

FOR THE RECORD

Schools take a stand

In a year where election posturing is fueling an already over-heated debate over immigration policy, most officials not in the running are inclined to fly low.

So credit the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education for having the guts to step into the debate over whether undocumented individuals are eligible to receive a community college education in the state of North Carolina.

On the school board’s agenda at this Thursday’s meeting (Feb. 7) is a resolution in support of the decision by community colleges system president Martin Lancaster to extend a community college education to this state’s undocumented residents.

In most cases, these are people who came to this country as infants or small children. In many cases, this is really the only country they’ve known. In all cases, they have worked hard enough in school to take their education to the next level. That is a value this state has endorsed since its inception.

In the opening sentence of the North Carolina Constitution’s article on education, it is stated, “the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” A little later on is the stipulation that “equal opportunities shall be provided for all students.”

The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld that undocumented children are entitled to a K-12 education. That is the law of the land. Extending that right of access to education further is a logical step and fits with the long-held values of our state.

We applaud any public body willing to make that case, especially in today’s climate.

Trucking toward a solution

The board of aldermen Tuesday night indicated that they’d like to take a look at the town ordinance that caused zoning violation letters to go to businesses that allow the taco trucks to use their property. A fair reading of that move is that the trucks will be allowed to continue to operate.

Last week, as the story and reaction unfolded, a couple of issues were raised that are notable. First, there seemed to be a quick leap in some people’s minds that violations had to do with health and food-handling rules. In fact, they had nothing to do with food-safety or public-health issues. We checked, and the trucks are in compliance with county rules, which require them to operate in conjunction with a licensed inspected commissary.

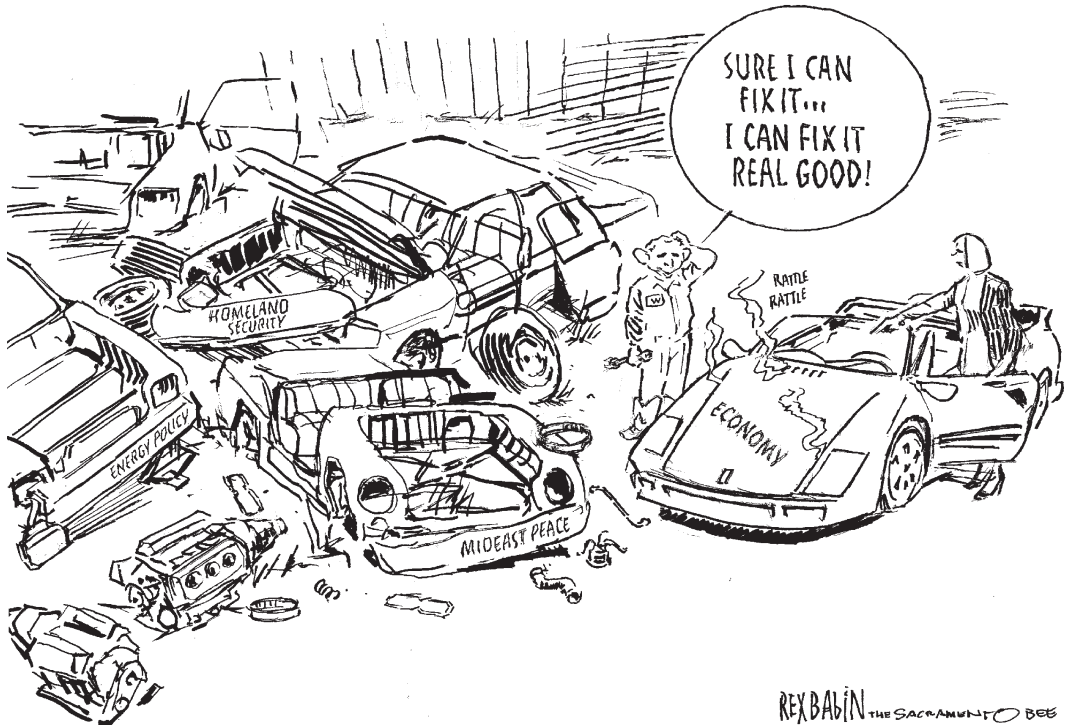
The second notable reaction, and the most disturbing one, was that somehow because these trucks are serving food indigenous to Latin America, there is an illegal-immigration angle. This just underlines how quick some people are to voice their resentment against a specific group that, as we said in the editorial above, has been so effectively vilified by the jingoists. We doubt that if a couple of kebab wagons or a somosa cart had opened in the downtown there would be a similar outcry.

