In the words of our guest speaker, Martín Espada: The Republic of Poetry is a place where, as Walt Whitman says, ‘your very flesh shall be a great poem.’ It is a place where you are your own greatest creation, your own most inspired invention. It is a place where you make of your life an epic poem. You may discover that medicine is your poetry, or law is your poetry, or education is your poetry, or journalism is your poetry, or music is your poetry, or poetry is your poetry.”
Project Summary

The Writers’ Center is proposing a grant for a diversity writing project for winter quarter 2008 as part of an effort to empower students to use writing as a vehicle for creating change. We are thrilled to announce that internationally renowned poet and essayist, Martín Espada has agreed to come as a guest lecturer to Eastern Washington University.

In a partnering grant we seek funds to support a writing contest on diversity. We will publish an anthology of the winning essays and poems and host a Community Reading event where students share their work in front of their fellow students, faculty, staff, and community members. With this grant we propose to augment that student writing project by adding an award winning poet and essayist to speak alongside our student writers at the community event, as well as offer a lecture on the power of writing as a tool for democracy.

Martín Espada, has been called “the Latino poet of his generation.” He has published thirteen books in all as a poet, editor and translator. His eighth book of poems, The Republic of Poetry (Norton, 2006), received the 2007 Paterson Award for Sustained Literary Achievement and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Before that, Imagine the Angels of Bread (Norton, 1996), won an American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Additionally, his poems have appeared in the The New Yorker, The New York Times Book Review, Harper’s, and The Nation. A former tenant lawyer, Espada is now a professor in the Department of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where he teaches creative writing and the work of Pablo Neruda, who is considered one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century.

When he heard about this writing project, he generously was eager to accept amd reserved the date of February 29 until we received notification of the grant approval. He committed to two events. He agreed to a lecture where he will share his expertise on Pablo Neruda and the role of poetry in the formation of democracy in Chile. He will also participate in a reading of his own poetry to augment our community event.

Bringing Martín Espada to our campus community as a lecturer and speaker is a great opportunity to celebrate the diversity that writing offers. And is a perfect example of the power of participation that we are trying to encourage in the students here. We asked and he accepted.
Statement of Issue

Writing is not thought of as a primary mode for impacting social change. The Moving Diversity Forward at EWU Report from 2006 stated, "there is a lack of motivation among students who want to see change, but feel they lack the knowledge of how to go about creating change." Without models to demonstrate the effectiveness of writing as a tool for expressing voice through experience, students are unable to see themselves as agents of change. Students need to be empowered by being exposed to writers that have proved that words do in fact shape a community.

Additionally, because EWU is a rural campus it is often disconnected from specific ethnic histories and stories even though portions of our student population come from diverse backgrounds. It is important to use the university as a resource to offer students varying perspectives from experts who are seeped in that history.

Project Objectives

The goal of this proposal is to inspire students to engage in the global conversation through writing and to look at creative writings not only as an art form, but also as an agent for democracy. As Martín Espada said in a commencement address at the Hampshire College: “The Republic of Poetry is a state of mind. It is a place where creativity meets community, where the imagination serves humanity. The Republic of Poetry is a republic of justice, because the practice of justice is the highest form of human expression. This goes beyond the tired idea of “poetic justice,” because all justice is poetic.” Exposing students to this concept of “The Republic of Poetry” through a lecture about a well-known poet, Pablo Neruda, can open the door to thinking about the role of writing in society.

Bringing Martín Espada to speak and share his writings at Eastern will contribute to the climate of academic inquiry and foster connections between disciplines, both of which support Eastern’s mission statement. Pairing a well-known author, dedicated to educating people about the possibility of writing, with students who are actively participating in determining their campus experience through essays and poetry sends a powerful message to the EWU campus and the surrounding community. That message being: we are dedicated to supporting students as they step-up to build their own futures, futures within a culturally diverse society.

Project Design

After visiting Chile in 2004 and participating in the celebration of the Neruda centenary, Martín Espada witnessed what he calls “the redemption of Pablo Neruda,” and the promise of poetry in a democratic Chile trying to heal itself. From that experience, he crafted a lecture about the evolution of Pablo Neruda as a political poet alongside the
history of democracy in Chile. “The Redemption of Pablo Neruda” lecture weaves some Neruda poems with some of Espada’s own poems about Chile to prove the adage—the pen is mightier than the sword. This lecture, held before the community reading, will take place in the Writers’ Center to further enhance the presence of the Center on campus.

