

REDUCING THE LATINO EXPERIENCE

Normally I do not read *Eugene Weekly*, until a recent article titled "La Lingua" (5/1) caught my attention. The article elaborated on the barriers being faced by local Latinos, in particular Latinos who 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, the article 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 who speak Spanish. The author then further attempted to show racial tension between the respective groups.

Barriers faced by Latinos are hardly those of inter-group 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 of Oregon? What group has been reduced to having their national 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 inter-group tensions is a mischaracterization of the Latino experience and a slap in the face to a 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' 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 whom they claim to help.

Other examples of tokenism are the following: The UO supports diversity, yet underfunds its Ethnic Studies program. The UO promotes multiculturalism, yet does not give the Office of Multicultural Affairs enough power to hold other departments accountable for their 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 University committees, centers and institutes, yet am limited to catering to white values and needs. Lastly, *EW* 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 kernel that represents a system of racist reductionism and tokenism that the white population continues to bank on. Forty years have passed, but the racist system of yesterday is yet to be truly uprooted.

Javier Ayala
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter and at least two responses to it can be found in the UO campus paper at www.dailyemerald.com

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



ROGUE RULE

Tom Hunnel's letter (5/1) criticizing my commentary on war tax resistance (4/10) adds an important war tax resistance strategy that my piece failed to mention. He is quite right that one of the important ways of reducing tax liability is to increase contributions to tax exempt organizations. In this way a person can not only support causes one believes in, but can substantially reduce financial support to the war machine. I thank Mr. Hunnel for this criticism.

I do, however, stand by my recommendations that people consider living below taxable income as a way of denying funds to the military and walking more lightly on the earth and of becoming self-employed in order to get out from under the withholding tax system, thus regaining power over whether to pay or not to pay.

It is quite true that a decision to not pay can be very costly, eventually risking home (but only for those who own one), garnished wages and liens on assets. In practice, the IRS

INSIDER BASEBALL BY TONY CORCORAN

Post-PERS

Time to move on.



I can't wait to have PERS done; the nastiness – the anger, the scape-goating, the innuendo – has greatly outweighed the positive comments I've received. Sometimes this can be a tough life. Within hours after giving the hardest speech of my life on the Senate floor, I received supportive calls from Mike Lehman and Bryan Johnston; we were all freshmen in the House in 1995 and we've retained a close friendship. The next day Bryan sent me this e-mail:

Tony, It was good to see you last night. I'm sorry you have to go through your current ordeal. I was troubled by not being able to give you the Emerson quote, so I looked it up:

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

By his definition, and it is one I accept, you've led a very successful life. My sense of it, though is that we both could have survived a little while longer without understanding what the "betrayal of false friends" line meant.

My response was: That's all very kind Bryan, but it's a damn eulogy – something usually reserved for the posthumous.

The week from hell concluded with the governor signing the three major PERS pieces on Friday. This met next Tuesday's deadline for the PERS Board to instruct the actuary to lower the employer rates for next year, saving state and local government and school boards \$670 million next biennium. I told the employers not to rush to spend the money; we made these bills as constitutional as possible, but they would be challenged and some aspects would probably be overturned – put the savings in escrow! The lawyer from the employer's side, Harrang Long's Bill Gary, thinks it'll all pass constitutional muster. Our problem was the conflicting opinions we got from leg-

islative counsel and the Attorney General's Office. Bottom line: For the next year we will await a court decision. Meanwhile the last piece, a successor retirement plan for new employees, is in front of us.

It's time to move on. As I said in my floor speech Thursday: "To the business community who said they wouldn't support tax reform until PERS is fixed ... it's done. Now do your job." Thursday afternoon in my Senate Rules Committee, I was able to present my bill to reduce the video poker lottery commission to save essential services. It's important to note that an identical bill of Representative Rosenbaum's can't even get a hearing on the House side. Even as late as yesterday, the House leadership is still in denial regarding the budget. "Raising taxes is not the answer, Speaker Minnis says" was the *R-G* headline. A few moderate Republicans are working up a plan that includes going after some of the tax expenditure loopholes, adding a little beer and wine tax; a little here, a little there. But it's not enough. My goal is to get education, human services and public safety back to the funding level we were at after the second special session.

Note to self: Don't ever show up at home again on a Friday night – after being gone all week in Salem – with a used bowling pin in your hand on Mother's Day weekend. "What the hell is that?" said my sweetie. "It's a bowling pin; it was given to me by a bunch of angry public employees." "Is it a reward?" she asked. "No, actually it's because of the PERS fix I supported; these nice people asked me to ponder the anatomically impossible deed of placing this thing sideways up one of my apertures, so I brought it home to practice." "Let me get this right, a gang of angry folks marched into the capitol to spread a bunch of bad chi? And they think this will help bring about something good?" she pondered. "It's called lobbying," I replied weakly. "Some of those folks wouldn't know a Rufous-sided Towhee from a Black-headed Grosbeak when it comes to PERS anyhow," she opined. "Now, get up to the barn and build me another horse stall," she ordered. "Do something constructive. It's great to have you and Simon home for the weekend."

Yes, my love, it's great to be home, as well.

Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove represents portions of Lane and Douglas counties in Senate District 4, which includes the UO area. He can be reached at sen.tonycorcoran@state.or.us