

Latino experience reduced with acts of 'tokenism,' inaccuracy

Guest commentary

Normally, I do not read the Eugene Weekly, until a recent article titled "La Lingua" (May 1) caught my attention. The article elaborated on the barriers faced by local Latinos, in particular Latinos that have assimilated into the English language and those that have retained their ancestors' language of Spanish.

Although the article attempted to illustrate the experience of Latinos, I believe the article gravely reduced their experiences. Additionally, it was nothing short of a token attempt to understand Latino experiences, which resulted in a white publication cashing in on people of color.

Experiences (barriers being faced) were reduced to conflicts between English-speaking Latinos and those that speak Spanish. The authors then further attempted to show racial tension between the respective groups. Barriers faced by Latinos are hardly those of intergroup conflicts and racism.

Who has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Lane County? What students have been the victims of hate crimes at the University? What group has been reduced to

having the international holiday underneath a highway? What group gets pulled over by police at higher rates than the white population?

The answer is Latinos, so to reduce barriers to intergroup tensions is a mischaracterization of the Latino experience and a slap in the face to my people. Although the title "La Lingua" caught my attention, it was not because I felt pride. The article drew me in because of its token appearance. Tokenism occurs when people in power appeal to the majority's prejudices of fairness and equality but do little to actually fulfill such values.

In the case of the article, tokenism is evidenced in no one noticing the obvious grammatical and spelling error in the article's title, "La Lingua." There were further Spanish errors throughout the article. The point of course is not to quibble about proper punctuation, etc. The point is to interpret why this was allowed to occur in the first place.

My experience has been that tokenism occurs because white people (holders of power) generally tend to do the minimum when it comes to understanding and appreciating the cultures of people of color. In other words, enough is done to appear fair and supporting of equality, but in reality, no power is

given to those they claim to help.

Other examples of tokenism are the following: The University supports diversity, yet underfunds its Ethnic Studies program. The University promotes multiculturalism, yet does not give the Office of Multicultural Affairs enough power to hold other departments accountable for its institutional racist practices.

The city of Eugene welcomes people of color, yet has had few city officials of color. In my case, I get to participate in the University's committees, centers and institutes, yet am limited to catering to white values and needs. Lastly, the Eugene Weekly runs an article on Latinos, yet does a poor job at representing the Latino experience and in writing the article.

Forty years have passed since the civil rights movement. Although some racist practices were eradicated, similar institutional practices, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors continue to live on. The article "La Lingua" is only a corner representing a system of racist reductionism and tokenism the white population continues to bank on.

Forty years have passed, but the racist system of yesterday has yet to be truly uprooted.

Javier Ayala lives in Eugene.

Liquor-control privatization would slash badly needed funding source

Guest commentary

Oregon has a state budget deficit of \$ 2.5 billion. Other than the Oregon Lottery, there is one agency that actually makes significant money for the state — it turns a "profit," for lack of a better term.

So, why are some people so anxious to get rid of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission?

As Oregon lawmakers struggle to balance the budget, there is again talk of privatizing the OLCC. Why? As state legislators are looking for every cent they can find, why would anyone want to eliminate this cash cow? It simply doesn't make sense — or "cents." And it also won't save the state any money. Consider:

- OLCC "profits" are spread statewide.

It costs \$16.8 million a year to operate the OLCC — that is more than 200 family-wage jobs that would be eliminated. But when you add liquor sales, license fees and beer and wine taxes, then subtract inventory purchase and commissions paid to liquor agents, there is still a healthy \$104.2 million profit.

OLCC excess revenues are distributed as follows: state General Fund, \$54.8 million; city revenue

sharing account, \$13.7 million; cities, \$19.5 million; counties, \$9.7 million; mental health, alcoholism and drug services account, \$6.2 million; Oregon Wine Advisory Board, \$200,000.

- Shutting down the OLCC does not save all of its costs.

