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In my opinion

Florida wins the right fight



ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
WORKS ON PAPER

Florida is a haven for strangeness, especially in terms of criminal behavior. Florida thieves once stole the remains of a relative because they believed the powdery substance found in a tackle box was cocaine. In 1994, at a hotel near Miami Airport, the dead body of a 24-year-old woman was found underneath a bed, after the room's guests complained of a foul smell. Later that year in Fort Lauderdale, a hotel staff member discovered another dead body, this time of 47-year-old man under a bed. Weird.

A Florida woman making meth accidentally dialed 911 instead of area code 921, hung up, and inadvertently led police directly to her well-stocked drug lab.

Then there is the whole voting in a democracy thing Floridians can't seem to get a handle on. Maybe it is the heat, or as I'm told, the humidity, that makes people crazy. Maybe it's the close proximity to other countries in case one needs to flee. Either way, wide-ranging media figures, from Adam Corolla of Loveline to the CBS News' 60 Minutes anchors, have taken note: If something is so criminally strange or politically far-fetched it seems unbelievable, it probably happened in Florida.

Now this land of gator farms, Epcot Center and hanging chads has gone and done something — right? Earlier this week Florida Gov. Jeb Bush signed the Jessica Lunsford Act into law. Jessica was 9 years old when she was abducted, sexually assaulted, then murdered by a convicted sex offender in March. John Evander Couey confessed to the crime and showed police where he buried her alive.

The Jessica Lunsford bill was swiftly drafted and moved to law unanimously after much emotional campaigning by the girl's father, Mark Lunsford, and many Florida politicians. A registered sexual predator confessed and was charged with the

death of another Florida girl, 13-year-old Sarah Lunde, only weeks after Jessica's murder. The events enraged the citizens and politicians of Florida and sped the legislative process for what is now known as Jessica's Law.

The new law is the toughest in the nation, imposing a mandatory sentence of 25 years to life in prison for people convicted of sex crimes against children under 12 and requiring convicted sex offenders to wear global tracking devices on their ankles for the rest of their lives.

The tracking device, which uses the satellite Global Positioning System, will alert authorities if a convicted sex offender is violating parole by being near a school or any other prohibited area. It took Florida authorities nearly a month to find Couey; if he had been wearing the tracking device, he would have been found instantly.

Local police can monitor the global tracking devices any time of day; makers of the device hope it will aid in the creation of a national database for sex offenders.

Offenders who molest older children, 12 and older, will be required to wear the tracking device only during probation. It will be removed upon completion of their disciplinary program. This means Jessica's law only affects pedophiles (adults who are sexually attracted to children), not, for example, a 19-year-old convicted of statutory rape for having sex with a 16-year-old.

Jessica's law also strengthens and

adds to offender registration requirements and makes it a felony to harbor a sexual offender. It is rumored that the people living with Couey in the trailer, where he says he held Jessica captive for days before killing her, were aware they were living with a sex offender who was unregistered in the area.

Critics argue the law is too expansive and doesn't allow for possible rehabilitation of sex offenders. Others say the global tracking device violates the offender's right to privacy — that tracking sex offenders like animals violates their humanity.

I say when you rape a young child, you have given up all rights to be treated as anything more than the animal you are. And rehabilitation? It doesn't work, not for the sex offenders this law targets. People who engage in sexual contact with 11-year-old children and younger have something fundamentally wrong with their brains. They have an incurable illness that can only be contained with constant work and attention through therapy, criminal analysis and an absence of vulnerable children in their presence. This is a near-impossible task to accomplish for the offenders as well as the judicial system.

With Jessica's Law, Florida hopes to stop child molestation before it starts. Lawmakers there claim the stiff penalties, which will go into effect Sept. 1, will deter potential molesters from acting in the first place. Politicians are confident it will lower the numbers of repeat offenders. Jessica's Law will eliminate the issue of offenders "disappearing" when they change residence.

This is the first and likely only time I am going to say it, but it looks as though all states could take a lesson from Florida law. Gator country is really on to something with this one.

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INBOX

UO's College of Education creates unsafe environment

As an organization that cares about discrimination in our community, Lane Gender Task Force is very concerned about what is happening at the College of Education at the University. We are further concerned that very few people are aware of what has occurred.

