

## To close the gap, tax the rich



By Chris Roe  
STAFF WRITER

The rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and — surprise! — there's corruption in Washington.

In the aftershock of the financial earthquake caused by the failed conservative fiscal policy under President George W. Bush, the Republicans in Congress are resolute in continuing to enrich the wealthy at the expense of everyone else.

U.S. Census data revealed, immediately before the 2010 Congressional elections, that there is a record gap between the rich and the poor.

This was caused by Republican philosophies of minimal taxation for the rich and a free market economy.

In a free market economy based solely on competition, you do not pass go, you do not collect \$200. You lose the game, and the rich win.

Prior to a tax deal with the Republicans, President Obama advocated for preserving income tax cuts for the bottom 95 percent. He wanted to eliminate the tax breaks for the wealthiest. Tax the rich and you close the gap.

Instead, the Republicans are determined to extend these tax cuts permanently. This is in line with their determination to stop the government from assisting those in need. They refuse to create a society of equality.

Republicans got their way in a deal with President Obama to extend tax cuts for two years. This allowance was in exchange for an extension of unemployment benefits, a mini stimulus and bipartisan tax breaks.

The whole concept behind this deal underlines the Republican objectives to enhance the power of the rich. Stubborn indeed, they opposed the extension of unemployment benefits as further evidence that they won't support those in need.

It's not necessarily about punishing the rich. It's about having them pay their fair share and contribute to society in an equal way. It's about having financial equality and opportunities for everyone.

Financial equity also participates in fueling the economy.

"If the primary goal is stimulating the economy, tax breaks to the rich are simply not cost-effective," wrote Richard H. Thaler, a professor of economics and behavioral science at the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago, in an opinion piece in *The New York Times*. "Numerous studies have shown that the poor spend nearly all of their income, while the rich save a significant amount of theirs."

When President Bush came into office, he distorted the tax cuts he put into place.

"(Bush was) determined to overstate the surplus and understate the size of the tax cuts: hiding the true budgetary effects of the tax cuts would minimize the danger of the fiscal tradeoffs becoming salient," said Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson in an *American Political Science Journal* article.

The Bush administration, by enacting these tax cuts, put in place fiscal tradeoffs that prevented economic growth and reduced government resources.

The effects of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 were, in fact, the opposite of what the title proclaimed.

The immense concentration of income at the very top robbed the middle class of spending power and the ability to power the economy.

Richard Reich, a professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley, and the former secretary of labor under President Clinton, pointed out in an NPR interview that there were two years in which income was so heavily concentrated at the top.

"One year was 2007," said Reich. "The other year was 1928."

Both years were the start of two major market failures, which were caused by too few economic actors having too much influence in the market.

"Unless we understand the relationship between the extraordinary concentration of income and wealth we have in this country and the failure of the economy to rebound, we are going to be destined for many, many years of high unemployment, (and) anemic job recoveries," said Reich.

The tax cuts call for immediate attention. This is an issue for the next election. Obama has saved this controversy for his reelection campaign, and this will be a major factor. Raise taxes on the rich, close the gap, generate revenue.

Bring it on, 2012.

## Black History Month celebrates, not chastises



By David Pferdekamper  
STAFF WRITER

In middle school I had a friend who referred to Black History Month as "Make-White-People-Feel-Guilty Month."

Unfortunately, that might feel accurate for a lot of people. The very fact that my friend would give February such an epithet shows that the mission of Black History Month does not always successfully cross the color line.

In fact, that mission did not always reach me. February would come around and I would have to sit in my middle school's gymnasium and listen to lectures about the slave trade. I was not engaged in the least, and it did not seem like any of my peers — regardless of their race — were all that engaged, either. In most set-

tings before Guilford, methods used for approaching Black History Month did not adequately match its positive and educational purpose.

Here at Guilford, the approach is different — the conversation is not about reminding everyone of social injustice for the umpteenth time, like was the case in middle school.

The Black History Month events at Guilford are based not around lecturing, but instead around celebration and progressive discussion. Here, it is about learning.

