

**Breaking Down Blackout**

Building Understanding of Media Effects at OSU

By Lauren L. Dillard

A PROJECT

submitted to

Oregon State University

University Honors College

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Liberal Studies

with an option in New Media Communications (Honors Scholar)

Presented May 13, 2009

Commencement June 2009



## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Lauren L. Dillard for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Sciences in Liberal Studies with an option in New Media Communications presented on May 13, 2009.

Title: Breaking Down Blackout: Building Understanding of Media Effects at OSU

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Susan Shaw

In the days following Oct. 5, 2007, the staff of The Daily Barometer — the student newspaper at Oregon State University — was left scrambling for understanding. The paper published a image of a man wearing black face paint for an event called “Blackout Reser.” That black face paint looked like Mistrel-era blackface to many on campus. University officials were calling for a teachable moment.

A case study was conducted by surveying those involved in conversations following “Blackout Reser” to identify the training needs of the OSU Department of Student Media as well as examine the “Blackout Reser” incident in detail. Case studies of other universities examine incidents across the racial spectrum.

The OSU Department of Student Media needs not one training solution but an ongoing and ever-present training in the areas of diversity, inclusion and systems of oppression. The Daily Barometer staff failed to act quickly because of a lack of understanding of both the history of media effects nationwide and media effects at Oregon State University.

Keywords: OSU, diversity, media, effects, blackout

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Honors Baccalaureate of Science in Liberal Studies with an option in New Media  
Communications project of Lauren L. Dillard presented on May 13, 2009.

APPROVED:

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Mentor, representing Women Studies

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Committee member, representing New Media Communications

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Dean, University Honors College

I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of  
Oregon State University, University Honors College. My signature authorizes  
release of my project to any reader upon request.

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Lauren L. Dillard, author

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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to all of those individuals who have ever been, and who will ever be, editor of The Daily Barometer. They will forever make tough decisions that create situations of incomprehensible effect and magnitude.

To every staff member, for more than 113 years.

To the fraternity that is The Daily Barometer.

## **Breaking Down Blackout: Building Understanding of Media Effects at OSU**

### **PREFACE**

#### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

In 2007, Oregon State University President Ed Ray said that the university would make one very important transition. One tough circumstance on campus would be artfully maneuvered into a “teachable moment.” On Oct. 5, 2007, The Daily Barometer — the campus newspaper at OSU — printed a photo illustration of an event called “Blackout Reser.” As the editor of the Barometer, I was responsible for every line of text and every image included with that illustration. We depicted an OSU student in black face paint and black clothing. “Blackout Reser” was an event aimed at amassing school spirit for the football team.

The black face paint, displayed proudly on the front page of the paper, was eerily reminiscent of 1920s and '30s minstrel-era blackface; the editors, including myself, had overlooked this element. Members of the OSU community were offended and outraged by our unintentional blunder. By revisiting the series of events that unfolded during winter 2007, this project will fill a void of knowledge that has already been created. The current staff of the Barometer, in almost two years, has already forgotten these lessons. Simply put, the staff was still in high school when the event happened. By creating a recorded history of “Blackout Reser,” the next editors and managers of the OSU Department of Student Media will have yet another resource available to them. By entering this data into the university’s body of knowledge, we extend our reach as fellow students and take responsibility for educating each other.

Understanding this incident is not intended to be a study of media ethics. This project will take a look at “Blackout Reser” as well as other media that have had negative effects on the OSU community and other campus communities nationwide. I believe that understanding this history and analyzing media that have effects on their communities allows students and staff a greater context to interpret new situations and new reactions to the media we produce.

A survey of those involved in conversations regarding “Blackout Reser” identifies some of the training needs of the OSU Department of Student Media as well as some of the missteps made by The Daily Barometer staff. To learn from “Blackout Reser” — to truly create a “teachable moment” — this effort to expand the details of “Blackout Reser” is critical.



*Fig. 1: This is an image of the front page of The Daily Barometer on Oct. 5, 2007*

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

### WRITTEN CHRONOLOGY OF 'BLACKOUT RESER'

Oregon State University sophomore and sports writer Casey Grogan started an event called "Blackout Reser" in preparation for an upcoming football game against the University of Arizona. After creating an event on the social networking Web site Facebook.com, Grogan's idea gained momentum. Thousands of students had committed to participating. A photo illustration of the event was printed in the Oct. 5, 2007 edition of The Daily Barometer, the student newspaper at OSU. The illustration was the dominant art on the newspaper's front page, and it showed a student dressed in black. The student had black paint smeared on his face and hands, creating a reminder of 1920s and 1930s minstrel-era blackface. Also, a caption said, "Paint your face black, it scares Wildcats."

The illustration was meant to show how those planning to attend the Oct. 6 football game should participate in the event. Students were quoted in the original article as saying that they thought the event, if it worked, would be the coolest thing they had ever seen.<sup>1</sup> Barometer columnist Renee Roman Nose submitted a column to Barometer editors on Oct. 16 regarding the "Blackout Reser" event. This was 11 days after the article had been printed. Barometer editors decided to hold the column, which was widely circulated via OSU cultural centers and their e-mail listservs on campus.

The game and "Blackout Reser" event passed, and on Oct. 22 — 17 days later — the event and Barometer coverage garnered attention on a blog kept by

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<sup>1</sup> Gale, Jeff. "Student section... color selection." The Daily Barometer. 5 October 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/10/05/News/Student.Section.Color.Selection-3015072.shtml>>.

OSU employee Eric Stoller.<sup>2</sup> Roman Nose's column appeared on Stoller's blog. According to Stoller, "The Barometer editorial staff/advisory board took umbrage with Renee's column and have banned that column and any of her future columns from being printed in the student newspaper."<sup>3</sup> It was believed that Barometer staff members intended to censor Roman Nose indefinitely because the original version of the column was held.

On Oct. 24, The Corvallis Gazette-Times addressed the issue in print. That story, which included photos of OSU students wearing black face paint at a football game, also mentioned students who were wearing Afro wigs with their game attire.<sup>4</sup> "'I've got team spirit all the way,' [Roman Nose said to the Gazette-Times]. 'But put an Afro wig and blackface on a white student, and I have a problem with that.'" Many believed that the photo illustration on the front page of the Barometer included an Afro wig on the student. In reality, the student's actual hair was shown. Roman Nose also asked readers to consider how an image of a white student in blackface would make other Black people feel. She asked if that image would make people feel welcome at Oregon State.

On Oct. 25, KVAL 13 TV news, based in Eugene, addressed the issue and interviewed me as Barometer Editor-in-Chief. OSU student Joakina Mode was quoted saying:

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<sup>2</sup> Stoler, Eric. "About Eric Stoller and EricStoller.com." <<http://ericstoller.com/blog/about-ericstoller/>>

<sup>3</sup> Stoler, Eric. "Blackface and the Barometer." Ericstoller.com <<http://ericstoller.com/blog/2007/10/22/blackface-and-the-barometer/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Hogue, Theresa. "'Black Out Reser' raises racial spectre." The Corvallis Gazette-Times. 24 October 2007. <[http://www.gazettetimes.com/articles/2007/10/24/news/community/5aaa03\\_blackface.txt](http://www.gazettetimes.com/articles/2007/10/24/news/community/5aaa03_blackface.txt)>.

Some students came in black face with Afros. So you can't tell me that you're ignorant of what you're doing when you just put on an Afro, I mean why would they do that? I don't like that. If you want to be honest you put on that Afro because you're correlating the black face and the black face paint on your face, to black skin.<sup>4</sup>

Two other students were quoted saying they didn't know that black face paint would be offensive. It was during this week that another Facebook event had been created to organize a second "Blackout Reser" event. On Oct. 26, the Barometer printed a revised version of Roman Nose's column that was originally submitted on Oct. 16. Alongside the column, the Barometer staff offered an apology to readers. Roman Nose articulated her desire for the university community to spark conversation and create change all over campus and in the Corvallis community.<sup>5</sup>

"Apparently, I missed the memo that said it was acceptable to go out in public in blackface," Roman Nose wrote. "Much to my chagrin, a friend of mine, Wolof, who is also an OSU graduate student who is Black (one of the mighty 264 [a name that was coined for the 264 Black students at OSU]), approached me and asked me what was going on at the paper and if I had seen the issue."

Roman Nose made the point that the blackout would not have been offensive had the newspaper not implied that students should also go out in black face paint. Black clothing would not have been offensive. Roman Nose continued, "No one should attend a game in any kind of Afro unless God gave him or her

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<sup>5</sup> Roman Nose, Renee. "Blackface: what's your opinion?" The Daily Barometer. 26 October 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/10/26/Forum/Blackface.Wha ts.Your.Opinion-3059628.shtml>>.

that Afro when they were brought into the world. To wear an Afro wig to the football game with your face painted black is crossing the line, and you should wake up and get an education.”

I wrote an editorial to accompany the piece by Roman Nose. The editorial explained the decision to delay running the column by Roman Nose and offered an apology to readers. The editorial stated, “It was a decision [holding Roman Nose’s column] made so that we could appropriately and accurately respond to the campus community — with the opinions of Barometer staff members, community members and especially the opinions and understanding given to us by Renee Roman Nose. We apologize to the members of our community who we might have offended.”<sup>6</sup> Many readers took objection to one statement made in the editorial. Barometer staff members said, “To this we ask, couldn’t that be a good thing that the era of offensive mockery is now far enough behind us that it was not present in our active memory?”

On Oct. 31, Roman Nose addressed the topic again. Through blogs, Facebook and Barometer forums, many students expressed their disagreement with the column by Roman Nose. Essentially, they disagreed that there was a racial issue to begin with. Those students did not see black face paint as a direct reference to mistrel-era blackface. Roman Nose asked, “If there is no problem on our campus or in our community, why are so many people angry? If there is no topic to discuss, why are so many people talking about it?”<sup>7</sup> Roman Nose also

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<sup>6</sup> Editorial Board. “Examining offenses.” The Daily Barometer. 26 October 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/10/26/Forum/Examining.Offenses-3059630.shtml>>.



addressed the claims made by students on the Internet that she was unqualified to talk about the marginalization of races other than her own.

On Nov. 1, the Barometer printed a column by Robert Sanchez, an OSU student and regular columnist. Sanchez explored the side-taking that had been taking place on campus.

It is easy to take sides or feel defensive when a topic like racism is brought up. Open dialogue is essential for digesting the tension that race issues often engender. We can argue about who is right and who is wrong, but this strong polarization limits the usefulness of discourse. An opportunity is lost when judgment of others' opinions takes precedent over reflection and desire for understanding all sides and parties involved.<sup>8</sup>

Sanchez discussed the intention of the illustration printed in the Oct. 5 edition of the Barometer. He said that it was unclear whether the image was intentionally racist, but that all parties involved did not want to be considered racially insensitive. Sanchez wrote, "Renee Roman Nose has been accused of constructing a racial issue where none 'really' existed. Critics of her interpretation of the facts even express concern that she is furthering racism herself by raising the issue." Sanchez, like Roman Nose, stressed that those involved must be willing to communicate in order to grow from the experience. The dichotomy of

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<sup>7</sup> Roman Nose, Renee. "The Might 264." The Daily Barometer. 31 October 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/10/31/Forum/The-Mighty.264-3068219.shtml>>.

<sup>8</sup> Sanchez, Robert. "Blackface: Race, meaning and understanding." The Daily Barometer. 1 November 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/11/01/Forum/Blackface.Race.Meaning.And.Understanding-3071178.shtml>>.

opinions expressed by those at OSU and in the Corvallis community was made apparent by the letters to the editor printed in the Barometer in the weeks following the apology and Roman Nose's column. George Scott wrote that Roman Nose fabricated racism and "sees something that no one else sees."<sup>9</sup> Kaitlyn MacLeod wrote, "What annoys me the most is that her original article portrayed everyone wearing black paint as either racist or completely ignorant of everything. This ignorance was also a theme, though I noticed that in every article she writes she is portrayed as the pinnacle of racial understanding."<sup>10</sup>

On Nov. 8, a noose was spotted hanging from a tree at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. This, paired with the Barometer illustration of "Blackout Reser," inspired talk of intentional racism. OSU student Shannon Warren said that she strongly believed that the blackface issue led to the noose incident. Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house manager Lewis Hagen said that the noose was used as decoration for haunted house fundraiser. At one time, there had been a witch hanging from the noose, but the witch was removed. Hagen said that fraternity hadn't gotten around to finding a ladder to remove the noose.<sup>11</sup>

According to an article in Willamette Week, the Barometer "refused to run any opinion editorials opposing the 'blackout' in the paper."<sup>12</sup> The Barometer,

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<sup>9</sup> Scott, George. "Letter to the editor." The Daily Barometer. 9 November 2007.

<sup>10</sup> MacLeod, Kaitlyn. "Letter to the editor." The Daily Barometer. 9 November 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Coonrod, Larry. "Demonstrators protest Barometer at Reser Stadium." 12 November 2007. <<http://media.barometer.orst.edu/media/storage/paper854/news/2007/11/12/News/Demonstrators.Protest.Barometer.At.Reser.Stadium-3094290.shtml>>.

<sup>12</sup> Stryker, Krista. "Anti-Racism Protest Saturday at OSU." Willamette Week. 9 November 2007. <<http://wwweek.com/wwire/?p=9952>>.

in fact, refused to print any submissions longer than 350 words, including opinion-editorials. A protest was scheduled for Nov. 10 in front of Reser Stadium on OSU's campus. The protest took place before the game against the University of Washington. According to a story printed in the Barometer after the event occurred — written by a staff member of the Lebanon Express — around 40 students and community members were in attendance of the protest. I requested that an outside source write the story, because I believed that a Barometer staff member could not be objective while writing the story.

The demonstrators carried signs that said, “The Barometer Hates Black People” and “OSU 4 Ignorance Not Diverse People.”<sup>11</sup>

Other commentary followed, including a column by Jess Thiessen in The Daily Vanguard. Thiessen wrote that “... this ‘era of offensive mockery,’ must be present in somebody’s active memory, because otherwise no one would have cared. It just wasn’t present in the active memory of these white students.”<sup>13</sup> The column continued:

In any matter of discrimination, it is a common defense of the accused to say that because the intentions were not offensive, the actions weren’t either. But nobody lives in a vacuum, and everything’s contextual, especially when you’re at a public event, or in a published newspaper, being seen and heard by thousands of people.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thiessen, Jesse. “What is racist?” The Daily Vanguard. 30 November 2007. <<http://www.dailyvanguard.com/2.4063/1.309210-1.309210>>.

The “Blackout Reser” issue hit the national stage when journalist Peter Schmidt published “A University Examines Underlying Problems After Racist Incidents” in The Chronicle of Higher Education. Dillard was quoted as saying, “Lessons get forgotten.”

