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Will students buy at the 'bake sale?'

By *MEAGAN BALINK* Colorado Daily Campus Editor

A bake sale for a cause is always a nice idea: sugar cookies, cinnamon tarts, and chocolaty brownies arranged colorfully on a table for hungry passersby.

But what if customers' buying power at this bake sale was based upon their race?

Wait a second, what kind of bake sale is this?

Say a white CU-Boulder student walks up to the bake sale and buys a sugar cookie for \$1, but the Latino student in line behind her is sold the same kind of cookie for 50 cents. And what if the sugar cookies are sold to black students for 25 cents and given to Native Americans for free?

If this is beginning to sound like racism, that is exactly the idea.

Joined by state Sen. Ed Jones (R-Colorado Springs), CU's College Republicans and Equal Opportunity Alliance (EOA) will sell cookies for the prices above at their Affirmative Action Bake Sale, to be held at 12:30 p.m. tomorrow outside the Hellems Arts and Sciences Building on the CU-Boulder campus.

The event sponsors' purpose is to illustrate what they say is the major flaw of affirmative action: programs that provide race-based preferences in hiring, admissions, and in this case, cookie sales to increase cultural diversity draw harmful conclusions about students of color.

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Rumors of the pending bake sale had the CU campus abuzz even last week.

Filmmaker Spike Lee addressed the issue during his speech on Feb. 4 when a student shouted from the crowd that Republicans would be holding the event.

"I'm in favor of affirmative action. It's not like going to the nearest street corner, finding some black person and putting them in that [admissions or employment] slot," Lee contended.

"Would these students [College Republicans and EOA] be happy if there were no black students here at all?" said Lee. He added with sarcasm, "You'd never win a basketball or football game then."

However, Sen. Jones had a different take on the issue.

"My background should not define my ability to succeed, and I refuse to see the color of my skin as an obstacle that needs to be accounted for by others," Jones said in a faxed statement on the bake sale. "While I do agree that disadvantaged students often need a helping hand, I refuse to define that category of students based on skin color."

CU student Joseph Neguse said despite the bake sale's intentions, such an event is racist. He thinks many students will be more offended than concerned about the political idea behind the event.

"It is tasteless, what they are doing," said Neguse. "It seems they're not trying to prove a point as much as they are seeking to offend people. I can think of more effective ways to do things."

College Republicans Chair Brad Jones said having support from Sen. Jones (no relation) adds legitimacy to the group's argument against affirmative action.

"Our goal is to provide another perspective to students who haven't been challenged to see both sides of the debate," said Jones in a statement on the event. "We look forward to the discussion it creates."

A legal twist could also make the bake sale interesting, indeed. Ron Stump, CU Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, cited two federal laws under which the university calls the bake sale illegal, Colorado General Statute 24-34-60 and the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

"Our position is that such an activity is illegal based on the university's non-discrimination policy," Stump added.

But CU's College Republicans are not the first conservative student group to hold the controversial bake sale as a protest of affirmative action.

In 2003, Northwestern, Southern Methodist and Illinois State University students held similar sales on their respective campuses and were shut down by university administrators because of safety concerns, according to the U-WIRE news service.

A University of Wisconsin bake sale turned violent when some detractors started throwing cookies at the UW Republicans, who were demonstrating at the same time as a traditional black fraternity.

Sales held at Texas A & M and Indiana Universities in November, 2003 were held without incident, according to U-WIRE, and prompted heated discussions among passersby.

Colorado Daily Staff Writer Erin Wiggins contributed to this report.