

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXIV, Number 120, 30 April 1990 — Letters Audubon agenda absurd [ARTICLE]

Letters

Audubon agenda absurd

To the Editor:

In a recent article “Protestors blast plan to raze Audubon,” (Spectator, April 16) the representatives of the protesting groups themselves unwittingly reveal the absurdity of their agenda. The speakers who call the proposed research center an act of “genocide on the black and Latino community” forget that AIDS (as minority activists are quick to point out) is most prevalent among blacks and Latinos. When private and governmental efforts to stop its spread are deemed inefficient, such activists call this an act of genocide. But when a biomedical research center is proposed, it meets with violent opposition. Such a center would almost certainly make some contribution to AIDS research, since this disease is one of the primary subjects of medical research now.

The protestors see it as racist that good jobs in the center would go to qualified white scientists, while minorities from the community would be hired for unskilled clerical and menial jobs. They propose a multicultural center instead. However, if an individual is not qualified for a top administrative position in a scientific center, is it likely that he or she will be qualified for a high position in a multicultural center? If the center is to be well-run and beneficial to the community, it has to be run by well-educated, adequately trained people, whether black or white. People who would be janitors in one institution would be janitors in another.

This is not to say that there is anything inherently right about the large number of

minorities who are poor. This problem, however, will not be rectified by promoting people into jobs for which they are not qualified, or by blocking the creation of a valuable resource in order to establish a center whose primary function is an appeasement gesture. It may not even be a successful gesture; many members of the black community view multiculturalism as tokenism and another way of judging people by their race. Furthermore, what exactly is a multicultural center? Would it be relevant to the black and Latino communities, or would it just promote the cultures of certain nations or groups with which all blacks and Latinos are “supposed” to identify? Columbia students need to give these questions more thought before joining a movement that is only furthering its own political agenda and using as a cover “the interests of the community.”

Jendi Reiter