

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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EDITORIALS

Immigration debate goes beyond county services

Municipalities won't make headway without cohesive federal policy

Mecklenburg County commissioners have jumped into the politically and socially sensitive subject of immigration. Republican commissioners, who make up the majority of the board, propose that the county refuse to offer services to illegal residents, arguing taxpayer-funded programs such as food stamps or mental health care should be accessible only to U.S. citizens or documented aliens. In addition, they propose fines for businesses that knowingly hire illegals.

The Republicans are right. A nation that purportedly is built on laws crafted to protect all citizens should be in no position to encourage or even reward lawbreaking. Those are powerful arguments, but represent partial solutions. Should education and health services be off-limits as well, considering the possible repercussions on the county's residents? And how many businesses — especially those that don't have the resources to do extensive background checks — keep track of applicants' immigrant status?

The commissioners face a difficult path. An estimated 11 million illegals are in the U.S., and conservative guesses put North Carolina's illegals at 330,000. Counties and cities can only do but so much if they decide to crack down on who is eligible for certain services. Legally, there's the risk of running afoul of state and federal laws. There's also the cultural pressure to provide services because the larger society benefits when everyone has access.

The real solution to this problem isn't in Charlotte or even Raleigh. Federal officials and Congress have been spinning their collective wheels for years in terms of a cohesive immigration platform that encourages lawful entry. Of course, with so much in this country, immigration comes down to economics. Immigrants around the globe are willing to come here and work in low-paying jobs for a chance at economic and social freedom. The key is low-paying service jobs, which are a magnet for immigrants. If Americans — especially those who control those jobs — would rather not pay living wages that would make them more appealing to native-born Americans, then immigration will continue to be a divisive issue.

State should do more to fund district attorney office

As crime statistics continue to climb, so does the cry by politicians for more police officers and jail cells. The public gets pulled in the fray when asked to support bond packages to pay for more prisons or asked to accept more taxes for a larger police force.

Interestingly, there is very little outcry for the main piece of the crime conundrum — the district attorney's office. The department responsible for convicting those the police officers arrest continue to go underfunded, which hampers the legal system's ability to prosecute cases, and ultimately serve the interests of justice. They are utilizing archaic equipment and technology which makes it very difficult to keep the criminal element under lock and key.

Locally, the police department is the responsibility of the city, while the prison system is the purview of the county. The DA's office falls under the state. The county only provides the DA's office with office space and furniture, which is little considering the growth in Mecklenburg's population, and the crime that comes along with that growth. The state's constant foot-dragging over funding the department, especially in a booming county like Mecklenburg, does a disservice not only to its citizens, but to the state as a whole. As a major economic engine for the state, Mecklenburg's growth and safety are paramount to North Carolina, and should be undertaken with all deliberation and speed.

Until the state gets behind properly funding the local DA offices, then the impact of more police officers and more prisons is marginalized.

