

Henry Richmond - Part II

Student power Naderstyle: OSPIRG

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How will OSPIRG work? What is OSPIRG's connection with higher education? How can students participate in OSPIRG?

It is important to understand that OSPIRG is a State-wide student organization. All seven State System schools are participating: Portland State; Oregon State; U of O; Oregon College of Education at Monmouth; Southern Oregon College at Ashland; Oregon Technical Institute at Klamath Falls; and Eastern Oregon College at La Grande.

Willamette, Reed, Lewis and Clark, University of Portland, and Pacific University represent the private schools. Portland, Lane, Clackamas, and Southwestern Oregon represent the Community Colleges. All other private colleges and the eight remaining Community Colleges will be encouraged to join OSPIRG in the fall. That is one of the big jobs to be done this summer.

The schools which will be formally part of OSPIRG this June have nearly 75,000 students. More than half these students have given specific approval of OSPIRG either by petition or by vote.

Each of these campuses will have an OSPIRG LOCAL BOARD. The 24 OSPIRG candidates on the ASUO general election ballot are running for the 9 U of O Local Board positions.

The students elected to these 9 Local Board positions will have an important role: (1) hold regular campus hearings so that students and other citizens can propose and discuss issues for possible OSPIRG action; (2) inform students of state-wide OSPIRG programs; (3) select representatives to OSPIRG's state-wide

student Board of Directors; (4) administer the quarterly refund procedure (any student not wishing to participate merely has to present his student card at the OSPIRG Local Board office; he will receive a no-questions-asked \$1 check); (5) maintain communication with student government, the ASUO Senate Fiscal Committee, President Clark (who has been extremely helpful to OSPIRG), the Emerald, Register Guard, and the general Eugene-Springfield community; (6) find students and faculty who will contribute their time and talent to OSPIRG projects; (7) distribute OSPIRG's periodic newsletter; (8) conduct OSPIRG elections; (9) work on projects of a local nature.

A project of a "local nature"

Here's one example: Many apartment-dwelling students have trouble getting cleaning deposits back, even if they have done a reasonably good job cleaning up when they leave.

The problem is most students aren't really able to stop their landlord from, in effect, tacking an extra month's rent on the lease. You're frazzled from finals, have a summer job or a plane to catch 300 miles away the next morning, and you have to pack and leave right now.

Solution: students who have troubled with cleaning deposit refunds can assign their rights to the deposit to a law student on the OSPIRG Local Board. Just before the student leaves town, pictures can be taken and affidavits obtained. Over the summer the law student gets the cleaning deposits back. When students return to school in the Fall they have a beer-money check waiting for them. And the law student probably gets three units toward his degree.

Each participating campus will have one Director representative for each 4,000 contributing students. Thus, U of O, OSU and PCC will have 3, PSU 2, and all the others one apiece. All Directors will be members of Local Boards. The State Board of Directors eventually will have 25-30 members, depending on how many schools join OSPIRG.

State-wide student Board of Directors

The State Board will control OSPIRG's money, and will control OSPIRG's professional staff. By a vote of two-thirds, the Board will adopt "directives" which specify state-wide environmental or consumer issues, and which declare why OSPIRG is concerned about these issues. These "directives" will be the basis of the staff's work. The Board will elect officers and meet once each month.

The heart of OSPIRG is its small professional staff of lawyers, ecologists, engineers, financial experts, doctors or media specialists, etc.

Public issues are not decided by moral zest, or by private mutterings over the morning "Oregonian." What is necessary is continuously accurate, hard-hitting, high-quality research, investigation, memoranda, legal briefs, proposed legislation, proposed city ordinances, proposed administrative rules and regulations, news releases, television appearances, and reports to the public.

This kind of student approach to Oregon's state-wide environmental and consumer problems would be impossible without a hard-working, high-quality professional staff. Likewise, there would be no OSPIRG staff without a unified, state-wide organization of students to

finance, control and support it.

The OSPIRG staff, together with the rest of the OSPIRG program, will begin its work in September.

How can students be involved in OSPIRG's efforts next fall, in addition to serving on Local Boards, or on the State Board?

