

# The Charlotte Post

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## OPINION

# Immigration is economic issue, not political

Do you remember when Mexican President Vicente Fox made the following comment? "There is no doubt that Mexicans... are doing jobs that not even blacks want to do there in the United States." He made that comment to a group of Texas businessmen in May 2005. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton telephoned Fox to voice their displeasure, to which Fox responded by inviting both of them to Mexico to "join forces" on working for immigration rights and civil rights for immigrants in United States, according to CNN.



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Fox at first refused to apologize for the comment, saying his remark had been misinterpreted. But later said he understood the African-American community has worked hard to fight against discrimination and that as a result of that fight the Mexican community in America has benefited greatly.

Jesse Jackson replied that he was sure the president had no racist intent and suggested the two meet to discuss "joint strategies between blacks and immigrant groups" in the United States. Fox agreed to set up a visit to Mexico first by Jackson and then with Sharpton.

Black people have very short memories. Does anyone know what has happened since those comments were made and since that invitation was extended and since those black "leaders" were supposed to go to Mexico and work things out? Now we have this brouhaha regarding illegal immigrants and what to do with them, and for the most part black leaders are not even in the discussion. What does all of this really mean? What has happened since May 2005?

I participated in a press conference (Choose Black America) on illegal immigration, held at the National Press Club, on May 23, during which time I spoke about the economic ramifications of this topic and how it negatively affects Black people in this country. I noted our hesitancy to enforce the law when it comes to the corporate raiders who hire "illegal" immigrants and pay them well below the going wage, all the while filling their own pockets with even more profits from this "New Black Slavery."

I suggested this is an economic issue, not a political issue, and not a race issue, as many would have us believe. It is an economic issue when corporations and people who enter this country illegally are able to get away with illegal activities. What else could it be?

I suspect that somewhere, sometime, in some backroom the statement was made by someone, "Muestrame el Dinero," because that's what this immigration thing is all about. But why can't black people see it for what it really is? Why are we engaged in conversations about "helping" the immigrants get their civil rights? Why have I heard brothers saying things like, "Let's not get into a fight with Hispanics," and "We have to strengthen our alliance with Latinos and support them."

When did you last see Latinos, or any other group for that matter, standing with black people on, say, reparations for the work our parents did to help these groups attain what they have, as Fox acknowledged? What about their support for us during Katrina? Why were there no marches in the streets then? Where was this alliance when black men and women were murdered by police officers, when black people were being profiled, and where is it now as black people are unfairly incarcerated, denied equal access to housing, to bank loans? Where is the unified support for Haitians who are sent back to their country? And where is this alliance now, as millions of black people languish in perpetual unemployment?

Frederick Douglass said, "The old employments by which we have heretofore gained our livelihood, are gradually, and it may seem inevitably, passing onto other hands. Every hour sees the Black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived immigrant whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place."

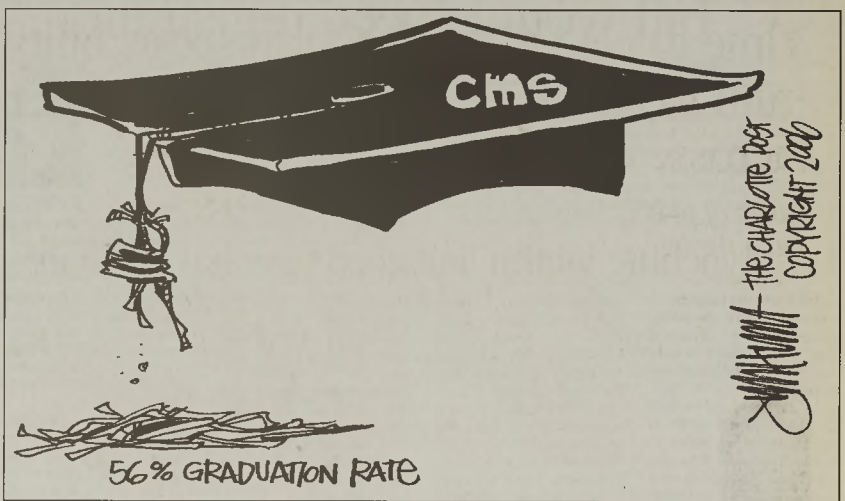
Booker T. Washington said, "Now is the time, not in some far-off future, but now is the time, for us as a race to... do our part in owning, developing, manufacturing, and trading in the natural resources of our country. If we let these golden opportunities slip from us in this generation, I fear they will never come to us in like degree again. Let us act... before it's too late, before others come from foreign lands and rob us of our birthright."

