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by Molière



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JAMES BATEMAN

'I am a person.' -Elliott Cook

diversity horizon. Springfield High School has a human rights club for students that packs a classroom with its meetings. Lane County Circuit Court Judge Cindy Carlson coordinates the Eugene chapter of Oregon Uniting, where interracial groups of 12 to 15 people communicate for six weeks in a weekly two-hour meeting. In these meetings, people can come together to build trust, which eventually leads to open communication, and eventually understanding.

Greg Rikohoff says that some issues of discrimination stem from avarice, that people don't want to share the resources of the community. But Elliott Cook says, "I am a person." This seems to sum up the general sentiment of all the people I talked to for this story: It isn't special treatment or the lion's share of resources that they seek; rather it is to be normal, pedestrian members of the community. The people in this story are only the tip of the iceberg: Latin, Asian, even Samoan communities all exist in this town. Is Eugene ready and willing to have them stay and flourish?

Home

My favorite place in Eugene is the five o'clock No. 37 bus, packed as it is with students going home to Westmoreland student housing on 18th and others heading home from work. There are Japanese women in urban outfits and clunky shoes; Chinese men in white button-down shirts and high-water slacks in gray or brown. There are

Middle Eastern women wearing sparkly gold jewelry and East Indians with skin and hair as dark as mine.

There are punk rock kids with orange mohawks and pierced faces. A man in a North Face Gore-Tex raincoat balances two paper bags of groceries on his lap. There is a woman with a violin. Babies and children ride in tow with young parents; elderly folks teeter and shuffle on canes or walkers to the seats that people give up for them.

At the back of the bus, three teen-aged boys in baggy Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren Polo discuss in their best city talk the "chick in Civics who is fine." They pronounce it "foyne" and they sound like rap stars on MTV.

There are four black men behind me, tall and very dark. They speak energetically, sometimes all at once. I don't know the language, but it hints at some French and the lilt of something Caribbean. I think they are discussing classes or exams. It sounds like, "Tra la la, tra la la, tra la la, microbiology, tra la la..."

The bus whooshes to a stop at Westmoreland and I stand waiting for a place in line to get off. One of the black men stops in the aisle and gestures broadly with an extended arm for me to go ahead. I smile and he smiles back.

I love the No. 37 because it feels like the potential of Eugene, where people are different, yet safe and inconspicuous; it feels like a home where I could stay forever.

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