

PERSPECTIVES

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Cabinet picks' diversity goes beyond the pale



SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

What does diversity mean in the world of politics? If you're an activist at the University, it means increasing the cultural diversity on our campus, while slamming the door shut on ideological diversity. Liberals rule the land, and they don't enjoy sharing their power.

If you're President-select George W. Bush, it means the most diverse cabinet nominations ever across racial and gender lines. But when it comes to politics, conservatives are running the show.

Based solely on mainstream media coverage, it's all too easy to believe that Bush has nominated a diverse cabinet of thinkers that will usher in a new era of bipartisanship and centrist policy.

Colin Powell, Bush's nominee for Secretary of State, a man possibly more popular than the incoming president himself, has been hailed as the first sign of how Bush will run the Oval Office. Yes, Powell is an African-American. And yes, Powell's political views are mostly centrist. He supports affirmative action and is pro-choice. But these distinctions have nothing to do with his pending duties. The Secretary of State does not decide whether to go to war in trimesters, and a quota sys-

tem is not likely to be in place when the bombs start falling. When it comes to policy, Powell has a reputation for keeping the United States out of conflict. He reluctantly supported the Gulf War, did not support President Clinton's efforts to include gays in the military and didn't think we should have intervened in Bosnia. He didn't even think we should have been dropping food or medical supplies to refugees who were fleeing from Serbian troops.

Former Missouri Sen. John Ashcroft is Bush's nominee for Attorney General, the chief law enforcement officer in the country. Ashcroft is well-known on both sides as a staunch conservative who opposes a woman's right to choose, even in cases of rape or incest. He has sponsored initiatives to break

down the separation of church and state, opposed any forms of federal gun control and led the fight against Missouri's first black appointee to the federal court.

Powell and Ashcroft are just two examples in the trend of Bush appointments. A trend where individuals are touted for their "diverse"

opinions and backgrounds, but are placed in positions where their decision making will fall conveniently in line with the right-wing of the Republican Party.

When Bush named Condoleezza Rice as his National Security Advisor, the media focused on the fact that she is both a woman and a minority, who also happens to be pro-choice. It's quite a role reversal in the world of politics. Republicans have long been

the side to say that race and gender should not be is-

sues that the government gets involved in, but they are quick to change their tune when a good photo opportunity presents itself. Almost none of the media attention focused on Rice's policy, positive or negative.

Another element to consider is the return of employees from the original Bush administration. First, and most obvious, is Dick Cheney, Bush senior's former Secretary of Defense, and the incoming vice president. Then there's Powell, Andrew Card (Chief of Staff), Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense) and the list goes on. Wouldn't it have been wise for George W. to diversify his selections, not trying so hard to mirror the administration of his father — a man who received the lowest voter support of any sitting president-elect since Taft? Then again, Dubya must have quite a long list of favors to pay off to Bush family supporters and campaign donors.

In a town like Eugene, where the word 'diversity' is tossed as often as an ultimate Frisbee, it would serve us well to define what diversity actually means to our campus community and political climate. Is it only a rainbow of colors, or does it also include the diversity of policy and beliefs? While it is of paramount concern to support a climate of racial, cultural and gender equality, it should be equally important to support the diversity of ideas.

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