

PASSPORT

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paper at the front of the classroom.

"Say that in Spanish!"

Castro laughs, but patiently obliges, reciting the American oath a few words at a time, translating as he goes along, while the children remain oblivious to the irony of what they're seeing.

"Con libertad y justicia para todos," he finishes. "With liberty and justice for all."

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As the final bell rings at Creslane and the children leave for the day, the 12 University students who brought them the world are happy to reboard the bus and head back to Eugene.

It's been a long and loud afternoon for them.

Myeni says grade-school kids are a tough crowd.

"Most of the high-school students are learning about South Africa and the questions they ask are related to the geography or politics and I have to explain how apartheid affected me," she says. "In the high schools, they give me all the attention. They ask challenging questions. But these kids get bored easily."

Castro, now in his fourth year in the program, agrees. When talking to young children, he often spends much of the time responding to questions about whether Nicara-



(From left) Pat Uampuang, Themi Myeni, and Lelia Lombardo share moments of humor when talking about the afternoon sessions with the young students.

guans have the same kinds of things that Americans do, he says.

But he usually visits middle schools, high schools and community centers.

Over the years, his presentations have changed for older audiences, he says.

"At first, I talked about the war, then about the elections," Castro says. "Now, nobody is thinking about Nicaragua, so I just talk about the history."

Although it's tiring at times, he says, it's never boring.

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The program that took the international students out to Creslane is one that provides speakers for schools and community centers virtually every day in Lane County.

The ICSP began in 1983 with a proposal from the University to the Oregon State System of Higher Education that some international students receive a partial tuition waiver in exchange for 80 hours of community service a year.

During the 1990-91 school year, students in ICSP completed 4,000 hours of community service. This year, 48 students from more than 30 countries are taking part. Last term alone, 946 hours were spent meeting 279 requests.

The amount of the waiver makes up the difference between resident and non-resident tuition.

Part of the impetus for the program was a concern that only international students from families and countries

with substantial financial resources would be able to afford to study at the University.

"If our effort now at the University is to try and internationalize ... among the ways we can do that is to have international students as learning resources," says Peter Briggs, assistant director of the University's Office of International Services.

"We think we're really onto something spectacular in terms of the teaching methodology," he says, "and that's what the purpose of an international education is all about."

Many universities have speakers bureaus, but the key to the success of this program is its tie with financial aid, Briggs says.

"On the scale that we're doing it, there's nothing close," he says. "The [participants] follow through because it's a requirement, not voluntary."

When students are accepted into the program, they take a course to familiarize them with public speaking and the kinds of questions they might get.

Morompi Ole-Ronkei, a graduate student from Kenya who participated in ICSP for five years, now helps administer it.

Like Castro, Ole-Ronkei says it was never boring.

He was a participant for so long that he would occasionally run into middle school

students, for example, who had seen him when they were in grade school.

"Some of these kids said, 'Yeah, I saw you at my school two years ago.'" Ole-Ronkei says, "and then I asked something like, 'Oh, that's really good. What did I talk about?'"

"And they say, 'You talked about this, and you talked about that.' Things like that make me realize that we're making an impact. Kids have stopped me at Valley River (Center), for instance, and said, 'You were at my school.' That's the reward. The impact is out there. The children are remembering when they see all these cultural things at that early level."

"At that stage of honesty and while they are still being molded, when they get exposed to all these different cultures, they begin to realize that people have different cultures around the world, but they aren't wrong, they are just different."

He was asked some interesting questions over years: everything from "Do people in Africa drink water?" to "How are children born in Africa?"

Sometimes he got questions adults would want to ask, he says, but didn't.

"They wouldn't want to be seen as ignorant," he says, "so for me there's never been a better way to actually penetrate and understand American society than through the children."

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