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FURTWANGLER
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■ In my opinion

Starving for appearances

For decades, America has been falling wholeheartedly into a culture that promotes eating disorders. Television programs and the media in general create a symbolic order wherein women are important, successful and visible only when subscribing to a certain physical appearance. And while issues with image are certainly a problem for those of all shapes and sizes, ages, and genders, the problem is severely and obviously polarized toward affecting young women. As of late, though, we haven't been hearing much about eating disorders.

There seems to be a silent pact between media and industry that agrees to shy away from details of bulimic actresses or national death counts from anorexia and instead focuses on the ideal of a health-conscious society. America is now all about eating healthier, getting more exercise and living a better life. As laudable as these goals are, it is upsetting to see that a nationwide discussion of eating disorders has gotten lost among low carb potato chips and pricey abdominal machines.

It is dangerous indeed to discuss eating disorders when our consumer industry is now so heavily based upon selling products to promote diet and exercise, the fear being that if people concentrate upon ending eating disorders, they might by default become overly critical of weight loss programs and supplements. America's weight problem is hardly a problem for the surge of businesses with products based upon consumers having bad body image.

We can tell ourselves that we are trying to work out and eat right in order to be healthy, but the truth remains that most of this nation is trying to be healthy in order to look good. A host of new diets and health plans only mask the problem of both disease and health, convincing the average American that



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

eating disorders have been replaced with healthy living choices.

To clearly understand that this new diet mania is coming from an obsession with physical appearance rather than bodily well being, consider this fact: Heart disease is the number one killer of women in America, yet there is little campaigning to end heart problems and certainly none that is anywhere near the scale of our current nationwide promotion to end weight problems. We may see an occasional public service message directed toward women's need to fight heart disease, but I guarantee that not a single commercial break or magazine issue can be found without at least one call to women to "get healthy" by improving their body.

Not to overlook the problem of eating disorders for men. Males too find themselves caught up in a slew of promotions for a good body. However, men have not been subjected to the same systemic assault of intense body-worship as women.

The message, primarily to women, is that keeping one's body healthy and happy is only important when that body will be viewed by someone else. Heart disease is kind of important, but an extra roll around the stomach is actually life threatening. Women are learning to be healthy not for themselves, but for others. In a heterosexist society, this means that our national goal of beating obesity is becoming a sad repeat of women's bodies being exploited for the

viewing purposes of men.

Advertisers and producers in America can claim they are working against obesity in order to create a healthier nation, but in reality they are preying upon a nation of insecure women in order to sell more products. And for every company or campaign truly acting to promote healthier choices, there are ten businesses exploiting a new national ideal of healthiness as just another mechanism to convince young women that physical appearance should be valued above all else.

It cannot be denied that our nation does have a relatively high rate of dangerous obesity. However, much of this problem is based on national rather than individual choices. In a society built upon getting to the top through a go-go attitude, eating choices tend to be quick and refined. Likewise, with a longer work week and less vacation time than other countries, it is no wonder that Americans are less likely to take an hour a day to exercise, or even an extra 10 minutes to walk rather than drive to the grocery store.

A healthy nation and an eating disorder-free nation need not be mutually exclusive. In order to accomplish the goal of true health, our society must avert its priorities away from physical appearance as reigning value and promote healthiness while also recognizing the harms and prevalence of eating disorders. Almost any woman will tell you that dieting doesn't stick because concentrating on food and weight only breeds resentment toward the body. As long as the women of our nation believe they must be skinny to feel attractive, the idea of being healthy to feel good will continue to get lost in the cycle of exploitation.

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■ Editorial

Grievances necessary, but could disillusion

In the world of elections, there is surely no phrase that elicits as many shudders of disgust as the infamous "recount." The 2000 Florida fiasco exemplifies, in a very muddled manner, the two most important facets of a democratic nation: the right of every citizen to have a voice and the right of every citizen to speak up if they believe some of those voices are being stifled. Unfortunately, those two noble values often clash and result in a messy obstruction of justice.

The situation that erupted late last week concerning the ASUO executive primary election is one example of such a clash.

On Friday, the Emerald broke a story concerning three grievances filed against the executive campaign of Ashley Rees and Jael Anker-Lagos ("Executive campaign efforts elicit grievances," ODE, April 8). After a clarification of rules, the ASUO Election Board dismissed two of the grievances against the ticket. The last grievance, concerning a student affiliated with the campaign who violated election rules, resulted in a sanctioned ban on the Rees-Anker-Lagos ticket campaigning until Monday.

The trouble did not end there.

With just hours remaining in the primary election, ASUO Student Senator Kevin Day filed a grievance with the ASUO Constitution Court on Friday, alleging that the Election Board had shown preference toward the Rees-Anker-Lagos campaign and lacked impartiality. Day's request for an injunction was honored, and ASUO primary elections grounded to a dead stop. Primary results could not be released until the court was able to dismiss Day's grievance Sunday afternoon, freeing up the Election Board to rule on two other grievances it had received, which were holding up the process as well.

Sound like a headache? We think so too.

These situations require a delicate touch. We believe it is of the utmost importance that students be allowed to express their voices by filing grievances, just as Day did. Partisan politics have no place in the Election Board, but the grievance brought up more questions than answers.

What would have happened had the court ruled in favor of Day's grievance? Would it have necessitated an extension of the primary election, or perhaps an entirely new election? A re-vote could have been yet another stepping stone in convincing an already disinterested student body that their vote doesn't count.

It is also worthwhile to consider the timeliness of Day's filing. Why wait until the very end of primaries to file the complaint, especially after the Election Board ruled against the Rees-Anker-Lagos campaign?

The important goal at this point is to move on to the general election before a frustrated student body becomes fed up with the process. The Emerald calls for a swift and clean general election, and we ask the candidates to stifle their ridiculous pleas of ignorance regarding the very simple rules that govern the election process and to refrain from sketchy campaigning tactics. We also advise the ASUO to make moves to tighten the election rules with the hope of preventing these bureaucratic and judicial traffic jams in the future.

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