On February 29 Espada will speak twice. In the afternoon, the Writers' Center will host his lecture on Pablo Neruda and in the evening we will reserve the auditorium in Showalter Hall for the Community Reading where students winners of the contest will open the event by sharing their writings. Martín Espada will then be introduced to read some of his own poetry. The evening will focus on the varying points of view that students can explore when offered a word: diversity.

Dissemination Plan

- Writers' Center Responders will announce the community reading, highlighting our guest speaker, when they present the writing contest to classes/programs that focus on diversity--Africana Studies, Chicano Studies, Disability Services, SAFE (the LGBT Center), Native American Studies, Women’s Studies, the English Language Institute, and TRIO.

- Three weeks before the event, The Easterner and The Spokesman-Review will be sent press releases of the diversity writing project, the Pablo Neruda lecture and the Community Reading event in hopes to secure an article about writing as a tool for democracy.

- Two weeks before the lecture and Community Reading (Feb 29) we will place the event information in the campus news outlets—The Focus, Good Morning Eastern, The Easterner—as well as pass out flyers to remind the academic departments to inform their faculty and students of the event and put up posters on campus.

- Additionally, we will alert our sister universities/community colleges of the lecture/reading and send flyers to their campuses.

- We will also place the event information in local news outlets—The Spokesman-Review (The 7) and The Inlander—to encourage community members to attend the community reading where they can hear Martín Espada along with student writers from Eastern.

Project Partners

We will contact different academic departments such as Chicano Studies, the Inland Northwest Center for Creative Writing, as well as the English, History, and
Government Departments, and others that would have interest in the intersection between writing and politics.

**Timetable**

This project will begin and end in winter quarter 2008:

- **Jan 7-18**: Class announcements for the diversity writing contest, Community Reading, and lecture with the guest speaker
- **Feb 11**: Notifying various papers of the upcoming lecture
- **Feb 20**: Posters announcing the reading and lecture on campus
- **Feb 29**: Pablo Neruda lecture in the Writers' Center
- **Feb 29**: Community Reading at Showalter Hall
- **Mar 3**: Anthologies Distributed to academic departments
Budget

Honorarium $ 5000

Requested Total: $ 5000

Additional Costs:

Hotel (2 nights) $ 350
Airfare $ 800
Rental Space (Showalter Auditorium) $ 100
*Publicity $ 500
*Reception costs $ 500

Total $ 2250

Currently The Inland Northwest Center for Creative Writing is offering $500 in support. We are also seeking funding for the additional cost from other academic departments such as Chicano Studies, or The Teaching and Learning Center as well as the Division for International and Educational Outreach.

*These costs mirror the publicity and reception costs from the “Diversity Essay and Poetry Writing Contest for Publication and Community Reading” budget. Should both grants get funded, the $1500 would only be required once.

PLEASE NOTE: While it is our hope that both partnering grants are funded, we do view this grant as a stand-alone and ask for individual consideration regarding funding.
Reference

Dr. Bob Neubauer
Professor Emeritus in Social Work and Interim Director of the Writers’ Center
khn.eagle@sisna.com

Resumes of Each Participant

Martín Espada, Guest Speaker
Here is some additional information on Mr. Espada’s accomplishments:

Awards and Fellowships
Robert Creeley Award
Paterson Poetry Prize
Premio Fronterizo
PEN/Revson Fellowship
Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship

Other Works
Now the Dead will Dance the Mambo, audiobook (Leapfrog, 2004)
A Mayan Astronomer in Hell’s Kitchen (Norton, 2000)
Zapata’s Disciple (South End, 1998)
El Coro: A Chorus of Latino and Latina Poetry (University of Massachusetts, 1997)
Poetry Like Bread: Poets of the Political Imagination from Curbstone Press (1994)
City of Coughing and Dead Radiators (Norton, 1993)
Rebellion is the Circle of a Lover’s Hands (Curbstone, 1990).

Dani Ringwald, Project Lead
Is in the second year of her MFA program with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She worked in the Writers' Center as a Responder for the 2006-2007 school year and will return as the GSA for this up-coming year. Previously, she worked as an event coordinator in the Los Angeles area, organizing panel discussions, movie screenings, and fundraisers. In all of the above, deadlines, details, and the dissemination of information were crucial aspects that were handled in a way to insure the success of the event.

Gail Forsgreen, Project Partner
Has worked at the Writers' Center for 13 years and is currently working part-time as a Senior Responder in the Center and part-time as a General Undergraduate Academic Advisor. She developed a conversation group for international students where she uses the skills learned in the ESL endorsement program to help non-native English speakers hone their English language skills. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Literary
Studies and is just completing her Masters in Adult Education. She has co-authored and been awarded other grants through EWU.