EDITORIALS

Face it: Integration is a farce

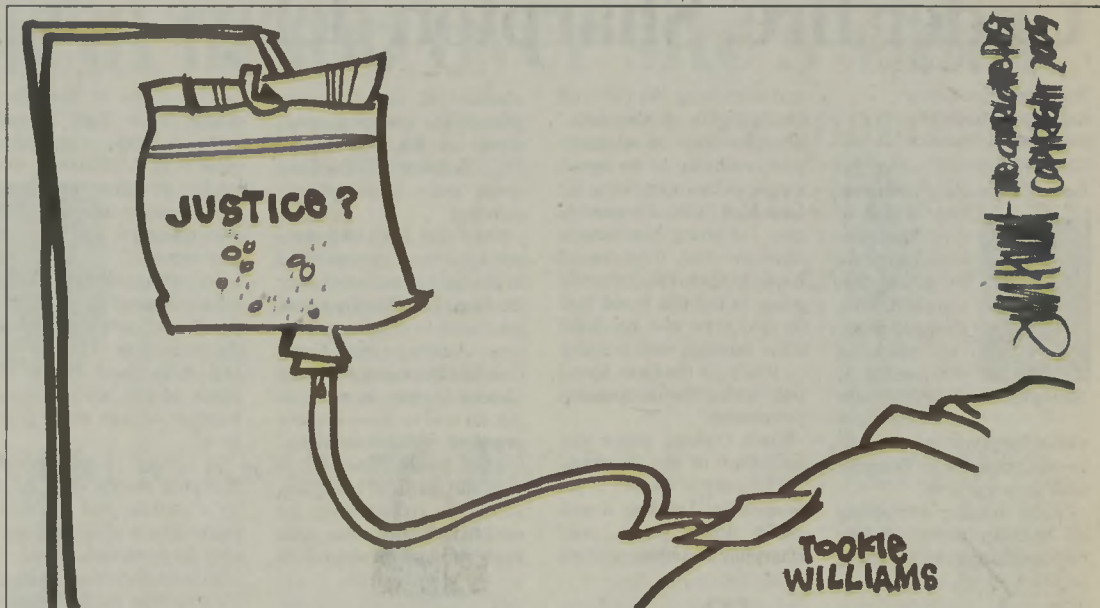
Just finished reading your article "The Party's Over" (Dec. 1) regarding allegations of racial bias at an uptown Charlotte nightclub. It reminded me of the flap caused by similar allegations by an annual black motorcycle rally in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

From where I sit, the solution is simple: Dispel the myth of "integration." As a people, we have been sold a bill of goods that is rotten to the core. Black folk cannot integrate white society. Yet, even The Post is formatted to encourage its readers to seek this impossible dream. How do you blend a fly in a bottle of milk?

When will we, as a people, realize that we are really a "nation within a nation?" When will we realize that "integration" is a failed experiment? What would happen, for example, if black folk decided to spend their money where you are welcomed, especially among our own people? What would happen if black folk voted with their dollars and channeled those dollars into local black businesses?

The goal of integration has caused us to get hysterical every time we are refused service in a white establishment. It seems to have also caused us to forget how to turn lemons into lemonade.

Wesley Barnard
Salisbury



Nightclub guilty until proven innocent

Charlotte businessman Stefan LaTorre continues to have his uptown establishment, Menage, labeled as unwelcoming to African Americans. It is unfortunate and as far as I am concerned it is untrue.

I have known Mr. LaTorre for six years and there is nothing I have seen in his personality or character that is racist. He is a very smart, shrewd businessman. It does not make business sense for him to be unwelcoming to any racial segment of the community.

The times I have visited Menage, the crowd was very diverse with Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and everybody was welcomed.

Moreover, here are some facts about Menage after one year of operation. Thirty percent of the estimated attendance of 50,000 guest was African American. Twenty five percent of the Menage

staff is African American. The manager of Menage is African American.

Hence, the unwelcoming label does not make sense. It appears to have gained a life based on unsubstantiated facts and innuendos. Sadly, otherwise distinguished people in our community who should know better, bought into the hype and helped propel the life of this situation.

It is time we give this matter a rest and move on to issues and concerns that matter. If we want something to get upset about try this on for size:

"Black Boys: The Sad Facts"

The most compelling case behind the vulnerability of black boys in school comes from these selected findings collected by the Schott Foundation.

- Expulsions and suspensions: Consisting of only 8.6 percent of public school enrollments, black boys represent 22 percent of students expelled from school and 23 percent of students suspended.

- Dropouts: Between 25 percent and 30 percent of America's teenagers fail to graduate from high school with a regular high-school diploma. That figure climbs to over 50 percent for black male students in many U.S. cities.

- Special education: Studies have found that black students nationwide are 2.9 times as likely as whites to be designated as mentally retarded. They also have been found to be 1.9 times as likely to be designated as having an emotional problem and 1.3 times as likely to have a learning disability. Since twice as many black boys are in special education programs as black girls, it is difficult to blame heredity or home environments as the root causes for these figures. In some metropolitan districts, 30 percent of black males are in special education classes, and of the remaining 70 percent, only

half or fewer receive diplomas.

