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PERSPECTIVES

City, campus don't always provide the comforts of home

With continued action, the Eugene and campus communities could improve by making all citizens feel comfortable in their own homes

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

Eugene isn't an innocent utopia. And more specifically, neither is the University.

The experience in Eugene and within the University has been quite the opposite of utopia for some. The City of Eugene has made them feel uncomfortable and sometimes unwanted.

Whether deliberate or not, this is not an encouraging sign in a city that is touted as progressive and a campus often labeled as liberal.

Citing racial strife for his departure, University music professor John Gainer, who is black, left Eugene earlier this year. Gainer had accused the Eugene police of taking him off of a crowded bus to search him because of his race.

In April, Eugene and its surrounding community suffered a rash of racist vandalism. Vandals spray-painted swastikas in an alley near the First Christian Church and wrote "Zyklon-B," a reference to a chemical used to create poisonous gas in Nazi death camps.

And just Friday, a Lane County Circuit Court judge ruled that former University Office of Public Safety patrol officer James Williams, who is black, was subjected to a hostile work environment. Although he was not awarded any monetary damages, the ruling is still symbolic of the discomfort many minorities are feeling.

Kameron Cole, an Oregon Daily Emerald columnist last year, wrote a column on her thoughts about the University's racial diversity (ODE, March 4). Cole, who is black, wrote about sometimes being the only minority student in a class — even some of the large lecture classes.

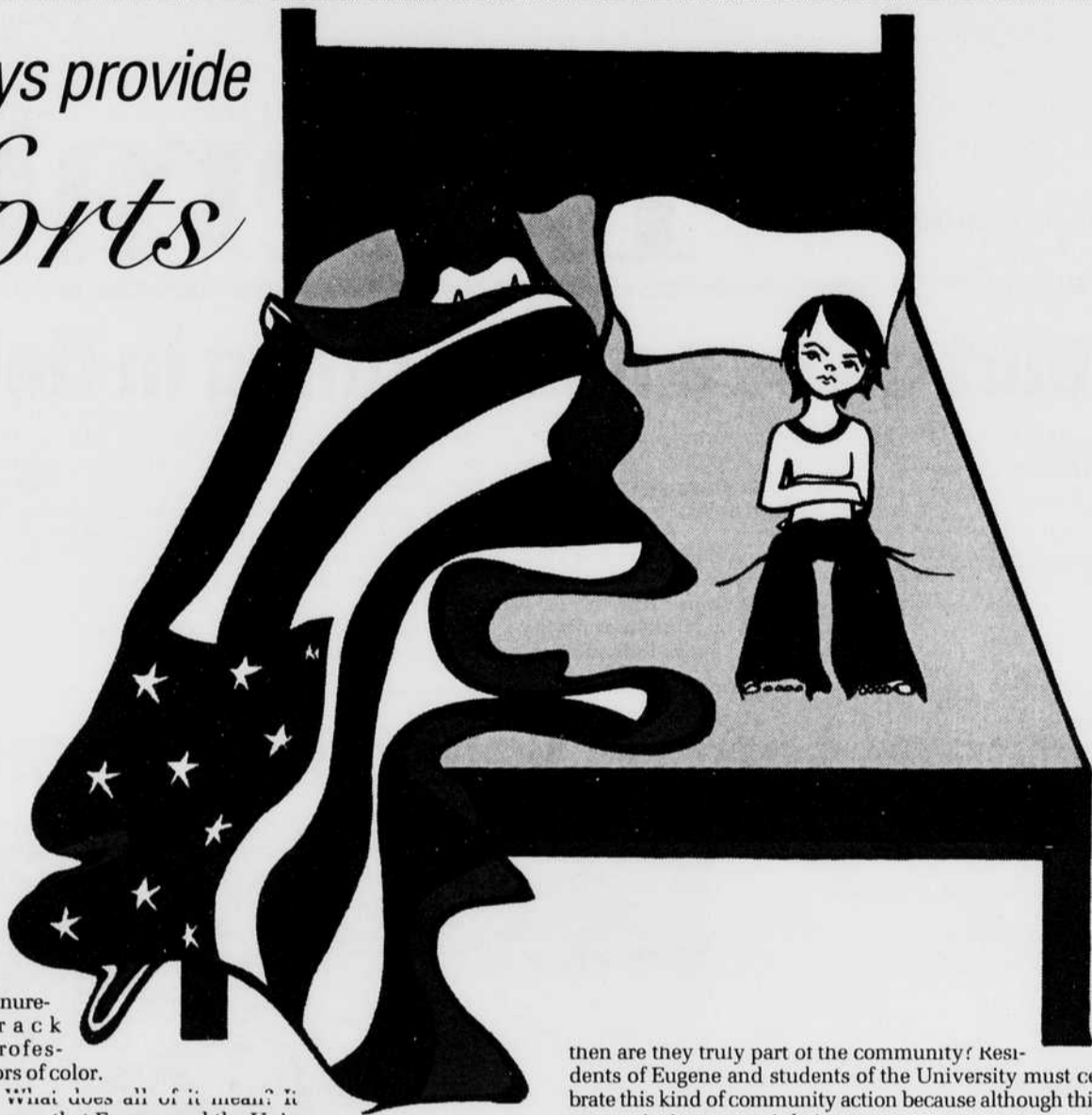
In May, the Oregon Students of Color Coalition held its first annual Zero Awards ceremony, giving the awards to 13 University academic departments without any tenured or

tenure-track professors of color.

What does all of it mean? It means that Eugene and the University are not the happy melting pots some people think they are. It also means there are people fighting the overt and subconscious racism and exclusion.

After the spree of racist vandalism, more than 200 people protested on the Ferry Street Bridge. When Williams felt cheated, he took action. And when students felt their education was being compromised by the lack of diversity, they organized and handed out mock awards.

Eugene is not a hotbed of racism, but it is discouraging to know that a town that has successfully fought so many battles over rights is still fighting a battle as important as this one. On the other hand, it is encouraging that the community is still fighting the battles, and it is fighting loudly.



then are they truly part of the community? Residents of Eugene and students of the University must celebrate this kind of community action because although this is no utopia, it can certainly improve.

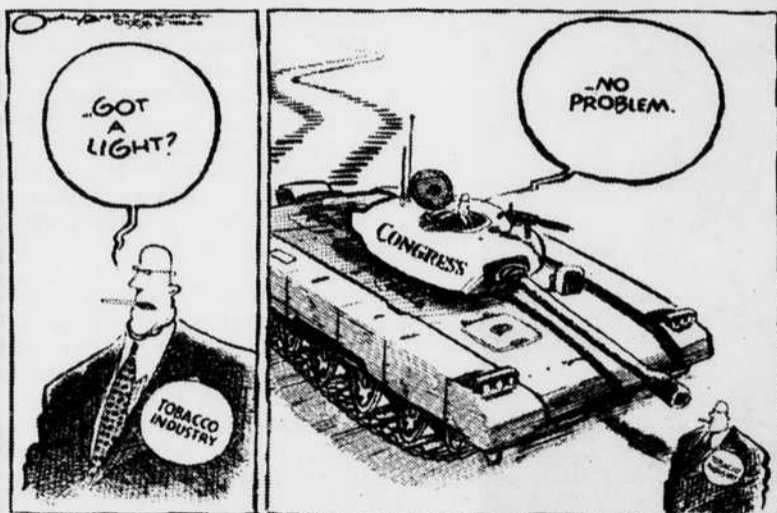
This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

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The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters must be limited to 250 words or less. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, clarity, grammar and style.

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