

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community
 1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203
Gerard O. Johnson CEO/PUBLISHER
Robert L. Johnson CO-PUBLISHER/GENERAL MANAGER
Herbert L. White EDITOR IN CHIEF

EDITORIALS

Low-wealth schools need not fail

For CMS's most troubled campuses, some solutions are as close as our commitment

With Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools adding a new superintendent, focus will surely shift to the struggles on three fronts: easing overcrowding in the suburbs, finding support for bonds to accomplish that goal as well as refurbish some schools, and the academic gap in the inner city.

As for the academic struggles of schools with high concentrations of poverty, the road will be long and difficult. It would also behoove those of us who are closest to those schools to roll up our sleeves and pitch in.

West Charlotte High School is the most glaring example. The school is one of four Wake County Superior Court Judge Howard Manning has threatened to close if standardized test scores didn't improve significantly this year. While it would be difficult for Judge Manning to shut down four public schools and scatter their students across the county, many residents took his threat seriously. West Charlotte alumni, the best organized and most passionate in the county, and perhaps the state, rallied to bemoan the possibility their alma mater was in danger of being shuttered.

Since Judge Manning's public threat last month, all has been disturbingly quiet on the West Charlotte front. The needs haven't miraculously disappeared — though it will be a great day when they do — but the alumni have. Where is the organization, the can-do spirit of hundreds of graduates living here in Charlotte to give something of themselves other than their worries to West Charlotte?

One of the main concerns was that shutting down WCHS would eliminate a vital historical link to Charlotte's past as a segregated school district and its attempts to right the wrongs of segregation through busing in the 1970s. That's all well and good, but it's 2006 and West Charlotte's students are pulling up the rear in too many measurable academic and social categories. It's time more of us decide to roll up our sleeves and mentor students or share our professional expertise in the classroom, whether it's computer science, accounting or journalism.

Every CMS student could use the helping hand of concerned and committed adults. Too often, we look to government to fix our problems, when in reality a good bit of interaction is more than sufficient. It can work at low-wealth schools as well as middle-income campuses. It's up to us to try.

Immigration debate will define America

The growing furor and fury over immigration reform has brought home several points. The folks who are in the U.S. — legally or not — are going to stick around. And they're willing to demand — by the hundreds of thousands — government take their contributions to the nation into account. On the other hand, hard-liners aren't willing to concede much, either.

That gridlock is quite apparent on Capitol Hill, where the U.S. Senate can't pull together enough support to pass either of a pair of competing immigration bills. One would more closely mirror the House of Representatives' version that would make undocumented entry into the U.S. a felony and punishes businesses that knowingly hire illegals with fines.

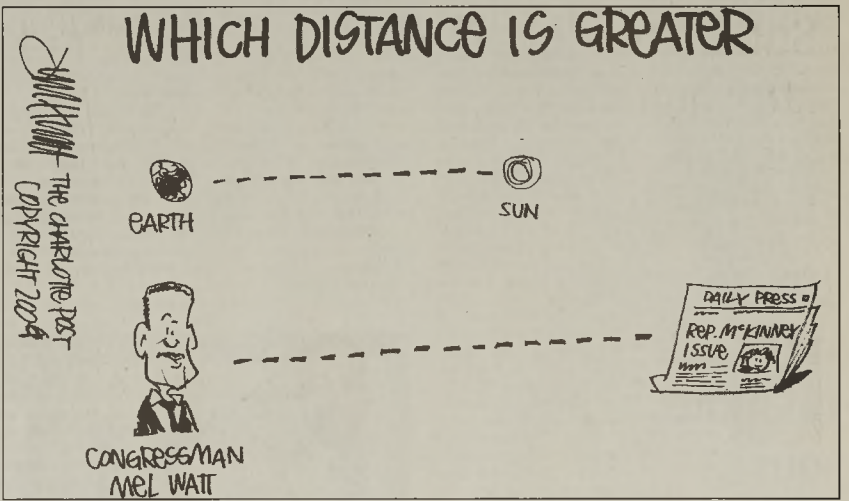
Moderates would take some of the bite out of the more conservative measure sponsored by U.S. Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), who is also considering a campaign for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008. Guest worker programs and leniency, if not amnesty, for illegal immigrants already here highlight their counter argument.

