

Campus campaign exhibits dirty side

This year's ASUO Executive campaign is off to a rowdy start after the discovery that vice presidential candidate Diana Collins Puente may have violated student government guidelines by working as the ASUO multicultural advocate fall term while not enrolled as a student at the University.

The idea of Collins Puente possibly deceiving the student body is bad enough. After all, the wages from her position came from student fees, which are supposed to be distributed among student groups for student concerns. Collins Puente's employment as a non-student would be wholly unethical.

But even more interesting is the fact that Leslie Warren and Mark Johnson, the opposing ticket to Collins Puente and running mate Eric Bowen, were so eager to divulge dirt on their opponents.

Warren and Johnson made sure a letter to the editor, referring to Collins Puente's fall-term enrollment, was turned in to the *Emerald*. They did not write the letter but were acquaintances of the person who did. Warren and Johnson came to the *Emerald* office to inquire about the status of the letter. The letter, which appears in today's issue, spurred *Emerald* News Editor Jake Berg to contact the University registrar about Collins Puente's enrollment status fall term.

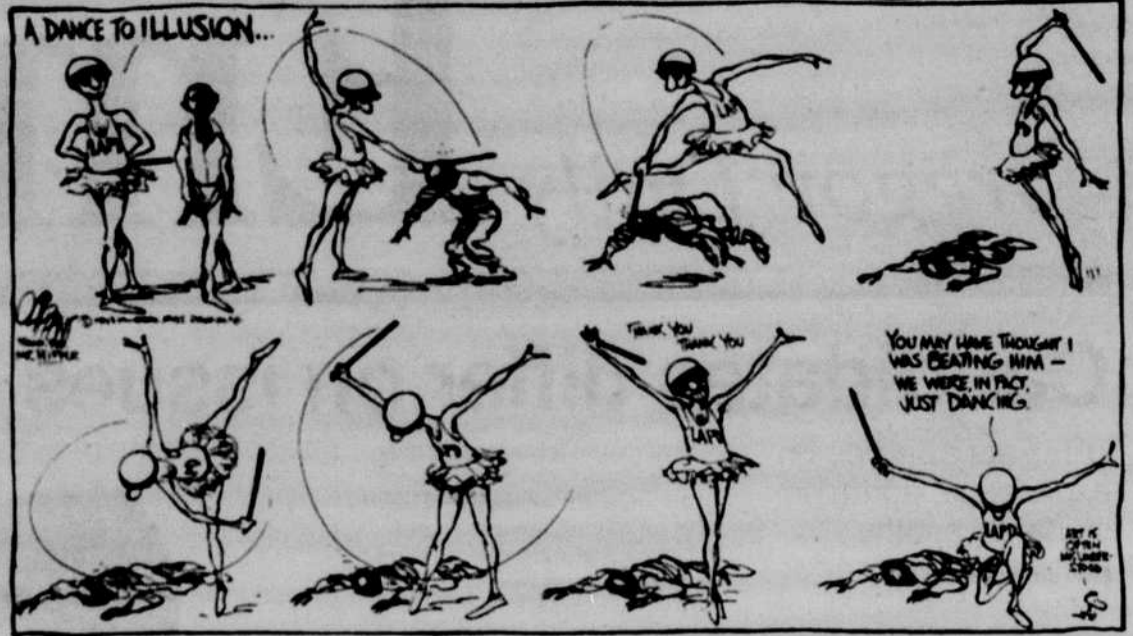
Monday, Warren learned the *Emerald* was working on a news story about her opponent and asked that it run before Tuesday's ASUO debates. The *Emerald* does not work as a public relations firm for any candidate and ran the story Tuesday only because it was newsworthy — not because it was requested.

There's nothing illegal about Warren and Johnson's actions. But it does raise the question of whether candidates should concentrate on smearing their opponents instead of running an intelligent campaign. If Warren and Johnson do have credible solutions to problems on campus, they should concentrate on spreading their own ideas to the student body, not attacking others through dirty tactics.

On the positive side, Warren and Johnson have shown a natural flair for politics. Finding dirt on your opponents is an age-old campaigning technique that marks the true professional. Warren and Johnson could be the real thing — although that's not necessarily good.

At the very least, they could have been more careful. Can you imagine George Bush personally calling *The New York Times* editors and asking whether they were printing the draft story on Bill Clinton? He would have a low-level aide do it instead; the liability is less evident. That doesn't mean it's ethical to have an aide do the dirty work for you, it's just cleaner.

This editorial is not intended as an endorsement of either the Bowen/Collins Puente or the Warren/Johnson ticket. Each campaign has valid points to make and an agenda to push. However, the candidates should concentrate solely on their own campaigns and lay off the dirty politics.