That learning does not just happen during February, either. The Multicultural Education Department puts on a fantastic range of events on campus that promote diversity all year, albeit less frequently.

That range of events reflects on an area of debate surrounding Black History Month: the idea that having one month set aside for black history separates black history and American history. Moreover, there is an argument that Black History Month promotes the idea that it is OK to ignore black history for the remainder of the year.

There might be some truth to this argument. However, the purpose of Black History Month is positive. Perhaps it is time to find a new way of achieving that purpose, and that is a worthy debate.

However, this debate has a different significance at Guilford because here, black history is not ignored the whole year round — no race's history is.

We might not always do the best job we could when learning about and discussing race, but we try. We try unlike any other community I have ever been a part of, and the discussions we have here are not something we should take for granted. The very fact that we have a Multicultural Education Department is something to be proud of; such a thing is not a feature at every college.

We are not perfect here. Sometimes that attitude of thinking of Black History Month as "Make-White-People-Feel-Guilty Month" may tinge our minds. The difference here is that that's not good enough for us. We can recognize that we have those unfortunate feelings sometimes, but we do not accept them. Instead, we are ready to learn and improve.

## BURSTING THE BUBBLE

### Triad Jewish Film Festival



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The year is 1940. The notorious Adolf Hitler has already invaded Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. In America, 3.7 percent of the population is Jewish. In Greensboro, N.C., there are only 250 people of the Jewish religion.

We've come a long way in the past 71 years. Hitler's dead, and the massive genocide of the Jewish population in Europe is over.

Today, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 45 percent of all Jews in the world live in America, outranking Israel by 3 percent. In Greensboro, the number of Jewish residents has soared from 250 to 3,000.

In honor and celebration of the rich culture of the Jewish people, the Greensboro Jewish Federation is sponsoring the 2011 Triad Jewish Film Festival.

Each year since 2007, the TJFF has attracted thousands of curious viewers that want to gain some insight into the culture, history, and traditions of the Jewish people, or just want to celebrate the joys of being Jewish. The mission, according to the festival's website, is to "enlighten, educate, and entertain."

The festival's website brags that they are "proud to feature award-winning films — comedies, dramas, and documentaries — that would not otherwise be shown in the Triad."

The patron behind the festival, the Greensboro Jewish Federation, is the proud voice of Greensboro's Jewish community. It has funded programs centered on the Jewish community for the young and old alike since 1940, providing a "lifelong community that grows with you from childhood to old age."

Before evolving into what it is today, the Federation was called the Greensboro United Charities.

In the 1940's, after the start of WWII, the Charities aided eight refugee Jewish families by relocating them to Greensboro. After the war, they worked to develop local Jewish agencies and to support the establishment of the State of Israel.

The Charities reorganized to form the Greensboro Jewish Federation in 1972, and incorporated the Jewish communities of Winston-Salem and High Point. Since then, the federation has hosted rallies, protests, fundraisers, and awareness programs. The Federation now has over 1,100 contributors and raises over \$1.55 million annually.

I myself am not Jewish. And, honestly, I have no idea which religion — if any — my friends practice. When I asked one student — who I found out was Jewish only after she received a Chanukah card in the mail — if I could interview her about her thoughts on the Jewish community in Greensboro, she responded that she honestly didn't have anything to say.

I read the Buzz almost daily, and while I have seen religious services for Buddhists and Quakers advertised, I do not remember once reading about Jewish practices. I was handed a Bible on my way to lunch one day by some Gideons International representatives, but I did not even know that there was a Jewish club until today.

I'm definitely not for people throwing their religion in your face, but why does the Jewish community seem so hush-hush? I think that Guilford definitely needs to work on their Jewish outreach tactics, and set up more activities for Jews and non-Jews alike to embrace the dreidels and the yarmulkes, the Torah, the menorahs and the latkes.

The TJFF is a great approach to engaging more people in the religion and the culture. Six films are shown each year at the festival. This year's picks, which include "Hidden Children," "The Matchmaker," and "Berlin '36," are sure to give you more than a glimpse into the Jewish tradition. But more than just educate you, they'll entertain you.

Shalom!