

EDITORIAL

It's no surprise that Collins Puente's tired

The seemingly sudden resignation of ASUO Vice President Diana Collins Puente last week offered an opportunity for many non-traditional student leaders to voice their frustrations at a campus environment that they perceive as hostile to minorities and women.

During her resignation news conference very little explanation was given for Collins Puente's decision, except the repeated assertion that the University wasn't doing enough to combat institutionalized racism and support non-traditional students, loosely defined as students of color, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and women.

In her emotional farewell, Collins Puente told her audience that she was "tired." After spending five years at the University as one of its most dynamic and vocal student leaders, there's no reason to doubt that she's tired.

She has additional reasons to leave her position and the University, however - among them, two internships waiting for her in Washington, D.C.

But even if she were leaving just because she's tired, it would still be unfair to blame her exhaustion and frustration solely on the unresponsiveness of the University. Collins Puente must bear some responsibility for those things herself.

"I came on this campus with the intent to stay here in Oregon, which is 90 percent white," Collins Puente said, "to achieve change, to better the lifestyle and the educational system and the justice system for people of color, for lesbians, gays and bisexuals, for women, and for non-traditional students." (Emphasis added to the "ands.")

No wonder she was tired.

Each and every one of those goals is noble, and worth pursuing. But if the person trying to reach those goals is unwilling to compromise, then nothing but frustration and stalemate will result.

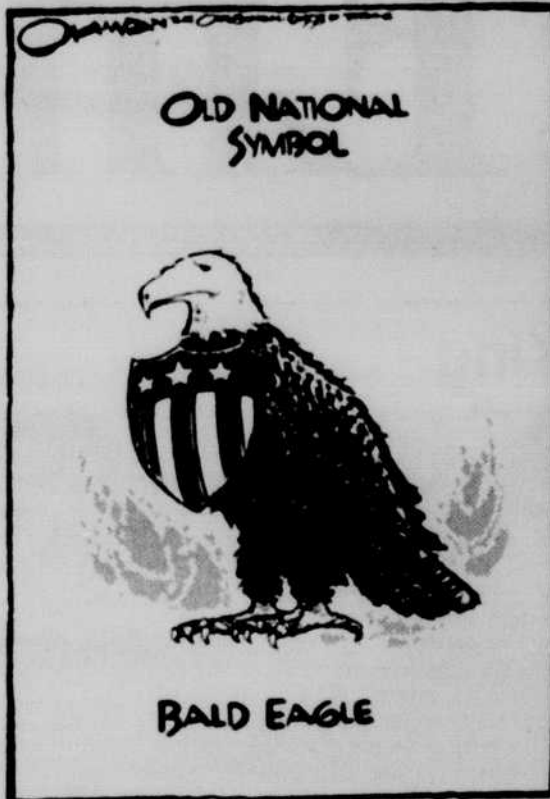
In response to past complaints that she should represent the entire student body, instead of just its multicultural components, Collins Puente said that she would "always be the multicultural advocate."

It's difficult for a person with strong convictions to try to represent every side of every issue, but that is exactly what Collins Puente agreed to do when she ran for vice president of the ASUO. The letters stand for Associated Students of the University of Oregon. That's *all* of the students.

Collins Puente said people don't understand why she can't be "moderate." The answer is simple, because compromise — being moderate — is part of the job.

Certainly racism and discrimination are problems on this campus. But they're problems on every campus everywhere. Collins Puente's panel of speakers included Rob Alvarez, a student from Rutgers University in New Jersey, who testified to that very fact.

That's not an excuse. That doesn't mean that the University should give up hope of one day having a peaceful, tolerant and fully integrated campus. That doesn't mean it should stop working toward that goal. But a resignation, no matter who it is from, does little to further the cause.



OPINION

Do your part now to stop OCA



ROBBIE REEVES

The Oregon Citizens Alliance is at it again. Never heard of the OCA before? Well, welcome to Oregon, and leave your indifference at the state line.

The OCA is a group of conservative Oregonians that insists on making its narrow-minded reactionary views the law of the land for Oregon.

