

# The many faces of Eugene racism

Myra Willard's legal suit against race and sex discrimination here at the University of Oregon elicited the official response of SHOCK from the administration. Some of us among the Blacks in this community are equally shocked by the administration's astonishment.

For though we don't talk about it much, in Eugene racism has many faces: that of a flushed youth yelling "Nigger!" from his car window in downtown Eugene; that of a tightfaced owner refusing to rent to Blacks, and that of a mocking, frightened Oregonian squinting in consternation and wondering where all these Blacks have come from all of a sudden.

We experience many faces of racism, personally, here in Eugene. But on the University of Oregon campus, often racism is faceless. It does not consist of any one administrator sitting at a desk plotting against individuals because they are Black.

Instead this kind of institutional racism thrives on unspoken, unwritten patterns of discrimination built into the system along with unconscious racist attitudes of some members of the university community; and it reduces Black people and other powerless persons to a state of invisibility.

Myra Willard's suit is not that of an

individual plaintiff, but a class-action suit (a fact buried in most media accounts); and it is not just for Blacks but for all conscious Third World persons and women who remain powerless and unrepresented in the presence of faceless discrimination. Faceless discrimination takes on two forms: tokenism and the revolving-door-syndrome. The first lets in a few "super-niggers," uses them, and then dismisses them remarking that there is some "reasonable doubt" about the quality of their performance.

The second form keeps a small number of Third World and women administrators and faculty members coming and going through the university's revolving door, not permitting enough of them to remain in positions of authority long enough to make an impact on the university system. Because of tokenism and the revolving-door-syndrome, no substantive commitment to the kind of social change that would make this university truly reflective of the diversity of American society takes place; yet the university continues to draw federal funds taken from the pockets of every ethnic group, class, and both sexes.

Because faceless discrimination thrives on unspoken, unwritten patterns of discrimination, fighting it is very much like shadow boxing: the opponent is very

elusive. When those discriminated against do cry "foul" they are accused of paranoia. It is impossible to submit the scars of discrimination to microscopic investigation; however, it would be difficult to find a Black person who could not recount some instance of certain discrimination on this campus.

In fact, simply searching out Blacks would be statistically revealing, because the hardest evidence of discrimination is the very absence of appreciable numbers of Blacks on the campus. Even the University's official figures, which are inaccurate and most probably inflated, testify to a decrease in the number of Black students on the campus from 1976 to the present. From Spring, 1976 to Spring, 1977, the number dropped from 283 to 212.

Even those who generally dismiss individual protest against sex and race discrimination as mere propaganda, must pause and reflect when the very officer appointed by the university to fight discrimination files a suit against it for discrimination. Myra Willard is effectively challenging tokenism and the revolving-door-syndrome of faceless discrimination. We are acutely aware of the need to retain an affirmative action officer of the caliber of Myra Willard. It is also important that the Affirmative

Action position have the possibility of tenure. Because of the sensitive nature of the position of an affirmative action officer who is constantly challenging the university to fight discrimination, relegating such a position to limited term appointments of one or two years weakens any possibility for aggressive, long-range planning by the officer.

On the basis of her excellent performance over the past six years, we insist that Myra Willard be granted tenure thereby strengthening her capacity to act affirmatively against discrimination. We urge all members of the University of Oregon community to further explore this case and lend their support as well.

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## Greek system?

In the Tuesday, August 1, 1978 issue of Daily Emerald in an article titled: *Student Grocery Back in Business* by Elmo Morganstern the "Greek System" was mentioned. I am new to this community and do not know what a "Greek System" is. Is it like a Mafia? Is there a membership? Where is it located? How does one join? Why is it connected with the Food-Op?

The article also referred to "subsidizing low food prices for the Greeks." Is this a special aid program for Greeks? Does this "system" force the Food-Op to deliver? How do they do this? Do they use strong arm tactics?

Some of my best friends are Greeks and they have never heard of this "system" nor are they aware of any subsidy to Greeks through the Food-Op. As a member of the "general student body" I am not aware that I am "subsidizing low food prices for the Greeks." Am I?

If you substitute the word "Greek" with some other ethnic group, the article takes on even more of a racial slur. I'm sure this was not intended, but when groups instead of individuals are singled out for criticism

racial overtones stand out.

Perhaps the Food-Op, specifically Mr. Murphy, could change not only their business practices and policies but their attitude and find themselves in a better financial position.

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## Nuke history

On August 6, 1977, near a small town on the Columbia River in northwest Oregon, history was being made. It was 32 years after the bombing of Hiroshima.

Solemnity, and a certain sense of purpose, dominated the observance of this horrible anniversary; however, the crowd of 600 which lined the road into the Trojan nuclear power plant burst into spontaneous cheering as close to 100 pack-laden people walked by in double-file, bound for the four gates of the plant. Their purpose: to block the gates until Trojan was shut down, or they were removed. Their reason: Trojan presents an imminent danger to the public, and life at large.

The arrests came in the early morning

hours of August 8. All those who took this action of civil disobedience had been specially trained in the theory and practice of nonviolent direct action.

It was the first time any group had ever tried to shut down a "live nuke" using non-violent civil disobedience tactics. (An even larger group returned to Trojan on November 25, 1977. The 125 arrested have not yet come to trial.)

On December 16, 1977, the "Trojan 96" were acquitted of all charges by a jury of six Columbia County residents. The Trojan Decommissioning Alliance had succeeded in putting nuclear power on trial; the nukes' lost.

Although the "imminent danger" defense was ultimately disallowed and the 96 were freed on a right-of-way technicality, it was obvious to all that the jury had been overwhelmingly convinced of Trojan's dangers during the five days of testimony delivered by various experts.

Witnesses included several scientists who have done cancer studies, a technical engineer, an insurance executive, a former legislator, and the former director of Oregon's Department of Energy.

Why this capsule history? Because these events have helped sow the seeds of what may be the most important citizen's move-

ment of this century. "Tower Topplin" Sam Lovejoy, famed for his unique and solitary act of antinuclear civil disobedience, has remarked that he's seen plenty of people switch to an antinuclear stance, but has never known anyone to go back to supporting nukes once they were educated on the issues.

The facts of nuclear power and weaponry speak for themselves, and are sometimes so awesome and fearful to contemplate that they get ignored. Meanwhile certain powerful economic interests would have us continue to build and use these destructive nuclear devices.

Common people are beginning to reawaken and understand that the public is not at all protected from nuclear harm, and that indeed the nukes are essentially anti-life. There are times, in the course of human events (and I paraphrase), when people must actively refuse to allow an evil to dominate and overcome them. But the great lesson carried into the '70's from the last decades' struggles is that employing violent means for peaceful or pro-life ends never works. We get what we put out.

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