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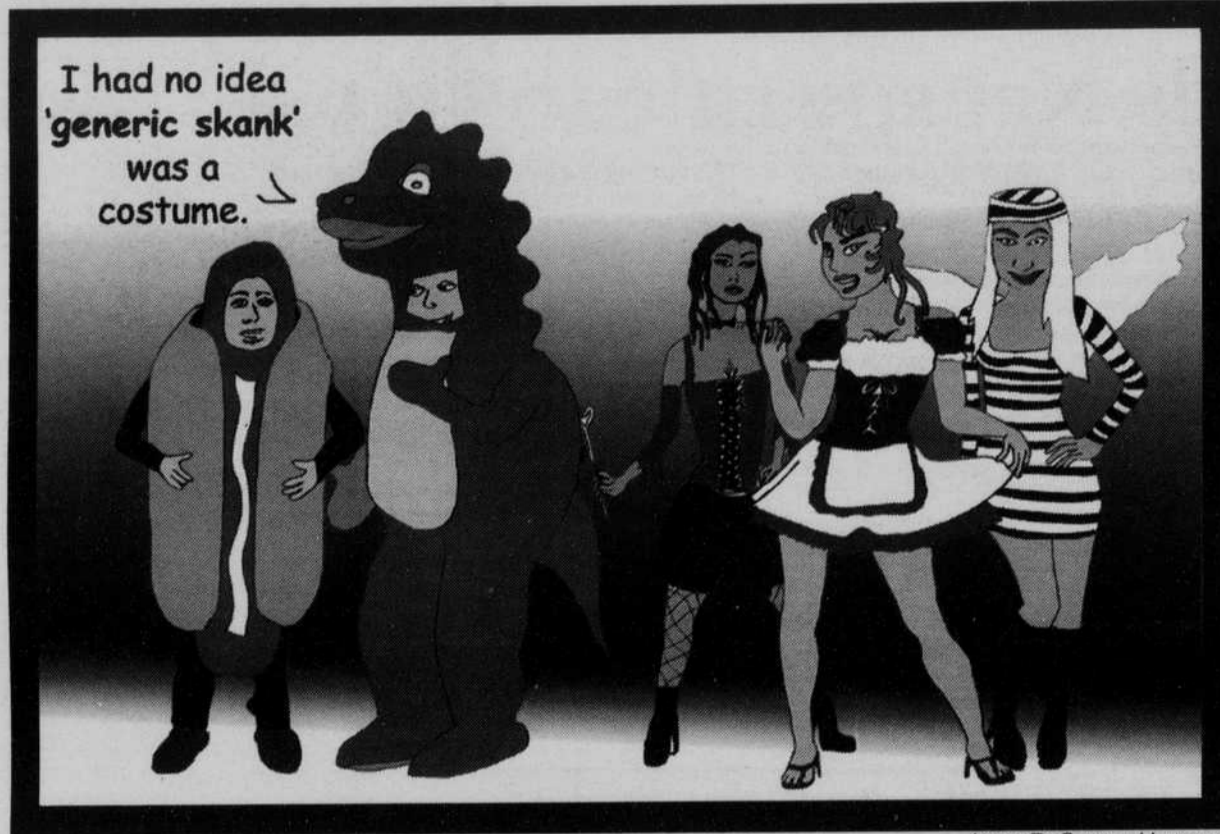
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AARON DUCHATEAU | ILLUSTRATOR

■ Guest commentary

Keep Westmoreland housing; lots of students depend on it

On Oct. 20, Westmoreland residents received a letter from Mr. Mike Eyster, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs & Director of University Housing, stating that "the University of Oregon intends to request action by the Oregon University System State Board of Higher Education to sell Westmoreland Apartments." The next day, University Housing officials were quoted by the Oregon Daily Emerald as saying that there are two reasons for the sale: One is high maintenance costs, another is the high potential cost of repairing the major structural problems on the site.

Westmoreland tenants are shocked by this news.

Selling Westmoreland will not only hurt Westmoreland residents, but the entire University community. If the University sells the Westmoreland Apartments and Children's Center, student families must face the miserable choice between letting their children and themselves starve in order to find a safe place to live, or quitting school altogether. In addition, the University, with 20,339 total students enrolled (6,013 graduate students), will have a greatly decreased

amount of apartments, houses and childcare centers for student families to fight over. What a shame.

It is worth noting that the decision-making process of this unreasonable action is also against the "policies and procedures" on the Oregon Administrative Rules. OAR (571-022-0025) made it clear that before any non-emergency action may be taken by University Housing, it shall submit to the Family Housing Board for discussion and review all proposals in the areas such as "changes in long-range planning policies." Westmoreland tenants and representatives never heard such an issue discussed until Oct. 20.

Westmoreland residents also noticed the information University officials released to the public is inaccurate and misleading. The following quotes and facts are from "University officials aim to sell Westmoreland Apartments," ODE, Oct. 21:

1. "High maintenance costs and the high potential cost of repairing the major structural problems on the site."