Indeed, if you privatize the OLCC, the state is still left with virtually 75 percent of its operating budget. How? Because the business of buying and distributing liquor is only a small portion of the OLCC's mission. The agency has other functions that would be shuttled to other state agencies. Liquor law enforcement, including specific programs aimed at ID verification, "minor decoys" and underage drinking; collection of beer and wine taxes; liquor establishment licensing; alcohol education programs and alcohol service permits; and others. These functions would have to be divvied up between the State Police, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Education and others. All of these agencies are already stretched thin and facing budget cuts of their own; they do not have the capacity to absorb duties currently performed by the OLCC.

- Who gains from privatization?

Think about this: The current OLCC-licensed liquor agents are Oregon business people and taxpayers. Eliminate the OLCC, and

where will that extra money go? Here's a clue: Fred Meyer, Safeway, Albertson's, Costco — none of which are based in Oregon. Incidentally, while some recent reports have said current OLCC agents were "split" on the privatization issue, our own survey shows more than 90 percent of agents statewide are against privatization.

Privatization proponents also argue booze would be more readily available without the current OLCC-licensed outlets. *This is good?* Somebody go ask MADD members what they think about making hard liquor more available around the clock. Responsible drinkers don't have to buy vodka at a 24-hour convenience store at 3:30 a.m. — problem drinkers do!

Here's a final mental image. Tool down I-5 and look to the west while passing through Redding, Calif. You'll see a huge building with a bright neon sign that says "Liquor Barn." Is this a sign we need dotting our own landscape?

Barns in Oregon typically house farm animals. Let's keep it that way.

Mary Botkin is the senior political coordinator for the Oregon chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. AFSCME Local 2505 represents most OLCC employees.

plus some additional costs, or about 20 percent of annual education costs.

Now, however, the grant covers less than 9 percent of annual costs. More cuts will drastically affect access to college, as well as add to those losses already suffered this year. The losses from recent budget cuts already mean that 6,500 fewer students will be able to receive a grant in 2003-04.

If the proposed budget is put into effect, the Opportunity Grant would serve less than half of eligible students in 2003-05. As a re-

ipient of the Oregon Opportunity Grant, it is to my dismay that these cuts are even an issue. I worked very hard to be able to receive a higher education, one that I unfortunately might not have been able to obtain if it were not for this grant.

Equal access to education should be something we strive for. Why, then, are we allowing education to become more difficult to obtain for many low-income students?

Maria Cortez
freshman
undeclared

Today's crossword solution

BAAL	FIVE	FEELS	
ANNA	IRAN	RADIO	
LOAN	ROLL	URGED	
EDIT	SNEAK	JNESS	
DESERTS	RITE		
RES	SGT	ROBE	
THANE	ELIE	SKIP	
AIR	DEMANDS	RAE	
CLEO	MING	ERASE	
OLAV	AGT	LEA	
	EMIR	RANTERS	
CORRELATED		TRAP	
ARILS	TALL	LOVE	
DEGAS	ERIE	EDEN	
SOAPY	DOTS	REST	

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Tues. May 6th 6:30-8:30pm Ben Linder Rm (EMU)
EPISODE I - The Difference Between Us
Everyone can tell a Norwegian from a Nubian, so why doesn't it make sense to sort people into biological races? Examine the contemporary science-including genetics—that challenges our assumptions about human groups.

Thurs. May 8th 6:30-8:30pm Gumwood Rm (EMU)
EPISODE II - The Story We Tell
Hasn't race always been with us? Explore the roots of the race concept, the 19th century science that legitimized it, and how it gained such a hold over our minds.

Tues. May 13th 6:30-8:30pm Ben Linder Rm(EMU)
EPISODE III - The House We Live In
Race may be a biological myth, but racism still gives different groups vastly different life-chances. Forty years after the Civil Rights movement, the playing field is still not level, and "colorblind" policies only perpetuate inequality.

ALL levels of interest are welcome.

LET'S ENGAGE IT.
VISIT THE COMPANION WEB SITE @ www.pbs.org/race

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON **BRT** black response team

For more information contact the BRT at 346-1139 or email kmcneal@darkwing.uoregon.edu

Letter to the editor

Education should be available to all

Education is a priceless commodity — one that should not be denied to any person showing interest. However, new budget cut proposals are at work to largely reduce the funding given as grants to low income students.

The Oregon Opportunity Grant is Oregon's only student grant program. It was originally intended that the grant would cover tuition

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from the inside out

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