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Racism

Continued from Page 1

"If I can hear everybody's voices saying 'Yes, we have a problem,' then I know we have to change it," she said. Multicultural Center Program Advocate Huy Ong said he sees racism on campus in an institutionalized form. "I'd like to see the racism-free zone incorporated into a hate-free zone," he said. "That way it could deal with more than just race." It could address sexual orientation, gender issues and other important issues on campus, he said.

Carla Gary, director of the University Office of Multicultural Affairs, said people have to stand up and take action against racism. She said people need to have the courage to say, "Please don't say that about me — I'm offended."

But Gary said ultimately people learn about racism in the home.

"We need to look inward," she said. "We have to take care of home before we reach out."

Although she is currently living in New Mexico, Ansari is spending this week visiting schools and colleges in the Eugene and Springfield areas. Jefferson Middle School in Eugene recently became a racism-free zone.

The students wrote a declaration of their promise to be racism-free and posted the message in three different languages, Ansari said. She urged the University to follow in the middle school's footsteps.

Ansari also encouraged students to call University music professor John Gainer and alert him to the project's goal.

Gainer was recently removed from a Eugene bus and questioned about a crime he did not commit. It was the second time that happened in two years Gainer had been misidentified as a suspect, and the incident started discussion of racism in Eugene.

"Call John Gainer and let him know you support him and his efforts," Ansari said. "Make it your business before this month is out."

She said everyone needs to know they have some sort of support system, and that is what the program is all about.

"If you're really sick and tired of something, you are going to change it," Ansari said.

Felicity Ayles covers city development and the West University neighborhood for the Emerald. She can be reached via e-mail at fizzer@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Program teaches children about heritage

Ganas helps Chicano and Lation students to achieve in school

By Erin Snelgrove
Oregon Daily Emerald

Armed with his backpack and an inquisitive mind, 13-year-old Jason Sutton was prepared for his first day of college.

Sutton, along with approximately 30 other Kennedy Middle School students, visited the University for a field trip Wednesday. It was all part of the Ganas project, a program that seeks to educate children about their Chicano and Latino heritage.

As a part of the trip, these young people had the opportunity to walk around campus, attend class lectures and eat in dorm cafeterias.

"It's fun," Sutton said. "We get to do a lot of things like go on field trips and we get to hang out with our friends. Ganas helps out a lot of people and it keeps them out of trouble."

Darlene Dadrass, a University student and coordinator for Ganas, said the program's intent is to convince young people of their academic potential. Dadrass and other University students make weekly visits to Kennedy to serve as educational mentors.

"The main purpose of this project is to teach the middle school

students about their culture and about their potential for seeking a higher education," Dadrass said.

Roscoe Caron, a Kennedy social studies teacher and co-founder of the Ganas program, believes this program fills a void in the community.

"Ganas was created because there is a need for it," Caron said. "Kennedy Middle School has one of the highest Latino student populations in Eugene and they have special needs that are not met in the classroom."

"But with this program, kids' lives have changed. They have gained a clearer understanding of their own history."

One of Caron's main concerns is the lack of minority students pursuing a college degree. By coming to visit the University, however, students of color can begin to see themselves achieving higher educational and professional goals.

"When the middle school students visit the University, they can begin to make movies in their heads of where they see themselves in the next five years," Caron said. "We want these students to make movies of college and college life, if they want to. We want them to know that college is a possibility for them."

Ganas was founded three years ago by Caron and Jim Garcia, who once worked in the University's

Office of Multicultural Affairs. The program was created to facilitate the learning experience for students of color.

Members of MEChA and other students volunteer three hours a week for a year to interact with junior high children.

Matt Ortega, a sixth-grader at Kennedy, joined Ganas at the beginning of this year. He joined to spend time with his classmates and learn about his heritage.

"I became involved because I had friends who were a part of it last year," Ortega said. "I also wanted to join because I wanted to learn about my Dad's culture. He's Mexican."

The Ganas program is offered to students only at the Kennedy and Kelly middle schools. Juan Garzon, a MEChA volunteer for the program, would like to see the Ganas project grow on this campus and spread to others. However, he believes only dedicated individuals should become involved.

"I would like Ganas to be offered at other schools, but the people who want to be involved must be committed to going every time," Garzon said. "Those who really like working with kids should join. You don't have to be a member of MEChA or the MCC to help out."

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