

# Speaking

By Jack Clifford  
Oregon Daily Emerald

David Bradley has been in Eugene for almost two weeks, and the rainy days are already starting to get to the San Diego resident. As the Creative Writing Program's distinguished visiting professor in fiction for spring term, Bradley is in town to acquaint himself with other faculty and some of the students.

After he gives a reading tonight in the Knight Library, Bradley can escape back to sunnier climes until his graduate class in fiction

### Reading

**Who:** Award-winning author David Bradley  
**What:** Reading and book signing  
**When:** 8 p.m. today  
**Where:** Browsing Room of the Knight Library

writing begins in late March. No matter where he goes, however, the author of a PEN/Faulkner Award winning book titled "The Chaneyville Incident" and such

magazine articles as "Black and American" and "The Nonexistence of Black History and Other Tales From the Road" won't be

able to change what he sees as a critical issue in this country.

"When a citizen is pulled over for a traffic violation, he should be absolutely certain that that's the reason," Bradley says. "As soon as a citizen suspects that the reason he's been pulled over is because he happens to be driving while black, the entire fabric of law enforcement starts to break down.

"Our process is so flawed by racism and has been so flawed by racism in the past that we can't govern the population. We have some serious resentments in this country, and we have to deal with them. It's going to get people killed."

In casual conversation, Bradley, who spent 20 years teaching English at Temple University in Philadelphia, really isn't this doom and gloom. Oh, he certainly has strong opinions, and he isn't afraid to tell a person what's bugging him. Yet, after nearly 50 years on the planet, Bradley has also learned to keep things in perspective.

Take the John Rocker incident, for example. Last December, the Atlanta pitcher caused an uproar across the land when he disparaged just about everyone except the Dalai Lama.

So what, Bradley muses, laughing at the idiocy of Rocker's comments, as well as the backlash.

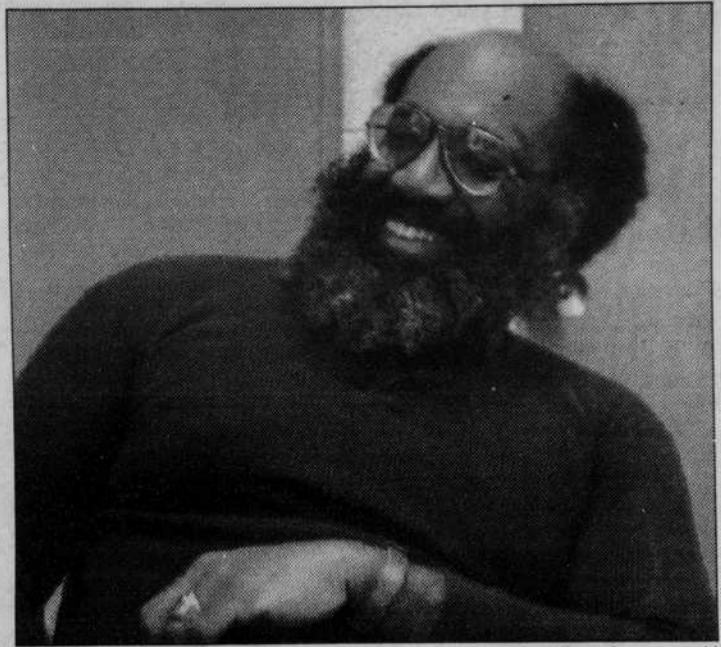
"I always get along better with bigots than I do with liberals because you know where the bigots stand," he said. "I don't think that in order for America to be America, truly America, that everybody has to love everybody. I don't care what some bigot in a white sheet says; I don't even care what he teaches his children about superiority of the white race. I mean I hear what a lot of black people say about black pride, and it makes me feel uncomfortable.

"When you whip out your guns, though, I got a problem because this country's based on tolerance."

That distinction between speech and action seems very clear to Bradley and usually guides how he responds to any specific situation. He also stays well-informed on current issues and takes community leaders to task for resorting to headline-grabbing antics to make a point, instead of waiting until all of the shoes drop.