We acknowledge it's a tricky path to navigate. On the one hand, there's the concern that immigrants take jobs that would likely go to native-born or naturalized Americans, and drive down wages for everyone. On the other side, immigrants, especially from Mexico, Central and South America, work low-wage jobs that many native-born citizens don't want because of the lack of pay, high risk, or both.

Charlotte has benefited from immigrant labor in the construction and hospitality industry, where thousands are employed. They work hard, raise their families and gladly do the things most of us take for granted. But no one should overlook another aspect of the debate, according to U.S. Rep. Mel Watt, a Charlotte Democrat and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Most of the illegals in the country "got in legally," he said earlier this month. They just never went back.

That's Mexicans, Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Zimbabwans, and people from every other corner of the globe. It's not just a Latino thing, although we're quick to lose sight of that because they're the largest group.

With no clearly comprehensive immigration strategy, America will continue to wrestle with its own morality. This is a nation of laws, yes, but it has also turned its back on the tired, poor and huddled masses when they became too much of a burden. Congress can't close the door, but it should make some sense by crafting a humane, sensible approach to immigration.



McKinney using racism as a crutch

When I worked as a reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in the 1970s, Macler Shepard, a race man and a community activist, often said that some blacks use race as a crutch so often that they forget how to walk. I thought about Shepard's comment when a controversy developed recently over what happened after Rep. Cynthia McKinney tried to walk past Capitol Hill police.



GEORGE E. CURRY

The Georgia Democrat acknowledges that she wasn't wearing her Congressional lapel pin that allows her to sidestep normal screening procedures. McKinney's version is that shortly before 9 A.M. on March 29, she was headed to a Budget Committee meeting in the Longworth House Building when she got into a scuffle with a Capitol Police officer.

"I was rushing to my meeting when a white officer yelled to me," she said in a written statement. "He approached me, bodyblocked me, physically touching me. I used my arm to get him off of me. I told him not to touch me several times. He asked for my ID and I showed it to him. He then let me go and I proceeded to my meeting and I assume that the Police Officer resumed his duties."

The Capitol Police version is that an officer failed to recognize McKinney and ordered her to stop. When McKinney refused, the officer tried to physically restrain her and she hit him in the chest with a cell phone. The United States Capitol Police has referred the case to the U.S. Attorney for possible prosecution. McKinney recently changed her hairstyle. In an appearance on the CBS "Early Show," she said: "This has become much ado about a hairdo."

McKinney

In subsequent days, McKinney has attempted to frame the issue in different terms.

"This whole incident was instigated by the inappropriate touching and stopping of me, a female Black congresswoman," she said at a news conference. Her attorney, James Myart, added, "Ms. McKinney is just a victim of being in Congress while Black."

Let's not confuse the issue. McKinney was stopped from bypassing the metal detector because she was not wearing her Congressional pin identifying her as a lawmaker. Of course, regular Hill cops should be able to recognize members of Congress. But when they fail to do so, it is not a capital offense.

Cynthia McKinney learned a long time ago that many African-Americans will give you a pass if you merely scream racism, regardless of whether it's true. I am fed up with public officials yelling

racism merely to deflect attention away from their own misbehavior. Discrimination is still rampant in this society. And if the specter of racism is raised when it does not apply, my fear is that when genuine cases arise, they will be discounted because of previous false claims.

If McKinney felt she was being racially profiled, she should have noted the officer's name and badge number and taken the matter up with his supervisor or in Congressional hearings.

Did you notice that after Ms. Super Black charged racism at a news conference, she walked off hand-in-hand with her White lawyer? Washington, D.C. has no shortage of talented black lawyers. And if Cynthia McKinney wants us to think that she's so pro-Black, it seems only natural that Ms. Super Black would have hired a Black lawyer. Of course, she can hire whomever she likes, but she can't have it both ways.

Even one of McKinney's news releases was disingenuous. After stating, "Honestly, this incident is not about wearing a Congressional pin or changing my hairstyle," she proceeded to talk about — you guessed it — her Congressional pin and her hairstyle.

"I have agreed to try to remember to wear my pin and notify Capitol Hill police every time I change my hairstyle," she said in a statement. "...It is, however, a

shame that while I conduct the country's business, I have to stop and call the police to tell them that I've changed my hairstyle so that I'm not harassed at work."

