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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Diversity should be a discussion for all

The news that Erica Fuller, the former director of the Multicultural Center, would be resigning after spending only a year on campus came as somewhat of a shock. Fuller came to Eugene with an undeniable zeal for addressing campus diversity issues, and this spirit and enthusiasm made for quite an eventful year. But she found our weather mundane and said she had to return to the Florida sunshine from which she came.

Former student advocate for the University of California at Santa Cruz Steve Morozumi has replaced her.

As one of the largest student groups on campus, the MCC has a responsibility to both minority students and also to the campus in general. In her many activities on campus, Fuller attempted to bring out the differing viewpoints from the many non-white students on campus. Her efforts deserve praise, but in this time of transition it is important to remember that in promoting the needs of some on campus, one cannot forget the needs of others.

Too often discussions on race are reduced to a polarized debate between skin tones — those with a lighter shade of skin versus those with a darker shade. That has never been much of a problem here at the University, but steps can be taken to ensure it never is. Instead of one side placing the blame on the other or ignoring each other, the many groups on campus need to work together to form one coherent identity. We cannot point fingers at each other, but instead should look for mutually beneficial solutions to diversity questions.

One way to do this is for the MCC to continue to make an effort to promote the views of its members on campus in a way that does not alienate it from the rest of the campus. As much as the MCC wants to ensure its voice is heard, it and other groups need to be strong members of the campus community. Criticism should always be given where it is needed, but we need to avoid playing a "blame game" in our attempts to promote diversity on campus.

Morozumi, along with the rest of the MCC, is an excellent position to help facilitate a strong discussion on race and racial perception here on campus. As more non-white students come to the University, it will become even more imperative that these students feel welcome on campus. It is the responsibility of the majority of students to offer that welcome, but it is the responsibility of groups on campus representing those students to not closet them from the campus community. The groups should serve as a resource of support for those students, but not as their only en-

agement with campus life.

The problem with groups divided along cultural or ethnic lines is that there is a risk they will identify themselves first as members of that group before acknowledging being a member of the greater whole. No one is saying that the situation has become so polarized that the University identity has become lost; it just needs to be considered that we are in fact one whole community.

The MCC has always been one of the most visible groups on campus, and let's hope Morozumi helps keep it that way. But let's also hope that as the issues of race continue to be discussed, we can do it as one community and not as a group of factions in competition to be heard.

Gang of Nine refreshing

A certain group of folks with decidedly pro-development views have been the cause of some quite indignant outrage from many members of the Eugene community recently. The "Gang of Nine" has been poking fun at the Eugene City Council with professionally drawn cartoons that have appeared daily in advertising space in The Register-Guard since June 24.

The cartoons have inspired dozens of letters to local news publications and were the subject of a Register-Guard news story and several columns, one even authored by the newspaper's executive editor.

While the idea of a newspaper making a media buzz over its own advertising is another issue altogether, the ads are in and of themselves an interesting look at the Eugene community. Many critics of the cartoons are blasting them for what they say are mean-spirited depictions of councilors and the fact that those who paid for the ads are staying anonymous. Well, anyone who has any experience with editorial cartoons knows that caricatures are by their nature not supposed to reflect someone in his or her best light, and anonymity is anyone's right in the correct context, which advertising is.

What is refreshing is the fact that this campaign comes from the other side of the Eugene political spectrum. Most of the time, Eugene seems to operate in some sort of liberally progressive vacuum. And it is nice to see those on the other side of the fence making some noise.

This is not an endorsement for the Gang of Nine, but an endorsement for an active and engaging local political dialogue. So let the critics whine, but for the sake of good political debate, let's hope the gang doesn't stop getting its opinions heard.

This editorial represents the views of the Emerald's editor in chief and does not necessarily represent the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Condit harmed his own image

GUEST COMMENTARY

Philip Terzian

WASHINGTON — While the Senate drones on about a patients' bill of rights, and the pundits ponder the president's latest polls, the city is transfixed by a tragic mystery.