In fact, just as Mr. Eyster said in the letter, Westmoreland Apartments have

been well maintained although they are 45 years old (some housing in the east campus area is 60 to 80 years old). Westmoreland even generates extra money to pay the commercial loan for Spencer View Apartments, according to last year's Family Housing Board meetings.

As for the so-called major structural problem, it actually does not exist. Tenant representatives were told last year at the University Housing Board meetings that Westmoreland is well designed and the apartments could easily last for another 50 or even 100 years with good maintenance and management.

2. "We started out full, with a lot of demand, and that's not really the case right now. ... There are only 360 leaseholders (out of 404 apartments)."

It used to be true that University Housing allowed students from Lane Community College, Northwest Christian College and the Eugene Bible College to reside at Westmoreland when vacancies were available. Some of them are still current Westmoreland residents. But this is no longer true. Why did University Housing raise the eligibility standards

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INBOX

University needs to answer housing questions

In response to the University's proposal to sell the Westmoreland complex, I must voice a few concerns. Thursday afternoon I received a letter in my mailbox informing me that my home will most likely be sold, and that I will have to move this summer. I am a graduate student, a GTF, and a Westmoreland resident. The University wants to sell my home because it isn't profitable and because it doesn't serve "families." Since when does Mike Eyster or University Housing get to define what a family is? My partner and I chose Westmoreland because it was the only affordable choice for us — a student couple with no children. The University provides housing for single

graduate students, undergraduates and "families." Evidently, because we don't have children, we are not a family.

We live on my GTF stipend, my partner's work study and combined money from loans. The rent at Westmoreland is the rent we can afford. The University says that the community has plenty of housing to take up the slack. However, the average price of a one bedroom apartment not subsidized by the University is about \$150-\$200 more a month than the \$355 that we now pay. My partner and I barely cover expenses as is; does the University have any advice as to how to make up that extra \$150-\$200 and still meet basic needs? I have a few more questions I would like the University to answer:

1. Do you intend to help the "non-

families" that reside at Westmoreland find student housing or affordable off-campus housing?

2. Do you intend to subsidize the moving expenses of the approximately 600 residents of Westmoreland?

3. Do you intend to explicitly reveal, instead of vaguely allude to, what you will do with the profit you make from selling our homes?

Westmoreland residents: Do not sit idly by and let the University sell your home. The Oregon State Board of Higher Education has to approve the proposal. Let the Board know how this seemingly innocuous and profit-based proposal will affect you and your family.

Darlene Hampton
English Department GTF,
Westmoreland resident

■ Editorial

Community must speak out about harassment

In response to alleged racist comments and death threats, a freshman from Hawaii left the University during the first week of classes. University administrators have responded to the incident by saying that the University needs to make an effort to better inform students and parents about support services on campus and to examine them to see how the harassment went undetected.

It is admirable that administrators are trying to figure out how to prevent similar instances from occurring. But the real problem is that someone attacked Zane Lobetos because of his race, causing him to feel so threatened and isolated that he decided to withdraw.

According to an e-mail to administrators from Lobetos' parents, he "was verbally attacked with racial and derogatory remarks," threatened with physical harm and received death threats on the door of his Carson Hall room. The e-mail circulated in the weeks following his departure and rumors swirled surrounding the incident, reaching as far as communities in Hawaii.

As of Tuesday, facts about the incident were not available because no witnesses have come forward. University officials were unaware of the alleged harassment until Lobetos left the University and they hadn't been able to contact Lobetos directly. What is clear, however, is that something profoundly disturbing happened at our University and relevant facts must be brought to light.

We must ponder who should be held responsible for this flagrant incident. The individual or individuals who made the alleged remarks should clearly be accountable for their actions. But other students and administrators also share some of the burden. As for students, we urge anyone with specific knowledge about the incident to come forward. Administrators should take note that perhaps incoming students need a more detailed orientation about support services on campus. These programs can't be effective if new students don't know how to find them or don't feel comfortable using them.

We also encourage students to speak up about instances like this when they occur. When students feel threatened, they may not report harassment for fear of retaliation. But suffering in silence isolates individuals and gives power to the minority of people who perpetrate racism.

Exposing harassment may be embarrassing to us as students, and rightly so. It is embarrassing that anyone here would be cruel enough to do the things described by the e-mail from Lobetos' parents.

This incident may have damaged our credibility in Hawaii; Interim Vice Provost for Institutional Equity and Diversity Charles Martinez and possibly University President Dave Frohnmayer are going to devote part of a future trip to Hawaii to addressing concerns regarding Lobetos' situation.

Lobetos' case also exemplifies a larger issue. As Hawaii Club co-Director Nestor Ugale recently told the Emerald, it's likely this incident isn't an isolated case. How many other students feel threatened or discriminated against but don't take any action?

We are shocked that this sort of flagrant behavior would happen on campus. Administrators and student groups have taken steps to create a welcoming environment and a more diverse mix of students, but these efforts are in vain if students espouse racist attitudes.