

Affirmative action receives close inspection by five-person panel

■ **DISCUSSION:** The event explores the pros and cons of the policies

By Cindy Long
Higher Education Editor

Five people from the University and community came together to discuss the pros and cons of affirmative action in a panel discussion last week.

The panel included Bettie Sing Luke, the multicultural trainer and equity specialist for the 4J School District and the University Graduate School; Henry Luvert, Eugene-Springfield NAACP president; Maurice Holland, law professor; Marshall Saucedo, office of Multicultural Affairs director; and Thomas Schoenborn, *Commentator* editor-in-chief.

Each panelist was given 12 minutes to state their viewpoints

followed by a brief question-and-answer period.

Saucedo said affirmative action programs have helped him in his career.

"I thank God for having had affirmative action programs ... that created opportunities for myself," he said.

Holland, on the other hand, said affirmative action plans cost him a job early on in his career and is concerned about the costs to people who are not targeted in affirmative action plans.

"I don't think that people who are in favor of affirmative action should so quickly deny that it has considerable costs in terms of injustice to individuals," he said.

Holland also said that opposition to affirmative action is not necessarily equal to racism.

"I don't think opposition to affirmative action means that the

person is opposed or hostile to minorities," he said.

The problem with opposition to affirmative action is that people who are opposed to it don't provide any other solutions, Luvert said.

When Luvert was promoted to Sergeant in the fire department, people assumed it was because of affirmative action and not his accomplishments.

"Heaven forbid. Don't give me any credit for having any knowledge of doing anything," he said, adding that at his promotion, Eugene didn't have an affirmative action program.

Schoenborn said he is not against affirmative action if it does not encourage the hiring of less-qualified candidates and is only meant to cast a wider net for the hiring pool.

"If that is what it is, then I am in favor of it," he said.

New Asian-American women's group formed

■ **STUDENTS:** The group hopes to work with other campus groups

By Ashley Bach
Student Activities Reporter

University students Miyuki Taguchi and Cindy Nguyen both had the same dream: to provide a support group for Asian women to discuss their experiences.

The only problem was that neither of them knew the other existed until they began talking one day. They pooled their ideas together, which eventually resulted in a new student group — the United Women of Asian Heritage (UWAH).

The group, which has met three times this year and held an open house Tuesday night to generate interest, hopes to find its own niche among the many

Asian student organizations on campus. Taguchi said they can offer a unique forum.

"A lot of the groups out there are broad in their approach," she said. "Women aren't always able to come together."

Taguchi and Nguyen, both seniors, said the group will try to create dialogue between both Asian-American and international women students. They will also work with the ASUO Women's Center and the Black Women of Achievement within the Black Student Union.

"We hope we can just break a lot of the barriers we have between each other," Nguyen said.

Nguyen, who is Vietnamese-American, and Taguchi, who came to the University from Japan, hope with their diverse backgrounds they can cater to

the needs of all backgrounds. Berenice Lai, another member of the group, sees UWAH reaching that goal.

"It's an empowering experience for international students," she said. "And it will help [Asian-Americans] find their roots, which is a wonderful thing."

The group is currently seeking recognition from the ASUO so they may be a funded organization next year. While they expect to be recognized in the next few months, the women don't see it as a big issue. "Just as long as we have a group of committed people," Taguchi said. "That's all that's important."

The group can be contacted at taguchi@gladstone.uoregon.edu or by calling 686-4916.

Commission aims to protect Eugene citizens

■ **GOVERNMENT:** Founded in 1960, the group advises city government on civil rights issues

By Abe Estimada
Community Reporter

In just the last few years, the Human Rights commission has made a difference in Eugene.

Thanks to the 15-member commission, Eugene's anti-discrimination ordinance was revised to protect gays and lesbians from housing, employment and public accommodation prejudice.

The group also proposed the creation of the Centennial car camp as a temporary solution for the homeless problem in Eugene.

In response to the shooting at Temple Beth Israel in 1994, the commission helped organize a candlelight vigil as a statement against anti-Semitism in Eugene.

Greg Rikhoff, a human rights analyst for the group, said the commission's work is not merely limited to changing city ordinances or processing complaints. The commission also plays the role of conscience for the city, he said.

"Most of their work is to deliver bad news to the city government," Rikhoff said. "The commission asks City Council, 'Hey,

wait a minute, have you thought of the implications of a particular action? Are you creating a policy that allows people to participate in city government?'"

The City Council selects Eugene citizens, representing different social and racial groups, to serve with the commission. A City Council member also sits on the commission. Currently, that member is Laurie Swenson Grib-skov.

The commission was founded in 1960 and was originally called the Committee on Race Relations. By 1975, the committee had separated into five groups that addressed not only the concerns of racial minorities, but also women, the elderly and people with disabilities.

In 1990, a mayor's task force recommended that the five committees combine again into one group that is now the Human Rights Commission.

The commission has a broad range of responsibilities that are mainly behind the scenes, Rikhoff said. The group advises city government on human rights issues, helps educate various sectors of the community through workshops and talks, and also provides support and referral services.

Rikhoff said he believes that the commission's work load will

only increase in the face of limited resources and lack of time.

The committee is currently developing solutions to deal with problems, such as incidents of violence against immigrants, which could potentially grow in scope and frequency in the near future. In particular, incidents of harassment against interracial couples have increased in the last five months, Rikhoff said.

It was watching the state of race relations deteriorate in Eugene that prompted Tyrone Jones to join the commission seven months ago.

"I've noticed more open hostility towards people of color," said Jones, who is African-American. "Now, there are more physical attacks, more open name-calling and just more open negative behavior as a whole."

As the community becomes more diverse, Jones said he believes the commission's work gains even more importance.

"When we invite high-tech companies such as Hyundai into our community, we're bringing a different culture in, too," he said. "We need to focus on educating the community and making adaptations. Some people say we need to help them learn our language and our customs. But we should also learn to respect their culture as well."

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