David Walker said, "How strange it is to see men of sound sense, and of tolerably good judgment, act so diametrically in opposition to their [own] interest." To paraphrase Earl Trent, author of "A Challenge to the Black Church," blacks are taught to "love everybody, especially whites and other groups," but we are not taught to "love one another," especially ourselves.

Illegal immigration has leaped to the forefront of the public discourse as though it just arrived; it has been going on for decades, but black people, and the issues that keep us at the bottom of the economic heap, have been around for centuries. I say, "first things first." Black people had better help themselves, with or without the alliances and those who acknowledge that our struggle has helped them, even though they paid no price for it.

The 13th 14th and 15th Amendments were written for Black people, not minorities, and until we stop playing in the minority game, black people will continue and will forever lose. And the constant refrain of Muestrame el Dinero will ring throughout the land for everyone else except us.

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## Randall Kennedy: Negro please

Call it Howard Beach — Part II. Nicholas Minucci, now 20, was on trial earlier this summer for cracking the



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skull of Glenn Moore, an African-American, with a baseball bat. According to Frank Agostini, one of Minucci's accomplices in the racially-motivated attack, the clang of the aluminum bat striking Moore's head "sounded like Barry Bonds hit a home run."

Moore, 23, is hardly a model citizen. But that does not justify the unprovoked brutal attack on him. Moore testified that he and two friends were looking to steal an automobile last June when they ventured into Howard Beach, the predominantly White neighborhood in Queens noted for another high-profile racial assault 20 years ago. But before they could find a car, a gang of young Whites, led by Minucci, spotted the three African-Americans. Moore's friends ran, but he fell and was trapped by the group. He said Minucci called him the n-word and said, "We'll show you not to come and rob white boys."

Moore said the 240-pound Minucci, called "Fat Nick," made him take off his sneakers and drop to his knees before teeing off on him. Albert Gaudelli, Minucci's

attorney, claimed that Moore fractured his skull when he fell on his own.

The surprise star witness for the defense was Randall Kennedy, a Black Harvard University law professor and author of a book titled, "Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word." Kennedy testified: "The word is a complex word. It has many meanings."

Gaudelli would later boast, "I think I did good. I got a Rhodes scholar to testify for nothing and all I had to do is drive him to the airport."

Outside the courtroom, Kennedy defended his action, saying, "I do not feel I was championing somebody's cause. I was asked to speak as an expert witness about a particular issue. Somebody's liberties are at stake here."

Kennedy testified that the n-word has multiple meanings and is not necessarily associated with racism. And he wasn't the only Black taking the stand for the defense. Gary Jenkins, a hip-hop music producer, claimed the n-word has been stripped of its noxious odor.

"It's been permutated and morphed by a generation of younger people who moved it around and changed it into a matter of parlance," Jenkins said. "There has got to be more to it than a word to find that someone is racist."

Buoyed by two African-American "experts," Gaudelli said in his closing argument, "You don't like that word. I don't like that word, no one

over 30 likes it but it's a fact that people under 30 use the word differently. Ignore the word, it's merely another descriptive word."

Fortunately, the jury was not swayed by Gaudelli's admonition or Randall Kennedy's testimony. Nicholas Minucci was found guilty of second-degree assault as a hate crime for the baseball-bat attack and first- and second-degree robbery as a hate crime for stealing Moore's sneakers and several other items. Minucci could face more than 25 years in prison when he is sentenced on July 15.

Although Minucci's lawyer failed in his attempt to sanitize the n-word, the trial should serve as yet another reminder that we can't use the n-word as a so-called term of endearment among ourselves and get upset when those outside the race use that same term in a different manner.

The n-word should not be used in any forum.

