

Opinions

Highlighting education's role Partisanship spoils an essential message



Ashley Jobe
Columnist

President Barack Obama made an address Sept. 8 telling students all across the country to buckle down, get organized and believe in themselves and their ability to achieve their educational goals. His comments have caused controversy nationwide for parents who insist that his dialogue was inappropriate.

If it's any indication of the truthfulness of his statements, Obama achieved what this country has never before thought possible, undoubtedly because of the feats he realized during his education and career.

During his speech, he spoke about his personal history, the tools he used to make it through school and his struggles to keep himself focused in the face of adversity.

He came from an extremely unorthodox, diverse background — one that has common ties with many Americans. He was raised by a single mother with limited resources, and he yearned for a brighter future only he could provide by creating his own opportunities in the American school system.

The style of speechmaking that wooed supporters throughout his campaign, in addition to the remarkable knowledge he displayed about countless issues that affected our diverse American communities, was certainly learned throughout his years of edification.

With all these credentials, it would seem logical that nearly every piece of advice Obama had to share with the nation's youth would be received as if each word were a gem, each containing a secret that we've all been searching for.

Americans are known for wealth, innovative ideas and encouraging public figures that preach

messages of hope — yet the foundation upon which those tremendous values stand seems to have been overlooked.

Education fuels the fire that consumes our hearts and propels us into action. It gives us the tools to build each of our unique futures, and the passion to want to use them.

So parents around the country are upset at Obama, the candidate who, throughout his entire campaign, stressed the importance of children getting an equal opportunity for instruction by the best teachers in the country in the best schools?

Wasn't everyone tap-dancing on the dining room table when Obama suggested that our desire to succeed in our endeavors played heavily into the resulting outcomes? It seems preposterous.

Of course, it is an unfortunate fact that not all children are afforded the same opportunities to acquire all the knowledge they need. In recent years, despite some strides toward progress in our education system, schooling has become riddled with red tape, disheartening test scores and discouraged, unprepared students.

But that doesn't mean they shouldn't try to attain the highest goals they have set for themselves in their respective communities and in aspects of their lives they think will pay the biggest dividends.

The retaliation of some of America's guardians is baffling. An idea so simplistic and necessary is meant to be addressed by the most prominent figure in the American political stratosphere, period.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"The story of America isn't about people who quit when things got tough. It's about people who kept going, who tried harder, who loved their country too much to do anything less than their best."

— PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, DURING HIS CLASSROOM ADDRESS

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Glenn Beck's grand new plan.

Kanye West, in case there hasn't been enough said.

The public option:
Is it dead in the water?



Overthrowing the czars just one more time



Ryan Maass
Columnist

To those who know of the Imperialist Russia's czars, the idea of transplanting them to America should seem contradictory — at least in a perfect world. Czar is the term used by politicians and media critics alike to refer to any one of the president's special advisers — that is, an executive official who answers only to the authority of the president.

Their job descriptions range from drug czar to car czar to energy czar, and seemingly everything inbetween. For

those who stand for true democratic values as our founding fathers saw fit, these czars are bad news.

There is a fine line between a czar and a secretary of an executive department, such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The executive departments have existed since the nation's founding, and it is the respective secretary's job to make the president's duties easier by focusing on a specific topic, such as Clinton's activity in foreign affairs as secretary of state.

The catch? The Senate is charged with confirming nominations for any given department. With this, our constitutional system of checks and balances serves to limit excessive dominance by a single branch of government. Czars are different. They require no such confirmation.

Why is this bad? The reason is simple: Americans hate the czars.

Last week, Van Jones resigned from his post as the green job czar. Before his resignation, Jones was supposed to be in charge of devising ways for the federal government to create environmentally friendly jobs to boost both employment and environmental sustainability.

Jones was also a member of Stand Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement, a communist organization based in San Francisco. This fact didn't sit well with those who took to the streets and protested his role in the government.

It was because of these protests that Jones decided he could not take the pressure any longer. There are still plenty of czars working for the president, but this was evidence enough that the populace is growing suspicious of the lack of the transparency they thought they had voted for.

Many Republicans celebrated this as a victory, but they prove their ignorance by looking at this problem from a political perspective. Just about every president has appointed czars since Franklin Roosevelt's administration.

These unconstitutional appointments undermine the fabric of representative democracy, in that the people's voice is completely taken out of the equation. A government made up of unelected bureaucrats serves its own interests first and the people second, if at all.

While the Obama administration currently gets the most heat for its sporadic use of czars to push its progressive agenda, it's important to keep in mind that this is not an issue of Republican vs. Democrat or right vs. left in any sense.

Having these czars doing the dirty work of the world's highest office is fundamentally wrong. Obama is facing dwindling approval ratings for numerous reasons, yet still maintains an impressive amount of popularity.

He would be wise to bring the honesty he promised to supporters and critics alike to Washington. But as it stands now, the existence of the American czars isn't helping the administration or the country.

Evaluating the Elon welcome



Kara Frasca
Guest Columnist

From the moment they received their acceptance letters, the incoming freshmen have been feeling nerves and jitters about going off to college. When the freshmen class moved in Aug. 28, Elon kicked off its orientation weekend to ensure their transition from home to college went smoothly.

Elon's jam-packed orientation schedule allowed students a few hours to unpack their things and say goodbye to their parents

before being rushed off to begin their activities.

The weekend proved to be a success. The events were entertaining, the schedule kept students busy and the orientation leaders were peppy and informative. Daily orientation sessions with an assigned group gave students a chance to develop friendships with other freshmen.

Besides instilling a fear that the ironically named ALE has a personal mission to arrest everyone, the orientation leaders covered all aspects of the college life — the best dining hall (Colonnades), where one can use the Phoenix Card (pretty much everywhere) and Elon's academic and social policies (yawn).

But it was hypnotist Tom Deluca's show that stood out as one of the best orientation activities. It was downright unbelievable. Students were roaring with laughter as their friends on stage danced, ate, slept and cried in their own little worlds.

Another favorite event was the Phoenix Pep Rally and Extravaganza. This carnival-like event featured

free food, contest drawings, brochures from nearby businesses and various student-run activities.

SUB provided the most popular activity of the night — the wax hand booth. After all, who doesn't want a wax model of their hand in their dorm room?

But orientation wasn't solely about fun and games. It provided new students with important information about campus safety, the honor code and Elon's alcohol policies. Orientation leaders attempted to make these topics exciting by playing games, but this just made the situation childish and boring.

The constant repetitive drilling of alcohol policies annoyed students. Though it is understandable and suitable for Elon to cover these topics, one simple and straightforward presentation rather than days of lectures and speeches on the topic would have been just fine.

"Let's Get It On," the student-created presentation on social issues, was a great way for freshmen to see the social aspects of college life.

Unlike the boring lectures from the orientation leaders, this presentation was engaging because it mocked the college social scene while still covering important information.

If Elon presented all serious topics in this way, students would pay more attention while learning the same material presented through typical lecturing.

Once orientation weekend was over, new students were still engaged in events on campus. Between hall meetings, Sportsfest, the organization fair and traditions like College Coffee, Elon has made it clear that it prides itself on its commitment to keep students involved.

Despite the boredom caused by the more serious material presented by Elon, the efforts to ease the freshmen transition were still largely successful.

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