

## THE OREGONIAN'S READERS ON THE ISSUES

## TEEN CARWASHES

## A scantily clad 'learning experience' for school girls?

"Hey, mister, wanna buy a wash?"

For the past month at the intersection of Baseline and Cornelius in Hillsboro, weekend days have been filled with the sights and sounds of scantily clad teenage girls calling out to motorists, holding hand-lettered signs reading "Car Wash Today!"

The young ladies are members of Century High School's dance team. Their assignment: to sing out, dance, jiggle, wave, dressed in a work uniform of sorts — if you want to call string-tied halter tops and shorts cut-down-to-there-while-up-to-here the appropriate dress code of the day. The desired result: to raise money for their club by enticing drivers, primarily male,

to pull into a grocery store parking lot for a charity carwash. As the vehicles clean up, so does the dance team. Just like windshield wipers working both ways: Everyone wins.

This isn't just happening in Hillsboro — fundraising carwashes are sanctioned by churches, schools and youth clubs from Portland, Ore., to Portland, Maine. If the carwash fundraiser is now as American as apple pie, and if Hillsboro represents a piece of that pie, perhaps we should rethink the dessert — underage cheesecake, anyone?

These teen queens' acts of solicitation are more than merely tolerated. They're often fully sanctioned by the girls' teachers, ministers and parents. If this is the charity that begins at home, perhaps it's time to call in child services.

Though I knew they wouldn't be able

to hear me over their sing-song shouts, I wanted to say, "Careful, girls, watch all that jumping around — the goal is to be 'arresting,' not 'arrested.'" Instead, I spoke to the mom in charge. It seems that though the Century dance team had placed third and fourth in previous state competitions, this year the girls are bent on capturing first place. To win, the mom explained, the team needs additional money for better costumes, an outside choreographer and a rental bus.

Was the mom concerned about the girls dressed in sexy outfits, literally working this particular street for the almighty dollar?

"It's a learning experience" — she paused, struggling for the right word — "in advertising. After all, they're always going to have to market themselves." She smiled broadly. "Besides, the girls are so pretty, people want to help the kids."

Pretty girls, yes, but it was the parents who washed the cars — the teens were

simply used as bait. "You should see how the guys' faces fall when they pull up and see it's us instead of the girls," the mom laughed.

I didn't know which was worse — the girls expected to service strange men's cars, acting out sudsy fantasies that are the realm of porn/naughty YouTube videos, or the same girls emboldened with the knowledge that because they possessed the requisite desirable anatomy, they only had to parade themselves while others did the dirty work. Ignorant of the fact that it's the very act of parading, strutting, luring that is, in itself, the dirty work.

I wondered at the far-reaching effects of this particular school lesson. And what about the girls who were physically rejected, who didn't make the cut? Were they grateful, ashamed or a mix of both?

Not that there aren't objections raised about these do-it-yourself carwashes. But the concerns are primarily

environmental, objecting to the problems of untreated water runoff discharging into the storm water system, eventually integrating into nearby rivers and lakes. If only there were a similar outcry as to a whole other pollution: that of the highly impressionable, adolescent brain.

With Madison Avenue/Hollywood continually bombarding the confused adolescent, often the only voices that cut through the media morass belong to her personal authority figures: her teacher, her minister, her parents. But when they, too, send a mixed message as clouded as the runoff from the carwash, then it's time for them to rethink their priorities ... and clean up their act.

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**KIMBERLY GADETTE**  
IN MY OPINION