### **TIMELINE — 2007**

**Oct. 5** — “Blackout Reser” coverage printed in Barometer

**Oct. 6** — Student Wolofbamanaigbo Ovimbundumakua reportedly called the Barometer and was hung up on

**Oct. 6** — “Blackout Reser” event takes place at Reser Stadium

**Oct. 16** — Student and Barometer columnist Renee Roman Nose submits column, Barometer Editor-in-Chief Lauren Dillard asks editors to hold column

**Oct. 18-22** — Dillard travels to San Francisco

**Oct. 24** — Roman Nose column prints with Barometer apology

**Nov. 8** — Noose is found at at Phi Gamma Delta house

**Nov. 10, 2007** – Protest at football game against the University of Washington in front of Reser Stadium

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION**

I’ve worked in Student Media for quite a few years, and it never ceases to amaze me how quickly knowledge and lessons are forgotten. They are things of the past; they are nothing to those who replace the editors and manager of Oregon State University’s Department of Student Media. I’ve seen seasons change. I’ve covered the good times and the bad. It was when the media spotlight was turned

toward me that I became a little shell-shocked. Planes can crash into houses, beloved students can be killed in tragic car accidents and still I am able to continue working. It was when I made the mistake and became the subject of media attention that I started to falter.

We are all human. But, in our history, we don't treat all humans equally. Blackface was a term that I was not familiar with. I had seen the images of Al Jolson and other minstrel-era performers. They were coating themselves in black paint, leaving grotesque features and playing on very negative stereotypes to get a laugh and a buck. In an attempt to create a photo illustration for an event happening on campus, I asked my photo editor to dress a student up in black clothing and put black face paint on his face and hands. We dressed this kid up, took a picture and put that picture on the front page of The Daily Barometer. I included a caption that said "Paint your face black, it scares the Wildcats." Sports writer Casey Grogan created this event on [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) called "Blackout Reser." Our names will be forever tied to blackface and the racial insensitivity of the university.

I've been asked, in the barrage of media attention that followed publication of that issue of the newspaper, what I was thinking. I wasn't thinking. Seven other editors and I weren't thinking of blackface. I had suggested that maybe thinking of blackface when we saw black face paint was a thing of the past. No one believed me. It has been just over a year since that paper printed and the image is still burned into my mind.

On Oct. 5, 2007, a man named Wolofbamanaigbo Ovimbundumakua called the newsroom, according to Barometer columnist Renee Roman Nose. Ovimbundumakua said that someone answered, but didn't believe what he was saying. They hung up on him. Reports of that phone call didn't reach me, the editor, until much later in the game. Two weeks later, Roman Nose — a leader for the voice of Native students on campus and frequently the voice of reason when it comes to racial diversity — submitted a column that did a number of things: First, it said that the Barometer had offended students with its recreation of the blackface image; second, it apologized on behalf of the staff of the Barometer for our insensitive behavior. I was not willing to allow publication of this column until I was able to verify the claims that it was making. I was also unwilling to allow Roman Nose to apologize on behalf of the staff. I believed that particular responsibility fell to me as the editor.

That week, I accompanied my mom and grandmother on trip to San Francisco (my mom had raised money for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society to compete in the Nike Women's Marathon). Because I was away, printing Roman Nose's article was delayed. Even though this was explained to Roman Nose, a number of OSU community members believed it was because we were unwilling to hear their voice. Roman Nose's column was circulated via OSU listservs and was widely distributed over the Internet. Letters to the editor poured in and media entities began calling. At a football game, members of the OSU community protested the Barometer, calling us racist. I was contacted by KVAL-13 TV station, based in Eugene, The Oregonian and The Chronicle of Higher Education

for stories. The offended members of the OSU community had contacted media sources to expose the situation.

It hurt. It hurt that instead of knocking on my office door and talking to me one-on-one, these people contacted media outlets to do that for them. I spent more time in interviews with media than I did responding to letters to the editor or running the newspaper. I felt alienated from the OSU community, and there were times when I feared for my life (however irrational that may have been).

The university — specifically the Office of Community and Diversity — held meetings where students would be able to talk to each other in a group setting and air out some of their concerns. However, in this case, the Barometer staff members weren't equals. We were simply wrong and we were treated as useless and uncomprehending human beings. The group meetings, open to the entire university, turned into forums for students to abrasively humiliate me and members of my staff. At that point, I was unwilling to allow my staff to participate in such meetings. As a staff, we discussed what had transpired. I met with the director of Student Media to discuss my options for continuing. Though no one ever filed a formal complaint with the University Student Media Committee, there was talk of removing me from my position as editor. Most of the talk, however, originated from me. I wasn't so sure that I was still qualified to be editor of the publication. Later during the week of Oct. 5, a noose was found hanging from a tree at a fraternity. It was a leftover Halloween decoration. The witch that had been hanging from the tree was removed, but the noose remained. Just a few months before, six individuals were charged with beating Jena High

School student Justin Barker. The Black teenagers who beat Barker were allegedly responding to escalating racial tension after nooses were found hanging from a tree at the school, as well as other incidents. The noose, which originally held a witch, also offended pagan students and women.

The noose, while being a symbol of American Revolution-based lynching, was not a welcome sight during those weeks. Racial tension on campus grew. The meetings my staff and I attended were hot with anger, and there was no way that I could try to defend myself or my staff. In smaller meetings, held again by the Office of Community and Diversity, I explored my own feelings of guilt and tried to raise my level of understanding. I honestly didn't get it, and it took a few days for me to really understand the feelings that our depiction had stirred. One of the issues we had to tackle while meeting in small groups was grasping the particulars of this specific event. Some of those who met with me were bringing feelings of years and years of oppression as well as years and years of mistakes from Student Media. At one point, someone commented, "We expect this in spring. We expect this from a new editor." OSU community members expect the worst from the new. Those who have been around a while expect someone to screw up at some point; they expect lacking judgment and troubled discretion. This is not acceptable.

Director of the Office of Community and Diversity Terryl Ross worked with the small groups to identify the specifics. He questioned each one of us, probing us for direct answers and rational descriptions. While I was searching for a way to explain my situation and grappling with my emotions, I was unable to



continue. I broke down, apologizing for my actions. It seemed to me that most of the problems that had been created were a result of slow response on behalf of the Barometer staff. The problems were a result of my slow response. Arguably, however, we created a horrific reenactment of blackface embodied in OSU school spirit.

I was broken. I was living in fear, losing sleep, eating little and spending countless hours preparing for and completing interviews with media outlets. Concurrently, I was handling a 12-credit course load and the daily production of the Barometer. I had reached my breaking point. I was not functional for the rest of that meeting and many of the discussions that followed. One of the meeting's attendees told me that my apology was the only thing she had wished to hear. She wanted to know that someone was really sorry.

A few eyes were opened as my staff discussed the issue. Jeff Wick, my photo editor, had a light-bulb moment with former reporter for The Oregonian David Austin who was discussing "Blackout Reser" with us. Austin started to describe something like the classic "birdcage" theory to us. Feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye explains in her essay "Oppression" that oppression is like a birdcage. If you look at one individual strand of wire that makes up a birdcage, you cannot see the others strands or the birdcage as a whole. You don't understand why a bird can't fly around that strand. When there are hundreds, if not thousands, of strands of oppression, all of the strands work together to hold us captive. She says, "It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to

its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.”<sup>14</sup>

Austin explained that white skin — and the perspective of white men — is the default in our experience. Wick asked why that was a bad thing. Austin made it clear that when we always approach situations or problems from the same perspective, we don’t always find the best answers. It’s not fair to always tell the story from the perspective of the privileged white male (see: Peggy McIntosh’s “Invisible Knapsack”). He said that the white male viewpoint is *universal* in this country. It is continually influencing every media outlet, every TV show and every conversation. Austin said he has to act like a white man to get ahead.

Wick was able to finally understand what Austin was saying. I think that it helped that Wick and the rest of my staff were hearing this from an African-American male reporter. Austin asked us the tough questions; he encouraged us to create a more diverse newsroom. If we weren’t able to do it in numbers, he challenged us to at least think like people of other cultures and skin colors. He encouraged us to push that sometimes-frightening envelope and ask the tough questions for the underrepresented members of our community. He told us that it’s okay to ask questions like, “How does this affect Mexicans at OSU?”

Not long after the Austin meeting, OSU Professor of New Media Communications Pam Cytrynbaum asked to meet with the same group of editors. We discovered that this group of editors continues to be horribly sheltered from those of other cultures, skin colors, financial situations and religions. While we

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<sup>14</sup> Frye, Marilyn. “Oppression,” from *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*, Trumansburg, N.Y., The Crossing Press, 1983. Accessed via <<http://www.unbeknownst.org/oppress.htm>> on April 30, 2009.

boasted one Jewish Ukrainian, she was only one person. However, the rest of the staff was from the state of Oregon — a.k.a. mostly white — and we boasted very little racial diversity. I heard OSU President Ed Ray say in a State of the University address that one of the missions of the university is to expose students from small-town Ontario, Oregon to international students and students from other backgrounds. As the university started to explore this topic, working to create a living document (the “Diversity Plan,” if you will), officials started to realize that the students of OSU hadn’t been socialized to understand these topics.

Why didn’t seven editors see blackface when they saw an image of a student wearing black face paint? There are a number of reasons, but the first that comes to mind is that I don’t look at images looking for the offense they can potentially create. This image, to me, was a picture of a student in black face paint. I hadn’t spent enough time around black students to understand what kinds of things are offensive. I understand that using the word “chink” is derogatory, but only because I’ve been around Asian people who told me that it offended them. Perhaps those from the West Coast have perspectives that those from the East Coast do not. Perhaps we understand more about Asian, Native, Pacific Islander and Russian Orthodox cultures than someone from the South would. I can only speculate the differences. While Oregon has a very small population of African-Americans, we do have growing and significant populations of Asian, Russian and Mexican people.

Whether it is a lack of sensitivity or a lack of experience with diverse cultures and conditions, there is a problem that continues to plague The Daily

Barometer. No matter what we learn over the course of our individual reigns as editors, we lose that knowledge. There is no institutional memory for that kind of thing. That is why I sit and write today. This cannot be explained more easily than by walking through the steps, thoughts and reactions of those involved.

It was largely accepted that the Barometer staff did not intend to offend members of the OSU community and that is what made this situation even more difficult. When an action is taken with intent, the response of the community is generally easy to understand. However, when an action is unintentional, you cannot be sure that it will not happen again. I live with this fear. What if I were to create another image of something so horribly offensive that I can never work in my field again? This would be because I didn't know enough to know what is offensive. I can't know what I don't know, otherwise I'd know it. I'm afraid of missing a piece.

Some in the OSU community believed that the Barometer printed the blackface image intentionally. That it was unintentional, however, was well-accepted. But, we didn't know. We hadn't learned before that day. How do we make sure that we learn after? We talked, we discussed and we worked toward understanding what had happened. Protesters at the Washington State University football game held signs that read "The Barometer hates black people," and "We deserve a voice at Oregon State." Another protester held a sign that read, "OSU 4 ignorance not diverse people." Intent is important. Intent is one of those factors that a court, or perhaps the University Student Media Committee, will look at. In

this case, the intent would have been a factor in our favor, but instead, it was a factor that ruled us ignorant and plain-old stupid.

## THE PROTEST

I brought my dad to the Dad's Weekend, football game vs. the University of Arizona at Reser Stadium. Before we left for the game, I explained the situation with which I had been faced. I showed my dad the newspaper and told him the general circumstances of the fallout. I explained the situation because I knew that Dad and I would encounter this protest when we made the walk from our dinner with University President Edward Ray to the President's box. I was considered a student leader, therefore I was invited to participate in this event with other student leaders, including the student body president. My father and I left the dinner and walked over to the stadium and I stopped to catch my reporter and photographer covering the protest.

I watched for a few minutes, walking close to the protest. TV cameras lined against the pushing crowd and protest. Police officers stood ready to break up fights between the silent protest and the crowd. People yelled inappropriate things like, "Go racism." James, a student who was quoted in the Barometer on the Monday after the protest, said, "That's stupid they're upset about the blackface. The fact is we were just trying to get some team spirit up. It was not racist. We needed a win."

My heart dropped a bit that my dad was there to see my mistake being protested at a major university. However, more than anything, I think he was

impressed by the turnout. I think he was impressed that I had the (for lack of a better word) power to stir that many people to action. I know that he had taken what I said about the protest to heart, but I am not sure how well he understood its implications. I wonder if an older generation would understand an image of blackface differently than my generation. Did Dad understand it immediately? Or was he left wondering exactly what the big deal is?

There were a couple of circumstances under which it was important for the Barometer staff to respond to the OSU community and to those people who had contacted us. In the spirit of good business, it is important to answer the phone, respond to voicemails and e-mails and generally just be available for people who need to talk or complain. The Barometer staff should have done a better job of listening to those who called or tried to contact us in the early days of the “Blackout Reser” coverage. When Renee Roman Nose submitted her column, I let my reservations about a few editorial things hold me back. I didn’t want Roman Nose apologizing on behalf of the staff and I didn’t really believe that this had happened, since her column was submitted more than a week after the initial incident. Had her column gone in the paper the very next day, many problems would have been solved.

We ran an apology side-by-side with Roman Nose’s column. One line, though, put another thorn in the side of OSU community members: “To this we ask, couldn't that be a good thing that the era of offensive mockery is now far enough behind us that it was not present in our active memory?” This statement was unbelievable and unacceptable to many who read it. I realize now that it

doesn't matter what is in my active memory, but what is in the active memory of my readers. While I may be a little too young to understand what blackface looked like, that doesn't mean my readers are. Age and ignorance are not excuses.

The Daily Barometer continued to run letters to the editor in the print pages of the Barometer. Many letters were excluded on the basis of length. I also fault my forum editors for not keeping very good track of what letters were being printed and which ones weren't, as those who were submitting letters believed we were actively censoring them. To remedy part of this belief, I posted long letters online. However, I still believe that many of our letters to the editor were lost in the bureaucracy of our system. For this, I'm not sure how to create a remedy. We simply weren't staffed to handle the number of letters we received.

In the meetings we attended, I recommended that members of my staff let me speak for them unless they wanted to speak. I suggested that we keep quiet and mostly listen, allowing others to vent their frustrations. This didn't work. This was a mistake on my part. When my staff was actively participating in the conversation freely, they were able to learn for themselves via interaction. I still believe it was best to simply listen at the group meetings that were held originally. However, it worked very well when my staff started talking at the Dave Austin training session. I was trying to keep my staff from suffering the same emotional strain that I was. I didn't want their spirits to be massacred by those who were killing mine. However, when they started talking, I wasn't as responsible for filling the silence. The responsibility for our actions was pulled away from me, though I will take responsibility for this story for the rest of my life.

I've noticed that even though I continue to work for the Barometer, the people who were involved in the conversations following "Blackout Reser" were never actually concerned with me as a human being. They were concerned with the Barometer as an institution. There were those who called for greater regulation of the Barometer on the part of the university. Letters were sent to OSU President Ed Ray; however, because the Barometer is not directly student-fee funded, the president of the university has little say in what we do. Ray has chosen not to exercise jurisdiction over the Barometer. He defaults to the institutional structure, which includes the University Student Media Committee. To this day, I continue to recognize readers who were involved in our discussions, but it seems that none of them remember me. Some of the readers will even enter the newsroom and interact with me directly, but there will be nothing but professional courtesy. There is no spark of recognition in their eyes. This tells me that my learning experience in this difficult situation never mattered to them.

## CAMPUS CULTURE

We faced one problem in particular while trying to react appropriately to those who were affected by our coverage. Students — generally white students — believed that we had done nothing wrong. While defending the actions of those who attended the game in black clothing, face paint and Afro wigs, the white students also defended the photo illustration of the Barometer. In fact, students planned another "Blackout Reser" event for the next football season. Thousands of students joined the Facebook group.



