

PITCHFORKS AND TORCHES

As a third year law student, I find the University of Oregon response to Prof. Nancy Shurtz' blackface incident disgraceful.

According to the university, the disruption caused by the professor's costume "was so significant that it outweighed any right that Shurtz has to free speech and academic freedom." It is patently offensive for the university to assert the right to selectively abide by the Constitution, because state entities have no such ability.

Moreover, it is imperative to a well-rounded education that students be exposed to contrary views and opinions. Instead, the university is attempting to assure that nobody's delicate sensibilities are offended. This is humorous considering that many law students will be dealing with murderers, rapists and (hopefully) corrupt politicians in the near future.

Additionally, I am disgusted by the cowardice of the professors who demanded Shurtz' resignation. It takes no courage to pick up pitchforks and torches in the

midst of a mob mentality. However, defending the rights of the vulnerable and unpopular requires a spine.

Matthew Watkins
Eugene

RIDICULOUS REACTION

I am glad that Prof. Nancy Schurtz has decided to hire a lawyer — I hope not one from the University of Oregon law school, whose faculty members have been complicit in persecuting her. The way this affair has been handled by the university administration and the law school faculty is an embarrassment and, in my opinion, will lower the esteem with which people regard the law school and, by extension, the university.

I remember blackface, used to poke fun at the stereotype of black characteristics — similar to men wearing dresses and ridiculing their stereotype of female traits. This was nothing like a representation of a character in a book.

The reaction by the university is ridiculous. I hope that Schurtz does not resign

and, although it is too much to hope for, I wish that the law professors who signed the petition asking her to resign would offer a public apology.

Betty Taylor
Eugene

OVERPAID DOUBLESPEAK

"Lamentable response" — I'll say. I'd like to start by giving the University of Oregon props on its response to a prof wearing blackface. The idea that some overpaid white lady could bring perspective to America's race issues would be laughable if it wasn't f**king disgusting.

As for Shawn Boles' viewpoint [12/29], I am much less impressed: "On Halloween a respected scholar, in the privacy of her own home, attempted to open a discourse about white privilege using props consisting of a blackened face, a stethoscope and a white coat."

This is doublespeak at its finest, as if he uses enough obfuscation we won't get the picture. "A blackened face," not blackface.

This is an overpaid white person defending the rights of another overpaid white person to do whatever they want while people of color face discrimination in every facet of life.

I agree that there is a difference between narrative and fact. Boles' narrative is that rich white people should be able to do whatever they want. Luckily the majority of the UO staff agrees that this is at least an unpopular narrative to voice aloud.

I'd leave a burning bag of shit on Boles' porch, but since he is one, this would be redundant.

Ian Blumberg-Engel
Eugene

RAMPANT HEALTH COSTS

This last year I saved up, juggled my insurance of "allowable" procedures and spent a boatload of cash to fill a gap in my smile with a dental "implant." It actually took two years, as my insurance would not pay for the complete procedure in one-year's coverage.

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

The Donald and The Dennis do Oregon

SCANDAL AND LEGISLATIVE APPOINTMENTS

Republicans Donald Trump and Dennis Richardson do not lack chutzpah! Both the recently elected president and the recently elected Oregon secretary of state were already making headlines prior to their coronations.

Trump's carnival of cabinet picks and the UN-Israeli ruckus speak volumes about what we're about to hear under Republican control in Washington, D.C. for the next two years. Breitbart News reports that Trump now intends to appoint El Chapo as the next head of the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Here at home, Dennis Richardson is demonstrating why he is the first Republican elected to statewide office in Oregon since Abraham Lincoln, according to Breitbart. I love fake news. Actually, the last Republican elected to statewide office in Oregon was U.S. Senator Gordon Smith in 2002. But you have to go back 36 years to Norma Paulus to find a Republican secretary of state.

Richardson campaigned promising to restore accountability and rid Salem of scandal. So what does he do prior to being sworn in? First, he announces his pick as deputy: a former state manager fired in a multi-million-dollar nepotism scandal. Then he picks an elections director who was asked to resign from that same job in 2013 by then-secretary of state, Kate Brown. As reported in the Oregonian, Jim Moore, professor and director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University quipped: "Bringing in people that have scandal attached to them is not what we expected." Understatement of the damn year!

Finally, most egregiously, Dennis invited his soul mate, former Oregon Republican Party chairman Vance Day as his special guest to his inauguration. You remember good old Vance, don't you? The current Marion County Judge is under indictment on felony weapons and misdemeanor official misconduct charges. Day was indicted by a Marion County grand jury last November after the state alleged he knowingly aided and abetted a felon in possessing a firearm, and separately used his elected position as a judge for personal gain.

Day's criminal charges are related to a separate ethics case against him. Remember, he's the judge that refused to perform marriages for same-sex couples citing his First Amendment rights to religion. The Commission on Judicial Fitness and Disability has unanimously recommended Day be removed from the bench.

Ironically, Day says that if he's sanctioned he will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. SCOTUS will probably have nine justices by the time this case would get to them. The last one probably will have been appointed by the Donald. Damn!

As I warned you in a previous column, Dennis Richardson is not for the faint of heart. The secretary of state position is second in line to the governor and oversees audits of state government, elections and a registry of businesses operating in Oregon. Stay healthy, Kate!

Speaking of carnival acts, Oregon's 79th Legislative Assembly will convene on Jan. 9. Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) reform, a \$1.7 billion dollar hole in the state general fund, a state transportation infrastructure in need of help, and a frightening federal landscape will greet our legislators.

During the "organizational days," members-elect are sworn in as legislators, bills are first-read on the floors of the Senate and House and legislative committees are officially created. The assembly will reconvene on Wednesday, Feb. 1 for the regular session. Sorta like a Neil Young song: it starts out kinda slow, then just trickles off altogether.

The Lane County delegation did well in the committee assignment process. Rep. Nancy Nathanson was appointed co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means committee. Phil Barnhart will chair the critical House Revenue committee. And Paul Holvey will serve as chair of the House Business and Labor Committee, with newly elected Julie Fahey on the committee. Paul was also elected as speaker pro-tem by his caucus, a well-deserved honor.

Floyd Prozanski will chair the Senate Judiciary committee and he will be co-chair of the Joint (of course) Committee on Marijuana Regulation. Lee Beyer will chair the Senate Business and Transportation committee and co-chair the Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, a mouthful. And our newest senator, James Manning, will serve on the Senate Judiciary and Joint Ways and Means committees, and also will co-chair the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government.

Congratulations to all of you. Now, get to work! And don't come back here without some decent school funding, adequate social services and a transportation plan! We'll talk about PERS later. Stay tuned.

Former Oregon state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a retired state employee.