Sometime around April 30 or May 1, a 24-year-old woman named Chandra Ann Levy prepared to leave Washington to return to her parents in Modesto, Calif. Her internship at the Federal Bureau of Prisons was over, and she was expected at a hometown commencement to pick up her master's degree from the University of Southern California. Her apartment had been scrubbed, her luggage was packed, her bank account was closed and her airline voyage to California beckoned. But she never, apparently, arrived at Reagan National Airport. After several days, her frantic parents in California notified the Metropolitan Police in Washington, and the search was on.

It produced nothing. Apart from a few random sightings, including video footage from a convenience store, all within the period before her scheduled departure, Levy seems to have vanished. The police dredged the rivers, combed the parks and interviewed people who had known the young woman. Such standard procedures for missing persons came up empty, and given the general incompetence of District police, the case of Chandra Levy was destined for oblivion.

Except for two things. Unlike the families of other young women who have disappeared from the streets of Washington in the past few years, Levy's parents know something about working the media. With much fanfare,

they have made repeated visits to the District, posted notices around town, held a press conference and hired an attorney with connections to the Clinton/Lewinsky case.

And of greater interest, the unaccustomed spotlight that shone on Chandra Levy revealed a connection to 53-year-old Rep. Gary Condit, her hometown congressman. From the very beginning, Condit has characterized Levy as a "great person and a good friend," expressed his concern that she quickly be found and stoutly denied that their relations were anything other than correct. His staff has been called upon almost daily to issue categorical denials that Levy and Condit were lovers.

The pressure grew sufficiently intense, however, that Condit, too, was moved to hire a criminal lawyer with connections to the Clinton/Lewinsky case, one Abbe Lowell. As if on cue, Lowell issued a suitably Clintonian declaration: His client, he said, "has resisted and will continue to resist efforts by the media to dissect and mischaracterize his and his family's private lives. Unlike some, Congressman Condit remains singularly focused on what is and remains the central mission at this time — locating Chandra Levy."

What Lowell did not address, of course, was whether his client and Levy were lovers, or question the veracity of six other women who reportedly have come forward since Levy's disappearance to report their own affairs with Condit.

As always, in Washington, this is as much a lesson in public relations as a morality tale or whodunit. No one would much care if Condit had been yearning for love between quorum calls — "It's very lonely being a congressman," says a veteran Washington correspondent, with a smile — and befriending interns or redheaded flight at-

tendants. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine why a six-term congressman would have any good reason to harm Chandra Levy: Even if she had threatened to go public with their good friendship (she seems to have filled in any number of acquaintances with the details), his Golden State constituents would probably smile and shrug their shoulders. Condit is a muscular, self-infatuated fellow who once posed for a calendar of Capitol pinup boys.

Yet, from the beginning, the congressman has issued a series of self-serving pronouncements, contradictory at times, certainly cryptic and vague, now filtered through the mouthpiece of Abbe Lowell. His wife was first described as something of an invalid, back home in California, but is now shown to be a healthy, good-looking blonde who was present in Washington when Levy disappeared. The police have complained that their interviews with Condit have been frustrating (although that could be explained by the officers' competence) and Mrs. Condit long refused even to talk with the cops.

In any case, no matter the truth, Condit has done nearly all that he could to make himself an object of suspicion and conjecture. And at some cost: His self-immolation forced him to cancel public appearances in Modesto, his party's leadership is leaking suggestions that he quit, and he has hired Marina Ein, a PR consultant with disaster expertise. The worst sign, however, has come from the media. Having carefully avoided partisan labels, reporters now refer to Gary Condit as a "right-wing Democrat." There's no avoiding the fact that Condit is a Democrat; it's the "right-wing" part that makes sense of it all.

Philip Terzian is the associate editor of the Providence Journal. Courtesy of Knight-Ridder Tribune.



Steve Baggs for the Emerald