For the last 20 years there has been large-scale discrimination at the COE. In the last two years alone there have been over 40 documented incidents of discrimination. Many more cases go unreported because of fear of retaliation. This includes discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, gender, nationality and ability.

The COE fails to provide a safe learning environment. There is retaliation against students who bring up diversity issues as well as students being shouted down in class and followed to the bathroom. In addition, this is a problem that affects our communities as a large number of COE students become educators in our schools and communities. Not only are students leaving the COE incompetent to deal

with the diverse populations that they will be serving, but they are being taught in a discriminatory environment that makes the silencing of diverse voices normal and acceptable.

This is a community issue.

A large coalition of student and community organizations working on this issue have put forth an eight-step plan of specific changes to address these problems. Join us, and many other community groups in working to end discrimination at the COE.

Alethia Hostetter

Lane Gender Task Force, Eugene

Bush's new budget leaves college students behind

Financing the pursuit of a college degree is hard enough as it is, but thanks to the 2006 budget proposals from President Bush it is going to get even tougher.

Tuition has skyrocketed a whopping 35 percent since Bush took office, yet his 2006 budget proposes to cut Department of Education funding by \$530 million, while also falling \$1,000 short of his promised \$5,100 maximum Pell

scholarship and cutting other important financial aid programs.

And what about all those students that take out loans? Well, typical students will now pay \$5,500 more for their college loans, thanks to the proposed elimination of the current low fixed consolidation rate benefit. But it doesn't stop there. Despite soaring loan debt, the President wants to abolish the Perkins Loan cancellation program that offers loan forgiveness for teachers, law enforcement officers and military service members.

Our education is what prepares us for the future. Our most important investments are in what is yet to come, and our future is in the hands of hard-working students. Unfortunately, the majority of these students simply cannot pay for college without scholarships, grants or loans that are now even harder to attain (and keep) through the Bush administration. By denying students the help they need and deserve, we cannot move forward in this country.

Linda Thompson

University College Democrats
Sophomore

Editorial

Citizens are not tools for government nationalism

Recently, China has been boiling over with anti-Japanese sentiment. During large-scale demonstrations in April, Chinese citizens proclaimed their anger toward the Japanese nation. One such protest targeted the Japanese embassy in China, damaging it and the residence of the Japanese ambassador.

The source of the anger was not a current event but rather a history lesson.

Chinese citizens, including vocal members of the Chinese government, have harshly criticized the Japanese for what they say is widespread ignorance and attitudes of distortion regarding the Japanese war crimes committed against China during World War II. A recently published Japanese textbook calls the slaying of 300,000 Chinese citizens an "incident." Chinese officials have expressed frustration because of this glossing-over, but the main complaint concerns Japan's alleged refusal to apologize.

The causes of the situation are fraught with the complexities of geo-politics, such as the fact that despite past crimes, Tokyo may soon receive a place in the U.N. Security Council. And while the Japanese are no innocents in this situation, the Chinese have clearly manipulated their populous nation through tyrannical control of the media.

Although the Chinese government has said it does not condone demonstrations, few steps have been taken to establish peace. The mob's rally cry was that Japan had never apologized to China, somewhat of a half-truth. Japan has made some previous, albeit weak, past apologies.

Yet during the riots, Chinese police looked on rather than preventing the mobs from destroying the Japanese embassy.

Japan retaliated both in speech and action. Officials simultaneously apologized for past war crimes, claiming that the Chinese interpretation of WWII crimes is "extreme," while Japanese citizens engaged in their own anti-Chinese protests.

China and Japan's past relationship has fueled bitterness, but it is inappropriate for any government to use citizens as a means to wield nationalism like a weapon. Instead of engaging in a productive discussion that could yield real results, each nation is refusing to compromise.

When Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi gave a public apology for Japan's actions during WWII, Chinese state media did not immediately address the story. Japan has still offered no consolation for its dismissal of crimes against the Chinese in the newly issued Japanese textbooks.

Instead of establishing a dialogue, officials from China and Japan are stroking their egos and allowing citizens to battle it out on the streets. Ugly history is not an easy force to reconcile, but it's time for both Chinese and Japanese officials to start acting like grown-ups. The task of stitching up past pains with present action should be tackled in a diplomatic fashion: Both governments must take a stand against nationalistic violence and make a real effort to see another side of the story.

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