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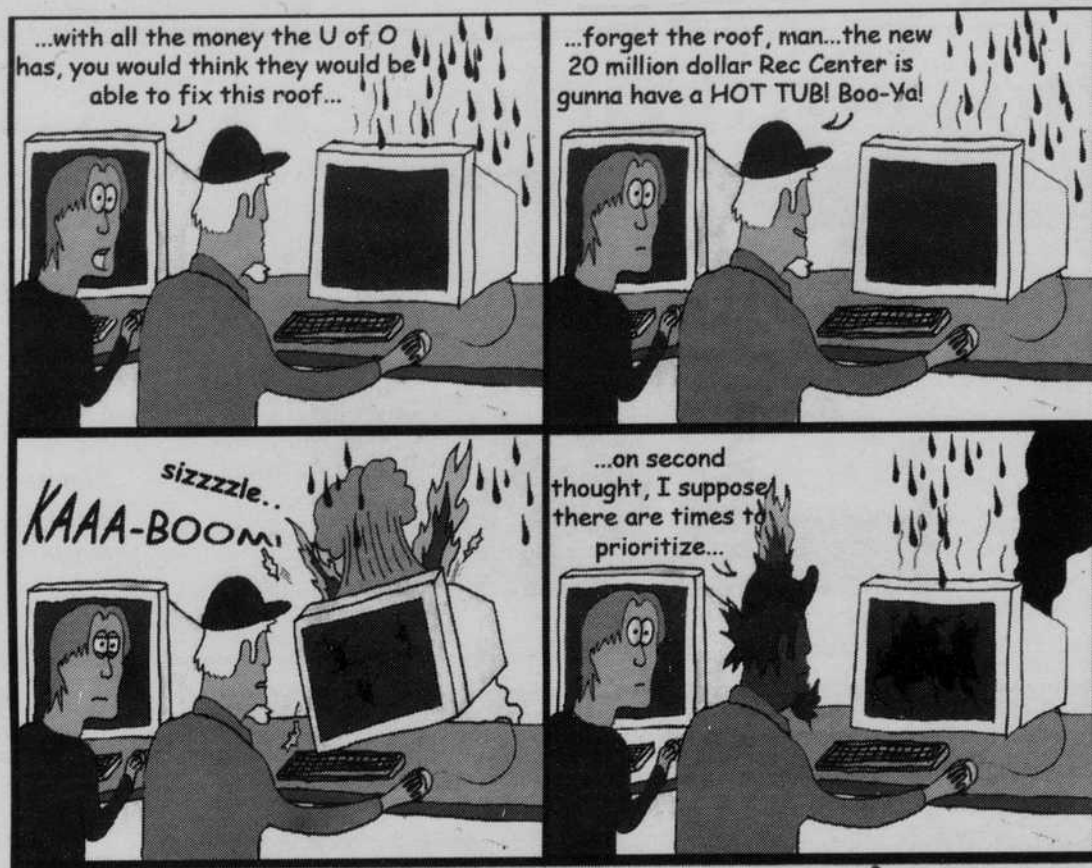
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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore. The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. Unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.



AARON DUCHATEAU | ILLUSTRATOR

■ In my opinion

Halloween thwarts hierarchies

Saturday I saw a young woman in a Chiquita banana lady costume, fruited headpiece and all, hanging out the window of a moving SUV at 2 a.m., pirates and fairies carousing the streets, confusion as to who was a real cop and who was just in a cop costume and a mime embracing a sexually suggestive waffle.

Halloween weekend was a sharp contrast to that which is cold, dry and serious — traits that seem more and more to define the world humanity now inhabits. People work so they can make money, so they can ... keep a roof over their heads? Or they simply want to buy a new model of cell phone. Do people work for the sake of money, for the sake of things, for the sake of something to leave behind after they die? My question is: Where's the party at? Where in society is this "life" that we all supposedly value?

An interesting fact about Medieval culture is that communities often devoted an average of three months out of the year to celebratory carnivals. Though the Middle Ages are commonly defined as a dead-end deluge of dark and dreary days, it turns out that folk festivals were as important to their culture as they were to the mid-20th century, Grateful Dead/Woodstock era.

People in the Middle Ages knew how to throw a party that everyone was invited to. Scholars, clergymen, beggars on the street, everyone was there, and everyone was feeling festive. During a carnival, the piety of life was kind of put on hold.

Mikhail Bakhtin was a modern philosopher who studied, among other aspects of the social world, humor. According to Bakhtin, the Medieval carnival was an event defined by laughter, playfulness and a departure from norms and prohibition. The carnivalesque is that which breaks from seriousness and finds joy rather than concern in images of the grotesque. Defecation, sexuality, profanity — all of



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

these elements are integrated into the carnivalesque environment to be appreciated and laughed with.

