editorial board seems to be feeling up to it. Maybe they know something that constitutional law scholar and University President Dave Frohnmayer doesn't, but given the board's sophomoric understanding of the Constitution, journalism, and so-called common sense, I'm hesitant to support that.

The Emerald's credibility would be enhanced by choosing not to engage in such self-righteous diatribes. Better yet, you could handle your business like business, and not resort to misguided First Amendment arguments every time you need to get your funding approved. Get off the soap box, go get a new readership survey and please stick to the news.

Ben Strawn
Eugene

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

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