"No sooner had they dragged [James] Byrd down that [Jasper, Texas] highway behind the pickup truck, then Jesse Jackson was flying in to start the healing process," Bradley says, referring to Byrd's dragging death in June 1998 and Jackson's trip to a community that reacted with shock when such a horrific incident happened there. "It turns out that [Jasper] had a segregated cemetery, and it was only a year afterwards that they thought they should take down the fences."

Bradley admits to experiencing



Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald

David Bradley will be the Creative Writing Program's distinguished visiting writer in fiction for the spring term. Bradley's writing has received a multitude of awards.

a slow burn when it comes to race relations and unfulfilled promises. He is bitter that America hasn't fixed a flaw that he believes can be repaired. Bradley's next non-fiction book, "The Bondage Hypothesis: Meditations on Race and History," deals with that failure.

"The real impulse behind the book is my being pissed off that they told me [racial discrimination] was going to be over in my lifetime, and it's not," he says. "We're not even close."

Although Bradley has spent just a short time on campus — he did visit in 1996 to give a talk with the

theme of "What would Martin Luther King say about race relations if he were alive today?" — his overall impressions are favorable. When asked about that "hot button" topic, diversity, he pointed out that the University's low number of black professors — 12 as of last year — isn't unusual compared to other state's public schools.

While stressing that he disagrees with the basics of affirmative action, Bradley elaborates to say that students do need to see people of color leading lectures, acting as au-

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## Woody's 'Sweet' film follows fictional musician

By Yael Menahem  
Oregon Daily Emerald

In Woody Allen's latest film "Sweet and Lowdown," Sean Penn's character Emmet Ray is fictitious, but you'd never know it.

This recent offering from Allen follows a jazz guitar genius, Ray, who can never quite make it to the top. Penn plays the character with such realism that you think you're watching the real Emmet Ray, even though there never was such a person. For the part, Penn learned to play the guitar just weeks before the shoot, yet his facial expressions and hand movements match perfectly to the music.

Allen's life-long love of jazz music couldn't be more apparent

with the best of the genre featured throughout the film.

The film is a docudrama set in the 1930s, just after the Depression. The storyline follows Ray's turbulent life, which includes lots of drinking. He also does a little pimping but with class — he insists on using business cards to recruit clients.

Although he devises many ways to support his rich lifestyle, Ray's favorite pastime is watching the trains pass by and shooting rats at the local dumpster. Penn is nicely complemented by the talented British actress Samantha Morton, who plays Hattie, a mute.

Ray meets Hattie, who is a laundress, on the boardwalk, and al-

though she is a mute and doesn't initially appeal to him, the two stay together for almost a year. Ray warns Hattie not to fall in love with him, as many women have, but his tough exterior seems comfortable with her even if he doesn't admit it.

Their often heartbreaking scenes together are reminiscent of silent films, and Morton's facial expressions defy any dialogue.

Uma Thurman's character, Blanche, is introduced late in the film as a curious writer/socialite with an extravagant taste for life equal to Ray's. The two marry, and their turbulent lives collide, but their marriage doesn't last.

After Ray is fired from a nightclub where he is a regular enter-

tainer, Blanche gets his job back. At the club, she meets mobster Al Torrio, played by Anthony LaPaglia, and the two have an affair.

Blanche is bored with her marriage, and, always the writer in search of a character's true soul, she is fascinated by the mind of a killer.

Allen is often a character in his films and he appears in "Sweet and Lowdown" as a jazz biographer who comments on Ray's life. Cult director John Waters also makes a surprise appearance in the film.

The music of legendary jazz guitarist Django Reinhard is played throughout the movie — Ray says that Reinhard's music brings him to tears. The biographers believe that Ray came close

to meeting Reinhard twice but fainted both times.

Throughout the film Ray is never too shy to boast that he is considered the greatest guitar player around, but he never fails to mention Reinhard's name in the same sentence, recognizing that his talent is second to Reinhard's.

"Sweet and Lowdown" is not a typical Allen drama, one set in New York that follows the lives of several neurotic people.

Fortunately, Allen has changed his style without losing any of his enormous talent in filmmaking, comedy, drama and his love of jazz.

"Sweet and Lowdown" opens Friday at the Bijou Art Cinema.

**BIJOU** 686-2458  
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www.bijou-cinemas.com

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Anthony LaPaglia Samantha Morton Sean Penn Uma Thurman

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