Part of me wanted to jump ship and go find friends who believed that because of the intent of the event and the illustration, nothing was done that should have been offensive. However, logic dictated the correct course of action, which was to diffuse the tension in the best way we knew how. While responding to the offended masses (apologizing and giving due consideration to each letter), we also needed to work to help others understand why this was a very bad, very offensive and unintentionally racist thing. Remembering what Ray said in his State of the University address, it is important to introduce that student from Ontario, Oregon to a few international students.

When I was a freshman at Oregon State University, there were individuals in my dorm area who would say offensively racist things. These individuals were outwardly racist, made derogatory comments about African-Americans and Mexicans and used offensive slang. This seems to be the general attitude of many at Oregon State University. Many of us are from middle-income families, and another subset of us is from small towns and may be first-generation college students. Some of those characteristics tend to also equate with racism and classism. This is a university-wide problem. This is why students are required to take one “Difference, Power and Discrimination” course in their stay at OSU. But is it enough? When students are writing in to tell us that Black people are just trying to get attention, we have a problem. I don’t think that the Barometer will ever be able to do enough to break that type of racial tension. The easiest solution is to not give white students a reason to write in and complain about minority students. However, avoiding reporting that is aware of the situations of *all* types

of students is not the solution for that. We must create awareness of minority students by asking questions and looking at situations from the perspective of those who are not so white-male.

## THE QUESTION

Were we wrong to print a photo illustration of a student in black clothes and face paint? There was no intention to print an offensive image. Can you argue that morally? Is there a question of “right or wrong” for a mistake?

We touched on an issue that had not been institutionally-recognized on this level until we printed the image. There have always been students wearing black face paint and Afro wigs at football games, but we weren’t aware as a university that there were students who were scared or bothered by that.

What did we do? We created university-wide awareness of this problem. There were really three issues going on. The first issue was that students at the university were willing to create an event like this. The second was that the Barometer chose to cover this event (and add the not-requisite black face paint). The third issue was that some students realize their behavior offends people, but they continue to do it anyway.

These three issues created an exemplar for the Marilyn Frye “Oppression” birdcage theory. Our university has an issue of perspective. We are the epitome of the white male. How do we apply this situation to the future? We can use this event as an example of how to try and understand. There will always be things that we don’t understand and images whose meanings we don’t always know all

of the possible meanings to. The first step is to report rather than create. Instead of photo illustrations and creating images, it's important to capture images with as many accurate facets as possible. Photo illustrations are sometimes necessary, but avoiding stereotyping is key. Black face paint, nooses, red paint, swastikas, stereotyped Asian hats and similar symbols are important to notice.

Filling newsrooms with those who have a different perspective is also important. Personally, I can give you the perspective of a white female. I can tell you when something is offensive to me as a female. But I can't necessarily tell you when something is offensive to a Native person or an African-American person. But an African-American reporter may have an edge on breaking those boundaries. If a newsroom just doesn't represent the population in coverage area, it is important to think in terms of marginalized groups. It is important to think in terms of religion, financial situation, education level and race or heritage. It's important to ask the questions that underrepresented groups need the answers to.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

I applied for and was granted permission to conduct a survey of individuals who were involved in the aftermath of "Blackout Reser." These students and faculty were involved in the conversations campus wide that followed "Blackout Reser." The survey consisted of 17 questions and was sent out via e-mail. I secured approval for the participation of 30 individuals. Twenty-six possible participants were contacted via e-mail and 15 agreed to participate. A second e-mail was sent to those who had agreed to participate, with the survey and a document of informed consent. Ten surveys were completed and returned.

The participants were spread along the age spectrum, as they are students as well as faculty. The participants were of no particular race, religion or socioeconomic status. The participants of this survey were selected because of their involvement in the university-wide conversation regarding “Blackout Reser.” Some of these conversations happened in large-scale and scheduled ways. Other conversations were held in small, informal settings at Student Media offices or around campus.

Five of the participants continue to work or have worked at the OSU Department of Student Media in some capacity — the capacity was not identified to provide anonymity — and the other five participants have no affiliation with the department. Of the participants, four were students and six were staff members. Not one of the participants was involved in the creation of the image. Eight of the participants were involved in or personally planned the formal discussions that crossed the OSU campus. Two of the participants were only involved in informal conversations that took place.

Questions ranged from the actual effect of the Barometer’s photo illustration to the continuing opinions regarding The Daily Barometer and the response of the university. Questions regarding the OSU Department of Student Media and training programs are addressed in the section titled “Examining Training Needs” on page 62.

The survey addressed many questions of contention, which were raised in discussions following the event. The first non-biographical question of the survey asked if participants recognized a small image of the Barometer’s front page. The

banner of the newspaper was intentionally excluded and only the photo illustration was included. Each of the 10 participants replied that they did recognize the image. The next question addressed participants' initial reaction to the image. Two of the participants were personally offended, six knew that the image would be offensive and two participants were not bothered by the image. Only one of the latter two participants was affiliated with Student Media. Participant no. 1 was "shocked and dismayed" following publication of the image. The participant wrote, "It made me feel sad that our staff at the Barometer would not realize the inappropriate nature of this image and accompanying article and how many people this would hurt." Participant no. 2, in contrast, wrote, "[My] first reaction to it was school spirit. I was fine with it." Other participants took issue with the caption that said "Paint your face black, it scares the Wildcats." Another participant said that he/she could not have comprehended or anticipated the full reaction of the university community. Participant no. 5 said that he/she knew the image would anger and upset members of the African or African-American communities on campus.

The next question addressed the continuing feelings of survey participants toward the image. Participant no. 1 was personally affected by the incident, therefore he/she continues to feel sad. This participant was attacked because of the role he/she played in the discussions. Many of the participants still believe that it was "pretty stupid" and "in poor taste" to print the image illustrating "Blackout Reser." Those participants who disliked the image or knew it would offend still

believe it was in poor taste. Those who believe the image was published with good intention and did not find it offensive still consider it as such.

Overwhelmingly, participants described the university-sponsored meetings that occurred after the incident as “poorly handled” and frustrating. Participant no. 1 wrote, “I felt that the perspectives of the African American students were not being heard or were being discounted and diminished, which seemed to add to the frustration felt by the African-American and minority communities here at OSU.” This participant also described other meetings as “fruitless” because all of the attendees understood the problem. The participant responded that it was like “preaching to the choir.” Participant no. 3 described one meeting as a “disaster” because “too many people were still wounded by the experience and too hurt to get to a place of authentic dialogue.” A later meeting, as described by participant no. 3, was “much better,” as it was between a few Black students and Barometer staff. “It was focused on where people were at the time and what they needed to move on. I thought it was authentic and I saw people make some amazing breakthroughs at that meeting.” Participant no. 5 was involved in discussions with the faculty advisors of the Black Cultural Center. This participant said they participated in many discussions once communication began between the “two parties – the Daily Barometer and its affiliates and the Black Cultural Center and the students/faculty it represents on campus,” Participant no. 6 was frustrated by “extreme positions taken by some of the students and my perception that some sought to exploit the situation for personal benefit.” Participant no. 10 said, “[The meetings] made me feel like there were multiple sides of the story and that *all*

student's [sic] voices needed to be heard and addressed. I definitely felt like I was a bit ignorant to how some groups of students would be hurt and offended by the image."

The next question addressed the specifics of the image. The survey encouraged respondents to explain exactly what about the image offended them. Four of the participants answered that the black face paint, combined with what looked like an Afro wig, inspired thoughts of 1920s minstrel-era blackface. Three participants wrote that the image did not offend them. Participant no. 8 wrote that it is unfortunate that black is a school color. Participant no. 10 said that he/she would be offended if something similar happened again because that means no lesson was learned from "Blackout Reser." Two participants left the question blank or said they preferred not to elaborate. Participant no. 3 believed that the image wasn't necessarily the issue, but that the Barometer handled the incident in such a way that it was offensive. Participant no. 7 was against the fact that the Barometer was acting as a cheer squad for a University Athletics event, which was planned by a Barometer staff member.

The survey also addressed the response of both the Barometer staff as well as university officials. First, the survey asked, "Do you feel that the Barometer staff responded appropriately after this image was published? Please elaborate." Six participants answered that the Barometer staff did not respond appropriately. Interestingly, four of those participants had affiliation with the Department of Student Media. Two participants did not answer the question and two participants said that the Barometer staff responded appropriately eventually. Participant no. 9

wrote, “My understanding is that the Barometer initially failed to listen and appreciate the concerns expressed by offended students and colleagues. After too long a delay, the Barometer created an online dialogue to help the community work through issues.” Participant no. 1 believed that the Barometer staff did not respond appropriately and wrote, “While I understand that the Baro staff were not aware of the history of blackface, the majority of minority students were and they are all in the same age group so there really is no excuse for offensiveness, intentional or not.” Participant no. 3 reflected the attitude of the participants who believed the Barometer responded appropriately eventually. They wrote, “I think the Barometer acted in good faith once they realized how upset everyone was, but by that time, it was too late. I think they should have been more proactive on the frontend [sic].”

Participant no. 4 addressed the feelings of the campus on the whole:

There were many white majority who I heard expressing surprise that anyone was hurt or offended by the image. They saw it purely as a show of spirit and did not want to listen to what others had to say about what they felt viewing the image. I think the Barometer staff learned a lot through all the discussions, but I wish it had a larger impact on others in the campus community.

Participant no. 7 said that it is not permissible to dismiss someone’s feelings when he/she is offended. Though the Barometer staff eventually understood the issue, “I think the staff would have seen it sooner had they been less on the defensive in the beginning.” It was a consensus among those who said



the Barometer staff did not respond appropriately, that the staff waited too long to offer a response to those who were offended.

The survey also addressed “What could have been done better?” on the part of the Barometer staff. While many participants said, “see previous question,” others did offer a response in the form of suggestions for improvement. Participant no. 1 believed that diversity training should be mandatory for all staff. The participant also believed, “A staff member who is not a student and is fully aware of minority issues should be proofing the paper prior to publication.” Three of the participants implied or directly stated that timeliness was an issue — too much time elapsed between initial complaint and response from Barometer staff. Two participants commented that the Barometer staff followed up well and fully participated in conversations once they realized that there was an issue.

The next question addressed the continuing feelings of participants toward The Daily Barometer. Four participants continue to enjoy reading the newspaper. Four feel neutral (as before) toward the paper. And two participants do not feel good about the paper. Both of these participants believe that the Barometer staff has acted in bad faith or have been “tone deaf about issues of diversity on campus.” One of these participants has worked for the Barometer in the past. Participant no. 4 wrote, “I think the Barometer is a good student paper and I think the staff learned from the incident.” One neutral participant wrote, “I’ll defend the Barometer’s right to print anything but I may not agree with the content.” Participant no. 9 wrote, “I think increased diversity on the staff and editorial board of the Barometer would be helpful.”

In an attempt to include other incidents of Student Media effects, the survey asked participants if there were other times that they had been offended by something printed in the Barometer. Five participants answered in the affirmative, citing mostly the Nathanael Blake column printed in 2006 titled “The Islamic double-standard.” One participant mentioned a KBVR-TV show that included a segment that addressed the question “How far have you gone to get some?” Of those participants who answered in the affirmative, two are students and three are staff. Five participants answered that they had never been offended by something in the Barometer. Three of those five were staff and two were students.

The survey also addressed the response of the university to “Blackout Reser.” Seven participants believed that the university responded appropriately. Of those, three are members of Student Media. Two participants were neutral to the response of the university and one believed that the university did not respond appropriately. In fact, participant no. 8 wrote, “I was told by several minority administrators that they were not offended by the image and they didn’t think the issue was as big some thought it was.” Participant no. 1 wrote that he/she had contacted President Ray and asked him what he was doing. The participant found his answer unacceptable. The participant said that results have been “slow and indiscernible.”

Because the university, and Ray, described “Blackout Reser” as a “teachable moment,” the survey asked participants what they had learned from the entire situation. Many of the participants described something they learned, whether it was about the reaction of the community or about their work in media.

Participant no. 1 learned that he/she is not safe on campus, and that there are people "...who adamantly do not want change or acceptance for anyone who looks or behaves any differently from themselves." Participant no. 2 learned that there are some words and images that are not appropriate to use in professional media work. Participant no. 3 said, "I was amazed at how many people from all backgrounds who did not know about blackface and who did not have any empathy for people that would find such images offensive." Participant no. 4 believes the Barometer staff learned a lot but perhaps the rest of the campus community did not. Participant no. 6 "...had the importance of dialogue and humility reinforced for me." Participant no. 7 said, "I learned how little students know about the history of discrimination and how easy it is to be insensitive to someone else's issues." Participant no. 8 wrote, "I think people learned that everything needs to be examined prior to publication." Participant no. 9 wrote:

The magnitude of the reaction to the slow response to reader concern by the Barometer was greater than I would have expected. It suggests that we have much further to go in building a diverse community than I appreciated.

Participant no. 10 wrote:

It is difficult to be aware of everyone's feelings, cultures, and situations, and to understand how everyone will react to various things, however it is vitally important for all of us as people and a community to continue to try and to learn. In addition to this we have to learn to be forgiving and encouraging rather than

demeaning and harsh to those of us who make mistakes or we will lose the opportunity to teach and educate each other about ourselves.

In additional comments, participant no. 3 included a thought regarding the survey and the incident and discussions as a whole: “I think it is a mistake to focus only on the image in the Barometer. It’s all of the issues around the image that were the problem. In many ways, I think the Barometer ended up being the scapegoats for a lot of other serious issues that are present on our campus.”

Overall, the survey revealed that the Barometer staff was overwhelmingly believed to be slow to respond to community criticism. Also, many of the participants learned just how effective the campus community can be in organizing a protest and responding to injustice. The initial reaction to the image was much the same across the board, but there were only two participants who were personally offended. Six participants knew that it would offend others. There was a 50 percent split for participants who had been previously offended by something created in Student Media. Most of the participants believed that the university responded appropriately, though they offered little explanation of what exactly was done well. Additionally, a few of the respondents added that the “Blackout Reser” issue was more than just a Barometer issue. They added that the entire incident and the response following were and continue to be university issues.

## **COMPLAINTS TO THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT MEDIA COMMITTEE**

There have been at least six complaints regarding content discussed by the University Student Media Committee since the creation of the committee in 1982. All but one of the complaints was submitted regarding The Daily Barometer, though the USMC is the governing body for all five branches of media in the OSU Department of Student Media.

Before 1982, print media at OSU was established under the Board of Student Publications, and broadcast media was under the purview of the OSU broadcast program. As Director of Student Media Frank Ragulsky and Assistant Director Ann Robinson were hired, the OSU Department of Student Media was established — and with it, the USMC.<sup>15</sup> Only three of these matters were submitted as formal complaints to the USMC. Many of the following issues were merely brought to the attention of the committee by members because of the interest stirred on campus.