Not all of OSPIRG's work requires lawyers, ecologists, or other specialists. Students can help in research, gathering evidence, interviewing government or business officials or preparing reports.

Or if OSPIRG needs work in, say, a broad question of coastal zoning, a professor could offer a course in that subject and divide the necessary work among the class.

Or a student could prepare a study entirely on his own and ask the OSPIRG staff to help him implement its proposals. Credit can be given for this work.

This kind of student participation in OSPIRG not only contributes to the solution of public problems—it also improves higher education. Extending the learning process from the "ivory tower" to the "real world" is an education concept endorsed by blue ribbon educational commissions. Student OSPIRG work is also a means of applying the role resources of academia to the problems of society.

More importantly, student participation in OSPIRG is the kind of educational technique which can help improve the common understanding of the way our complex, fast-changing, technology-driven society actually works. Unless we are prepared to abandon the premises of democracy, that is the only way average Americans are going to regain control of the direction of their country.

Edwin L. Coleman II

Edwin L. Coleman II is a counselor in the office of academic advising.

I used to wonder
About living and dying—
I think the difference lies
Between tears and crying.

I used to wonder
About here and there—
I think the distance
Is nowhere.

The month of May is a month of remembrance and reflection. We celebrate the birthdate of Brother Malcolm X and the death of Brother Langston Hughes. We have already witnessed Brother Malcolm's day earlier this year (February); now I feel that Hughes, the "Black Poet Laureate," should have special recognition.

Hughes was born February 1, 1902, in Joplin, Missouri. From there his life was packed with inspiration for and devotion to his people. Although he wrote two autobiographies (*The Big Sea* and *I Wonder As I Wander*) they described only the first half of his life. Interestingly enough, the last half of his years saw an even greater variety in his writing. His direction and aims remained constant, however. "I document the feelings of our time in relation to myself and my own people, and, of course, the problems of our democracy," he told an interviewer in 1963.

It was his poetry that first made him known, and his poems are still the root of his reputation although he ventured into many other forms of writing—plays, music scores, fiction, Black history. He wrote more than twenty plays, operas, musicals and gospel pieces. He wrote books on jazz, children's stories, rhythms, on the West Indies, on Africa.

In memorium

Hughes lived in many countries during his lifetime, which include, Africa, Russia, France, Mexico and Spain. He spoke the language of each fluently. He received many top literary honors both in the U.S. and abroad. With all that, his life was filled with financial hardship. Unlike many white writers, Hughes never had a lucky break. None of his plays was a smash hit on Broadway, nor were his books swept up as best-sellers and sold to Hollywood for fantastic profit. If he had been so lucky, he probably would have given the money away to friends and down-and-outers—he was that way.

Langston Hughes' lack of literary recognition was common in America—because he was Black. The neglect he suffered at the hands of literary powers is evident. All Black poets (up until a few years ago) have been ignored by the makers of anthologies of American Poetry. Time and time again we see the evidence of white anthologists' view of Black writers as being invisible. There was not a single Black poet in *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, in *Modern Poetry*, in *The Pocket Book of American Poems*, in *100 American Poems*, in *A Complete College Reader*, in *Best Liked Poems*, in *An Anthology of American Verse*, in *Modern American Verse*. (Some academicians still question the validity of *Black Literature!*) On the other hand, Kenneth Rexroth has observed that

Hughes was, "for an American, an extraordinarily sophisticated writer, which is probably why Americans took his apparent simplicity at its apparent face value. In France, where such striving for the greatest possible simplicity is common, his work was probably more accurately judged."

Langston Hughes was probably the forerunner of the use of "Soul as we know it today. In his early poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers,"—

...I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the songs of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset . . .

My soul has grown deep like the rivers. Hughes again refers to "Soul" in the poem "My People"—

The night is beautiful
So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful
So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people. Hughes is just an example of the many Black heroes who lived-died without proper recognition. It is this writer's hope that the next time I mention the name of Langston Hughes to a Ph.D. in English from this University or to any university student, the reply won't be ". . . Langston who? . . . never heard of him."

Hughes died at ten-forty on Monday night, May 22, 1967—Alone!

PEACE