Get outside

A new major study by the Nature Conservancy — soon to be published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences — confirms that there has been a steady and steep worldwide decline in the amount of time we spend in nature.

The concern is that as we become a more urbanized planet and spend less and less time in the natural world, our connection with it and our commitment to it is decreasing as well.

Not sure if there’s a long-term solution to this problem, but if you’d like to save yourself and your children from this fate there is a tiny button on your remote that can actually make the television/DVR/gamebox stop. The mid-week weather certainly offered ample reward for anyone willing to press said button and venture outside. And, as our Flora columnist Ken Moore points out this week, there is growing evidence that a rather colorful outdoor event call “spring” may occur again this year. Be sure not to miss it.



Racism within our walls?

DANIEL MATCHAR

If you are a student at Carrboro High, a teacher or administrator at Carrboro High, have a student at Carrboro High, or have ever heard of Carrboro High, there is a high probability that you have heard about the “racial tension” at the school. To clear things up, I would like to say that I do not believe that my school has a racism problem. Well, at least our problems are no worse than any other high school in the district. All of the hype from the January 17th fight has left my school with potentially negative and long-lasting repercussions. It’s sad for me to see CHS be labeled “the racist school” because my belief is that the incident was isolated to a few ignorant students.

In an attempt to turn things around, I hope that this negative situation has taught some lessons. I have learned (in greater detail) the domino effect that the use of racial slurs can have on a body of students. The situation began with three students, but now, a mere three-some weeks after the fight, an entire community is involved.

My hope is that CHS can move past what happened and, hopefully, come out a little more socially aware of racism. Ironically, I think that if things are handled appropriately, CHS can come out being the “least racist” school in the district.

Daniel Matchar is a junior at Carrboro High School.

ANTONIO G. POWELL

Is there racism in the walls of our school, are there really kids that hate each other based on the color of their classmates’ skin, and, if so, why is it even still happening in the year 2008?

A fight recently took place at our school between two black students and one white student. Was it a prejudice in-

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cident or was the word “nigger” simply used to hurt the two black students and as an opportunity for the other student involved to draw attention to himself?

I believe that it was an isolated incident and that the word was just meant to hurt or get a reaction. I don’t believe it was directed toward the black students as a means of prejudice. If more people actually knew what the word meant, then I bet it would have never been said in the first place.

Really, most students can’t even tell you what a “nigger”

Antonio G. Powell is a junior at Carrboro High School.

The real class warfare continues

CHRIS FITZSIMON

The post-mortems on the Edwards campaign continue, with most political analysts attributing the failure of his candidacy to his embrace of what the pundits insist is class warfare, the focus on the country’s staggering and growing economic inequality.

A secondary analysis focuses on Edwards’ ambition. A prominent North Carolina columnist wishes Edwards had stayed in the Senate instead of beginning his first run for the presidency during his first term.

It’s not clear if he feels the same way about the two Democratic candidates still in the race, both of whom are also serving their first term in the Senate and seeking the White House.

But it almost always comes back to a version of class warfare that was Edwards’ problem, that aggressively challenging the aspects of the economic system that expand the gulf between the rich and poor is somehow a declaration of war against corporations and the wealthy.

Ironically, the critique of Edwards’ economic policies comes the same week that President Bush released the details of his budget proposal

to Congress, a plan that slashes funding for programs that help the poor while giving more than a trillion dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest one percent of the nation’s households over the next ten years.

There’s your class warfare, though not many pundits can seem to bring themselves to use the term to describe the budget that way. And Bush’s budget is not a declaration of class war as much as it is a continuation of it, the latest proposal from this administration to give breaks to the wealthy and corporations at the expense of people struggling every day to make ends meet.