### **PUBLIC PRIVACY?**

According to Ragulsky, during the 1996-1997 school year, a KBVR-TV crew was capturing shots of Central Park in downtown Corvallis. During that shoot, the crew filmed a homeless man. After seeing himself on KBVR-TV, the man took offense to being filmed. He filed a formal complaint to the USMC to argue that he has a right to not be filmed in public. The committee met to discuss

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<sup>15</sup> Ragulsky, Frank. Director of Student Media, Oregon State University. Personal interview. 27 January 2009.

the matter and agreed that because he was in a public space, the man had no rights to privacy.<sup>15</sup>

This was an example of Student Media entering the social space of a minority group and providing commentary. This group was filmed by students from KBVR-TV, which is similar to providing commentary in print. Perhaps Student Media has a blind spot regarding certain minority groups. Maybe the students behind the camera do not understand what it is like to have no private space, like this homeless man.

### **TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENT**

On Feb. 19, 1999, the USMC allowed OSU student Seth Wolpin to file a formal complaint. Wolpin addressed the subject of tobacco advertising in The Daily Barometer.<sup>16</sup> “Wolpin identified himself as a registered nurse and a master’s candidate in public health,” according to the minutes of the USMC meeting. “He said the field of public health is dedicated to the prevention of preventable diseases and that his desire to follow that mission brought him to complain.”

The Daily Barometer received \$789 for that advertising insert, according to the minutes. Wolpin believed that receiving money for a tobacco ad turned an issue about health into one about money. Wolpin cited the Barometer mission statement of “striving to publish material that helps the University as a whole.” Wolpin, during his hearing with the USMC, mentioned editorials run by the Barometer against the proposed Corvallis Smoking Ban. Wolpin stressed that the

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<sup>16</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 19 February 1999.

bottom line of his complaint was removal of the tobacco ads in the Barometer. Wolpin noted that the OSU Bookstore is “prohibited from selling tobacco products and believes that the student newspaper should be also.” One USMC voting member, who later became a staff photographer at the Corvallis Gazette-Times, mentioned that alcohol was advertised (at that time) at Parker Stadium, now Reser Stadium.

The committee decided, after discussion, that decisions regarding advertisements should be left to the discretion of the editor. This was decided unanimously.

## **EDITORIAL CONTENT**

On Jan. 31, 2000, the OSU President’s Commission on the Status of Women at OSU submitted a complaint regarding content, in general, of The Daily Barometer.<sup>17</sup> However, there was one particular column that caught their interest.

“The PCOSW recognizes the importance of a student newspaper in contributing to the campus community. Because we value this medium and recognized its power, we wish to go on record in support of the Student Media Committee requiring diversity training for the Barometer staff,” wrote the commission.

A sports column, “Big win indicative of things to come,” by Andrew Hinkelman used the phrase “Pac-10’s bitch” to describe the UCLA Bruin’s new

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<sup>17</sup> Cleary, Susan. Letter on behalf of President’s Commission on the Status of Women to the Student Media Committee care of Frank Ragulsky. 31 January 2000.

status in the league. This column printed on Oct. 25, 1999.<sup>18</sup> On Oct. 26, 1999, Hinkelman offered an apology in print.<sup>19</sup> According to Ragulsky, the USMC took no action toward Hinkelman.<sup>15</sup> *See Appendix, part I, for text of Hinkelman's article.*

### **DIFFERENCE, POWER AND DISCRIMINATION REQUIREMENT**

On Oct 5, 2000, Associate Professor of philosophy Lani Roberts sent an e-mail requesting to meet with USMC Chair Robert Hood.<sup>20</sup> Roberts requested to meet with the USMC and did so on Oct. 30.<sup>21</sup> Roberts specifically mentioned an ad in The Daily Barometer. The advertiser was Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The ad showed a picture of a young Black man, holding his head in his hands, with the caption, "liquor then beer, never fear. 90% of all campus rapes involve alcohol."<sup>22</sup> *See Appendix, part III.*

Roberts also mentioned an inserted ad from Yahoo! Messenger. The text of the ad read, "Stoney — get over here quick. She's about to take her top off. — Bob" and "Yahoo! Messenger ~ The only people who see it are the people you're

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<sup>18</sup> Hinkleman, Andrew. "Big win indicative of big things to come," The Daily Barometer. 25 October 1999. Sports section, page 12.

<sup>19</sup> Hinkleman, Andrew. "There are no excuses for yesterday's remark," The Daily Barometer. 26 October 1999. Sports section.

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, Lani. "Student Media Committee request." E-mail to Robert Hood (chair of USMC), Marianne Vydra, Judy Ringle, Janet Lee, Jim Buckley, Frank Ragulsky, Larry Roper and Susan Shaw. 5 October 2000.

<sup>21</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 30 October 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Advertisement in The Daily Barometer. 29 September 2000.



talking to. messenger.yahoo.com”<sup>23</sup>. Roberts wrote in an e-mail to Hood, “We are not yet three weeks into this academic year and the Barometer has accepted and published advertisements which are degrading to women and, most recently, the MADD ad (Sept. 29) which perpetuates a very dangerous and false racial stereotype regarding black men and rape.”

She continued: “This is entirely unacceptable anywhere, but particularly in an institution of higher education which seeks to create an inclusive and respectful community as a matter of its stated commitments.” *See Appendix, part IV*

In her e-mail to Hood, Roberts discussed a previously mentioned suggestion that Barometer employees be required to take a Difference, Power and Discrimination course within the first year of working at the newspaper. As of 2009, a DPD course is a baccalaureate core requirement for all graduates.

During the Oct. 30 USMC meeting, Roberts brought the complaint to the committee and mentioned an earlier meeting with Ragulsky and Robinson. At that meeting, the three parties agreed that Barometer staff were in need of a higher level of Difference, Power and Discrimination training.

Robinson and Ragulsky agreed to teach ALS 199: Ethics, Culture and Influence: The role of media in America. This class, taught winter 2001, included guest speakers, such as the director of Multicultural Affairs, as well as lessons on libel and slander.<sup>24</sup> *See Appendix, part V, for course syllabus.* After discussion, the committee unanimously decided to require all students who are employed in

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<sup>23</sup> Yahoo! Messenger. Advertisement in The Daily Barometer. December 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Ragulsky, Frank and Ann Robinson. Syllabus for ALS 199. Oregon State University. Fall 2001.

Student Media to complete the student media ethics and diversity course or a university DPD course within their first year in Student Media.

Ragulsky submitted a decision package during the 2000-2001 budget cycle of \$6,000 to fund the student media ethics and diversity courses. The Educational Activities Committee rejected this decision package.<sup>25</sup> Robinson and Ragulsky received no reimbursement for teaching the ALS 199 class for one term. The class was discontinued because students from the Department of Student Media were not interested in taking the class, according to Ragulsky.

### **WHITE COLUMNIST ON BLACK CULTURE**

The USMC met on April 15, 2004 to discuss the “controversy surrounding a column printed in The Daily Barometer a week earlier.”<sup>26</sup> David Williams, a Barometer staff columnist, wrote a column, printed on April 9, 2004 titled “A message from a white male to the African American community.”<sup>27</sup> Williams highlighted African American poverty levels, prison statistics, AIDS numbers and singer Robert Kelly as a “Black role model.”

Williams wrote, “It’s not the fact that black people are doing bad things that hurt then collectively as a group. White people do terrible things. Hispanics do terrible things. Koreans do terrible things. People do terrible things.” He

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<sup>25</sup> Ragulsky, Frank for the University Student Media Committee. “Student Media 2000-2001 Budget Decision Package Proposal.” Fall 2001.

<sup>26</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 15 April 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Williams, David. “A message from a white male to the African American community.” The Daily Barometer. 9 April 2004. Forum.

continued: “My point, however, is this: There is a lack of morality in the black community because African American leaders, whether Jesse Jackson or the NAACP, choose to rally themselves around minorities who seem to have little quality characteristics about them.”

On April 9 — the day the column printed — Roberts e-mailed Ragulsky saying, “The blatantly racist column today is disgusting, blaming African American people for their own oppression.”<sup>28</sup> Williams was fired by Barometer editor Nikki Sullivan.<sup>25</sup> On April 12 — one day before an apology ran in the Barometer — students stood “shoulder-to-shoulder” and passed a megaphone around on the steps of the Memorial Union to protest Williams’ column.<sup>29</sup>

OSU student Shannon Warren was quoted in a Barometer article titled, “Barometer column focus of campus protest,” “[Williams’ column] was not written in a way that portrays both sides of an issue. He wrote plenty about problems within the black community but nothing about any of the strides we have made as black people.”<sup>28</sup> In the same article, student Charlene McGee was quoted as saying, “This is not the first time. Or the second or the third time [the Barometer] has offended people from certain groups. The Barometer needs to be held more accountable.”<sup>28</sup>

On April 13, The Daily Barometer editorial board offered an apology for printing Williams’ column<sup>30</sup>: “While the opinions expressed in columns are not

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<sup>28</sup> Roberts, Lani. “Student Media Committee.” E-mail to Frank Ragulsky, the DPD program, Janet Lee, Earlean Wilson Huey and Larry Roper. 9 April 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Traylor, Dan. “Barometer column focus of campus protest.” The Daily Barometer. 13 April 2004. News, page 1.

representative of the staff members of the Barometer, we have a policy never to print material that is discriminatory, racist or sexist. By printing such material in the Barometer, we legitimize the messages, even if we don't agree. We never meant to offer racially insensitive opinions as valid ones by printing the column.”

On April 14, a forum was held at which Sullivan, Ragulsky and Barometer forum editor Christina Stewart were able to answer questions from the audience.<sup>31</sup> Stewart apologized for “letting this column get through,” according to reports from the Barometer; “Forum attempts to conquer issues” was printed on April 15. “Sullivan said Williams ‘took a very serious topic and mishandled it.’ She added that Williams has been unresponsive to making the column into a learning experience, which she felt was necessary for every staff member.” President Ray was in attendance, “calling the column incident a ‘teachable moment’”

Barometer staff writer Dan Traylor wrote on April 19 “The Daily Barometer has learned that former columnist David Williams may have used some of the wording of a nationally syndicated columnist in his April 9 column without proper attribution to the author.”<sup>32</sup>

Traylor’s story continued:

An analysis by The Daily Barometer shows that five of Williams' paragraphs closely resemble, in wording and order, six paragraphs from an April 2 column by Leonard Pitts, who writes for the

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<sup>30</sup> “Taking the first step in apologizing.” Editorial. The Daily Barometer. 13 April 2004. Forum, page 4.

<sup>31</sup> Traylor, Dan. “Forum attempts to conquer issues.” The Daily Barometer. 15 April 2004. News, page 1.

<sup>32</sup> Traylor, Dan. “Column similar to national columnists’.” The Daily Barometer. 19 April 2004. News, page 1.

Miami Herald and has won a Pulitzer Prize for his work. While some of the content of Williams' column is similar to Pitts' column, there are differences. Williams returned a phone call from The Daily Barometer but did not answer specific questions on the record about the column Sunday night.<sup>18</sup>

“In a Sunday column in the Oregonian, Associate Editor David Reinhard wrote that, ‘(Williams) says he read the Pitts' column ... and was inspired to write his own piece.’”<sup>18</sup>

Reinhard wrote the first column, which ran on April 18.<sup>33</sup> Reinhard wrote:

Is there a racial double standard here? Is a white kid being persecuted for writing something a black man writes with impunity? Talk radio's Lars Larson has spotlighted this basic unfairness here, and he's right to raise the issue. I'm torn, however, because I'm not so sure Pitts and Williams were making the exact same point in substance or tone. But did Williams deserve to get the boot? Never.

Reinhard discussed Williams' column in an honest way, saying that he was deriving content from Pitts; however, the act was not plagiarism. Reinhard also called Williams' column “unrefined.” “What's most shameful is the way Williams' editor sacked him at the first whiff of controversy and offered up one of the more craven apologies you'll see this side of the Moscow trial,” Reinhard continued. “This from folks who approved his piece before publication. Maybe

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<sup>33</sup> Reinhard, David. “Shame on OSU, The Daily Barometer.” The Oregonian. 18 April 2004.

they should fire themselves. Or maybe not. This should be a learning experience for all involved, since they're at a university of all places.”

The second column printed in *The Oregonian* on April 25, 2004, by Pitts of *The Miami Herald*, was titled “Teachable moment goes by wayside in controversy over college paper piece.”<sup>34</sup> Pitts wrote, “People keep asking me what I think of David Williams’s [sic] column. That’s because his column, published recently in the student newspaper of Oregon State University, was inspired by one of mine.”

Many of the themes of Williams’ column were inspired from one of Pitts’. Pitts’ column — titled “Being black isn’t reason enough to merit support” — discussed singer Robert Kelly as well as the concept of rallying around Black community members who are in trouble.<sup>35</sup>

During the April 15 USMC meeting, Ragulsky mentioned that President Ray had “told the Barometer staff that this is a campus problem and the Barometer simply put itself in the line of fire. He concluded that the column by David Williams has provided an educational experience for us all. What we need to do is focus on the best way to prevent it from happening again.”<sup>12</sup> A USMC member asked editorial page editor Christina Stewart to explain the process of allowing the column to be printed. Stewart described accepting the column on a Wednesday and reading it the evening before it printed.

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<sup>34</sup> Pitts Jr., Leonard. “Teachable moment goes by wayside in controversy over college paper piece.” *The Oregonian* (reprinted from *The Miami Herald*). 25 April 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Pitts Jr., Leonard. “Being black isn’t enough reason to merit support.” *The Miami Herald*. 2 April 2004.

According to the minutes, “At that time, she thought it would raise some controversy but did not see it as causing the kind of offense and pain that it apparently caused. When the complaints started to come in on Friday morning, it was clear that the column had crossed the line in the area of cultural sensitivity.” Also according to the minutes, Williams was unwilling to attend a forum at which community members could talk with him about grievances. Because of his unwillingness to learn and the submission of a letter of complaint, Williams was fired.

Many on the USMC believed that the headline was the most inflammatory part of the column. Stewart told the committee that either she or someone on the copy desk wrote the headline for the column, not Williams. The committee made suggestions for future improvement, including requiring columnists to work as news reporters for at least one term before becoming columnists. No decisions were made.<sup>12</sup>

The USMC unanimously passed a motion to draft a letter to the administration calling for specific classes to support media education. Because of the forum regarding Williams’ column, KBVR-FM was able to gather a group of people who would have liked to produce minority programming.

In this case, Williams chose to provide commentary on stereotypes of a minority group. He used extraordinary examples to highlight fault for an entire group of people that cannot be generalized. Perhaps Williams and the editors of the Barometer did not have an awareness of what it is like to be African-

American. Because of a lack of experience or understanding, Williams was willing to generalize without specificity or exception.

*See Appendix, part VI, for Williams' original column and Appendix, part VII, for the apology written by Barometer staff members.*

## **WHITE COLUMNIST ON BLACK CULTURE, PART II**

Because of the fallout with Williams, Barometer columnist Sanjai Tripathi submitted a rebuttal column to his editors.<sup>36</sup> In an e-mail to Ragulsky, Tripathi said, "I am writing this message to inform all relevant parties that I intend to file my own complaint against the Barometer to the student media committee. I feel that my own free speech rights have been violated, and I hope and expect that you, Mr. Ragulsky, will assist me in this process."<sup>37</sup>

Tripathi believed that the Barometer staff had not performed their duties in helping Williams form a good argument, respond to controversy and craft a good headline. Tripathi also believed that the Barometer staff seemed to default blame for the column to Williams himself. In his e-mail, Tripathi argued that because The Daily Barometer is nestled in an educational setting, the editor should not have unlimited power.

