

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

## EDITORIAL

# 4J Chavez campaign must look beyond race

Some 150 people converged on the 4J District Education Center on Friday, calling for the almost-finished "Southside" elementary school to be named after late activist Cesar Chavez, who fought for migrant farm workers' rights and founded the United Farm Workers Union.

Spurred by a March 1 work session, where few school district board members favored the suggestion, supporters blended calls for recognition of a leader with criticism of the education board.

One of the common arguments for naming Southside after Chavez is a simple matter of demographics:

"There are enough (Latino) students that it's important to see something that reflects them and who they are," said Guadalupe Quinn, program coordinator for the Network of Immigrant Justice.

This argument becomes problematic when it is extended into a full-blown appeal to racial collectivism.

"There is no other recognition for Latino leaders, and we want some recognition for the work we do," eighth-grader Xochitl Soto told the Eugene Weekly.

Cordoning off groups of people according to racial affiliation and naming public institutions for the sake of "honoring" communities of one race or another necessarily constitutes a more racially divisive policy, harmfully dividing a community instead of unifying it. And such is the problem with so many of the Chavez supporters' arguments.

Beth Gorot, the chairwoman of the embattled board, addressed claims of implicit racism, telling The Register-Guard, "I think that the message that our community needs to hear is that we are listening, we appreciate the thoughtful input we have been getting from our community, we appreciate the input and we're trying to make the best decision."

Javier Ayala, of the group Educación y Justicia, is dissatisfied with the board's efforts: "It's time that they really walked the talk."

In what is some of the worst rhetoric to date, and one of the worst plays of the race card the Editorial Board has seen in recent memory, Ayala effectively equates any board decision (other than the one he favors) to racism, drawing attention away from the more meaningful issue at hand. Despite all the bad rhetoric tarnishing the argument, there are several compelling reasons why the board may wish to name the school after Chavez, not the least of which is that so many community members argue it's a well-deserved honor for an important leader.

The presumptive purpose of naming a school after a person is to recognize individuals who have made positive contributions, and Chavez certainly fits that bill. His contributions improved the quality of life not only of Latino farm workers, but of farm workers of all races.

Johnny Lake of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs emphasized this point elegantly, telling The Register-Guard, "Whether there is one Latino in Eugene or 100,000 Latinos in Eugene, he was a man who deserves this honor."

Picking a namesake for the school on the basis of race reduces the recognition of legacy to tokenism, and certainly Chavez deserves better, no matter what the board decides.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

## BRITAIN LEGALIZES GENETICALLY MODIFIED CORN



Steve Baggs Illustration

## The splendor of spring

*I see trees of green, red roses too  
 I see them bloom for me and you  
 And I think to myself, what a wonderful world*

*I see skies of blue and clouds of white  
 The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night  
 And I think to myself, what a wonderful world*

—Louis Armstrong

It's springtime. The spring equinox isn't for another ten days, but it's springtime.

I slept with my bedroom windows thrown open to the stars last night, and dreamed of bare feet on cool green grass. I woke up to the sounds of birds: blue jays, robins and a small drab brown bird that I couldn't identify but that looked to be a member of the sparrow family.

Two of my roommates spent yesterday working in the yard. They threw out any pretense of studying for their finals, instead planting bulbs that should have been in the ground months ago and building a small fence around the compost pile. In the background Louis Armstrong serenaded the world through doors and windows flung open to spring's breezes.

After a long dark winter, spring in the Willamette Valley is a call that cannot go



Aimee Rudin

Five feet of fury

unanswered.

Spring gets into my mind and into my blood, distracting me from term papers that need to be washed. Spring speaks to me. It insists that I weed the vegetable garden that has lain dormant since October's first bite of frost.

My golden retriever, Hayward, spent yesterday lolling in the grass that has suddenly gone from short and brown to lush, green and in need of a mow. He refused to come inside; rather he laid by the back door with his head on the jamb and a tennis ball in his mouth, inviting someone to come play with him in the glorious weather.

Hayward is right — there are better things to do than sit in front of the computer. Better ways to waste a day.

Recently, I have spent so much time worrying about what I am going to do with my life that I have sort of forgotten to live it. I need to get outside and try to remember why I came to the University in the first place. I need to plant my vegetables and play with my dog. I need to take the time to eat sitting down rather than standing over the sink.

Everyday we make a bit of our own destiny. With the choices we make and the projects we undertake we shape our lives, and so it seems simple — if you want to have a good life then you have to make good choices. My choice today is to rejoice in this world I have been given the grace to be born into. Today, I thank the world for springtime.

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 This is my last piece for the Emerald. I would like to take a few lines to thank everyone who has read my articles and columns during the past year. Thank you for your e-mails and letters, your words of support and your suggestions. Thank you for picking up the paper.

Contact the columnist at aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## EPD, OLCC strong-arm students

I find the idea that the Eugene Police Department can, and will, use undercover officers to "pro-actively" prevent riots a little disturbing. Sgt. Terry Fitzpatrick claims that "These are the parties that start riots," but

if that is EPD's way of dealing with it, why stop at just parties? I will see my ex-girlfriend at a party tonight; will EPD be undercover there to "pro-actively" prevent a domestic disturbance? I understand that being pro-active can be helpful in many situations, but I don't think EPD should be

using its authority to go around under the assumption that a riot will break out.

EPD isn't the only organization guilty of these questionable tactics, as the Oregon Liquor Control Commission has shown no hesitance in abusing its power. Drums, speakers and a laptop were alcohol-related? You show me a party where a laptop is a main attraction, and I'll show you a party where a riot is definitely not going to break out. The idea that OLCC can back up its strong-arm tactics with vague concepts such as "alcohol-related" is also something that should raise eyebrows all around Eugene. I'd love to see a working definition of that term, because the items they seem to consider related to

alcohol could truly open the door for them to confiscate anything in that house.

I own a guitar and a keyboard, and I am now afraid to have parties at my house because of the chance of losing those expensive items. In all my years of playing these instruments, I still haven't come up with a way to use them to drink alcohol, but I guess OLCC seems to know something we all don't. I'm all for the safety and well-being of others, but there needs to be a line drawn between EPD and OLCC carrying out their needed functions and walking all over helpless students.

Kirk McGuire is a junior studying journalism.