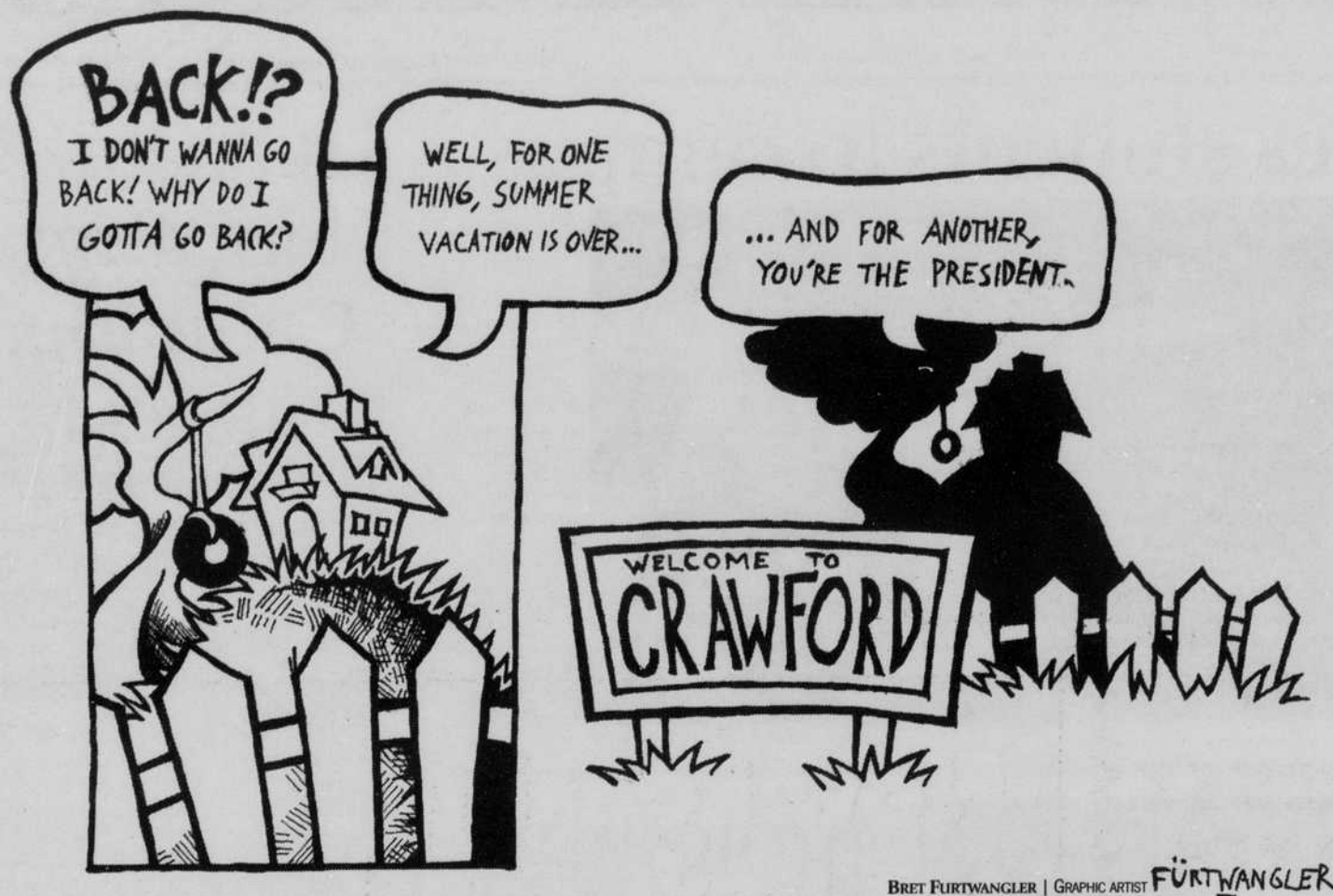




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In my opinion

'public displays' and 'venus opinion traps' Destroy Discourse

With a growing awareness of the world around me and an ever-increasing interest in politics, I have often found myself starved for a discussion, a debate, or a verbal scuffle about one issue or another. However, one thing causes hesitation about bringing up the issues that I feel so passionately about: the blood-thirsty raving lunatics that seem to be around every corner.

You know the ones — pupils dilated, shoulders tensed, hackles raised, ready to pounce and tear your opinions and thoughts to pieces. These creatures come in every size, shape, color and political persuasion, and they are a force to be reckoned with. As different as all of these creatures may be, I find that the majority of them can be put into two different categories: the Public Displays and the Venus Opinion Traps.

The Public Displays are the kind that attack you when all you are simply trying to do is walk down the street. I had a close-up view of this particular breed when I attended the presidential inauguration and found myself assaulted by dozens upon dozens of screaming protesters. Don't get me wrong, I think everyone has the right protest, but these people were taking things too far.