Bush wants to not only make deep cuts to federal programs that protect the environment, control the spread of infectious diseases and provide heating assistance for poor and elderly families, he wants to reduce the amount of federal dollars sent to states to help pay for initiatives that include vocational education, worker training, family services and public safety programs like community policing and preventing violence against women.

He can’t claim the cuts have anything to do with fiscal responsibility. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities says that the budget Bush sent

is; and if they could tell you, they would say it meant an ignorant person. That may be true to some definitions of the word, but a “nigger” is actually a Negro, or a person of the Negroid race, and also any group of dark-skinned people mostly coming from Africa. I also want to say that the student knew exactly what he was doing when he said the word, because it wasn’t the first time. The first time he said the word he said it to another black student before the Jan.17 incident occurred.

I don’t believe this is racism, but why is this still even going on? I mean, there is no purpose for the word; there is no use for it anymore. I don’t say this just toward students of races other than blacks, but to black students as well.

If we say it, then it is like giving the right to other people to say the word, and they probably figure that it doesn’t hurt them anymore because they use it themselves. I also think that the word is used so much because people don’t understand its true meaning. All we know is when it is said to us negatively and directly to hurt us, we are supposed to defend ourselves. And to think the whole incident went down on MLK’s birthday, the man that tried to bring the black and white races together.

Antonio G. Powell is a junior at Carrboro High School.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

With apologies to Mr. Wolfe

Now that he’s not working the campaign trail, John Edwards and family are a lot more visible around town. He was close to courtside in the comfy seats at the Smith Center during last week’s Boston College game and he’s been making the rounds lately to thank the staff and hometown volunteers and supporters.

And if you were strolling by Milltown the other night, you might have heard the former senator — or someone who sounds just like him — belting out a Bon Jovi number during the karaoke challenge at a party for the staff. The tune was “Who Says You Can’t Go Home.” Here’s the chorus:

*Who says you can’t go home
There’s only one place they call me one of their own
Just a hometown boy, born a rolling stone, who says you can’t go home
Who says you can’t go back, been all around the world and as a matter of fact
There’s only one place left I want to go, who says you can’t go home
It’s alright, it’s alright, it’s alright, it’s alright, it’s alright
Indeed. Welcome home, John.*

Campaign finance

Nothing wrong with a nice dinner, but when a candidate in a local race drops \$6K on a fundraiser at La Rez, well, it’s gonna get noticed.

There are all kinds of tidbits of information in the local campaign finance reports if you peruse the recent filings on the OC Board of Elections website. Of the recent filings, Chapel Hill Town Council candidate Matt Czajkowski’s was by far the most interesting. The largely self-financed candidate, who edged out Cam Hill by 60 votes, dropped \$5979.17 for an early December “victory party and fundraiser” at the lovely Rosemary Street establishment. That’s a hefty chunk of the roughly \$20,000 the newcomer spent overall and three times the amount he raised from contributors throughout the race.

Friends of Bill?

It wasn’t lost on several observers that a board of aldermen item to schedule breakfast with the state legislative delegation included a yes or no poll about extending Rep. William Faison (D-Cedar Grove) an invitation. Not sure if someone at the town knows that Faison is simply not a breakfast eater (he’s 0 for 3 returning our phone calls, so I didn’t bother asking) and doesn’t want to force him. But the item did cause some residents to wonder if there was a move to snub Faison, who presents a couple of precincts in northern Carrboro, over his support for a bill to de-annex The Highlands and that derailing last session of the town’s campaign finance bill.

A few aldermen objected to the poll saying it didn’t seem right and noting that Faison had attended similar events before. So, the poll was removed and Faison, like the rest of the delegation, is on the invite list.

HKoj

The acronym really reminds me of something you’d buy at an IKEA, but the Historic Thousands on Jones Street is an annual gathering in Raleigh that brings together a coalition of groups fighting for civil rights, a better health care system, labor issues, a cleaner environment and a number of other causes.

The event is Saturday with a rally at Chavis Park at 11 a.m. and a march to the General Assembly at 12:30 p.m.

More than 5,000 people representing 75 organizations attended last year.

—KIRK ROSS

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