

• What to say about the debacle around the celebrations of **Martin Luther King Jr.**'s birthday? On the one hand, same-sex marriages are indeed a civil rights issue, and the invited speaker, the Rev. Walter Fauntroy, pursues active discrimination against gays and lesbians of all ethnicities when he joins his voice to the anti-same-sex marriage Alliance for Marriage group. We wonder what Fauntroy says about Bayard Rustin, the civil rights leader, gay man and close associate of King's who helped bring the principles of Gandhian nonviolence to King's attention. But just as importantly, African-American voices have nowhere near the media attention or participation in the structures of power in Eugene that white lesbian and gay activists do. The first vote of the city's Human Rights Commission, taken without discussion with the committee that invited Fauntroy (or, apparently, anyone who identifies as African American), showed a bizarre and troubling lack of attention to input from members of the black community. We're glad that committee chair Carmen Urbina revisited the issue with far more attention to race relations. But the entire discussion is painful, which doesn't make it less necessary. Race, class, gender, sexuality, historical oppression and the active attempts of Karl Rove and his gang to divide (and conquer) civil rights leaders – those are large issues, ones which we should all work on understanding. Working to end all oppression: Now that's a goal we can support. But we'll admit that we don't know everything about these issues, and we'd truly like to hear from a variety of community voices. In the meantime, on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, we'll listen to Fauntroy but remember the contributions of LGBT people of color like Rustin, Pat Parker, Langston Hughes, Audre Lorde and James Baldwin.

• Kitty Piercy's **State of the City** address last week was a very upbeat affair, and we give it an A for thoroughness (Kitty covered a broad range of issues), an A for entertainment (those city staffers can really sing) and maybe a C for candor (we're nowhere close to being the greenest city in America). Good people, good speeches, good food, good way to start the year.

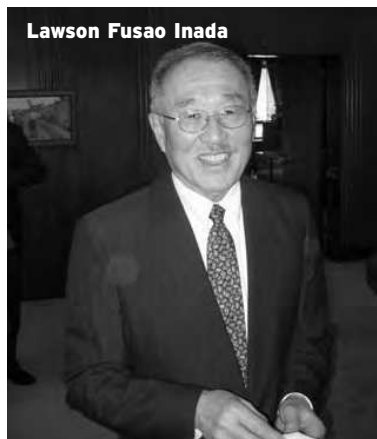
• **Suggestions for a nickname** for the new courthouse have petered out. We've pondered all the imaginative names and while some of them are clever as hell (see this column last week and 12/21), most would not likely stick and become commonly used. Our favorite name, "Starship Hogan," has sticky qualities, and in fact is already being used by some attorneys and courthouse staffers. Thanks to Ralph Wombat for bringing it to our attention, and thanks to all who submitted the great names that kept us giggling over the holidays.

• It makes sense that artists can catch the essence of a moment in history better than the rest of us. Lawson Fusao Inada did that Monday in Salem at the **inauguration of Oregon's 36th governor**, Theodore R. Kulongoski. Inada is Oregon's poet laureate, a resident of Medford and a professor at Southern Oregon University in Ashland. Here's what he wrote for the splendid event (especially splendid for the Democrats!). He called it "An Oregon Chorus":

*Hope, as we all know,
Is at home in our hearts.
We were born with hope,
And it was nurtured in us,*

*Opportunity, as we all know,
Must present itself to us.
Opportunity can offer
A chance for advancement.*

*Today, our hope is evident.
Today, opportunity beckons.
Let us proceed as partners
For the betterment of Oregon.*



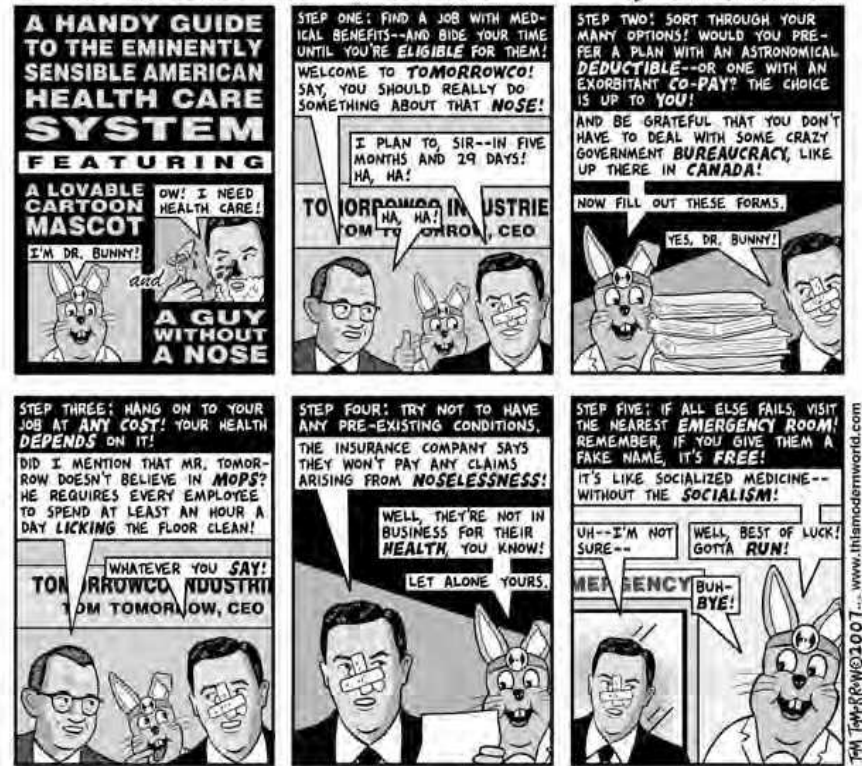
• Everybody who cares about **what's going on in Iraq** needs to speak up now as Bush prepares to escalate our military commitment and spend billions more on a long-shot gamble. Get on the record with your representatives in Congress. Hold their feet to the fire. Write a letter, send an email, make a call. Clearly state your objections. The Democrats now "in control" of Congress are still vulnerable to allowing the inertia of this idiotic campaign to plow through countless more Iraqi and American lives. Only a massive public outcry will assure a quick withdrawal from Iraq. And don't let mainstream media fool you with the use of the word "surge." It's an outrageous escalation.

