

## Renowned authors to read works

■ Creative Writing Reading Series presents the words of award-winning poets and authors through May

By Mark Morical  
for the Emerald

An American Book Award winner and two Pulitzer prize-winning poets are just some of the writers scheduled to come to the University campus throughout winter and spring terms.

The writers will be coming as part of the 2000 Creative Writing Reading Series, which runs through May.

Ehud Havazelet, an associate professor, said one aim of the program is to enable students to learn about writers who are the leaders in the development of modern literature.

"The reading series helps culminate the process of literature we study," Havazelet said. "Not only do we want to study Shakespeare and other classics but also pieces just now written. The people we're bringing in are the leading writers of a generation who are writing texts that will be used later on."

The series began Thursday with Danzy Senna, who read from her best-selling novel "Caucasia" about two sisters divided by politics and race at the beginning of the 1970s.

The program continues today with Grace Talusan, a visiting fiction writer, and Havazelet. Havazelet's last collection of stories, "Like Never Before," was named as one of the best books of

1998 by both the New York Times and Los Angeles Times.

Havazelet said he hopes that the reading series will provide inspiration to students trying to be successful writers.

"By having meetings like this we show people that it's possible, and if they keep at it, it can happen for them," he said.

Talusan said she is also excited about the reading series.

"It's a great opportunity for students and the University community to hear writers read their work," Talusan said. "It's a wonderful way for the audience to be introduced to writers they have never read before and for long-time admirers to hear and see their favorite authors in person."

Debra Gwartney, the assistant director of the Creative Writing Program and one of the program's organizers, said the reading series has thrived partly because it is an excellent way to expose students to other ways of thinking about reading. Gwartney said the reading series is an attempt to bring together diverse people who write about race and rediscovering personal identity because the students in the Creative Writing Program at the University come from a variety of different backgrounds.

"That's why Senna, who writes so much about race, was here, and Gary Snyder, who's always writ-

ing about place, home and self-discovery, is here," Gwartney said. "We look at geographical diversity, ethnic diversity and cultural diversity and try to bring in this whole mix of influences and ways of thinking for students to be exposed to."

Gwartney said many of the guests who are scheduled for the reading series have close ties to the University.

As a beat poet throughout the 1960s and '70s, Snyder was a frequent visitor to the University. He will make his reappearance on March 9. Snyder's "Turtle Island" won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1975.

Charles Wright, another Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, will read on April 5.

Gwartney said students and faculty are especially excited about Chang-Rae Lee's reading scheduled for April 27. Lee is a former associate professor in the Creative Writing Department and author of "Native Speaker," which won the American Book Award.

Havazelet said he hopes students will benefit from the opportunity to be exposed to so many different writers.

"Books are a vital part of our culture and they are not the same as TV or the Internet," Havazelet said. "To hear them read is a different experience and is an important part of the living culture and of the community."

## Debate team sets sights on Cuba

■ An Oregon high school debate team heads for its first-ever debates in Cuba, where it will be the first U.S. team to argue with Cuban students on political matters

ASHLAND — A group of Oregon high school students embarked Monday on a historic trip to Havana, where they will be the first U.S. high school debate team to formally argue about international relations with Cuban students.

After gathering in the Ashland High School Cafeteria for predawn interviews on the CBS Early Morning Show, the 27 students and nine chaperones making up the U.S.-Cuba Youth Debate Team boarded planes in Medford for a flight to Miami, where they stop before flying on to Havana.

"I'm looking forward to a real one-on-one dialogue with students from a different culture," said Misha Isaak of Lincoln High School in Portland. "I hope all the students will teach and learn from each other. And second, start down the road of reform for Cuba."

It's also the hope of the Clinton

administration, which made the trip possible a year ago by allowing more contact with Cuba, which has been under a severe economic embargo imposed by the United States since the early 1960s.

The State Department has said it hopes that contacts between young Americans and young Cubans, such as these debates, will help Cubans develop an organized political opposition that will allow a peaceful transition to a more democratic government when Fidel Castro passes from power.

The policy shift also allowed the Baltimore Orioles to exchange baseball games with the Cuban national team.

The Cuban government has said it hopes the visits will give Americans a firsthand look at the benefits the communist revolution has brought to their country.

The trip fulfills a dream of Ashland High School debate coach

John Tredway, who still vividly recalls watching television as a child when President John F. Kennedy announced the imposition of a naval blockade after the Soviet Union began installing missiles in Cuba.

"We're going down there to promote peace," Tredway said.

He added that it was fitting the trip would begin on the national holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

"It's in the spirit of Dr. King," Tredway said. "He was killed in 1968, and at that time, he was calling for better relations with Cuba."

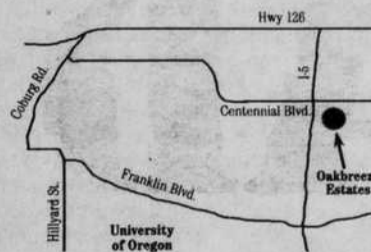
Despite increased tension over what to do with 6-year-old Elian Gonzales, the boy who was rescued from an inner tube in the Gulf of Mexico after his mother died trying to reach the United States, Tredway said his greatest concern was that someone would lose their passport.

Ian Swallow from Ashland High School said his biggest concern was whether his Spanish would be good enough for the debates, which will be held entirely in the language of Cuba.

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