

RACIST WEEKLY

Great job blasting the Economic Forecast 2005 meeting (Slant 2/3) for having all white men. One problem though: I am of Native American decent. Sorry if the color of my skin or the comments at the Forecast I made didn't conform to *Eugene Weekly's* preconceived notions of the way my people should look or talk.

What's it called when someone forms judgments based on the color of a person's skin? Oh yeah, racism. Way to go *EW*, you're Eugene's number one liberal, racist publication!

Ron Davies
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: Ironically, our paper last week also had an interview with a woman of Native American descent on stereotypes and "the role of media in racial divisions."

REAL DIVERSITY

This is a good time to celebrate the achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who helped us recognize the importance of equality and the corrosive effect of racism.

The Eugene community prides itself on being a tolerant and diverse community. We hold conferences on racial issues, we protest when a swastika graffiti shows up on a synagogue in a show of solidarity. But where were the protests when a professor at the UO was stopped three times by cops until he got fed up and left town?

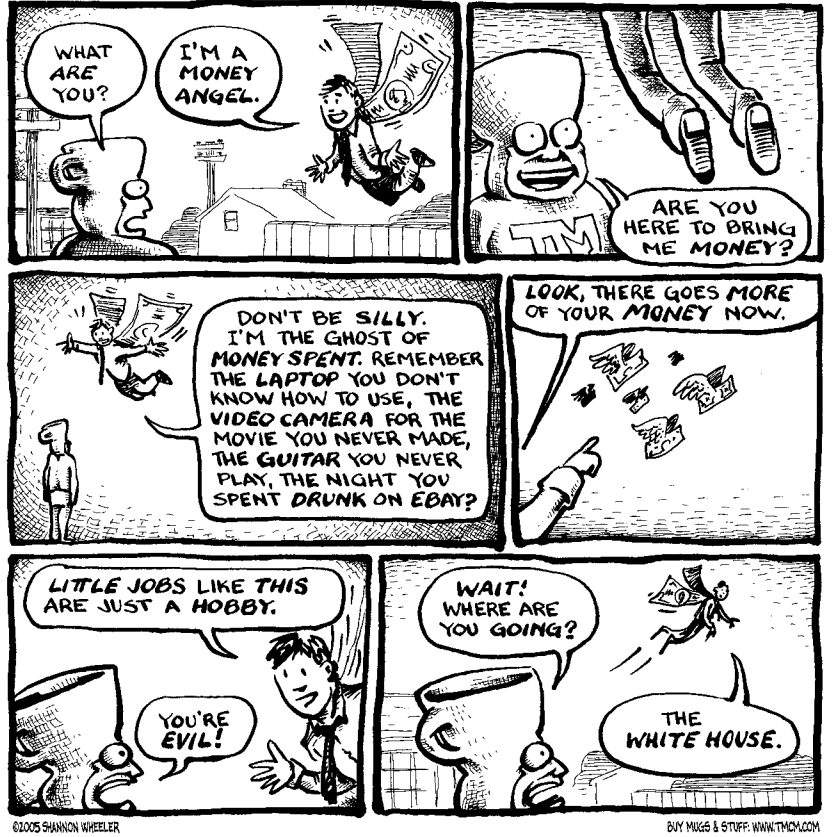
Eugene is just another predominantly white town trying to convince itself it is tolerant. Eugenians go on about diversity as if the place was crowded with minorities, fraught with tension and we should all get along. Well it's not. There are instances where minorities are made to feel unwelcome and despised. They are watched when they go into a store as if they were criminal, they are stopped by the police at a greater percentage than whites – a fact even the Eugene police admit to – and people still call them by racial slurs. Harassing minorities until they leave is also a good way to keep the place lily white.

Of course white folks don't feel there's racism; they're not victims of it. When someone cries foul they are dismissed as overreacting or trying to stir up trouble. Just ask the cop who stopped Jordan, who he viewed him as "anti-cop" because he was trying to teach the police to be sensitive to race, and warned not to use the "race card." Why haven't we heard the white kids walking with Cortez Jordan publicly defend him?

I lived in San Francisco for many years where real diversity exists. People came in all shapes and colors. I could walk down the street and hear a polyglot of languages and find real ethnic cuisine. I will believe that Eugene is a safe, tolerant place when I see that here.