COMMENTARY

Passover: celebration of freedom

By Jonah Bookstein

Monday, April 5 began the weeklong Jewish celebration of Pesach, or Passover. We Jews, friends and strangers recount the story of the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt to freedom. We choose spring to celebrate freedom. Freedom from slavery, freedom to live our lives free from any oppressors or instruments of oppression, freedom from intolerance and freedom from harassment. During Passover, we discuss and hope for freedom for all peoples.

In light of this holiday, it is interesting that Stephanie Sisson chose a public forum (*ODE*, April 5) to continue the oppression of two groups who have been victimized for centuries: homosexuals and Jews. In doing so, she chose a time-worn method, using Christianity as a litmus test to judge others' actions.

Her column reeks of anti-Semitism, intolerance to homosexuals, and it only does her and Christianity a disservice.

She writes that there has been a disservice done to her New Testament because in recently published condemnations of homosexuality it has been left to obscurity. She then states, "To be honest, I don't take the Old Testament laws very seriously. Those laws were given to the Jews. (One of them prohibits tattoos. Give me a break!) But the New Testament, which concerns itself with more Christ-like behavior, I take very seriously. ... Homosexuality is a chosen behavior. And it is wrong." Thanks for the honesty. If I remember correctly, though, wasn't Jesus a Jew?

In her attempt to be cute and Christ-like, she has, on the eve of the holiday of freedom, slandered the Jewish community.

Who gave her the right to judge the Jewish guide to life that has preserved the Jewish community for more than 3,000 years? From where does she gain this overwhelming sense of superiority that has empowered her with the right to condescend and insult the Jewish and homosexual communities?

It just so happens that the holiday of Passover comes from the Torah (the term we Jews use to refer to our holy scroll). The Torah teaches Jewish people how to celebrate their freedom from slavery, which is done by setting aside the week for feasting and remembering the hardships of slavery and oppression. Perhaps this is just one of those "Old Testament" laws Sisson finds useless.

Passover is celebrated by more Jews than almost any other Jewish holiday. It is a unique celebration with contemporary meaning and purpose. It is a chance to gather as a community and with family. It is a chance to be thankful for freedom from the bonds of slavery, which plagued our ancestors. And it is a chance to always remember people throughout the world who are today not free from slavery.

Annually, we commit ourselves to freeing all people from oppression; for as long as someone, somewhere, remains in bondage, we believe that we cannot ourselves be truly free. This year we must think of the victimized men, women and children in the Balkans, the starving Sudanese, indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest who are being murdered, Arabs and Jews who are at each other's throats, the islanders of East Timor who are being liquidated by the Indonesian government, migrant farm workers being exposed to dangerous chemicals and living in degrad-

ing conditions — and the list tragically continues.

So let me return to Sisson's intolerance of homosexuals in light of Passover. In Oregon, we narrowly defeated a ballot measure only half of a year ago that would have deprived a segment of the population fair and equal treatment. Thankfully the measure failed, but it reminds all of us that intolerance and ignorance are strong forces in our society. Through her unenlightened, Christian-based egoism, Sisson is continuing that trend.

By her vitriolic attack on the homosexual community, couching her moralistic judgment in pseudo-scientific language and New Testament quotations (i.e. that homosexuality is purely choice motivated and is a sin), she has demonstrated that she uses the Bible to support bigotry, intolerance and ultimately oppression — a purpose I doubt it was created for.

Although she is "afraid that homosexuality is becoming an accepted lifestyle in our society," and that it will keep "someone (Sisson) loves" from being "a follower of Christ," I am afraid her movement of Christian fundamentalism is intent on destroying the freedom of women to choose, the freedom of Jews to live in a society that accepts minorities and the freedom of homosexuals to live free from prejudice and harm.

But in conclusion, I will thank Sisson. She has reminded me, on the eve of Passover and with her "General License" to be self-righteous from a walled island of ignorance and simplicity, that I have a life's worth of labor in this world until all people, including her, are free.

Jonah Bookstein is an undergraduate in independent studies and a member of the Jewish Student Union.

LETTERS

Student?

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding Diana Collins Puente. Is she a student? There is information circulating to the effect that Collins Puente was not a registered student during fall term.

I find this shocking. Did she not occupy a student-subsidized

position during fall term? I am told by numerous sources that she was paid for holding the ASUO multicultural advocate position and also a Building Community student mentor position.

If this is, in fact, true, I would like to know why she was paid and how I can get some of the money this University is throwing around.

Are we supposed to cast our votes for someone that finds the pursuit of money more rewarding than the pursuit of an education? What kind of leader would she be? With these traits, she has the potential to be a politician, but not one that I would vote for.

Matt Gougler
Fine Arts

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