Bakhtin would probably comment that the carnivalesque is the definition of laughing with rather than laughing at. Humor in the modern age is usually satirical, cynical laughter, whereas the folk humor of the carnivalesque means that the people laughing do not place themselves above the item that is funny.

The carnivalesque is not about making dry, intelligent, witty political criticism. The carnivalesque is about dressing up as the politician you despise, spilling wine all over yourself whilst dancing around a fire and rejoicing in the base degradation that now defines you both.

Folk humor and the carnival encompass an all-inclusive laughter; people can't laugh without becoming the object of humor themselves. Equality is key to the carnivalesque; hierarchies are meaningless.

Saturday night, we were all Medieval clowns laughing in camaraderie and jubilation with passing strangers at the grotesqueness of our dress, our bodies, our outrageous voices and action. Our hair was mangled, our legs stumbling out from under us, yet the laughter roared on; degradation and debasement were means enough for celebration.

In the carnivalesque nature of the Halloween festivities, there were no such things as insecurity,

embarrassment, or awkwardness. Instead, all of these uncomfortable traits were revealed in. Sluttishness didn't exist because we were all jovial in our sexuality. Homophobia didn't exist. Masculinity didn't exist because even the men were wearing short — shorts and spandex. They were heartily lauded for their costume choices.

Mikhail Bakhtin would say that the joy of the Halloween celebration is in letting go of repressive reality and discovering a carnivalesque realism. The campus carnival on Saturday was disruptive, distasteful and deviant. Yet, the real deviance from day-to-day reality seemed to come in a societal state wherein everyone, even the police, understood that this was a time for fun. Pedestrians let go of their need to look both ways, but drivers let go of their need to be polite. All were shouting, but the anger and the joy seemed to mix together into a state wherein negative feelings could be experienced, then freely shed.

Bakhtin writes that only by embracing the profane will it ever become ambivalent; i.e., not a threat. It's like the way that you can use abusive swear words toward your best friend, and find nothing but joy in their act of returning the dirty insulting speech. According to Bakhtin, laughter and the carnivalesque provide an atmosphere wherein fears, profanities and abuse lose their status as objects of harm. Indeed, as long as everyone in the carnival is truly laughing from an inner state of jollification, individual and global problems are literally nonexistent.

So, now that we have evaluated the nature of the carnival, the grotesque and the holiday, what can we say that this nature teaches? It teaches us to take the world seriously, if sheer seriousness is what you're seriously seeing.

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■ Editorial

Don't let restrooms flush gender protection

The city of Eugene's attempt to add protections for transgender people to its anti-discrimination ordinance is truly admirable, but discussing the finer points of the change has created unnecessary delays. We must stop mincing words, deal with this problem rationally and instate the protections.

Surely, little harm can come simply from adding the classification "gender identity" to a list of identifying features that should not be discriminated against.

Yet opponents to the code fear that if gender identity becomes protected from discrimination, transgender people will be able to use the bathroom of the gender that they identify with rather than the bathroom of the sex that they were born with. If biological men are allowed into women's restrooms, some worry that sexual assault will become a problem.

However, it is simply illogical to claim that a non-discrimination policy against people of a transgender identity will lead to an increase in sexual offenders sneaking into women's bathrooms. After all, discrimination code or not, sexual predators are physically able to enter any bathroom they choose as well as many houses, offices and cars. Sexual assault is an issue far removed from non-discrimination codes.

Likewise, asking bathroom users to provide legal documentation proving their status as transgender is an impractical solution. To whom would transgender bathroom users show this identification? More importantly, if there is an officer of the law posted at every restroom entrance in order to verify documentation, doesn't that eliminate the problem of sexual assault in the first place? Demanding only transgender individuals to prove their identity before using the loo is itself blatantly discriminatory.

Further, there is no reason that the restroom debate should define whether Eugene's anti-discrimination code needs to be tweaked. Refusing to put "gender identity" into city code has no causal relation to sexual assault rates; therefore, the code should be amended and the sexual assault issue addressed as a topic separate from that of anti-discrimination.

Most rational people can agree that discrimination on the basis of race, religion or other factors is wrong. Despite various questions regarding sexual predators and bathroom access, we should also agree not to discriminate against people because of gender identity. Supporters of the discrimination code revision are realistic in their assertion that it is critical to protect transgender people from employment and housing discrimination. As of now, the restroom debate should be put on hold and resumed once "gender identity" is protected from discrimination by city code, and it is made explicitly clear that Eugene supports the rights of residents of all identities.

■ Out loud

"To everyone's mind that has been working on this, the important parts of the code revision are the addition of transpeople to the list of those against whom discrimination in employment and housing in Eugene shall be illegal."

— Risa Bear, member of the Gender Identity Work Group, which is working to change Eugene's anti-discrimination ordinance to include transgender people.

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