

Friday, May 21, 2004

Fisher Kings and Freeman food for soul

Carla D. Gary is director and University advocate for the Office of Multicultural Affairs. A Duck alumna with a degree in law, Gary has worked at the University for six years and, as an undergraduate, was the first black cheerleader at the University. She sat down with the Emerald for Quick Quacks — a short question-and-answer session aimed at giving readers an expedient look at campus and community members' thoughts.

Emerald: What CD dominates your CD player right now?

Carla Gary: Will Downing. He is an amazing, old-school ballad singer. He's like Luther Vandross. He sings the classics from the '40s and '50s, and he sings new stuff that he writes. He's brilliant.

Emerald: What was the last Oregon athletic event you attended?

Gary: Track and field last year.

Emerald: Is the University diverse enough?

Gary: No.

Emerald: What steps can the University take to increase diversity among the students and the staff?

Gary: Well, I think recognizing that diversity is not just a critical mass, but

that's a part of it. We're part of the community, and we need to reflect the community, not just in staff and students and faculty, but how we engage the community ... in activities and events and determining what's important for us to share.

We also need to offer access and opportunity for those who are traditionally underrepresented, particularly by race, by ethnicity, by socioeconomic class

Emerald: What's your favorite restaurant around Eugene?

Gary: Oh, my gosh. Probably Beppe & Gianni's. But I just went to Papa's. Papa Joe's, across from the (Hult Center). Serious soul food! I had some chicken that was quite serious. And some collard greens. They were real!

Emerald: Who is one person you would like to meet and why?

Gary: The first person who comes to mind is Nelson Mandela. I would like to know how you find that kind of courage and strength in the face of outrageousness to maintain not only your dignity and your self respect but your humanity. I'd like to know how do you do that, where do you find that? That's incredible.

Emerald: What book are you reading right now?

Gary: "The Fisher King" by Paule Marshall. She was just here ... this weekend. We had her because I'm teaching a class with Joe Fracchia in the Honors College, and we're reading her book "Praisesong for the Widow." She's wonderful; she's elegant and eloquent. She talks about the nexus of race and class and gender.

Emerald: What do you see as the biggest issue facing the Office of Multicultural Affairs in the next five to ten years?

Gary: I think a continued understanding of the fact that the challenges of a world in which skin privilege is so prevalent and invisible for lots of folks has dynamics for lots of people who don't share that skin privilege. And that there is a need to be able to engage people who have an understanding of what those challenges are, so that students are able to navigate them.

Emerald: If you had one hour of free time per day, how would you spend it?

