

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Brooklyn, Nair's year began with full plate, ended in mediocrity

Former ASUO Executives Nil-da Brooklyn and Joy Nair have had a long year, and we are thankful new ASUO Execs Rachel Pilliod and Ben Buzbee are now working to pick up the slack from this year's mediocre student body leaders. The former executives did make some headway on their original campaign promises — namely by reducing, but not eliminating, the student energy fee. All things considered, Brooklyn and Nair's reign met with fair success at times, but the pair did not live up to our expectations as student leaders.

The ASUO's "Doin' it in the Dark" campaign had limited interest from students, but it was a small victory for the ASUO office. Brooklyn and Nair were able to reduce the \$30 energy fee in fall term to \$20 winter term and \$15 spring term. But all of the Exec's public promotion of conservation and the elimination of the fee seemed to disappear six months ago, after the first reduction. And the original campaign promise was to eliminate the \$30 fee altogether.

We were also disappointed with other campaign promises that were not met during the course of the year. Brooklyn and Nair's original platform included creating a housing code for Eugene, improving the residence halls and reaching out to average students through the ASUO.

Brooklyn and Nair did some vague work to create a housing code but appeared to give up on the project after they had invested so much energy in conservation efforts. They ended the year without a formal draft of the code for the city of Eugene or an outline of their accomplishments for their successors to pick up where they left off.

Residence hall standards were hardly promoted after the pair entered office and the current executives don't have any guidelines or suggestions to continue the project. Residence halls continue to decline in livability, but the executives failed to make housing improvements a top priority.

All of the ASUO Exec candidates for 2002-2003 election criticized Brooklyn and Nair's accessibility. At the Emerald, many reporters also experienced difficulty reaching the women, and they were infamous for declining comment for stories or simply not returning phone calls.

The executives' office never finished completing the ASUO Green Tape Notebook during the year, a main administrative duty of the ASUO president and vice-president. The incoming executives will have to pick up the slack on that project as well, even though Brooklyn and Nair should have completed the notebook months ago.

The pair did make connections with several key student leaders in unions but had no impact on the majority of average students. Brooklyn said herself that she wished she had been able to engage more people in the ASUO during her tenure.

Brooklyn and Nair did make progress in registering students to vote. Voters, especially student voters, are notoriously difficult to motivate. With so much voter apathy, it was amazing 10 tickets emerged during the ASUO election this year.

We were taken aback by Brooklyn and Nair's enormous sign that gave a countdown of days they had left in office. The "Getting the fuck out countdown" was so big, it dwarfed all of the other fliers in their office. With an exit so ungraceful, we wonder if they had good intentions at the start but became jaded in the end.

Overall, we saw Brooklyn and Nair make their biggest strides in fall term, but we thought they rested on their laurels for the rest of the year. We hope future executives learn from their mistakes, and the mistakes of many past executives — pick a few tangible issues that have a real measure of success and go after them. Making campaign promises is a way to get elected, but taking on too many projects at once can come back to haunt executives in the end.

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CLARIFICATION

Monday's commentary ("Rewarding achievement with celebrity," ODE, June 3) incorrectly identified Rose Festival participants as princesses. The correct term is ambassadors.

Steve Baggs Emerald



Diversity action affirms all races

GUEST COMMENTARY

Tomas
Hulick

This is in response to Jeff Oliver's May 29 column entitled "Judging people by the color of their skin." Oliver's letter is a well-intentioned, though desperately uninformed, attempt to discredit the notion of racial/ethnic diversity in favor of universal acceptance. While I have many issues with the views Oliver expresses, let me start with three things I think he gets right:

- "Diversity" is a university "buzzword." Agreed. It has become a mantra we in campus settings have repeated so often that we increasingly fail to engage its true meaning and purpose.
- You "can't judge people on the color of their skin and expect to succeed." Right again. In a deeply racialized society, all of us must constantly strive to break free from our essentialist understanding of "race."
- White Americans are all too often assumed to be monolithic (i.e., "non-diverse") simply because they're white. Bingo. Bigotry and prejudice have no color (though I might remind Oliver that the tendency to prejudice on the basis of skin color is a crucial element of racial oppression that has served Anglos extremely well).

That being said, I must express extreme disappointment with Oliver's woefully under-researched views on affirmative action in college admissions, especially as applied by the University of Michigan. I worked for Michigan's Office of Undergraduate Admissions for two years, and never once did I deny admission to a student because they were white, nor did I ever say anything like, "Great, this kid's black. The heck with his GPA." The fact is, Mr. Oliver, that affirmative action in admissions — the policy which seeks to increase racial and ethnic diversity on college campuses — isn't just for students of color. Look around your next class and witness what affirmative action has done for white women. Forty years ago, women were a novelty in American universities; now they constitute better than 53 percent of the University student body. You tell me if affir-

native action has not worked for white women.

Moving to the issue of geographical diversity, Oliver smugly states that his background as a middle-class Midwesterner who grew up on a cul-de-sac brings an element of diversity to the University, thereby showing that we cannot define diversity and its benefits solely on the basis of skin color. Guess what: He's right, and affirmative action policies at Michigan and elsewhere are designed to benefit students from underrepresented recruitment territories. As a Michigan recruiter, it gave me great pleasure to visit students at some of the "whitest," most rural high schools you could imagine and inform them that, in the interest of campus diversity, I could use affirmative action policies to help them get into one of the country's most competitive universities. Think any of these farm kids complained about racial injustice when I sent them an admit letter? Not once.

Jeff Oliver's central theme — that we cannot judge people by the color of their skin — is laudable. Nevertheless, the oft-repeated "skin color doesn't matter" axiom falls flat when students of color are burdened every day by subtle and not-so-subtle messages of alienation and exclusion. If Oliver believes that students of color on campus have been granted admission due to the color of their skin, then one can not help but wonder if he thinks we belong here at all.

Incidentally, I can assure you, Mr. Oliver, that if you applied to Michigan I would never have denied you for being white. Ignorant, yes. White, no.

Tomas Hulick Baiza is the University assistant director of admissions for multicultural recruitment.

Letter to the editor

Not everyone has super-white skin

I'm writing about the recent article "Blister In The Sun" (ODE, May 29). It seemed to me like the Emerald was supposing that almost everyone has the super-white northern European skin type that cannot handle the sun.

I believe at least some of us evolved under the sun and consequently not only can handle sun, but require it for physiological balance. And this includes the ultraviolet light as well.

Have you ever heard of studies by Dr. Ott? I think he found that UV light is necessary in order for some hormonal balance in our bodies. If I al-

ways wear sunglasses, my vision will become weak, and I may be more depressed. My eyes will not know how to deal with the natural sunlight so essential for life on this planet. Maybe the Emerald should print an article on this topic as well.

My main concern was the fact that the article seemed to neglect people that do not burn (usually) and people with pigmented skin. Will I live 10 years longer if I wear manmade chemicals on my skin everyday? Maybe the Emerald could also look into naturally occurring sunscreens. Thanks for listening, and please, the sun is not evil.

Guru Rattan Khalsa
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