When I was editor of Emerge magazine, we helped lead a campaign that forced Merriam-Webster to change its published definition of the n-word. Cam Gilbert wrote a short article that noted that Kathryn Williams, curator at the Museum of African American History in Flint, Mich., was fond of saying, "Anyone can be a nigger. A nigger is any ignorant person." When a boy asked her, "Am I a nigger because I am black?" she replied no and

urged him to look up the word in the dictionary. Neither liked the definition they found in Merriam-Webster's 9th and 10th editions: "1. a black person. 2. ...member of any dark-skinned race — usually, taken to be offensive."

Williams launched a national letter-writing campaign against the publisher of the dictionary. An Associated Press story noted, "Hundreds of people contacted Merriam-Webster after its definition of the racial slur was printed in the September [1997] issue of Emerge magazine."

NAACP President Kwesi Mfume said, "The NAACP finds it objectionable that Merriam-Webster would use black people as a definition for a racist term." He threatened to lead a boycott of the company if the definition was not revised in the next edition.

Merriam-Webster quickly capitulated. Its revised definition of the n-word states, "it now ranks as perhaps the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English."

That's exactly what it is. And use of the n-word should never be defended by Harvard professors, hip-hop artists or anyone else.

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## College bridge to economic mainstream

As the 2006 cohort of African American college students prepare to go off to school in the fall, they will become a part of a living legacy that was paved by groups



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such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The AME Church knew the value of a college education to tomorrow's black American upward mobility in 1881 when they started Morris Brown College as the only college in the state of Georgia established by black Americans for Black Americans. Blacks being just a few years out of legalized U.S. slavery where educating the slave was forbidden, the AME church's vision to create a college helped to undergird the modern African American middle and upper class experience. However, in recent years poor Morris Brown College business management practices may have destroyed that dream today.

A December 10, 2002 article, "Morris Brown College loses accreditation," by The Associated Press/Newsday offers a chronology of the mistakes made by the college en route to losing its accreditation. However, this article

also intimates the existence of survival problems at another Historically Black College.

Morris Brown College was stripped of its accreditation Tuesday, a blow that will cost the historically black school the federal financial aid most students depend on to help pay their tuition.

"Another historically black institution, Grambling State University in Louisiana, will continue on probation for another year, according to the decision by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

"Grambling was placed on probation last year over concerns about its confusing financial records."

Yet HBCUs have produced many excellent American citizens. You get an appreciation of the caliber of HBCU citizens looking at the Morris Brown College's web site welcoming message to potential students.

"Morris Brown has graduated thousands of alumni who are leaders in government, education, business, technical fields and the professions. A Pulitzer Prize-winning author, pilots, journalists, bank presidents, chemists, actors, doctors, government officials and professional athletes, all are among our graduates. These individuals - and many more - have

flourished because of the College's commitment to providing access to higher education and to fostering achievement."

As racial integration comes to fruition, traditionally white colleges and universities now view black students as fair game in their recruiting efforts. Yesteryear's legalized racial segregation laws that once guaranteed HBCUs a steady supply of students are now relics of a by-gone era and have been replaced by a highly competitive college marketplace.

HBCU Savannah State University helps us appreciate today's student recruitment paradigm shift in their Recommendations for a Comprehensive Enrollment & Admissions Plan 1989-2007. "...Influential is the increasingly crowded and complex higher education environment in southeast Georgia, generated by a recent influx of suppliers—for example, Armstrong Atlantic University, The Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah Technical College, and South College. These accumulated environmental changes have led to a truly dramatic decline in market share of southeast Georgia African-American students enrolled at Savannah State University... and the declining share of African-

American students has not been compensated by a growing share of non-black minority students. It should also be noted that the changing market shares are thought to be highly associated with the changing nature of students remaining at Savannah State University."

In essence, traditionally white colleges are now cherry-picking Savannah State University's yesteryear African American student base for college ready individuals to meet their racial and ethnic diversity goals. Savannah State University, therefore, finds itself having to clean up the educational debacle emanating from the public schools under-preparing today's students to handle college work.

Are we ignoring yesterday's wisdom in setting up Historically Black Colleges and Universities that offered Black Americans access to a college education when legalized racial segregation reigned? Just think about it, today obtaining the Bachelor level degree has evolved into a rite of passage into the economic mainstream. If the HBCUs disappear, does this mean that many blacks will never gain entrance into the economic mainstream?

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