Alisa McLaughlin
Eugene

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



CHENEY FIRST

Bob Saxton has it exactly right in his letter (1/13): Let's impeach Bush. But, as the button I'm currently wearing says, "Impeach Cheney

first." That is, unless you want Cheney as president *de jure* as well as *de facto*.

Jim Estes
Deadwood

KUMBAYA DAMMIT BY DAN CAROL

Education Anyone?

The option is very expensive.

Now here's a big mess. I can name that tune in a few notes. The backbeat is simple: lots of failing, underfunded public schools – 10,000 according to the federal government. No good answers. No silver bullets. Lots of ugly politics and sour faces. Parents are panicked. Kids ... bored. Politicians stymied.



The main melody in the classroom is even sadder. Our teachers are underpaid and underappreciated – and retiring in droves. The profession doesn't pay anything close enough to attract the best and the brightest. So duh, we produce students that are falling behind those pesky Finns and 47 other industrialized countries in the most important Olympics of all – math and science competitiveness.

So what's the plan to hire the two million new teachers we will need in the next decade? Ready for a minor revolution? We need one.

Right now, we're educating our kids using industrial-era techniques, and doing it on an agrarian calendar. We're bickering over local issues (from creationism to school choice) and testing ourselves into a corner. What does it say that the only big ideas on education are coming from characters on TV shows like *West Wing*, where actor Jimmy Smits, running to "succeed" Martin Sheen as fictional president, is serving up more serious discussion than any real candidates out there for national and state office?

Normally, when it comes to solving political problems I am a big evangelist for local, state and regional solutions. But on this one – well, we need a national commitment to education excellence akin to our other wars on drugs, terrorism and so forth. Simply put, our national character, our economic future and our national security are at stake. (And if you don't get that, well, you had some weak history classes growing up.)

So quit complaining, Dan, and get specific, right? Here's the best I can do in 800 words.

• **Want One America?** Public schools are the melting pot, pure and simple. If we want one America, under God or not, the public school experience is the one place where our kids come together. It's the one place for ensuring starting gate equality. The one place for the melting pot to stir together a working gumbo of new Americans. How much is that worth? Me, I'd cut all kinds of deals with right-wingers who insist on English as the official language in schools if they'll come around on other public school issues.

• **National Neighborhood School Initiatives.** There is this growing bi-partisan consensus in communities across the country that public school choice for elementary school is the way to go, but it's ALL wrong. Look at how it has played out over a generation in Eugene, about as homogeneous a community as you will find. Higher-income parents are better able to exploit the opportunities of a choice system (see Alan Pittman's great article 1/27), and once a neighborhood school starts developing a reputation problem it spirals downward. We can't play musical chairs with schools and kids.

• **Paying For It.** We can write a blank check for Iraq but can't afford to educate the next generation of children in the information era we want to rule? Poppycock! If someone would do the math – on the costs of losing a generation (and then imprisoning them), or the costs of falling behind Europe, India or China, they'd be singing a different tune. Check out author Matt Miller's book, *Two Percent Solution*, for some great ideas for changing that resource debate. And let's all work together on some bright ideas for getting our "friends" at Halliburton involved in new school construction, featuring rooftop solar and more. Because I suspect that might help our case a little with the folks at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

• **Attracting Talented Teachers.** Teachers are amazing and don't make enough. A historic turnover is taking place in the teaching profession and we have no plan to recruit the next generation. We live in a time of constricted budgets and a tax break for everything. So why not implement the great idea I heard from my friend Bob Estrin – cap the federal income tax at 3 percent for public school teachers. Conscription is the key to winning this war and we can't draft great teachers into service.

• **High School Is Obsolete.** Folks like actor Rob Reiner and activist Jonah Edelman of Stand for Children have truly advanced thinking about pre-K education; but what about high school? We need more businesses offering apprenticeships and work study opportunities in the schools rather than just selling Pepsi and other brands in the hallway vending machines. Virginia Gov. Mark Warner's "Redesigning the American High School" Initiative is laudable, and research by Hillary Pennington of Jobs for the Future offers the right direction. I'd add one silly/serious suggestion: Why do we start high school so early when teenagers get up so late? Let them sleep in and school them later in the day when they are actually awake.

What's the first step on this long hike? Rather than expect much good news from Salem, I'll hope to see our bi-partisan senatorial duo (Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith) come together around some dynamic ideas on education. Oregon can show America the way out of the mess it has pioneered.

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