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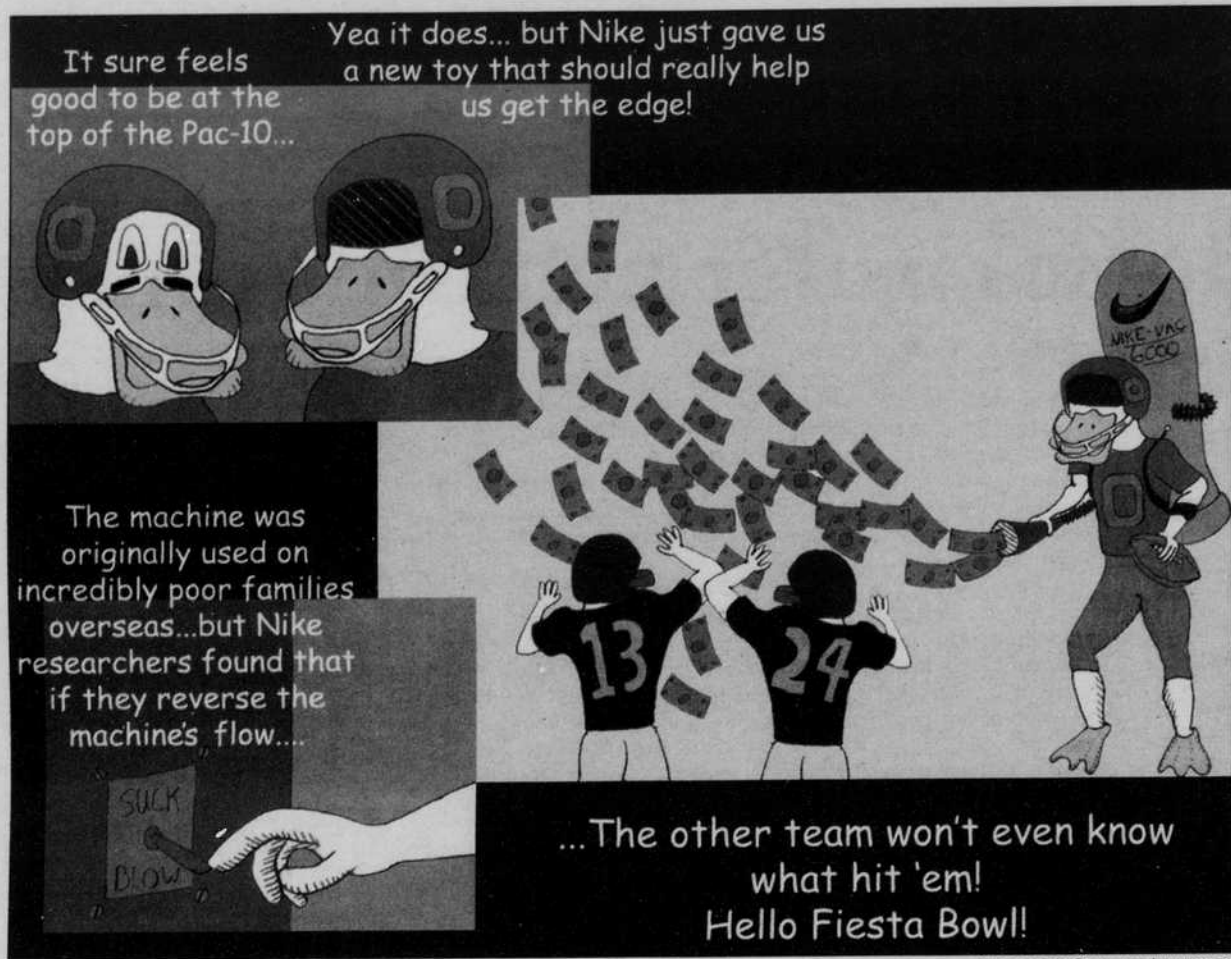
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AARON DUCHATEAU | ILLUSTRATOR

In my opinion

Banning head scarves is religious discrimination

Dress codes at educational institutions aren't just about appropriate skirt lengths anymore. A medical student at Istanbul University wasn't allowed to take a final exam in 1998 because of her Islamic head covering. Leyla Sahin, a Turkish woman from a Muslim family, considers her head scarf a religious duty and fought the university's dress code after being denied access to myriad classes and examinations.

When a Turkish court refused to repeal the head scarf ban, Sahin appealed the decision to the European Court of Justice. Thursday, that court upheld Turkey's prohibition of head scarves on university campuses. As an organization that "deals with disputes and upholds the treaties of the European Union," the Court of Justice has set an inexplicably terrible precedent for issues of religious freedom and individual expression.

The court's decision to side with the Turkish dress code is nothing short of approving religious discrimination.

Because the Turkish constitution is based on strictly secularist principles, the state is not supposed to show a preference for any particular religion. However, if an Islamic form of religious expression is banned, non-Islamic religions are certainly receiving preferential treatment by the Turkish government. Are necklaces with crucifixes explicitly banned from university campuses? How about Jewish stars? Are atheists required to keep their disbelief in a higher power to themselves?