• We heard from a credible source that the **VA in Roseburg** has been talking to PeaceHealth about buying one or more of its older buildings at the Sacred Heart campus on Hilyard. Turns out it was just a rumor, according to Brian Terrett at PeaceHealth. "We don't have an agreement with the VA, and actually they haven't talked to us about space at Hilyard," he says. "At this point almost all of the space at Hilyard is already spoken for, so it would be hard for us to accommodate the VA if they wanted to be at Hilyard."

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

DISPUTES MARK MLK HOLIDAY

Martin Luther King Jr. Day will be observed as a holiday in Lane County Monday, Jan. 15, and the event this year has taken on political and social baggage due to the choice of the keynote speaker for the county's celebration.

Human rights activist Walter E. Fauntroy, pastor of the New Bethel Baptist church in Washington, D.C., will address the theme "The Dream: How Far Have We Come?" But the preacher's political activism against gay marriage led some local gay rights activists to call for a cancellation of Fauntroy's appearance.

The issue came before the Eugene Human Rights Commission in December, which led to a vote to not support Fauntroy's appearance. The commission reversed itself Jan. 4 after hearing from black community leaders supporting Fauntroy's long history of fighting for racial equality. The commission did go on record expressing concern about the speaker's stand on gay rights.

Councilor Bonny Bettman called for the City Council to cancel the city's financial support and sponsorship of the Fauntroy speech, which she said contradicts the city's anti-discrimination code, but her Jan. 8 motion died for lack of a second.

Fauntroy was a personal friend of King's and served 10 congressional terms representing Washington, D.C. He has "devoted his life to applying the principles of nonviolent civil disobedience to 'raise consciousness and prick

consciences' about racial discrimination and poverty in the United States and human rights abuses in South Africa," reads a statement from Betty Snowden, one of the event's organizers.

Fauntroy was King's personal envoy to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and also chaired the board of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change. Today he is president of the National Black Leadership Roundtable, co-chair of the Sudan Campaign, and head of the Millennium Villages Project, a U.S.-based private sector effort to eliminate extreme poverty in Africa by 2025.

But Fauntroy became controversial in recent years when he signed on for a leading role in support of a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. The Alliance For Marriage (AFM) included Fauntroy's name and his link to King on all its press releases in support of the constitutional amendment and amendments to state constitutions in Oregon and 10 other states.

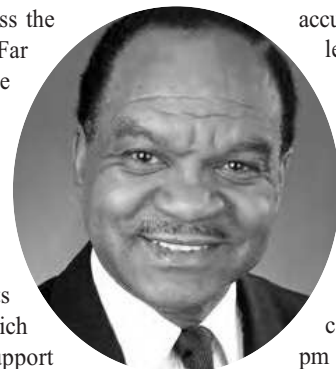
Some gay rights activists accused Fauntroy of using King's legacy to shield those supporting discrimination against gays from charges of bigotry. The anti-gay initiatives in swing states served to help re-elect Bush and other Republicans in 2004, political pundits said.

Fauntroy will speak at the celebration which begins at 6 pm Monday, Jan. 15 in the Morse Events Center at Northwest Christian College, at the corner of 11th and Alder.

The UO is co-sponsoring the Fauntroy talk along with campus events continuing all month. A unity celebration and candlelight vigil are planned from 6 to 8 pm Tuesday, Jan. 16 at Gerlinger Hall.

A documentary film about Hurricane Katrina will be shown from 6 to 8 pm Thursday, Jan. 18 at the Walnut Room, Erb Memorial Union, followed by a discussion.

A free public talk by Angela Y. Davis, co-founder of the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Oppression, will be from 1 to 3 pm Saturday, Jan. 20, Room 150, Columbia Hall. Davis will speak on "Radical Frameworks for Social Justice."



Walter E. Fauntroy