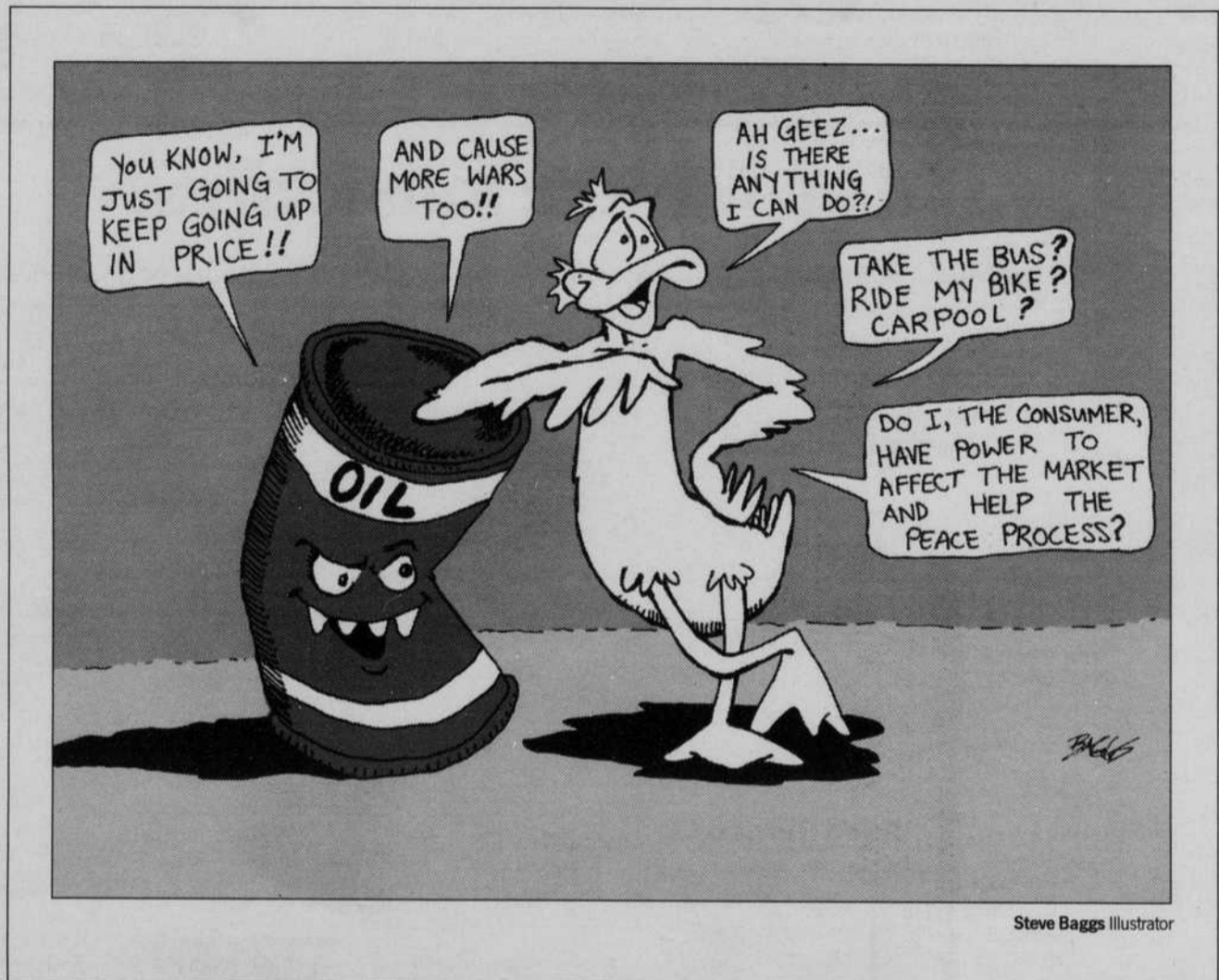
Gary: Finishing my book! (I'm writing) two of them, actually. One is fiction, and it's kind of like navigating the waters of corporate American, being black and female in the world. The other is about the nexus of race in sport, and the dynamics of how sports serve and don't serve the preponderance of players. Something as simple as, this is 2004 and there are less than ten black head coaches in Division I, where surely half of the players are black.

Emerald: What's the last movie you saw?

Gary: The last movie I saw on TV was "Along Came a Spider," with Morgan Freeman. Very good. I love Morgan Freeman.

Emerald: Where can we find you on a Friday night?

Gary: Probably at home, watching "While You Were Out" or "Trading Spaces," or on the computer trying to do some work.



Steve Baggs Illustration

Wit rivalled, lessons learned

It's not too early for a year-in-review column, I think. Just two weeks remain before finals (and for many, not much longer until graduation and the rest of life), and there are only 10 issues of the Emerald before the end of my tenure as editorial editor. So, now seems an appropriate moment to reflect on a long year of lessons learned.

And the experiences of the last 138 or so issues since I drafted my introduction to the commentary page, "Commentary: An open forum" (Sept. 29, 2003), have provided many opportunities for my instruction.

Among those lessons:

(1) **Even if you write moderate political opinion, you'll eventually be charged with every partisan label in the book.**

My position on People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and animal rights makes me a nationalist. But the stance of the Emerald Editorial Board (of which I am a member) on the Illinois mascot debate make me a Marxist. Hopefully, my moderate libertarian stylings have shone through those and similar charges.