Also, Tripathi had twice submitted a column that addressed Williams' column, however, his editors had censored the column. Tripathi wrote, "I can only conjecture as to the actual cause of my column's censure. I believe, either

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<sup>36</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 27 April 2004. University Student Media Committee.

<sup>37</sup> Tripathi, Sanjai. "Media Committee Complaint." E-mail to Barometer forum editor, Barometer editor in chief and Frank Ragulsky. 19 April 2004.



deliberately or unconsciously, that the false and imagined problems cited [including factual inaccuracies] are in fact rationalizations for the editor's desire to simply avoid more complaints."

In his submitted column, Tripathi wrote, "The Barometer staff implies [there is more to the issue of Williams' column than poor word choice] in their editorial apology when they refer to Williams' column and state, 'we have a policy never to print material that is discriminatory, racist or sexist.' However, as quoted in my first paragraph, they do explicitly charge [Williams] with the crime of racial insensitivity."

According to the minutes from the meeting on April 27, 2004, Tripathi met with the USMC. The committee entertained his complaint. Tripathi said that his complaint "centered on the editor's decision not to run a column that he wrote in support of David Williams' right to work at the Barometer." Tripathi told the committee that his first amendment rights had been violated. A member of the committee, Tasha Rassuli, noted that Barometer editors can and regularly do reject columns for publication. Rassuli also said that she feared making a decision in this matter, because then the committee "could be setting a precedent regarding daily editorial decisions." It was noted by the committee that a right to free speech does not necessitate a right to publication.

Also according to the minutes, "Tripathi wants the newspaper to continue to be a bastion of free speech. He believes that the committee needs to help the paper reduce the ambiguity over what is acceptable to print and asked that the committee draw up more specific guidelines for the editor. Tripathi feels too

much power rests with the editor and that some one should be guarding against abuse of that power.”

Because of the ability of the USMC to remove an editor the committee feels is abusing his or her power, the committee agreed that further micromanagement was unnecessary. “The committee unanimously agreed that there were no substantive claims to his arguments and voted to continue full support of the editor,” according to the minutes. Tripathi’s column was not printed.

### **BAROMETER COLUMNIST DIGS ON ISLAM**

In terms of formal complaints, this particular columnist was never taken all the way to the USMC. However, a column by columnist Nathanael Blake stirred controversy when it was printed on Feb. 8, 2006.<sup>38</sup>

Blake picked up on a news story that was circulating the globe. According to the Corvallis Gazette-Times, Danish newspapers published cartoons that depicted the prophet Muhammad. The cartoons caused riots, which resulted in the deaths of at least 12 people.<sup>39</sup> Blake took the opportunity to comment on the behaviors of Muslims around the globe, not only in this situation but regarding collective societies. Blake wrote, “Blatantly put, we expect Muslims to behave barbarously: Muslims die in protests over supposed insults, ho-hum.”

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<sup>38</sup> Blake, Nathanael. “The Islamic double-standard.” The Daily Barometer. 8 February 2006. Forum.

<sup>39</sup> Lystra, Tony. “Why all the ruckus?” The Corvallis Gazette-Times. 4 March 2006.

To those of Muslim faith, the depiction of the Prophet violates a basic tenant of their religion. OSU Muslim Student Association Vice President Nada Mohamed told the Gazette-Times that Muslims tend to not draw representations of animals and humans.<sup>25</sup> “We’re not supposed to draw anything with a soul,” Mohamed told the Gazette-Times. To the Islamic world, the cartoons were not “supposed insults,” as Blake explained them to be.

Letters to the editor poured in regarding Blake’s column, “The Islamic double-standard.” While some letters supported Blake’s position, others broke down his argument — which was based in out-of-context passages of the Quran. Muslim students submitted letters that printed in The Daily Barometer in the following days.<sup>40</sup>

Ferhat Muhtar, a graduate teaching assistant in industrial and manufacturing engineering, pointed out — via letter to the editor — the most offensive aspects of Blake’s column.<sup>41</sup> Blake wrote:

I would suggest to the Saudi government that if they want me to show their pedophile prophet (yes, Mohammad first had sex with his favorite wife when she was nine and he was in his fifties) any respect, they ought to make it legal to publicly practice my religion in their kingdom... Christianity grew on the blood of its martyrs; Islam grew on the blood of its enemies. The only combatant a modern Muslim martyr is sure of killing is himself; he prefers that the others be women and children... There are, to be sure,

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<sup>40</sup> Letters to the editor. The Daily Barometer. Posted 9, 10, 13 February 2006. Forum.

<sup>41</sup> Letters to the editor. The Daily Barometer. 13 February 2006. Forum.

individual Muslims who are quite nice, and even a few Muslim countries that aren't run by tyrannical kleptocrats or theocrats. But on average, Islamic nations are oppressive and poor.<sup>24</sup>

Muhtar wrote that she believes Blake is “a young person full of prejudice, I feel this at his every sentence that exactly taste like clichéd slogans memorized from some extreme resources.”<sup>27</sup> An op-ed by Aly Mohamed, president of the OSU Muslim Student Association, was published on Feb. 14, 2006.<sup>42</sup> Mohamed used his space as an opportunity to explain the misconceptions of Islamic and Muslim society that are portrayed by the media. First, Mohamed explained that there is a difference between the ideal Islamic society and the reality of Muslim societies.

Mohamed wrote, “After the attacks of Sept. 11, negative views regarding Islam have materialized rapidly and have become more concerted in their propagation. There is not room for empathy, and I know it's a Western dilemma because I have often witnessed Arab Christians stand in elegant defense of Islam. They understand the difference between the Islamic religion and a Muslim; the former can never be represented by the latter in the same way that abortion clinic bombers do not represent Christianity.”

Mohamed also addressed Blake's assumption that Islam perpetuates the oppression of women by quoting passages of the Quran other than those used by Blake. It was also noted that the MSA did not choose to protest after a comic ran that was questionable to those students as well as other OSU community

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<sup>42</sup> Mohamed, Aly. “Op-ed: Whose double standard – a response on Islam, Muslims.” The Daily Barometer. 14 February 2006. Forum.

members. The cartoon was printed in December and showed “Jesus as a mutant with wings and declaring, ‘Behold!’ the comic also showed Muhammad as a blade-wielding robot under the heading, ‘Beware!’”<sup>43</sup>

A protest was held on March 2, 2006 by the OSU Muslim Student Association. The protest was intended to protest the Danish cartoons and the column from Blake.<sup>39</sup> On March 3, 2006, a University of North Carolina graduate drove his SUV into a common area on campus, injuring six students. It was reported that the attack was meant to serve as “retribution for the treatment of Muslims around the world.”<sup>39</sup>

After the protest, Barometer Editor-in-Chief DD Bixby wrote “Out of adversity and into lemonade.”<sup>44</sup> This commentary explained that after speaking to family members about the situation at OSU, she was able to start understanding that there were stories to tell on campus. “If it was ‘their job to explain,’ it was my job to listen,” Bixby wrote. “Not just print letters and meet every conversation with the coolness First Amendment rights afford the press, but really listen and hear the people, not just the words. On Feb. 23, two weeks and a day after ‘The Islamic double-standard,’ by Nathanael Blake was published, I finally heard what the big deal was.”

Bixby described the ongoing, world-wide struggle that many Muslims are facing. While she questioned whether the Barometer was really the cause of the

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<sup>43</sup> J. Raymond Davidson. “The Great Revival of: Filthy Clean.” The Daily Barometer. 1 December 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Bixby, DD. “Out of adversity and into lemonade.” The Daily Barometer. 13 March 2006. Forum.

first “wound,” she admitted that the Barometer had “certainly [thrown] salt to make it sting.”

Bixby wrote, “Diversity at the Barometer has long been criticized, and our answer has been, and largely still is, ‘Our door is always open and there are always more stories to write.’ What I’m learning is that that door only looks open to some, no matter what we say or how many ‘We’re hiring’ advertisements are published.”

Because no formal complaint was filed to the USMC, no action was taken against Blake or any member of the Barometer staff. Bixby concluded her year-long term as editor in March. Blake used stereotypes of this minority group to find fault in the actions of leaders. He provided commentary on generalized ideas of both the religion and those who practice the religion. Perhaps Blake and the other editors of the Barometer had no experience with individual Muslim students, which would have given them a different perspective that would have been impossible to generalize.

In April 2007, Blake earned a “silver metal” as one of MSNBC commentator Keith Olbermann’s “Worst Person in the World” for a blog he wrote about the Virginia Tech shooting that occurred on April 16.<sup>45</sup> Blake, who was writing for an online media outlet called “Human Events,” wrote an opinion piece asking “Where Were the Men?” Blake challenged the men who were victims of the Virginia Tech massacre, asking why they didn’t risk their lives to stop the

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<sup>45</sup> Albright, Mary Ann. “OSU alumnus named ‘Worst Person in the World’ silver medalist.” *The Corvallis Gazette-Times*. 19 April 2007. News.

shooter. *See Appendix, part VIII, for Blake's column and Appendix, part IV, for an opinion piece issued by Bixby.*

### **DPD ACCELERATION: QUICKER FIXES**

On May 19, 2006, the USMC heard a proposal from Lani Roberts and Jun Xing, the director of the DPD program.<sup>46</sup> According to the USMC minutes of that meeting, the proposal, brought by Roberts and professor of women studies Janet Lee, was to accelerate the already-existing DPD requirement. The proposal was to require students to complete a DPD course by the end of the second term of their employment at Student Media. The original requirement — that students complete a DPD course or the ALS ethics course taught by Robinson and Ragulsky within the first year of their employment — was established after the Barometer printed a column by Andrew Hinkleman. This column was found to be sexist and offensive, according to Ragulsky.<sup>1</sup>

Because of an incident regarding representation of Muslim students in the Barometer that occurred during winter 2006, Lee and Roberts requested a meeting with Student Media staff and then an audience with the USMC. According to Student Media Office Manager Lois Lessert, more than 90 percent of students had completed the DPD requirement. According to Ragulsky, some transfer students had not completed the requirement because it was not enforced. Also, many freshmen had not completed the requirement.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 19 May 2006.

According to the minutes of the meeting, “Roberts noted that her role is as a spokesperson for those who are alienated by things published in the Barometer. Students go to Lani and ask for her help and support. The staff of the paper needs to gain a perspective that helps them understand their privilege. Roberts believes that taking a DPD class can greatly enhance that understanding.”

During the meeting, Ragulsky raised the subject of the David Williams column that printed on April 9, 2004. The column, which proved controversial and insensitive, was written by a student who had taken three DPD courses. According to the minutes, “Ragulsky wondered if the DPD courses fill the educational void of such classes as media ethics and courses on the influence of media in American culture.”

According to the minutes, “Robinson said that because all of the controversies have involved students who have taken one or more DPD course[s], she’s not sure that moving up the requirement is the best solution to the problem and would like to look at other opportunities to help students increase their cultural awareness.” USMC voting member Dennis Dugan suggested that the student group Team Liberation tailor training for Student Media. USMC voting member Matt Lewis mentioned that Barometer editor Andrew Nealon was already in the process of developing a diversity training program.

USMC voting faculty member Rick Brand was cited as saying, “...one of the most powerful tools we have for learning are our mistakes, documenting incidents of the years and sharing them with the future staff could help barometer editors draw on the legacy of their predecessors.” The committee unanimously



voted to postpone the decision on the DPD requirement until the June 9, 2006 meeting. The USMC decided on June 9, 2006 to not accelerate the DPD requirement.<sup>47</sup> The committee chose to leave the requirement as it was previously — requiring students to take a DPD course by the end of two registration periods after hiring. However, the committee decided to amend the requirement to apply to all student employees of Student Media. The committee also amended the requirement to not include summer term as part of the required two terms.

The policy is as follows (as of February 2009):

All students employed by any branch of student media are required to enroll and complete a DPD course no later than two registration periods after their hiring. This excludes summer. Upon completion of a DPD course, the student is responsible to present proof of completion to the relevant manager/editor and adviser. Failure to follow this guideline is grounds for termination.

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<sup>47</sup> University Student Media Committee. Minutes for group meeting / Oregon State University. 9 June 2006.

## OTHER CASE STUDIES

Media outlets are constantly offending and are constantly making missteps in terms of judgment. Headlines, photos, photo manipulation and cartoons are the source of criticism for newspapers and media outlets all over the country.

### DOOR-TO-DOOR AT MONTCLAIR

In its very own “teachable moment,” The Montclairion – student newspaper at Montclair State in New Jersey – printed a cartoon that used the “N” word in reference to presidential candidate Barack Obama.<sup>48</sup>

The cartoon, printed in the Oct. 23, 2008 edition, was drawn by syndicated professional (non-student) cartoonist Keith Knight. This cartoon was also printed in the Arizona Daily Wildcat. However, the Wildcat was the only other paper to print this cartoon. According to The Montclairion, “The cartoon is part of the The K Chronicles written by Keith Knight, a Black cartoonist. It ‘is a weekly, semi-autobiographical comic strip based on the life of cartoonist/rapper/ne'er-do-well Keith Knight,’ according to his official website.”<sup>49</sup>

The K Chronicals are provided to The Montclairion by MCT Campus, a service that provides cartoons, graphics and crossword puzzles to campus newspapers nationwide.<sup>50</sup> Editor-in-Chief Bobby Melok said that the staff of The

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<sup>48</sup> Galant, Debbie. “Oops! Montclairion Apologizes for “N” Word in Cartoon.” Baristanet. <[http://www.baristanet.com/2008/10/oops\\_montclairion\\_apologizes\\_f.php](http://www.baristanet.com/2008/10/oops_montclairion_apologizes_f.php)>. 29 October 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Cattafi, Kristie. “Syndicated Comic in The Montclarion Causes Controversy.” The Montclairion. 6 November 2008. News.

<sup>50</sup> Melok, Bobby. “Statement from The Montclairion.” The Montclairion. 28 October 2008. Opinion.

Montclairion relied on the judgement of editors at MCT Campus, rather than exercising their own judgment.

It is never The Montclarion's intention to offend its readership, and we sincerely apologize to all who were upset with this comic. The Montclarion recognizes and appreciates the campus community's diversity and strives to provide a newspaper that respects and honors all viewpoints. Action has been taken to ensure that all content from this point forward will be sensitive to the diversity of The Montclarion's readership.<sup>50</sup>

On Oct. 30 and 31, 2008, the Organization of Students for African Unity held a forum for students to discuss the cartoon.<sup>51</sup> The event was host to 15 students, who were addressed by the director of the Center for Student Involvement and the community director of Bohn Hall.