Harassed? Asking someone entering a federal building for ID in this post-9/11 era does not constitute harassment.

Contrary to her assertion that this is "much ado about a hairdo," McKinney asked in a statement, "Do I have to contact the police every time I change my hairstyle? How do we account for the fact that when I wore my braids every day for 11 years, I still faced this problem, primarily from certain police officers?"

If that's true — and it's hard to know what's true in this case — then this "ado" is not about her hairdo.

McKinney's conflicting assertions do not mean there aren't deep-seated racial problems within the U.S. Capitol Police. Others have complained of ill treatment and Blacks on the force have filed racial discrimination lawsuits against the agency, some of them still pending. If the agency is found guilty, it should be assessed the stiffest possible punishment.

In the meantime, if we confuse racial discrimination with bad judgment, we may forget how to walk.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. To contact Curry or to book him for a speaking engagement, go to his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.



Manning



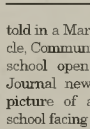
McKinney

Closing Catholic school douses light

It is disquieting to see inner city communities in the media lamenting over the death rattles their local Catholic schools are hearing.

Today, inner city Catholic education finds itself at the mercy of getting sufficient student enrollment to show Archdioceses that it makes economic sense to retain yesterday's educational oases in the 21st century.

The plight of St. Hedwig's Catholic School in the city of Wilmington, DE, as being



SHERMAN MILLER

told in a March 30, 2006 article, Community fights to keep school open, in the News Journal newspaper offers a picture of a neighborhood school facing today's financial chopping block. Attendance at this Catholic School has declined over the years until it is now facing extinction. St. Hedwig's school was the prize of yesterday's Polish immigrant community.

Although black Americans are not known to embrace Catholicism, they may pay a significant upward mobility penalty if these Catholic schools continue to fade away

in inner city America. In a June 30, 1997 article, "Why Catholic Schools Spell Success For America's Inner-City Children," Nina H. Shokraii, writing for The Heritage Foundation gives, a valuation of Catholic schools for America's uneducable children.

"Attention from across the political and social spectrum is shifting to the astonishing success of inner-city Catholic schools in working with the very children the public schools have abandoned as uneducable. An abundance of recent research comparing public, private, and religious schools shows that Catholic schools improve not only test scores and graduation rates for these children, but also their future economic prospects and at a substantially lower cost."

Today some inner city Catholic parishes may find themselves in the untenable position of having more funerals than baptisms. In yesterday when the churches were filled with childbearing families, one might have expected their parish schools also to be filled with their offspring. However, the exodus of the Catholic population to the suburbs is the modern paradigm that Archdioceses must now face. A downside in

this exodus is it leaves slowly emptying inner city churches as the parishioners age, suggesting that the Catholic churches may not be offering what today's surrounding communities want.

Some religious purists might cringe at the thought that the Catholic Church must learn to use marketing strategies to survive in inner city America for today churches are competing with a host of activities in which people may indulge on Sundays. The compassion one might feel in deciding to send their children to their own parish school may no longer have the emotional appeal of yesterday for the students at the school may not be related to the parishioners. The question becomes, why should a person pay tuition for her or his child to go to a Catholic school?

I asked Bishop Michael Saltarelli of the Diocese of Wilmington, Del., to offer why people might want to send their children to Catholic schools. He made the case that Catholic schools offer children discipline (not corporal punishment but learning to adhere to societal rules) and moral values. Bishop Saltarelli acknowledged that one can find a

good education at many secular institutions. However, Catholic schools offer students the ability to function in life.

Bishop Saltarelli's strategy of focusing on discipline and moral values to save Catholic school education may have some unintended consequences when one takes a holistic look at the de facto abandonment marketing strategy that the Christian exodus from inner city America might portend. The extinction of inner city Christian education accompanying today's Christian exodus to suburban America sends a symbolic message that the inner city souls are less valuable than suburban souls. This suburbanization of Christianity is offering a beachhead for Islam to utilize an apostatizing strategy to gain converts. Inner city black communities appear to be prime candidates where Muslims can employ apostatizing strategies to gain Mainstream American legitimacy by becoming the dominant religion for native born American citizens.

SHERMAN MILLER is a syndicated columnist in Wilmington, Del.