



Graphic by Sioux Anderson

# 'A positive step'

## City, students respond to continuing racism

By MIKE RUST  
Of the Emerald

During the past couple months, incidents of racial harassment in Eugene have drawn censure from both community leaders and the press.

But some local residents didn't have to be told racial harassment exists in Eugene — they've had first-hand experience for quite a while.

Gwen Polite of the Eugene chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People says the level of racial harassment has remained constant since she moved to Eugene in 1969.

"It's been more or less undercover," Polite says. "People have been reluctant to mention things that happen to them."

Donovan Guy, University Black Student Union vice president, agrees, calling the situation in Eugene "institutional racism."

"It's a subtle racism. It's people laughing with you and then stabbing you in the back. It's people watching you when you step onto a street."

"It's not like in a southern town where they call you 'nigger.' Here they don't say it, but you know they're thinking it."

Last month, public attention and community concern were sparked when a black woman and her family in west Eugene received a threatening letter. But the letter was only one of a number of recent incidents of harassment in the Eugene area, Polite says. Others include:

- A white family that has adopted two black children were the targets of a threatening phone call.

Polite's husband, Willie, who is Eugene NAACP president, told the Eugene city council last week that the couple's adopted children were described by the caller as "the lowest things in the neighborhood."

- Last February, a privately printed

racist pamphlet called "The Fifth Kingdom" was distributed in west Eugene.

- A letter on stationary reported to bear the letterhead of the Oregon Wildlife Society has apparently circulated containing racist threats.

- A Eugene construction worker had a tire slashed and received racist notes while on the job.

- A local clergyman was the recipient of racist-oriented mail.

There also have been reports of blacks experiencing difficulty in finding jobs because of their race. An NAACP statement issued last month described the "covert racism" faced by minority residents.

"Covert racism is where an ethnic minority family goes into a restaurant and everyone else is served first," the statement read. It described covert racism as being excluded from training programs and turned down for jobs for which the minority applicant was best qualified.

The statement also described covert racism as "finding out the day after you

applied or left a deposit that the apartment house was already rented."

Also, there are "small things such as name calling and stares," says BSU Pres. Vince Green.

Last week, the Eugene City Council directed the Human Rights Council and city staff to study harassment legislations and draft an ordinance that would make racial and ethnic harassment a crime.

However, black leaders on campus and in the community are realistic about such legislation's impact.

"The ordinance is good if it acts," Green says. "If it just sits there, then why have it?"

Gwen Polite says she doesn't think an ordinance "is going to help the situation. We have laws against crime. We have crime all over."

Local minorities face the threat of harassment "every day and every hour," she says. "How is an ordinance going to help? It can't stop letters. It can't stop phone calls. When papers on the Fifth Kingdom come up, how can an ordinance stop that?"

However, state and local harassment legislation is "a positive step," she says.

Ultimately, individual attitudes must change before legislation will be effective, Polite says.

The BSU will sponsor a panel discussion Tuesday night that will include law school dean Derrick Bell, Rep. Jim Weaver, D-Ore., Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer and Oregon State University vice president Clifford Smith.

BSU member Donald Brown says the panel will try answer questions about the proposed anti-harassment legislation.

"One of the problems is that we don't want to give the white man a weapon to use against us," Brown says.

Brown, who says the Reagan administration "put us back 25 years," says that the time has come for white liberals to "make their decision" concerning the racial situation in America.

"There's a fire growing," Brown says. "Throw a little alcohol on it, you'll have to deal with it."



Gwen Polite

Photo by Steve Dykes

## Class studies economics of bias

Can capitalists capitalize on discrimination?

Economics Prof. Robert Campbell discusses such questions in Race and Economics, a new special topics class this term.

Factors that appear to represent a slow-down in discrimination can be attributed to economic changes, Campbell says.

Campbell says Race and Economics is not an anthropology class. Because it's difficult to separate different races from among the mass of discriminated peoples, the course deals with discrimination rather than race, he says.

One statistic worth exploring, Campbell says, is the fact that in 1969 the female work force earned 59 percent as much as the male work force. In 1971, women earned 61 percent as much as men did.

This statistic could mean sexual discrimination is slowing down, Campbell says. It also could mean that two additional working years have improved women's labor qualifications, he adds.

One reason for women's improved labor status is that they have gained more seniority and more skill, Campbell says. Women have developed more marketable qualities and therefore are

discriminated against less.

Blacks also possess a higher labor status now than they have in the past, Campbell says.

This could be attributed to investments in human capital, he says. Providing better education and health care are investments in human capital because each enhances a person's ability to work.

According to Campbell, improved black education has in turn improved black labor status. The average young, married black encounters the same labor opportunities as his white counterpart, he says.

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