Production Editor Eric Strickland was responsible for placing the cartoon on the page. He told his own newspaper that he didn't take time to review the cartoon because it was from a trusted source that had been syndicated before by The Montclarion. "Students said they were shocked and confused by the comic that 'everyone was offended by,' remarked one student. Students learned of the comic from a third person source or through Facebook the Monday following the Oct. 23 issue."<sup>51</sup>

The Editor-in-Chief of The Montclairion offered an apology on Oct. 28 — which was e-mailed to every student at Montclair State. "Action has been taken to

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<sup>51</sup> Zygadlo, Jackie. "Students Discuss Syndicated Comic at Forum." The Montclairion. 6 November 2008. News.

ensure that all content from this point forward will be sensitive to the diversity of The Montclarion's readership.”<sup>47</sup>

According to The Montclairion, students on campus have been the victims of hate crimes. These crimes have included, but are not limited to, swastikas and the “N” word written on the dorm-room doors of Black students. The Newman Catholic Center also found a condom on a doorknob after a discussion was conducted on site.<sup>52</sup> According to Montclair State University, the undergraduate population consists of 20 percent Hispanic, 10 percent African-American and 6 percent Asian. There are more than 13,000 undergraduate students at MSU, as of Nov. 2, 2007.<sup>53</sup>

This seemingly simple mistake, of not reviewing the cartoon before it went to press, is a common example of how media organizations cause offense without intention. The production editor grabbed a cartoon off of a wire service and placed in on the newspaper page. Training a staff member may not prepare a newspaper or media entity to fix these types of mistakes. Instead, tired and busy student journalists must be warned to take their time and review the material that is printed in their paper. The inappropriate use of the “N” word in this cartoon may not have been prevented, even if the production editor had read it. This is where training and understanding of systems of oppression come in. *See Appendix, part X, for cartoon.*

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<sup>52</sup> Montclairion staff, “Break Down the Walls.” The Montclairion. 13 November 2008.

<sup>53</sup> “MSU Statistics.” Montclair State University. <<http://www.montclair.edu/statistics/index.html>> 2 November 2007.

## ASIAN ACCEPTANCE AT PRINCETON

Even Ivy League schools can have their share of controversy. The Daily Princetonian, the newspaper of Princeton University, printed a “joke issue” on Jan. 17, 2007.<sup>54</sup> One column in particular sparked campus discussion as well as an apology from Daily Princetonian editors. The column, titled “Princeton University is racist against me, I mean, non-whites,” was a parody of real student Jian Li, who had entered his first year at Yale. Li had applied to Princeton but was denied. Li has issued a federal civil rights complaint against Princeton.<sup>55</sup>

The column used broken English and Asian stereotypes to poke fun at this student. For example: “Hi Princeton! Remember me? I so good at math and science. Perfect 2400 SAT score. Ring bells?” The column continued, “Just in cases, let me refresh your memories. I the super smart Asian. Princeton the super dumb college, not accept me. I get angry and file a federal civil rights complaint against Princeton for rejecting my application for admission. They rejected me because I'm not blond or blue eyed and my name doesn't end with Ockefeller IV or Osworth.”<sup>54</sup>

On Jan. 19, The Princetonian issued a statement that explained the column was written to examine racism.<sup>56</sup> The editor wrote that the paper was trying to

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<sup>54</sup> Daily Princetonian Contributor: Guest Columnist. “Princeton University is racist against me, I mean, non-whites.” The Daily Princetonian. <<http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2007/01/17/17109/>>. 17 January 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Tartan Board. “Princeton newspaper’s ‘joke’ issue offends.” The Tartan, Carnegie Mellon University. <<http://www.thetartan.org/2007/1/29/forum/yummyboarded>>. 29 January 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Daily Princetonian Staff. “Editors’ note.” The Daily Princetonian. <<http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2007/01/19/17133/>>. 19 January 2007.

“lampoon racism by showing it at its most outrageous. We embraced racist language in order to strangle it.”

The editorial board was troubled by the accusation of racism. “The column in question was penned by a diverse group of students — including several Asians on our senior editorial staff — who had no malicious intent. Given our purpose, we are deeply troubled by and reject the allegation of racism.”

The editorial board invited the Princeton community to comment on the joke piece as well as participate in constructive debate on the topic. Asian-American Student Association Co-President Katherine Chiang was quoted as saying, “The article was completely distasteful. Even in the context of a joke, it made reference to so many stereotypes such as yellow fever or eating dogs. What really pushed us over the edge is that we don't speak like that, and we don't write like that.”<sup>57</sup>

The AASA and the Chinese Student Association made it clear that the behavior of The Daily Princetonian was unacceptable and would not be tolerated in the future. The vice president of the Taiwanese-American Student Association felt differently. He “could see how students could be offended, but the authors' intent wasn't clear.” If they had sent it through the Triangle Club before publishing [it], it might have been funnier ... but it seemed to be more of a stereotype of stereotypes.”<sup>10</sup>

Letters to the editor poured in. Princeton alumnus Andre Liu called the mockery a “Real bad call.” They continued, “What puzzles me the most is, why

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<sup>57</sup> Shapiro, Mike. “Joke op-ed sparks ire, controversy.” The Daily Princetonian. <<http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2007/01/19/17134/>>. 19 January 2007. News.

would you guys risk the reputation of The 'Prince' for some kind of sad attempt at humor? ... Anyways, thanks for making me feel a little less proud to be a Princetonian.”<sup>58</sup>

The editorial board of The Daily Princetonian and two students representing the Asian-American Student Association met to organize a forum that would allow community members to discuss the op-ed in question.<sup>59</sup> The Princetonian staff expressed appreciation that members of the community would come together to discuss the concerns.

This incident, among many other controversial issues at America’s Ivy League universities, has been written up at Ivygate.com. Blogger Chris Beam had this to say: “The best part is, the people responsible for running it — the outgoing board, [Chanakya] Sethi included — won’t even have to deal with the (still hypothetical) fallout. The hate mail, the meetings with deans, the sensitivity training seminars — all will fall squarely on the shoulders of their successors. Thanks, fellas. It’s been fun. Don’t let the picketers hit you in the ass on the way out.”<sup>60</sup>

As of March 2009, there are still more than 300 members in a group called “Dear Daily Prince, This Isn’t Funny, It’s Racist” on Facebook.com. At Princeton, 35 percent of the 2009 graduating class is described as “minority.”

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<sup>58</sup> Liu, Andre. “Letters to the editor.” The Daily Princetonian. < <http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2007/01/19/17127/>>. 19 January 2007. Opinion.

<sup>59</sup> Chiang, Katherine et. al. “A message to our community.” The Daily Princetonian. < <http://www.dailyprincetonian.com/2007/01/22/17158/>> 22 January 2007.

<sup>60</sup> Beam, Chris. “Princetonian ‘Joke’ Issue Shows Knack for Subtle Social Commentary.” IvyGate. < <http://www.ivygateblog.com/2007/01/princetonian-joke-issue-shows-knack-for-subtle-social-commentary/>> 17 January 2007.

“Reflecting the University's efforts to attract a broader pool of applicants, the number of minority students in the class of 2009 rose to a record 433, or 35 percent of the class, from 321, or 27 percent, in the class of 2008,” according to university data from 2005.<sup>61</sup>

Writing April Fool’s Day and joke articles are frequently the cause of stress for student newspapers across the country. The Daily Princetonian took a newsworthy issue and attempted to make a mockery of an Asian-American student at Yale. Because of the use of predominate Asian stereotypes, this article hit a nerve. The Daily Princetonian attempted to brush off its mistake, saying that members of the editorial board are Asian-American and that they had been accepting of the article. However, even though one Asian-American student is accepting of the joke, the mistake made by Princetonian editors was the liberal use of mocking stereotypes to poke fun at an Asian-American man. *See Appendix, part XI, for text of joke article.*

## **NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS SEEK EQUALITY AT DARTMOUTH**

The Dartmouth Review – a conservative, non-daily campus publication at Dartmouth University in Boston – was the center of controversy in 2006 when the editorial board chose to illustrate tensions among Native American students with a drawing of an Indian scalper.

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<sup>61</sup> Cliatt, Chris. “Class of 2009 reflects success of Princeton's diversity efforts.” Princeton University. < <http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S12/71/57E37/index.xml?section=newsreleases>> 20 September 2005.



The illustration was described as an “Indian warrior brandishing a scalp.” The words “The Natives are Getting Restless” accompanied the image. On Nov. 29, the Dartmouth community gathered to rally support for the Native American population at the college. According to The Associated Press, The paper is not affiliated with the college and has “had an adversarial history with minorities.”<sup>62</sup>

The Dartmouth Review’s cover “spurred an impromptu meeting Tuesday [Nov. 29] night of about 200 students to plan the rally. Students said the event was also a response to other offensive acts against Native American students and a Nov. 27 episode in which three non-students drove through campus shouting racial slurs at black undergraduates.”<sup>63</sup>

More than 600 students, faculty and staff attended the rally.<sup>64</sup> According to CampusProgress, “When asked if he had any regrets about the issue, [Review editor-in-chief Daniel] Linsalata stood by the content, but said ‘I would try to contextualize [the cover] so that fewer people would be taking it literally... The cover was an ironic tongue-in-cheek comment on the reaction from the [Native Americans of Dartmouth group]. The important thing that people missed is that this wasn’t an attack on Native Americans as a whole, just the leadership. I really don’t think that NADs is the voice of every Native at Dartmouth. I’ve had a lot of

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<sup>62</sup> Wang, Beverley. “Dartmouth rallies for minority students.” The Associated Press. 29 November 2006. Accessed via <[http://www.boston.com/news/local/new\\_hampshire/articles/2006/11/29/dartmouth\\_rallies\\_for\\_minority\\_students/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/new_hampshire/articles/2006/11/29/dartmouth_rallies_for_minority_students/)> on 9 March 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Lowe, Allie. “Hundreds converge on Dartmouth Hall for rally.” The Dartmouth. 30 November 2006. <<http://thedartmouth.com/2006/11/30/news/hundreds/>>.

<sup>64</sup> Trucker, Nichola. “Dartmouth Reviewed.” Campus Progress. 1 December 2006. <<http://www.campusprogress.org/features/1308/dartmouth-reviewed/index.php>>.

Natives [e-mail] me, and say, ‘I hear what you’re saying and the NADs are not a group I believe in.’”<sup>62</sup>

In context, the image of an Indian warrior holding a scalp is yet another issue at Dartmouth University – the former home of the Indians. In a Nov. 29 story, the Associated Press said that Dartmouth graduated less than 20 Native-Americans during its first 200 years. “The same time its catalog of Indian mascots – featured on canes, sports uniforms, even songs and art depicting natives lapping rum – increased.”<sup>62</sup>

Dartmouth’s history as a college founded to educate the youth of northeastern Native American tribes makes these recent representations and actions towards Native Americans particularly contentious. Students and alumni continue to be divided on how to reconcile the message of Dartmouth’s founding with the unofficial Native American mascot still in use by some today. The mascot’s detractors see the symbol as a stereotypical misappropriation of Native American culture that engenders inaccurate understanding of an insensitive behavior. Supporters of the old mascot argue that tradition should not be overshadowed by an attempt to placate the modern-day feelings of a small minority.<sup>64</sup>

Most recently, a fraternity printed T-shirts showing the College of the Holy Cross mascot performing sex acts on an Indian, meant to represent Dartmouth. On Columbus Day, a group of fraternity pledges disrupted a Native

drumming event.<sup>65</sup> The Dartmouth Review front page was created in response to the Nov. 20 edition of The Dartmouth — the school-sponsored student newspaper — the Native American Council created a two-page spread that asked “the perpetrators ... to meet in open dialogue...” regarding the events listed above. That same day, University President James Wright also issued a statement that explained Dartmouth’s troubled history of mascots as well as apologized for racist acts committed against students.<sup>66</sup> The review illustration was printed on Nov. 28.

All of these events, including a hockey game against the University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux, occurred during a term where two diversity-related dean positions were left vacant. The two empty positions were the dean of the Office of Pluralism and Leadership and the special assistant to the president for institutional diversity and equity.<sup>67</sup> On Dec. 3, Linsalata offered an explanatory statement regarding the actions of the editorial board. Linsalata explains that the text and image in the Nov. 28 edition of The Dartmouth Review was meant to criticize the behavior and actions of the NAD group regarding the previous incidents on campus, rather than Native Americans at large.

“The accusation, then, that this cover was maliciously designed as a wantonly racist attack on upon Native Americans is patently false. All the same, I regret that it could have been construed as such, to the detriment of discussion of

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65 Rolo, Mark Anthony. “Damage control at Dartmouth: anti-American Indian incidents at the Ivy League college create unease for Native students.” Bnet.com. <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0WMX/is\\_23\\_23/ai\\_n17114734](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WMX/is_23_23/ai_n17114734)>.

66 Wright, James. “Letter to Dartmouth Students from President James Wright.” 20 November 2006. <<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~presoff/speeches/2006/112006.html>>.

67 Wool, Hillary. “Racial tensions mar Fall term, activists respond.” The Dartmouth. 4 January 2007. <<http://thedartmouth.com/2007/01/04/news/racial/>>.

the content of the issue,” Linsalata continued.<sup>68</sup> On Dec. 7, the editors of The Dartmouth Review offered an attempt at an apology. They said that they regretted people were offended.<sup>69</sup> A few days after publication (Nov. 28) other editors of The Dartmouth Review offered an “outright apology” for the cover. According to The Dartmouth, they stated that it “distracted from the serious journalism The Dartmouth Review has been publishing, not least in the articles that came after the cover.” On Monday, Jan. 5, 2007, The Dartmouth Review President Kevin Hudack — class of ’07 — announced that he would resign from his post. According to sources close to the Review, the resignation came as a result of the Nov. 28 cover.<sup>70</sup>

On Oct. 31, 2007, the University of North Dakota (Fighting Sioux) and the National Collegiate Athletics Association struck a deal for UND to either secure permission for or stop using the Sioux as a mascot. UND was given three years to solicit permission from the Spirit Lake and Standing Rock Sioux Tribes.<sup>71</sup>

The use of this cartoon-like image of an Indian Scalper was in poor taste because of the very negative connotations and associations associated. The NAD, by using this image, was suddenly compared to a proud, cartoon-like scalper. This

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<sup>68</sup> Malchow, Joe. “The Cover Story.” Joe’s Dartblog. 3 December 2006. <<http://www.dartblog.com/data/006699.html>>.

<sup>69</sup> Beam, Chirs. “Dartmouth Review Offers Peace Pipe – It’s Fine, We’re All Friends Now.” IvyGate. <<http://www.ivygateblog.com/2006/12/dartmouth-review-offers-peace-pipe-its-fine-were-all-friends-now/>>.

<sup>70</sup> Glickman, Laura. “President of Review steps down over cover.” The Dartmouth. 11 January 2007. <<http://thedartmouth.com/2007/01/11/news/president/>>.

<sup>71</sup> Bergengruen, Vera. “UND and NCAA strike mascot deal.” The Dartmouth. 31 October 2007. <<http://thedartmouth.com/2007/10/31/news/und/>>.

image played on stereotype of Native Americans from the days of The Oregon Trail. A student group, the NAD, does not deserve to be compared to the early stereotype of Native Americans – a vicious, violent group that was characterized as uncivilized. *See Appendix, part XII, for cover image.*

## EXAMINING TRAINING NEEDS

### PERSONAL THOUGHTS

While researching this project, it became apparent that it is not possible to train students for all of the possible scenarios they may encounter. The solution, it seems, is ongoing education and training. If one training program cannot encompass all of the topics students need to be prepared for what they may face, that means constant education is necessary.

First and foremost, I believe that understanding the history of the publication where employed is important for student journalists. While looking at “Blackout Reser” and the complaints filed to the University Department of Student Media, I realized that I would have responded differently to those who were offended by the Barometer’s black face paint illustration had I understood what transpired only a few years before.