(2) **Mocking our in-state rivals is easier than I thought.**

The Emerald and its (grossly inferior!) counterpart, The Daily Barometer, have maintained an annual tradition of trading blows in the form of newspaper columns — ours informed, theirs unworthy of further mention, of course — come Civil War time. In writing this year's column ("Burritos and feces: Life at Oregon State," Nov. 21, 2003), I



Travis Willse
Rivalless wit

found that, thanks to OSU's countless drawbacks, failings and generic downsides, "Burritos" was one of the easiest-to-write pieces I've drafted all year.

(3) **If you write opinion of any kind, you'll eventually be called every name in the book.**

My sense of journalism? "Sensationalist." My goals? "Halo preening." My finer points? "Moron." "Self-righteous." "Gutless." "Hateful." "Prejudiced." "An enemy of free speech."

And in one of the better-worded (but still philosophically dubious) attacks, "Travis' inability to enter into a meaningful and equally rewarding relationship with a subjective and alive nonhuman other (Friskie) is more than symbolic of the fundamental basis of hierarchical and oppressive power dynamics that have shaped our cultural history."

(4) **Godwin's Law of Nazi Analogies holds in print media.**

In any controversial issue, Godwin's Law — which states that as an online discussion

grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one — applies to the newspaper page and Web site, too. Some 60 odd years after the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler and Nazism remain the biggest hammers in the toolbox of casual social philosophy debate, and they've definitely come up more than once this year. While comparisons of this sort can be worthwhile, they're usually just meaningless (or slanderous) distractions from the point.

(5) **When in doubt, make fun of the column tag.**

One particularly critical but memorable feedback post asked me whether "Rivalless wit" was conceit or a joke. While I've learned that both a little arrogance and lot of humor is needed for this job, my naysayer missed the point. From that reader's post ("Rivalless (sic) Wit? Maybe more appropriately 'Rivalless ignorance?') to charges of egomania (unjustified ones, I like to think), at least a few readers have questioned the motivation, if not the accuracy, of "Rivalless wit" during the year. Still, most of these critics have failed to realize that the tag is just an anagram for my name.

But the most important lesson I learned? That, for its many ups and downs, managing and writing opinion is one of the most challenging and rewarding jobs I've had.

Contact the editorial editor at traviswillse@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Prisoners should work to pay for living expenses, not TVs

Regarding "Land County Direly Needs More Funds" (ODE, May 4): The worst part about the prisoners with the flat-screen televisions is that some of these felons still owe monetary restitution to their victims, or they owe court fees to the state. These people are supposed to be repaying a debt to society, and as long as they still owe on that debt, they should not be able to purchase

things like flat-screen televisions with the money they earn working in prison.

Instead, after all restitution is paid, why not have these prisoners use the money they earn to pay for all or part of their own incarceration? Why should taxpayers pay their room and board? Let businesses hire them, pay them a low but fair wage, and on the first of the month, their rent is due!

Every day that they don't pay is one extra day that they sit in prison at the end of their sentence. If executed properly, this system would save the state money, provide a source of cheap labor for Oregon's businesses, give inmates the chance to build some job skills, and let them repay their debt to society. The money saved on room and board for convicts could be used to help fund

public safety in Lane County.

Or better yet, let's privatize the prisons. Introduce competition by letting private companies bid on prison contracts, and whoever can give the best service for the lowest price wins. Private prisons have worked in other states: They consistently receive higher quality ratings from both inmates and employees. These prisons are not only better

and cheaper than state prisons, but they are profitable, as well.

I think that free market, capitalist principles applied to the prison system will surely irk liberals everywhere, but it's time to get inmates off welfare. Let them work to pay their own way like the rest of us do.

Christopher Looney is a junior studying economics.