OK, so I'm biased against them. Actually, it's pretty hard not to be.

The OCA has several agendas, such as the anti-abortion cause (it unsuccessfully tried to ban abortion in 1990). However, the OCA is best known for its crusade against rights for gays and lesbians in Oregon.

The group has campaigned for several years against the cause of gay rights. In 1992, the group sponsored the now-infamous Ballot Measure 9, which would have added to the Oregon Constitution an amendment that would have declared homosexuality "unnatural, abnormal, and perverse." The measure failed by several hundred thousand votes, but succeeded in making Oregon look like a place where bigotry was tolerated by a lot of its citizens.

And so the OCA took its anti-gay rights initiative to other cities and counties in Oregon, for the most part in Eastern and Southern Oregon, areas known to be more conservative than places like Eugene and Portland.

Many of their efforts, including one in Springfield several years back, have been successful, and more elections are scheduled.

However, the group has not been able to muster the votes statewide to pass a statewide measure against gay rights.

Until possibly this November, that is.

The OCA, along with similar groups in Washington, Idaho and several other states, is trying to pass a measure that would prohibit gays and lesbians from acquiring any sort of "special rights."

Special rights, you might ask? What are those?

Well, from reading in between the lines, that can roughly be interpreted as the right to not be discriminated against because one is gay.

I don't know. Maybe the OCA thinks that if everyone was legally free from discrimination, then maybe it couldn't discriminate against people anymore with its illogical and discriminatory ballot measures. (And wouldn't that be a shame for the OCA!)

The sad thing about the whole situation is that, unlike the garbage that the OCA likes to throw around about gays "coming after your children" and the like, gays are not looking for "special rights," but equal rights.

The OCA, in the true spirit of friendship toward gays and lesbians (translated, in another way of showing their Neanderthal outlook on modern society ...), recently established a group called HOPE, which stands for Help One Person Escape.

The group is designed to "help" gays, lesbians and bisexuals to "escape" from the lifestyle that the OCA believes is bad.

Various OCA officials have also boasted of taking gays and lesbians into their homes, where they invariably "renounce" the gay lifestyle, convert to rabidly conservative creatures both religiously and conservatively, and begin to support the OCA.

This goes to the crux of the OCA's outlook on society. The OCA believes gays and lesbians choose, incorrectly, to be gay, whereas heterosexuals choose to be that way.

I have absolutely never heard of a person that went home one night, took out a piece of paper, and listed the pros and cons of being a particular sexual orientation, in an effort to decide whether to be heterosexual or homosexual.

Maybe the people in the OCA

do this, but I doubt that anyone else does. After all, does it really take a college degree to figure out that sexual orientation is not chosen like a major, but is a given trait, such as one's eye color?

And so the OCA continues to spew its conservative rhetoric to the state, a state where a significant minority of the citizens apparently believe the OCA enough to vote for its initiatives.

The fight for gay rights will probably be coming back to a ballot box near you this November. The OCA group is currently in the process of gathering signatures for the ballot initiative, starting in places such as Springfield (a surprise?).

Please don't sign the petition.

It would be nice if things like equality and human rights didn't have to be voted on by people. However, because we live in a world that is far from ideal, one has to concede that the OCA will probably make it onto the ballot.

The OCA likes to prey on the fears of the more impressionable Oregonians. It is toward them that the OCA directs statements about "militant homosexuals," trying to destroy such things as sacred as family values and America.

Don't believe it. The OCA needs to create a climate of fear in order to justify painting a picture of gays and lesbians as some sort of enemies of humanity.

With less than 10 months remaining before the November general election, Oregonians need to organize now to defeat this initiative.

Many things can be done to defeat this nonsense. Register to vote here in Oregon, volunteer for an anti-OCA organization, and maybe even donate money to the cause.

But, above anything, don't be indifferent. The OCA has campaigned against gay and abortion rights. Next time, it could be you and your rights that they could be after.

Human rights for all is too important a cause to leave to chance.

Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.

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