

CULTURE OF TORTURE

What the hell is going on in this country? Torture is becoming the norm, and the population seems to accept this as proper: Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Kesey Square right here in Eugene. The race to the bottom used to refer to global economics; it can now be equated to the level of civility in this country. This country needs to regain the high ground, and what better place to start than in this progressive town of ours — by banning the use of Tasers.

What happened to a skinny 19-year-old student in Kesey Square on May 30 was nothing short of torture. Anyone who was at the anti-pesticide rally or viewed the video on YouTube knows the Eugene police used unreasonable force on a kid who was already under their control. Even if you believe the official story printed in the *R-G* and reported on the evening news that Ian Van Ornum asked the police, "Do you want poison in your face?" he was no longer a threat to them when he was Tased. Van Ornum was lying face down on the sidewalk surrounded by officers when up to 50,000 volts of electricity was shot into his body three separate times.

What then was the purpose of Tasing someone who was already rendered helpless, except to punish him for his behavior, beliefs or the way he looked?

Have seven years of Bush/Cheney desensitized us to the point where we will accept any act of violence by our soldiers or police? Let's hope our new auditor and City Council do their job and hold those to blame accountable.

If the citizens of Eugene do not demand that these torture devices be taken out of the hands of the police who have proven they are emotionally unequipped to use them properly, then the blame ultimately lies with us.

Soon Eugene will be full of tourists here to watch the Olympic Trials and spend their money at our hotels, restaurants and shops. How will the police respond to protests and activists with all that money at stake? The world will be watching.

*Rick Gorman
Eugene*

BLUE WALL OF SILENCE

It's painful to see how the brouhaha over the police union's caricature of City Councilor Bonny Bettman is playing out. There should be no doubt that it's a hate campaign, given the original caricature posted on the union website. And mayoral candidate Jim Torrey took his sweet time huddling with his main men and persuading them to take it down because "it's the right thing to do," to show he has influence with them.

The union, with its \$100,000 war chest, is practicing the Bush "push-back" strategy to undermine the Independent Review Board and the police auditor. The chief needs to provide leadership; he needs to show the union they're not the boss of him. That role is prescribed; the manager should act to carry out the policies of the council and require the chief to act accordingly.

The only sense this all makes is if the "blue wall of silence" is protecting dangerous secrets, criminal misconduct by a small number of officers and complicity by a larger group to keep these crimes from seeing the light of day. The \$5 million that Magaña and Lara cost the city may be just the tip of the iceberg. I see no wisdom in avoiding this and hoping it will go away. I see a need for those who have worked to put safeguards in place to get re-involved in defense of our constitutional rights.

*Paul Prenskey
Eugene*

COP OVERSIGHT NEEDED

I find myself extremely disturbed to hear about the events that happened in Kesey Square on May 30. Disturbed because I wonder what this means to our right of assembly and free speech to have one's gathering broken up by armed men AND by force — still worse, by men acting under the color of law?

Disturbed because I wonder if Tasing a man who is already subdued is sadistic? Or is it torture?

The voters demanded better oversight for our police department for good reason. Now they have even more reason. Please



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