It is unfair that the head scarf should be banned simply because it is a very obvious, visual display of religious affiliation. Unless university officials are prepared to prevent anyone with a religious affiliation from attending their campus, students should be allowed to indulge in personal, nonobtrusive, nonharmful expressions of their religion.

When crafting their decision to retain the ban on head scarves, the European



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

Court of Justice claims to have paid special heed to the issue of women's rights. Indeed, head scarves are often made out to symbolize the oppression of Islamic women. However, the women who choose to wear the scarves often have a different interpretation of their head gear. Modern feminists from an Islamic background consistently theorize that demonizing women's head coverings shows a lack of knowledge or appreciation for non-Western religious backgrounds. These feminists always make the point that a woman who wears a head scarf or a burka should not be designated oppressed, as long as the choice to cover or not to cover belongs to her.

In the case of Leyla Sahin, it is the European court rather than a religious head covering that is truly oppressing women. The court is deluded in their thinking that a ban on head scarves is a step forward for women's rights. The only effect most women will feel from the scarf ban is frustration, when they are forced to choose between their religion and their education. Already, hundreds of Turkish women have come out in protest to the head scarf ban.

Also objecting to the ban is Human Rights Watch, an organization that exposes and comments on international human rights issues ranging from homophobic legislation to the military recruitment of children. Human Rights Watch has taken a firm stand against the decision of the European court, making the valid point that secularism was founded

from a point of view wherein all beliefs and religions, including atheism, are treated with respect.

Obviously, the judges on the European Court of Justice believed that their decision was just and respectful to all. The court even claimed that its ruling was in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights. However, looking at the convention document, it is difficult to understand how the court could possibly consider itself in compliance with human rights regulations.

According to the convention, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion ... either alone or in community with others and in public." The convention goes on to say that the only time a person is not allowed to manifest their religious beliefs is when such manifestations are a threat to public safety, public order or are illegal. Unless head scarves can be shown to damage the general safety and order of society, the Convention on Human Rights would seem to dictate that scarves not be banned from university campuses.

The recent head scarf ruling follows in the footsteps of a 2004 French bill that banned girls from wearing head scarves in all state schools. And there is no need to explain how Muslim communities in France feel about their country's religious atmosphere; flaming cars and suburban riots pretty much sum it up.

It is uncommon to say in our current global atmosphere, but Europe should take a page from U.S. policy decisions. When a Muslim girl in Oklahoma was sent home for wearing a hijab, the U.S. justice department ruled that a dress code that banned the head scarf should be considered religious discrimination.

The United States got it right: Secularism is pointless if people are still oppressed for their religious expressions.

aslater@dailyemerald.com

Editorial

Skateboard ban on 13th is ludicrous

This year, the Eugene Police Department will enforce a city ordinance that bans skateboarding on East 13th Avenue from Kincaid Street to Pearl Street. In response to business owners complaining about an upsurge in skateboarders, riders will be ticketed \$50 and potentially have their skateboards confiscated.

Pedestrian safety is an important concern, and often one sees skateboarders weaving between pedestrians on streets and sidewalks. Yet it seems outlandish that the police would spend time and energy hanging around East 13th Avenue and waiting to catch skateboarders. This action is just one of a string of law enforcement policies that attempt to create public safety, but only seem to hinder students of the University campus. Last year, the Department of Public Safety decided to start citing campus bicyclists a \$25 fine for riding on sidewalks or for failing to yield to pedestrians. Skateboarders became subject to the fines as well.

As usual, bicyclists and skateboarders get the short end of the transportation stick. These policies give both cars and pedestrians the right of way over bikes and skateboarders. Bikers and boarders have limited access to the sidewalk, and limited access to the street; on portions of East 13th Avenue, skateboarders have access to neither. Bike lanes around campus are often one way, forcing people traveling in the opposite direction to either ride next to automobiles or on the sidewalk. Bicyclists and skaters are usually soaking wet, cold and exhausted by the time they reach campus. Fining these riders is unfair to the people who have chosen alternative modes of transportation.

Assigning Eugene Police Department and Department of Public Safety officers to catch skateboarders and bicyclists who skirt rules of the road is an ineffective use of University and city resources. If the DPS wishes to actually increase the safety of the public on campus, they ought to consider creating more clearly marked bike lanes and crosswalks at the East 13th Avenue and University intersection, as well as attempting to inform pedestrians how to stay out of the way of bike and skateboard traffic.

The current traffic solution — forcing a few boarders or bikers a day to pay fines — is not making the University area any safer. As anyone walking across campus can see, bicyclists and skaters still appear on sidewalks and pedestrians still lollygag across East 13th Avenue, especially when police aren't there. And everyone still needs to look both ways before crossing an intersection.

The issue of bicycle, skateboard and pedestrian traffic should be one of respect rather than citations and fines. As long as bicyclists and skateboarders use caution and verbal alerts, and pedestrians are alert to their surroundings, we can all make our way around the campus area with ease. Recent citation policies by the Department of Public Safety and the Eugene Police department are unnecessary additions to this transportation equation.

CORRECTION

Thursday's "Jay & Silent Bob strike OUT... again" stated there is no coarse language on the DVD. In fact, there is coarse language on the DVD's commentary track.

The Emerald regrets the error.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.