

Letters to the Editor

Darris, student respond to diversity coverage

*(Editor's note: In the diversity coverage that appeared in the last issue of The Print, we quoted Dean Darris, political science instructor, as a source. Darris feels we misrepresented his statements and used his quote out of context. The following are Darris' thoughts, in full, regarding the diversity plan, The Clackamas Print, and his views in general.)*

Dear Editor,

I was looking forward to reading the article concerning the Diversity Plan, hoping it would help shed some light, instead of mere heat, on the complex question of social, intellectual, and moral diversity.

Fortunately, the article and its attendant comments, in general, seemed to do just that; unfortunately, my comments, in particular, did not. That is, I discovered that it was my comments that radiated the heat while generating very little of the light. Quotes such as "you're all being screwed equally" - independent of the context in which they were given - do very little in the way of education and seem to be nothing more than inflammatory and ignorant - for this I apologize to my community, my students, and my colleagues.

As a political scientist I take very seriously the demands of social justice and it is with this intent that I would like to provide the context lacking from my quotes.

Let me be very clear from the outset that I support whatever justice demands. And, there can be little question that justice - whatever else it is - demands that persons be granted equal concern and respect regardless of their race, sex, ethnic backgrounds, religion, sexual identity, class, etc. Nonetheless, justice also demands that plans or programs or goals

claiming to support a just social order must respect the complexity that this enterprise entails.

If we are really concerned with promoting the values of dignity and respect (and I know we are) then we simply cannot ignore the reality of economic prejudice in contemporary life. How can any of us be so self-congratulatory about our enlightened state, when so many members of our Clackamas community face an uncertain - dare I say desperate - future given the present realities of their economic conditions?

Also, if the purpose of the plan is to help instill a sense of our respect and appreciation for others, then how come there is so little expressed concern in the plan that most of our global neighbors live in abject poverty? As a matter of conjecture, could it be that much of the passion expressed at the diversity forum was, rather, a manifestation of the intuitive sense of powerlessness that these students feel given the economic realities they face?

It is time - as an academic institution of higher learning - to entertain this question: Are sexism and racism, in fact, the primary obstacles to social justice in America? I posit the following opinion: Racism and sexism are very sick beasts (which makes them easy targets?) that are dying, if a bit slowly, of both their own intellectual deficiencies and because dedicated individuals refused to accept them as guiding ideals of social reality.

To be sure, there still remains a few pockets of ignorance, but they hold very little sway on the vast majority of persons and simply do not account for the primary acts of social and institutional prejudice in America. The general institutional agreement with the intent, if not substance, of the plan attests to this social fact.

But, in their place, an old

beast is thriving, one that is sophisticated and charming, where the others were crude and obnoxious. This one speaks the language of freedom and democracy while it practices their antithesis - namely classism.

I know it is not popular or trendy to question the gospel of "free market economies;" hence, so much more the need for academics to do so. One of the high purposes of an academic institution is to set a normative example for society as a whole. Is this not one of the purposes of the plan? Or, is it only appropriate to question a prejudice when that particular prejudice is no longer socially acceptable? In other words, do we lead best from behind? Let us not forget that racism and sexism themselves used to be, not only popular, but academic orthodoxy as well.

Therefore, when asked if I thought the "plan" was applicable to the issues facing students today, I replied, in effect, that given the general economic situation of most Clackamas students - regardless of sex or race - they are "all being screwed equally." That is, institutional America already grants all working class persons equal concern and respect - which is to say, none at all.

In short, my comments were not an indictment of the plan, but rather, a plea that we make it meaningful. We could do this by having the intellectual courage to examine prejudices that all of us may actually share, instead of ones we already know we should not perpetuate. That is, education is about exposing successes against it. It is in this context that my comments were made, and I guess this does prove that with all complex ideas, be it justice, diversity, or whatever, context is everything.

Dean Darris,  
Political Science Instructor

Dear Editor,

The rumor around campus has it that the "proposed" changes in CCC's existing, approved Affirmative Action Plan, the focus of the recent campus forum, is anything but "proposed," but is, in fact, a done deal.

As a paying student at CCC and a taxpayer resident of Clackamas County, I am curious, in light of the recent Proposition 5 funding cuts, as to how these changes ("pursue grant monies and/or release time for faculty to develop/modify classes to meet 'diversity content' criteria... research 'Diversity Awareness Programs' used in other institutions... research techniques used by other colleges...") are to be funded.

Isn't CCC also faced with further funding cuts at the state level when the revenue sharing, rich school/poor school formula begins next year?

I also object to their politically correct and indoctrinaire tone: "clarify/define criteria for 'diversity content' ... Examine existing courses for current 'diversity content.'"

There is also the danger of a new orthodoxy being imposed upon possible hires: "establish and use a set of 'standard' questions regarding diversity/cultural issues for all position openings." This gem is from

the Original Draft 11-21-94 (Goal 5 part i) and it should be pointed out that this point was footnoted (with a double asterisk) stating, "We recommend these strategies be done immediately." If anyone doesn't conform to this new orthodoxy, he/she need not apply. How tolerant.

This should frighten the socks off of everyone because it is reminiscent of the new incarnation of Afghanistan, where only Muslims may hold public office or public employment (and where non-Muslims organizations are outlawed) and the former Soviet Union, where only party members in good standing could hope to advance.

Good Grief, Martha, grab the scatter gun, the thought police are at the door!

The odd thing is that, if these goals begin to be enacted, what you will end up with is a group of people employed at this institution who are homogenous in their outlook and philosophy, which seems to me to be the very antithesis of what the "diversity plan" had hoped to accomplish. Or is that, in fact, the true intent and purpose of this plan?

If it is true that, it is, indeed a "done deal," then the recent diversity forum was a charade and a farce.

A "gut level reactionar[y]"  
Terry Koivisto

Corrections Box

In the article titled "ASG invites students to Dance: Friday, May 26," we printed some incorrect information. The following information is the correct concerning the ASG dance. Photo identification is required for admission. The dance will be from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. There will be '70s, '80s and '90s music. The contest that will be held will be for the best dressed from each decade, as well as a dancing contest. The live band Grocery will play from 1 to 2 a.m. for more information, contact ASG at 2247.

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