When David Williams published “A message from a white male to the African American community” in 2004, I was in high school and had never practiced journalism in any form. When Nathanael Blake published “The Islamic double-standard” in 2006, I was a beginning reporter and barely took notice of the protests and the issues that were buried at the heart of this situation.

I believe that if you understand the cause-and-effect relationship between the behavior of a media entity and its audience, you can navigate those relationships more effectively. If you have no understanding of which content can anger, upset or frustrate an audience, you cannot predict that audience’s behavior

toward you. This understanding is very location specific and, in the professional world, is learned by experience.

Secondly, it is critical that students understand the history of bias, intentional and unintentional, in this country and worldwide, including the associated images. I believe continuing education in this subject is important core curriculum for the university, though it can be supplemented in the context of the OSU Department of Student Media.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

In an attempt to gather information from survey participants regarding training opportunities in the OSU Department of Student Media, two questions were added to the survey that was circulated to 26 potential participants. Both questions were specific to individuals who have worked in the OSU Department of Student Media. Of the 10 surveys returned, five participants work or have worked in the department.

The first question asked, “If you are a member of Student Media, what kind of training could you or your staff benefit from? What subjects would be useful?” Three survey participants of five answered the first and second question. Participant no. 1 believed that there was need for Difference, Power and Discrimination Courses “that are actually focused in areas of minority issues, such as anthropology courses, ethnic studies courses, ethics of philosophy...” One DPD course is required within a student’s first year of employment in Student Media and is also part of graduation requirements. Participant no. 4 believed that

continual training is needed. The participant suggested that the continual training be in “various issues of diversity... Bringing in good speakers from the media profession to talk about different issues of diversity is good, but we also probably have resources on campus that could speak to issues of diversity.” The participant also suggested that Team Liberation — a Student Leadership and Involvement group that specializes in the facilitation of human resources — could host workshop for media staff at which editors and managers could talk about issues of diversity and discuss them with their respective staff members. Participant no. 7 believed that “historical review of controversies and looking at issues that have happened in the commercial would be worthwhile.” They also suggested creating a checklist of factors for editors and managers to run through before printing or broadcasting a story, such as “Does it have a racial/diversity component? If so, how will it be handled to avoid offense like this and for all stories, how do we gather diversion sources to improve the value of our stories?”

The survey also asked, “If your staff were to participate in a diversity-related training program, what elements would you expect?” The second question yielded results about the expectations of a successful Student Media program. Participant no. 1 expected that all incidents of “historical and worldwide mistreatment of virtually any person who is not Caucasian or chooses to worship in ways that differ from the mainstream” be included in a training program. Nonspecifically, the participant said that issues relating to cultures that exist outside of the majority culture should be included. Participant no. 4 responded, “I don’t think you can have just one diversity-related training program. There are



many topics that could/should be discussed.” This participant also stressed the importance of scenarios and discussions in small groups. Participant no. 7 wrote that a diversity-related training program should build awareness of white privilege, “different perspectives,” “awareness of hidden diversity” and the tools to gather news from diverse and varied sources.

The survey participants from the OSU Department of Student Media generally agreed that students need to build an understanding of cultures outside of the dominant, white culture of the United States. Diversity of news sources as well as the staff that comprises the newsroom is also important, according to survey participants.

## CONCLUSIONS

### SUMMARY

From the information that has been gathered in this document, it has become clear to me that taking a look back at history — in more than one way — is key to the success of OSU’s Student Media leaders. The OSU students who are placed in leadership positions at the OSU Department of Student Media need an understanding of at least two types of history to be effective in their positions. First, understanding the history of this nation and the systems of oppression that dominate here is critical. Secondly, it is important to understand the types of offense that the OSU publications and media have caused on this campus. The section “Complaints filed to the University Student Media Committee” contains this type of information. As I was researching this project, it became clear to me that I would have responded differently as the editor of The Daily Barometer had I understood or even vaguely recollected some of this information. My downfall came from my complete ignorance of both of these topics. After digesting the information in the section mentioned above as well as “Other case studies,” I started to build an understanding of why “Blackout Reser” happened the way that it did.

For me, “Blackout Reser” was an emotional blur. This project gave me an opportunity to help the university understand what transpired in a very detailed way. From the survey, it became clear that my sample of participants is as fractured as the rest of the university’s students were during the aftermath of “Blackout Reser” — some were offended and some were not. As a whole, the

survey participants undoubtedly understood that there was an issue with what was printed on the front page of the Barometer on Oct. 5, 2007.

However, this issue reaches farther than one front page of a campus newspaper. The survey participants agree that these attitudes are widespread on OSU's campus. While time was spent talking to Barometer staff members, how many of the general campus population were included in the lessons that followed "Blackout Reser?" It became clear that the Barometer took too long to respond appropriately. The Barometer staff, including and perhaps lead by myself, spent too much time being defensive about our mistake. We waited too long to apologize. We spent too much time trying to understand. Some survey participants described an atmosphere — in meetings and group sessions — that was not a positive learning environment.

It is not a surprise to me that our campus community responded as it did, as I now know the history of OSU's Department of Student Media. In so many ways, education is the answer. George Bernard Shaw said, "If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience."

How do we keep history from repeating on this campus? Though my hope was to create the answer to all of our problems, it became clear to me that this is impossible. It takes constant education, attention and understanding. The history, which can be easily assembled in this document, is only a first step. The students of Student Media have proven that they have no understanding of their own institution's history, let alone the history of their state or nation. I have

proven that as a sophomore in college, I had no understanding of events that had transpired in my exact location only a year prior to “Blackout Reser.”

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

I strongly encourage the members of the OSU Department of Student Media to continue documenting large-scale media effects caused by content produced in the department. I believe that students, who enter fresh and exit in four to five years, will benefit from a long-term, written institutional memory. This institutional memory should be readily available and easy to explore via the Internet. Students should be made aware of these types of resources as they become available.

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## APPENDIX

### I. Andrew Hinkelman article

Published: Monday, Oct. 25, 1999

Author: Andrew Hinkelman

Publication: The Daily Barometer

#### **Big win indicative of big things to come**

This wasn't just a convincing win, it was a beating, a whipping, a thrashing. It was such devastating demolition, such a convincing assault and batter that the Bruins now know what it feels like to be the Pac-10's bitch.

It's a feeling the Beavers have felt all too often over the last three decades, and the run-away 55-7 win over a hapless, inept UCLA team is proof-positive of what Oregon State is capable of when they don't beat themselves.

Seven first-half possessions resulted in six Beaver touchdowns. Seven Bruin drives in the first half netted UCLA four punts, one interception, a touchdown and the end of the half.

When the two teams headed for their respective locker rooms at the intermissions – OSU to celebrate, UCLA to apply more Vaseline – the Beavers had 42 points and 355 yards of offense, and the realization that they are not a good football team and do not have to make plans for a 12<sup>th</sup> game this year.

But while the payback is nice, it doesn't come close to the satisfaction of knowing that the Beavers can pour it on anyone, anytime. I have been convinced for some time and remain so today: No one can stop this offense. As long as the players make their plays, they will put points on the board, and can outscore anybody.

So here it is, my boldest prediction yet: Barring any major injury (and we'll know more about Ken Simonton's condition tomorrow), Oregon State will win its final four games, highlighted by a shutout vs. California, and punctuated by an exciting – but convincing – win over Oregon in the Civil War. OSU will have their first winning season since 1970 and will go to a Rose Bowl for the first time since the following the 1964 season.

We are on the cusp of Beaver football history. The time is now, and we are here to witness it.

## **II. Andrew Hinkelman apology**

Published: Tuesday, Oct. 26, 1999

Author: Andrew Hinkelman

Publication: The Daily Barometer

### **There are no excuses for yesterday's remark**

Yesterday a phrase ran in my column that should never have been there. The remark, characterizing UCLA's current standing in the Pac-10, was written initially for its humorous content, meant for a private chuckle.

But as the evening wore on, I lost track of its place in the column and finished writing the remainder of the piece.

When the offending line was discovered by a copy editor later, I decided to be lazy and told the copy editor that it had been approved by the editor-in-chief, and was OK to run.

The responsibility for the phrase appearing in yesterday's paper rests solely on my shoulders, and I humbly apologize for it being there.

It really doesn't bother me that people might have been offended by that line. Nor am I concerned that some people disagree with me, which is why I have never retracted anything before.

But in this instance, I made a mistakes in keeping something in my column that I had promised to my colleagues would not be there, then I lied to keep it in because it was late and I wanted to go home, plain and simple.

My behavior was inexcusable. I betrayed the trust and confidence my friends and coworkers have placed in me, and I again apologize to all parties involved.

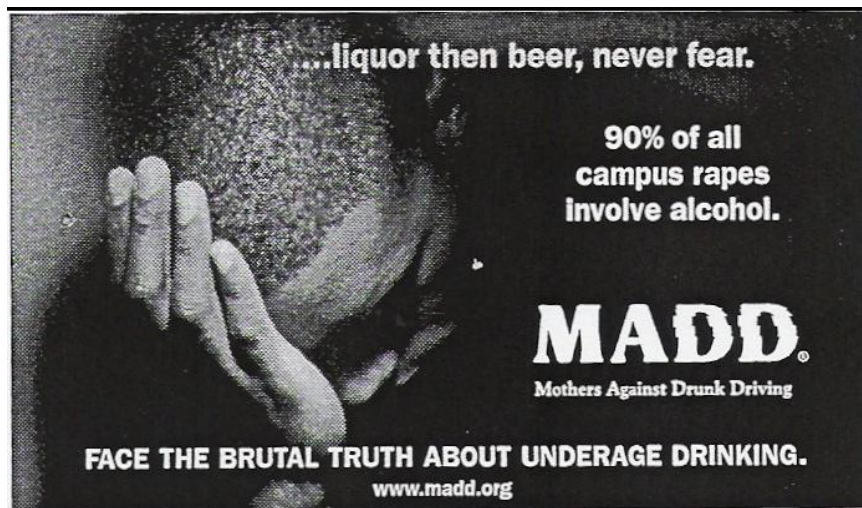
The opinions expressed in this sports commentary are those of Andrew Hinkelman, assistant sports editor for The Daily Barometer. Send questions or comments to <baro.sports@studentmedia.orst.edu>.

**III. MADD advertisement**

Published: Friday, Sept. 29, 2000

Author: Mothers against Drunk Driving

Publication: The Daily Barometer



**IV. Yahoo! Messenger advertisement**

Published: Sept. 2000

Author: Yahoo! Messenger

Publication: The Daily Barometer

Stoney -  
get over here quick.  
She's about to take  
her top off.  
-Bob

Yahoo! messenger: The only people who see it are the people you're talking to. messenger.yahoo

## V. ALS199 course syllabus

Published: Winter 2001

Authors: Frank Ragulsky and Ann Robinson

Winter 2001

ALS 199: Ethics, Culture and Influence: The role of media in America

Credit: 2 CRN: 26199 Class Time: Friday, 2:00-3:40 p.m. Class Location: Ed Hall 201

Instructors:

Ann Robinson  
MU East 218  
737-4604

Frank Ragulsky  
MU East 118  
737-4615

[ann.robinson@studentmedia.orst.edu](mailto:ann.robinson@studentmedia.orst.edu)

[frank.ragulsky@studentmedia.orst.edu](mailto:frank.ragulsky@studentmedia.orst.edu)

Jan. 12 Introduction: Media Influence in America. Where does the college media fit in? How are OSU's newspaper, yearbook, TV, radio and literary magazine perceived on campus. Guest presenter, Phyllis Lee, OSU Director Multicultural Affairs.

Jan. 19 The importance of Diversity and Contributing to the campus climate. Guest presenter, Phyllis Lee, OSU Director Multicultural Affairs.

Jan. 26 Altering image/changing reality--photo/video/audio manipulation. Do news anchors need to "sound white". Is it OK to create an image for myself that does not accurately reflect who I am?

Feb. 2 Citizen voice. What is the role of advisory boards, letters to the editor and listener/viewer comments? Should we take them seriously? Guest presenter, Rob Prieue, editor *Corvallis Gazette Times*

Feb. 9 Who did or said that? Using diverse sources and characters, spotlighting diverse individuals for personality profiles, and knowing how to describe a victim or criminal without furthering stereotypes. Can you be brief and creative without promoting a stereotype?

Feb. 16 Creative writing/productions that offend, push buttons and stereotype. What is the impact? Where does the responsibility lie? Is it possible to be funny without offending? Is it ever O.K. to offend to be funny? (Guest from Will Vinton or Ryan/Mitchell productions)

Feb. 23 No Class (critical issues summit)\* (students should attend the Feb. 22 or 23 daylong critical issues summit or a discussion/presentation on issues of race or diversity and write a one page summary of their experiences.)

March 2 Legal issues for media around libel, slander, copyright, incitement, etc.

March 9 The ethics of the media from news coverage to music programming. When does help from a company or source become payola? Dave Weinkauff, General Manager KVAL TV

March 16 The power of the media.

Guest speakers will present information to promote class discussion. Students will keep a weekly journal and will be expected to bring media examples to class that illustrate both the positive and negative impact of media on controversial and sensitive topics. (see course description)

ALS 199, Ethics, Culture and Influence: The Role of media in America  
 F 2:00-3:50 instructors Ann Robinson 737-4604, Frank Ragulsky 737-4615  
 2 Credits, graded

The course is required for all students participating in student media. The purpose of ALS 199 is to introduce the student to the ethical and cultural issues involved in publication and broadcast and to help students develop basic skills needed to make decisions regarding content and approach to materials they produce. A basic knowledge of current events is needed in order for students to successfully complete the course.

Heavy emphasis will be put on the process of gathering and conveying information accurately, understanding audience and the influence of the media. Grades will be based on successful completion of assignments in a timely manner and on in class participation.

**Course Requirements.** Students will keep a weekly journal and complete a final project (publication or broadcast) explaining the role of the media in ethical and cultural issues.

*Journal assignments*

For each of the topic areas listed below, compare and contrast programs or articles from different publications and stations. Comparisons should look at stereotyping, descriptions and portrayals, gender roles, subject matter selected, audience for which the material is geared and the role of production additions (laugh tracks, graphics, quote boxes, etc.). Are any of the pieces being evaluated potentially offensive? In what way? To whom? Could the same topics be handled in a different but effective way to avoid producing offense? If so, how? (attach copies of the newspaper and magazine pieces analyzed)

Week 1: Newspaper news articles (3 newspapers, 1 national & 1 local article from each)

Week 2: Music (3 radio stations, for a minimum of three songs during the day and three after 10 p.m. on each station, include DJ comments in your evaluations).

Week 3: Advertising & photographs examples of each (2 newspaper, 2 magazine, 2 TV, 2 radio). TV sitcoms (4, ½ hour sitcoms (at least 1 with ethnic minority lead character) select from a minimum of 3 networks.

