

To The Editor,

I am writing to protest the Red Ruffensor comic strip that appeared in the November 16th Vol.23 No.26 issue of the City Collegian. In the last panel of the strip, an Asian given a demeaning name was depicted gritting his prominent front teeth, squinting his slanted eyes, cringing foolishly, and spitting out broken english. I regard the printing of the "Ding Dong" character as an act of racial harassment.

Acting on behalf of the Asian/Pacific Islander Student Union (A.P.S.U.), I scheduled a meeting on November 21st to discuss the publication of this cartoon. Those in attendance were Dr. Mildred Ollee, Dean of Students; Michael Doane, City Collegian Faculty-Advisor; John Lewis, City Collegian Editor In Chief; Sandra Scroeder, Vietnamese Student Organization Faculty Advisor; Tuan Vu, Vietnamese Student Organization President; and myself, A.P.S.U. President. The cartoonist was conspicuous by his absence.

Judging from the outcome of the meeting, the only reasonable conclusion I can make is that the City Collegian editorial staff is ignorant as to the tremendous significance of the cartoon. This characterization of Asians is a graphic representation of the degree to which our society is permeated by racism. The fact that a cartoon like this can be approved for publication is an indication of the level that racism has been institutionalized in our College.

Printing such negative stereotypes in a state-endorsed school newspaper such as the City Collegian gives permission to practice racism, and sends the message that it is acceptable to commit discriminatory acts.

The editorial staff stated clearly that they were completely unaware of the racist nature of the cartoon. They expressed what I believed to be their sincere personal apologies. However: when a formal apology printed in the next issue was requested, the editorial staff cited several sets of special rules and regulations for journalists that apparently excuse them from taking direct responsibility for their work. It should be pointed out that rules and regulations are for use as general guidelines, and are not intended for rigid application to every situation. I am dissapointed that the City Collegian chooses not to use this oppourtunity to build better multicultural understanding and awareness. In view of the recent anti-Asian graffiti on the north wall of the school ("Speak English Or Die Squinty Eye"), It is unfortunate that the City Collegian appears to be encouraging such anti-Asian sentiments. Independent of the City Collegian's wishes to follow it's media's conventions is the fact that the City Collegian is obligated to recognize it's mistakes and acknowledge them.

As President of the Asian Pacific/Islander Student Union, I am requesting the City Collegian demonstrate that they are responsible, respectful, and ethical journalists and members of the campus community by extending an apology and retraction for this incident.

Although this issue is an embarassment to all of us, it is important that we analyze it carefully and completely from all points of view, so that we may remember, learn from, and build upon this experience for the future. I am hopeful that the City Collegian will resolve this issue in such a manner that we all can look back on this experience and draw strength and confidence from it's dignified and expedient resolution.