Face Off:

Has America done enough to help tsunami victims?

U.S. financial contributions to tsunami victims is insufficient

Elizabeth Tobey
The Clackamas Print

Only a month ago we witnessed perhaps the worst natural disaster of our time, but it appears that providing aid is not a top priority for the United States.

Immediately following the horrific earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean countries around the world, individuals and various relief organizations began working to provide aid to the victims. That work continues and is far from complete. Yet in the United States our financial focus already seems to be elsewhere.

We have witnessed the most extravagant and heavily guarded presidential inauguration in history.

With everything that is happening in the world around us, our government chose to put their time and money into a celebration. It's a choice that was made despite much criticism.

"Precedent suggests that inaugural festivities should be muted if not canceled in wartime," said Rep. Anthony Weiner in a letter to President Bush last week.

In another letter, eight congressional democrats stated that the inauguration was causing an unfair financial burden on the District of Columbia.

This celebration cost so much that money was taken out of our Federal Homeland Security Fund to pay for it.

We redirected government spending to provide amenities such as bottled water, box lunches and granola bars for the extra security officials who will be on duty.

Approximately five million people have had their homes, families and lives taken from them by the tsunami. They are fighting disease and hunger while they try to rebuild what they have lost, and the United States is buying granola bars for police officers.

Granted we sent some money over too. We even raised the amount from $35 million to $350 million after criticism that the original amount was, well, not even close to enough.

"[It] gave the wrong impression to the rest of the world," Sen.. Patrick Leahy said.

Perhaps $350 million is enough to buy a better impression, but it doesn't come close to providing relief to five million victims.

It is estimated that emergency aid will require just shy of $2 billion. Rebuilding efforts will need more than that.

As a country that prides itself on being one of the most powerful and influential in the world, we ought to be able to contribute a little more than $350 million. Other countries certainly are.

Japan has pledged $500 million and intends to send more. Germany pledged $651 million. Australia topped it all, promising a $764 million aid package, more than twice what the United Stated has offered.

But unfortunately, like planning an expensive inauguration during a time of natural disaster, Bush shows us time and again that his priorities are not on a global level.

Just a few weeks before the tsunami hit, Bush made the decision to cut our 2005 contribution to The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The fund is currently one of the organizations hard at work providing relief to the tsunami victims and they have no financial support from us.

Out of the 22 wealthiest nations in the world, the United States ranks 19 for overall foreign aid giving. And now we are buying box lunches instead of helping to rebuild a country.

We may be rich, but we need to learn how to share.

Our country has been generous; it's time to look at our own needs

Jacob Ray
The Clackamas Print

Another natural disaster happens and of course America jumps in to save the day.

I'm talking about the tsunami that hit southeastern Asia last month, quite possibly the worst natural disaster to happen in this young decade. Americans, being the nice people we are, just rolled our sleeves up and dove right in.

On top of the $350 million of the taxpayers' money that the government decided to contribute, it seems like every charity in America has a tsunami relief fund.

Then there are the private donations, and I don't know if it's just me but it really scares me to see both. Because of this, it has somehow been imposed that we, as Americans, owe it to ourselves to help out. I mean, I'm not trying to downplay the devastation of the tsunami, but this country already has enough problems of its own, so why should we be worrying about other countries' problems?

Well we do have a "knack" for "helping" other countries, but that's another story. The national debt is somewhere around $7 trillion dollars (and growing by $2 billion dollars per day), this country is at war, the unemployment rate is at an average of five-and-a-half percent, one out of six people in Oregon don't have health coverage, and we're expected to give away money to help rebuild other countries when ours isn't doing too well?

People are donating money to this cause who would just walk by a bum on the street.

There is a lot of money donated to the relief effort and I think that is awesome. But with the contribution from the government, the charities, donations from celebrities, and the $15 I donated, I'm starting to think America is donating the most.

The Washington Post notes that the current amount committed for tsunami relief and reconstruction is about 4 to 5 percent of the $70 billion that was spent on all foreign aid last year by governments and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.

"That's pretty big, so I think there is reason to believe that maybe at least some of this money could be productively used elsewhere," said Steven Radelet, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, a Washington think tank, who warned that "there is a real potential here for [the tsunami donations] to squeeze other aid, particularly in the U.S. foreign aid budget."

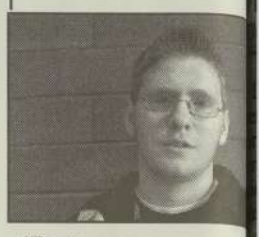
Now I know that just a couple hundred million is not even close to enough to build back up those countries hit by the tsunami, but that is more than enough to give to another country. I mean, Florida got hit with three—yes, *three*—hurricanes in a month, and I didn't see a worldwide effort to help out. Yes, there is a difference between the hurricanes and the tsunami, but it's just the thought.

It's a shame about the destruction and fatalities caused by the tsunami and my prayers go out to all those affected. My whole point is just that, yes, we are doing enough to help out, which is great, but we must draw the line somewhere.

This whole thing has shown that as a country we are very generous; now it's time to use that generosity to help out the less fortunate of *this* country that we so dearly love.

Student Po

How goes fina aid?



"Pretty easy; my parent it all out while I played Theft Auto.'"
Andrew Mcnult

"Kind of depressing a because I did not feel was paying off, but in it did."
Catrina Schehe

"I just got the form an need to fill it out."
Rosaline Worsle

"Once we got it, it was But it took it a billion y get there."
Christina Boon

"This quarter sucks bec didn't get any."
Jesse Freegrad

"Ridiculously slooooooooooooow...."
Samantha Cox

This week's poll compiled b Piazzizi and Norma Ma

Regulation of violent media violates rights

N.P. Delzell
The Clackamas Print

"The Constitution is a figment of your imagination, held up to make people believe they have rights," said Ice T, controversial rapper/actor. "I don't believe anybody in this country has rights."

Media violence is only a problem when it is taken the wrong way. If conservatives start messing around with the independent media, they will be infringing our first amendment rights, just like my boy Ice stated.

Ice gained mass popularity with his hardcore band Body Count after dropping the single "Cop Killer" in the early '90s. Ice has been involved in a number of right-wing attacks since then, and he has said a number of times that his song in no way advocates the killing of a police officer; it's a song he wrote after watching the Rodney King beating, which was flossed all over mainstream prime time news.

Society needs people like Ice to show ignorant, uninformed people that violence is real. It makes the world go around. Violence is in no way a good thing but it will always be here.

People who are influenced to act out in a violent way after watching television, playing video games, and listening to music have issues that go way beyond violent media.

According to www.gamespot.com, the Federal Trade Commission reported that parents are involved in minors' video game purchases 83 percent of the time, and the U.S. Court of Appeals released a statement regarding legislature of this nature.

"We do not mean to denigrate the government's role in supporting parents, or the right of parents to control their children's exposure to graphically violent materials," the statement says. "We merely hold that the government cannot silence protected speech by wrapping itself in the cloak of parental authority ... To accept the county's broadly drawn interest as a compelling one would be to invite legislatures to undermine the First Amendment rights of minors willy-nilly under the guise of promoting parental authority."

I don't care if it's a song or a video game that has people in an uproar. This assault on peoples' basic freedoms is whack. If society gave a dang about real-world issues, no one would care about fictional violent video games and songs.

We are a world at war and these "violent" video games and songs don't cause violence, a violent world causes violence. If society puts the potato on the barrel and silences violent forms of media, the First Amendment will be sacrificed.

the Clackamas Print
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The Clackamas Print is a weekly student publication and is distributed every Wednesday except finals week.

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