After witnessing the inauguration with some friends, we made our way to the parade route. Somehow, after pushing through the huge crowd and going through a security check point, we managed to make it to our destination. For more than two hours I stood in the cold, attempting to watch the parade over the shouts of "murderer," "asshole" and "liar" that were coming from the mouths of those around me. Dozens of faces, twisted with anger, shouted obscene language while families and children attempted to peace-



JESSICA DERLETH
FREEDOM RINGS WHERE OPINIONS CLASH

fully watch the parade.

I cannot stress enough that I think we all have the right to protest, but the language and hand gestures made by the protesters were completely unnecessary. Along another part of the parade route, the same message was shown in a more powerful and appropriate manner; a group of more than 5,000 turned their back on President Bush as he passed. They made their point calmly and logically, which is what I urge everyone to do when there is a message to get across.

But please, for the sake of all humankind, do not become one of the opinion-lunatics who are constantly going like a torturous energizer bunny. Whatever the location or the point you are trying to get across, some people just aren't going to agree with you. And please, do not keep attacking people and their opinions. If people are firm in what they think, you are not going to be able to say anything that will suddenly get them to change their position.

Even though the energized people who follow you insisting that they know what they are talking about can be especially alarming, none inspire terror as much as the Venus Opinion Trap.

These type of people are a little more rare, but they make up for their rarity in their swift, vicious attack. I

have, for the most part, managed to avoid said people; however, I witnessed a close encounter that my best friend had. While at a party, consisting mainly of staunch Bush-haters, my friend mentioned that she likes the president. The seemingly benign person with whom we were talking had, up until this point, seemed like a very nice, normal, non-violent individual. However, when my friend mentioned that she voted for Bush, there was a slight shift in his features. He started asking her some innocent questions about her political stance. Then he suddenly exploded with the force of an atomic bomb, "HOW COULD YOU LIKE THAT MURDERER? HE HAS RUINED THIS COUNTRY!" This guy was a maniac. I do not think circumstances ever warrant attacking people because they disagree with you.

Everyone should be able to talk about important issues without attacking others or having to worry about being mauled. If everyone (including the lunatics mentioned above) would strive to be open to what others have to say, then the more timid people out there would feel comfortable talking about controversial topics.

These types of civil discussions should always be encouraged because they allow people to become familiar with important issues, with how others think, with how to express their views and how to effectively communicate.

So, I encourage everyone to be informed, debate, have fun and, as American journalist Charles Dana said, "fight for your opinions, but do not believe that they contain the whole truth or the only truth."

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Editorial

ASUO slacks off — is anyone surprised?

For the Associated Students of the University of Oregon, our student government, the summer proved a rocky transition to the 2005-06 administration.

As noted by Emerald news reporter Nicholas Wilbur (ODE Aug. 11, "Student 'sits in' for ASUO summer Senator"), one ASUO senator, Spencer Crum, was not only missing from a Senate Summer Committee meeting in August, he was signed into the meeting by an old roommate.

Crum might find it amusing that he told his ex-roommate to "be Spencer Crum"; the rest of us paying incidental fees are hardly laughing. Crum later said that he was expecting the Senate Summer Committee to be more "flexible," and might not have assumed his current position had he known the duties that it entailed.

University students tend to have a general reputation for avoiding serious responsibility, and it is disappointing to see members of our student government fulfilling such a negative stereotype.

The Crum/roommate identity switch was not the only situation of lagging attendance that plagued the ASUO this summer. One senator, Sara Hamilton of the EMU Board Finance, crafted an e-mail to her fellow senators regarding the problem of continual absences meetings (ODE July 9, "ASUO committee neglects duties"). When less than two-thirds of the committee is in attendance, meetings must be postponed.

Hamilton wrote that "coherent organization" was lacking among the Summer Committee Senators, to which Committee Chairman Reinier Heyden replied that they were doing their best and hadn't considered the fact that Senators might be out of town during the summer.

Senators were missing from meetings without giving notice to anyone. Obviously, someone is not doing their best, be it in terms of prompt responses or simply taking the time to communicate.

If ASUO senators cannot even understand and relate with each other, how can they expect to respond to 20,000 students?

Further troubling is the fact that multiple senators this summer violated Green Tape Notebook rules by failing to hold office hours or missing more than one-third of senate meetings.

The Summer Senate is given \$5,000 to distribute. When elected officials don't do their work in a mature and devoted manner, it's basically like giving the middle finger to the entire student body.

In response to the various issues plaguing the Senate Committee this summer, ASUO President Adam Walsh has been ambiguous on possible ramifications in the upcoming year. Walsh isn't sure what, if any, action will be taken against senators who violated their job duties this summer.

Students are exhausted of hearing about ASUO officials not taking their jobs seriously (think: last year's ASUO retreat to Sunriver, saturated in arrogance and marijuana), and the Emerald is exhausted from reporting on it. In the following year, the entirety of the ASUO needs to take heed: We, the students of the University, cared enough to elect you. Show the University that you care enough to represent us and spend our money wisely.

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