Week 4: Newspaper editorial page (2 newspapers: editorial, cartoons & letters to editor)

Week 5: Magazine (3 different types of magazine, 1 "news" article and 1 "feature" article from each)

Week 6: Week 7: TV "news" (1 local newscast, 1 network newscast, 1 network magazine show)

Week 8: Sports (newspaper 1 feature, 1 breaking news article & 1 column, 1 TV sports segment in newscast, 1 TV sports show)

Week 9: TV drama (3 one hour TV dramas on different networks, at least 1 should have ethnic minority lead characters)

Week 10: "Real TV" (3 programs depicting non-actors in "contrived" situations, may include one game show, 1 talk day-time show)

Final Project: One of the following: An article for a publication about media ethics and issues of diversity. Production of a video or audio segment



## VI. Williams column

Published: April 9, 2004

Publication: The Daily Barometer

### **A message from a white male to the African American community**

Twenty-four percent of African Americans are in poverty, which is double the official national average in 2002. At current levels of incarceration, newborn black males in the United States have greater than a 1-in-4 chance of going to prison in their life times. Of those who are HIV positive, or have AIDS, 43 percent are black. If an African American does not graduate high school, he or she has less than a six percent chance of earning more than \$15,000 a year by age 25.

Get the picture? Think African Americans face tougher and more threatening obstacles than the rest of the population?

Even though I hate to be the one to point out a problem without giving much pause as to a course of action, this circumstance is the exception. I am not about to dive into how to tackle step 954 when we haven't even addressed step four yet.

For some time now I have felt compelled to voice my opinion as to why African Americans have not made the leaps and bounds necessary to close racial disparity gaps.

One would think that with the strong presence of talented blacks in government, sports and entertainment, this minority base would have a slew of noble and moral leaders. However, especially as of late, this has not been the case.

Singer Robert Kelly stands accused of child pornography by Chicago authorities. The primary evidence in the case is a videotape that allegedly shows him having sex with an underage girl.

While Kelly rightfully has the presumption of innocence, I don't think he is the type of person that deserves praise.

During the recent Soul Train Music Awards, Kelly received trophies and applause. While being in serious trouble for a sick crime, his music continues to earn him millions of dollars in sales. In fact, in January he was nominated for an NAACP Image Award.

In my eyes, that's the equivalent of nominating Bob Dole to host the Oscars -- it just wouldn't make much sense.

I understand the door to O.J. Simpson's murder case has been closed for some time; however, it puzzled me when black leaders made it a cause.

Consider the fact that Simpson never really had strong ties with the African American community, especially in the years leading up to the murders of his former wife and Ronald Goldman. Bear in mind, too, the overwhelming and irrefutable (I guess not to those brilliant jurors) amount of evidence of his guilt.

I don't want you, the reader, to walk away from this column feeling as though I am picking on the worst the African American community has to offer. There are thousands upon thousands of successful and upstanding black role models.

It's not the fact that black people are doing bad things that hurt them collectively as a group. White people do terrible things. Hispanics do terrible things. Koreans do terrible things. People do terrible things. My point, however, is this: There is a lack of morality in the black community because African American leaders, whether Jesse Jackson or the NAACP, choose to rally around minorities who seem to have little quality characteristics about them.

Why don't black leaders call out people like Allen Iverson and Sammy Sosa and say, "Hey, there are millions of young African Americans who worship you; why don't you start showing up for work on time and stop putting cork in your bat?"

Sure, that's contrite and overly simplistic and there are bad apples in more than just athletics, but you get the point.

Isn't the way we treat and look upon those in the upper echelons of society a reflection of ourselves?

Don't you think apathy to their character hurts you in everyday life? If you don't, you should stop and smell the roses.

I understand why my judgment may be put into question in this circumstance. I am not black. I have never been the victim of racism. I am a white male. This all is very easy for me to say.

Sure, Kelly, Simpson and Iverson are just mere instances of misbehavior in the grand scheme of things. Their misconduct is not what necessarily hurts minorities; it's the acceptance and lack of accountability African American leaders have chosen to embrace these figures with.

In summation, I think blacks should be more careful in deciding whom they choose to support. They need to grow beyond the automatic reaction of defending someone because he or she shares the same skin color and is in a dilemma.

Yes we are a forgiving nation, but African Americans have spent hundreds of years proving to the world that black is not a character blemish. Let's not perpetuate that false notion anymore.

David Williams is a columnist for The Daily Barometer. The opinions in his column, which appear every Friday, do not necessarily represent those of The Daily Barometer staff. Williams can be reached at [baro.forum@studentmedia.orst.edu](mailto:baro.forum@studentmedia.orst.edu).

## **VII. Apology regarding Williams column**

Published: April 13, 2004

Publication: The Daily Barometer

### **Taking the first step in apologizing**

On Friday, April 9, The Daily Barometer published a column by staff columnist David Williams that was racially insensitive and inappropriate.

We apologize to everyone for printing the column.

While the opinions expressed in columns are not representative of the staff members of the Barometer, we have a policy never to print material that is discriminatory, racist or sexist.

By printing such material in the Barometer, we legitimize the messages, even if we don't agree.

We never meant to offer racially insensitive opinions as valid ones by printing the column.

Every newspaper makes mistakes, and we don't want to hide behind ours. It would be easy to say we're students and we're just learning. It would be easy to say the system for editing stories failed us and the column slipped through the news judgment cracks. It would be easy to blame this on the columnist, and say he was exercising his First Amendment rights.

But we do not want to use excuses or try to justify our actions.

The plain and simple fact is this: We made an inexcusable mistake.

We apologize to the African American community, who was no doubt disappointed, hurt and outraged by the column.

We apologize to the university community of faculty, staff, students and their families.

We apologize to the Corvallis community.

We want you all to know that we are aggressively working to correct our mistake.

David Williams will no longer be writing for the Barometer.

We covered the protest that took place in the MU Quad Monday. We've had an editors meeting to discuss the problem, and we will have another today to discuss what we can do to prevent this from happening in the future.

We've also contacted leaders on campus for help.

We wrote a letter to the editor in the Corvallis Gazette Times.

We know these things are a drop in the bucket and cannot make up for our ignorance and insensitivity, but we consider it a start.

We encourage you to write in with suggestions of how we can prevent racial insensitivity and better serve our readers.

We will update readers of the Barometer and continue to cover any news surrounding this issue.

Editorials serve as a platform for Barometer editors to offer commentary and opinions on current events, both national and local, grand in scale and diminutive. Opinions here are a reflection of the Editorial Board's majority.

## VIII. Blake column

Published: Feb. 8, 2006

Publication: The Daily Barometer

### **The Islamic double-standard**

"There is certainly freedom in America to deride Christ. This is done every day on Broadway, and every other day in Hollywood. Americans do not take up arms in protest."

- William F. Buckley Jr.

With his usual insight, Buckley has located the dog that not only isn't barking, but has apparently taken an eternal vow of silence. As Muslim mobs torch embassies and Muslim governments begin boycotts in response to European newspapers' publication of cartoons mocking Mohammad, there has been little surprise at such savagery.

There have been plenty of platitudes about respect and dialogue, many mealy-mouthed statements about the value of a free press, and bountiful bromides about tolerance. What there hasn't been is any serious inquiry into the special status Islam enjoys.

Let Christians so much as stage a peaceful protest against the latest "art" to blaspheme Christianity, and the liberal media chorus will issue a cacophony of condemnation. Not at the offending art, of course, or the tasteless artist, but at those bourgeoisie boobs who had the audacity to display disgust at the demeaning of their religion. Art, we are told, exists to break taboos and transgress standards.

And Christianity is considered ripe for ridicule, as it is thought Puritanical and hierarchical, repressive and patriarchal. Islam, of course, possesses such attributes in spades (Sura 4:38: but chide [women] for whose refractoriness ye have cause to fear - and scourge them), but it's awfully gauche to say so. Also, doing so isn't nearly so safe as Christian-baiting; there's no Moral Majority equivalent of Mohammad Bouyeri, the chap who butchered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh for making a film critical of Islam.

When Muslims worldwide go on violent rampages over a few caricatures published in a newspaper they would never have heard of otherwise, no one is surprised, and the storm of disapprobation that would arise if anyone else did such a thing is forestalled. Bluntly put, we expect Muslims to behave barbarously: Muslims die in protests over supposed insults to Islam, ho-hum.

Saudi Arabia has recalled its envoy to Denmark in response to the cartoon kerfuffle, blathering about how showing such disrespect for Islam is unacceptable. I would suggest to the Saudi government that if they want me to show their pedophile prophet (yes, Mohammad first had sex with his favorite wife when she was nine and he was in his fifties) any respect, they ought to make it legal to publicly practice my religion in their kingdom. Not executing Muslims who convert to other religions would also be good.

Notes Victor Davis Hanson, "Ever since that seminal death sentence handed down to Salman Rushdie by the Iranian theocracy, the Western world has incrementally and insidiously accepted these laws of asymmetry - the Muslim

Middle East can insist on one standard of behavior for itself and quite another for others." We are not, he acridly points out, "to remember that Hamas terrorists occupied and desecrated the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in a globally televised charade." In that case, the Vatican declined to call another Crusade in response.

When I read passages in the Koran like Sura 8:40: "fight then against [the infidels] till strife be at an end, and the religion be all of it God's," I started doubting the "religion of peace" cant. Perhaps this "peace" is the peace of the grave.

Christianity grew on the blood of its martyrs; Islam grew on the blood of its enemies. The only combatant a modern Muslim martyr is sure of killing is himself; he prefers that the others be women and children.

Oh, I'm sorry; I forgot that those extremists don't represent the majority of Muslims, who are kind and peaceable. I suppose that I'll have to suppress the knowledge that the Palestinian majority just elected a terrorist group to govern them.

There are, to be sure, individual Muslims who are quite nice, and even a few Muslim countries that aren't run by tyrannical kleptocrats or theocrats. But on average, Islamic nations are oppressive and poor.

The problem with Islam is that it is an immanentist religion. While Christianity teaches that the kingdom of God is not of this world, Islam holds that it is the duty of Muslims to bring the kingdom of God to this world. Islam allows no distinction between religious and governmental authority, and proclaims that good Muslims will always triumph over their infidel enemies. That's hardly a metaphysical view that inclines toward tolerance and religious freedom.

If Muslims are incapable of separating the political from the spiritual, then both the right and the left are going to have to examine some of their favorite views. Conservatives need to take a hard look at whether the Muslim Middle East really can be remade in a free, democratic image. I used to think so, but now I'm skeptical.

Liberals, meanwhile, need to consider if their vision of multiculturalism is really possible, or whether it will succumb to what Leszek Kolakowski called "The self-poisoning of the open society."

Finally, the "moderate" Muslims that are constantly touted need to demonstrate that they have the will and ability to lead their religion out of barbarism.

Nathanael Blake is a senior in microbiology. The opinions expressed in his columns, which appear every Wednesday, do not necessarily represent those of The Daily Barometer staff. Blake can be reached at [forum@dailybarometer.com](mailto:forum@dailybarometer.com).

## **IX. Bixby column regarding Blake column**

Published: March 13, 2006

Publication: The Daily Barometer

### **Out of adversity and into lemonade**

"Throw a towel on a head, and that can mean a lot of things to a lot of different people. It's their job to explain what that means to them," my father said, desperately trying to comfort me as I explained the recent events which have been unfolding between the Barometer and Muslim community at OSU and in Corvallis.

It was at that moment I realized, I didn't know anything about Islam or Muslims or even if a cloth meant anything in relation to either. Sure, I had taken comparative religions, and I knew enough about the five pillars of Islam and the misappropriation of "jihad" to pass the class with a B. But even my secular upbringing was steeped in a Judeo-Christian culture and I never expected Islam to be a factor, much less the people practicing it.

Now it was. And even with a fast grip on freedom of press and every letter to the editor, phone call, visit and e-mail confronting me after Feb. 8, I was still left thinking: "What is the big deal? These people have just as much right to complain as any of our columnists have to criticize, and we're letting everyone do that."

The answer lay in my father's unintentional wisdom.

If it was "their job to explain," it was my job to listen. Not just print letters and meet every conversation with the coolness First Amendment rights afford the press, but really listen and hear the people, not just words.

On Feb. 23, two weeks and a day after "The Islamic double-standard," by Nathanael Blake was published, I finally heard what the "big deal" was.

To quote a favorite movie, "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade": "The pen is mightier than the sword." We had proven this again; besides, who can argue with Sean Connery.

The pain and worry felt by the Muslims I met with that evening was real. This wasn't just some trumped-up special interest group, these were flesh-and-blood people with real wounds. Whether or not we caused the first wounds I can't say for sure, but we certainly threw the salt to make it sting.

The blessing and curse of the free speech enjoyed by the United States is that it's as messy as the world it exists in, reflecting the gritty reality of human experience. Thank God it does, or else I fear some wouldn't have roused themselves from their armchair apathy to see the series of events unfolding in Europe and the Middle East, which have echoed throughout this cozy Corvallis community. I'm certain the Barometer has been roused. I definitely have.

Criticism for publishing the first column, for my column appearing Feb. 14 and from the more recent coverage - some inaccurate - by professional media has come in at every turn, from every side, so much that I'm unclear how many sides there are anymore. The solace I can provide is that both I and the Barometer staff have worked to the best of our ability at each juncture, and what may look

like knee-jerk reactions or succumbing to über-PC pressure have been an extraordinary number of growing pains and new tactics to accurately portray OSU and Corvallis. Hopefully this growth is vertical, and not, as my 16-year-old brother would say to me, from side to side.

The Barometer has not fallen to censorship by the Muslim Student Association and we're still strongly sticking to our columnists' rights to free expression. However, since Feb. 23 I'm discovering more and more stories of people, groups and trends, which haven't reached the wider readership. Would I have noticed had this controversy never happened? I can't know for sure, but because it has I have met new people and heard the other side of the Muslim experience than what comes across the AP wire from Beirut and Palestine. The relationship between columnists and the Barometer has even grown as they discover how seriously we take this job.

Diversity at the Barometer has long been criticized, and our answer has been, and largely still is, 'Our door is always open and there are always more stories to write.' What I'm learning is that that door only looks open to some, no matter what we say or how many "We're hiring" advertisements are published.

In the last two weeks, I've started recruiting. Not to fill a color quota, or anything so crass as that, but to encourage people who are already good at telling their own stories to share them with OSU. Pouring yourself into ink and paper for 23,000 sets of eyes to read and judge, often with scrutiny, is no relaxing task - even now my heart is racing - but it's important and necessary as the borders of this global community push closer to one another. Other efforts to build and rebuild bridges with many different communities are underway, too.

As a journalist, to maintain my unbiased and fair integrity, I've often felt I needed to ignore my own story in order to accurately tell others'. As the last few weeks have waned, I've realized that to truly do this, I need to recognize the complexities of my story. They certainly affect the way I view the world, and only in respecting their validity will I be able to lay them aside and respect others.

My mother, who says she hates cliches, usually offers me this one when I'm down: When life hands you lemons, make lemonade.

And that is exactly what I've watched OSU do. Although hurt, the Muslim students have reacted in a way that has left everyone's dignity intact while still expressing their disagreement. And free speech was not, as some have implied, abused or disrespected. OSU has set an example of free speech in action for the world, and, although it may take a little longer for that lemonade to stop tasting so bitter, it gives me hope. This is what free speech is all about.

DD Bixby is a senior in new media communication and German and editor in chief for The Daily Barometer. The opinions expressed in her columns do not necessarily represent those of The Daily Barometer staff. Bixby can be reached at [forum@dailybarometer.com](mailto:forum@dailybarometer.com).



