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BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

## ■ In my opinion

# Free speech vs. hate speech

How can a liberal defend free speech when it includes the right to speech that is hateful in nature? This is a question that may be plaguing a great many here on the University of Oregon campus.

While relevant to the topic, the focus of this commentary is not the oft-discussed de-funding of the Oregon Commentator; rather, it is the American Nazi Party's adoption of roads in Marion County, Oregon. Six weeks ago, in accordance with the Adopt-A-Highway policy, this group took on the responsibility of keeping its span of highway clean, and bright green city signs were posted proclaiming that the American Nazi Party had adopted those spaces. Both signs were stolen last week, but they can be replaced if the party wishes.

According to a recent Associated Press article, the county decided to approve the Nazi Party's signs because of a January 2005 case in which the U.S. Supreme Court allowed Missouri Ku Klux Klan members to have signs of a similar nature, under free speech rights of the First Amendment. In this case, the court decided that Missouri's "desire to exclude controversial organizations in order to prevent road rage or public backlash on the highways against the adopters' unpopular beliefs is simply not a legitimate governmental interest that would support the enactment of speech-abridging regulations."

Coming from a Jewish perspective, there are no fuzzy lines in this situa-



AILEE SLATER  
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

tion. For me, these signs are wrong, period, and should not be posted. I believe it is wrong for the state to show any indication of condoning the behavior of white supremacists, especially when such a group has been empirically shown to promote hate and death. This is not just hypothetical harm that such a group might cause; this is real world harm that resulted in the death of over 6 million people. To be forced to look upon the memory of such events on public paraphernalia is distressing, and the county's decision to allow such signs is indecent and hateful in nature.

Coming from a liberal, democratic perspective, however, the boundaries of right and wrong begin to fade, while the blur of confusion becomes 10-fold brighter. I believe that a pro-choice group should be allowed to adopt a highway and post a sign saying so; yet, a road adopted by people in favor of abortion could easily be offensive to citizens who believe that abortion is legalized murder. To these citizens, it would certainly seem that the state was condoning homicide. How can the government shut off just one voice without

shutting off all? Just as I believe that government legislation shouldn't be based on Christian morals, I also grudgingly believe that it shouldn't be based solely on liberal morals either.

Perhaps the most important idea to keep in mind is that hypocrisy is natural, and there is not always one right answer. I don't know what the law should be regarding Adopt-A-Highway signs; for me, there is no solution. If one person cannot even come to a personal truth, how can a government official ever find truth that is valid for an entire nation? Maybe more people, especially those in positions of political power, need to remember the frailty of their own belief systems. Perhaps then, seemingly absolute ideas such as God or life or choice could be re-evaluated once in a while. Accepting that nothing is absolute is essential to finding the best solution rather than the "right" solution, especially when making decisions that affect billions.

Possessing conflicting personal and political views is okay, even important: It means the ability to see the other side of the story. I'm never going to believe that the American Nazi Party should have a public street sign, and I'm never going to believe that a pro-choice group shouldn't. And maybe, somewhere between the things I know and the things I can't resolve lies an answer. I guess I'll just have to keep on knowing and not knowing and wondering and searching.

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## INBOX

### Sometimes activists' extremes get results

In response to David Jagernauth's commentary article on Feb. 4, 2005, I happen to agree with a lot of what was said in his column ("Welcome to activist theatre"). I like the idea that some "actions" are becoming "more arbitrary and less consistent."

However, I feel that many "activists

on the left" are very deliberate in their actions. They also get results. The time has come where conventional forms of protest are largely ignored. Many of these actions take place after an issue has been ignored in the institutional realm, so the necessity of "theater activism" becomes an expression of the actor's lack of satisfaction with the dominant power structure. "Theater activism" is a tactic important for

expressing ideas without having to depend on mainstream media.

Saying that we should narrow the targets of our actions, I can agree with. But suggesting that we narrow the scope of our disobedience is exactly the opposite of what needs to happen on a very, very large scale. Creativity is revolutionary.

Ray Cole  
Eugene

## ■ Editorial

# Kid-friendly Super Bowl ads escape controversy

As about 78,000 fans gathered at Alltel Stadium on Sunday to watch the first Super Bowl ever held in Jacksonville, Fla., more than 100 million viewers positioned themselves in front of television sets awaiting the most-watched sporting event in history. Broadcast on the FOX network, this battle between the New England Patriots and the Philadelphia Eagles also brought the much-anticipated grab for consumer dollars, and at a hefty price.

At about \$80,000 per second of commercial advertising, big-name companies such as Anheuser-Busch and PepsiCo, who together bought seven-and-a-half minutes of advertising, faced off with smaller companies such as FedEx, which took a 45-second piece of the 59 30-second commercial units offered. FOX is expected to rake in an estimated \$140 million in advertising revenue, according to The Associated Press.

In a conservative swing to avoid an incident akin to last year's "wardrobe malfunction," which had CBS saddled with a \$550,000 fine by the Federal Communications Commission, Super Bowl organizers booked ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, 63, for 12 minutes of good, clean, half-time entertainment.

"It's a great honor to do this," McCartney said at a February press conference announcing his intention to perform. "People may have concerns of another wardrobe malfunction, but I can safely tell you that I won't."

Advertisers have followed suit. According to a New York Times report, the Ford Motor Company on Wednesday withdrew a commercial after receiving complaints that it made light of the recent string of Catholic Church sexual abuse cases. The commercial showed how a girl's prank caused a member of clergy to be tempted by a Lincoln pickup. A Lincoln-Mercury spokeswoman told the Times that the company wanted the attention to be focused on the truck, not on possible parallels to the controversy.

Although much of the Super Bowl commercial content (which can be seen online at [dyn.ifilm.com/superbowlads/](http://dyn.ifilm.com/superbowlads/)) was overly watered down with child-friendly ads featuring the Muppets for Pizza Hut, M.C. Hammer for Lay's potato chips, a stable full of Marvel superheroes for Visa and the Jolly Green Giant for MasterCard, there were some highlights.

Our favorites:

FedEx's "ten items needed to come out on top" featuring actor Burt Reynolds and a dancing, talking, groin-kicking bear, hit all the notes to be the best commercial of the Super Bowl (as promised). The tongue-in-cheek mockery of the Super Bowl's advertising insanity was refreshing and disturbingly accurate.

Ameriquest Mortgage Company's tagline "Don't judge too quickly. We won't." was perfectly paired with a set of hilarious ads that put innocent people in situations easily taken out of context: A girlfriend walking in on a boyfriend holding a clumsy cat and a large knife over a spilled saucepot of tomato sauce was a winner among this company's champions.

Diet Pepsi, like FedEx, was at its best when in self-depreciation mode: When singer Sean "P. Diddy" Combs arrives at a premiere in a Diet Pepsi truck (after his own slick car broke down, of course) the vehicle soon becomes a must-have commodity, and Carson Daly makes an appearance playing up his reputation as a poseur.