- Graduation: While 61 percent of black females, 80 percent of white males and 86 percent of white females receive diplomas with their high school cohorts nationally, only 50 percent of black males do so.

- Juvenile incarceration: One hundred and five of every 100,000 white males under 18 are incarcerated. That figure is three times as high for black youth at 350 per 100,000. Also, more black males receive the GED in prison than graduate from college.

- Unemployment: Nearly 25 percent of black youths 16 to 19 were neither employed nor in school, according to the 2000 census, nearly twice the national average for this age group and six times the national unemployment rate.

- Rosa Smith

If you want something to get upset about, then here it is.

GERALD O. JOHNSON is publisher of The Post.

Punishing children of illegal immigrants

If you're not a Native American, you're an immigrant. We're a country of immigrants. Yet, the nation is embarking on a nasty and divisive debate over how to stem the flow of illegal immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, and what to do about the undocumented workers already living here.



GEORGE E. CURRY

Suggestions have ranged from President Bush's guest worker proposal to erecting a wall along the 2,000-mile Mexican-U.S. border.

Until now, nothing has worked. That — and raw politics — has prompted a group of federal and state elected officials to seek alternatives that would curb the flow of illegal immigrants. This week, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to take up the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437), which has already been reported out of the Judiciary Committee.

One of the most controversial plans is to circumvent the birthright citizenship provision of the constitution. The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868 to protect the rights of newly emancipated slaves, declares: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

To get around the difficult task of amending the constitution, anti-immigration advocates are arguing that inasmuch as illegal immigrants are not in the U.S.

lawfully, the parents are technically not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the U.S. and therefore their children are not covered by the birthright citizenship provision of the 14th Amendment. This is a matter that is likely to be settled by the Supreme Court.

Supporters of curbing illegal immigration note that the United States is one of the few major industrialized nations that grant broad birthright citizenship with no additional requirements.

Even some backers of the change acknowledge that ending birthright citizenship will not solve the problem of illegal immigration.

"Illegal immigrants are coming for many different reasons," Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) told the Los Angeles Times. "Some are coming for jobs. Some are coming to give birth. Some are coming to commit crimes. Addressing this problem is needed if we're going to combat illegal immigration on all fronts."

The challenge for Republicans is that some want to enact get-tough immigration polices while simultaneously courting the burgeoning Latino vote. California Republican Gov. Pete Wilson backed an anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in the mid-1990s, only to face a Latino backlash.

Clearly, Americans of all political stripes have strong feelings about the need to curb illegal immigration.

A 2004 Gallup Poll found that 85 percent of Americans believe that "large numbers of immigrants entering the U.S. poses a vital threat to the U.S. over the next decade." A September Zogby poll found that by a 3-to-1 margin, Americans believe border control is more important to national security than gun

control. And a Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll two years ago found that 76 percent of Democrats and Independents agreed with the statement: "We should restrict and control people coming into the country to live more than we do now."

In August, the Pew Hispanic announced the findings of polling it did in Mexico.

About four of every ten adults in the Mexican population say they would migrate to the United States if they had the means and opportunity and that two of every ten are inclined to live and work here without legal authorization, the report found.

While it is clear that Americans want tougher immigration laws, many hold stereotypical views of migrants coming across the border. A popular perception is that most of them were unemployed. In fact, most worked before entering the U.S. to take menial jobs for wages higher than what they were earning back home.

However, a recent Pew study found that of the estimated 6.3 million to 11 million Mexicans living in the U.S. illegally, most arrived to find better jobs and because

of family connections, not because they were unemployed in Mexico. Of those polled after applying for identity cards at seven Mexican consulates in the U.S., most are believed to have moved here illegally, more than 80 percent had a relative other than a spouse or child living in the U.S.

As everyone knows, there are no easy solutions. Even if the U.S. were to miraculously build a steel and wire fence along the U.S.-Mexican border, illegal workers would still find a way to enter the U.S.

No one knows how many children are born each year to illegal immigrants. Estimates generally range from 100,000 to 350,000. Whatever solutions lawmakers come up with should not be predicated on punishing babies that had no say in their parents' decision to cross the border for a better life.

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