

Immigration a hot topic at Tuesday Breakfast Forum

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information sessions, was really jumping over immigration.

Fly's spies report that the regulars let Latin American Coalition honcho **Angeles Ortega-Moore** have it over immigration and how it impacts African Americans. The way folks were gettin' after girlfriend, you would've thought she was bringing in a bunch o' illegals by herself.

You can imagine how the ranting took on a life of its own: Forum types get worked up over immigrants taking jobs, don't pay taxes and soak up human services and health care like sponges. Then it turns into an us vs. them Hispanics tirade and the piling on starts. While it may feel good to get the frustration off the collective chest to the point where Miss Ortega-Moore — a guest of the forum — is feeling like a pinata, answer this: Y'all see her forcing anybody across the border anytime soon? Shoot, even **President Bush** and U.S. Rep. **Sue Myrick** can't do that — yet.

• No one can accuse **Mayor Pro Tem Susan Burgess** of not being ambitious.

Madam councilwoman was at the Habitat for Humanity Building Blitz Monday in the Druid Hills neighborhood when **Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso Jackson** called Burgess mayor.



Burgess

Maybe she's got plans for that job. Burgess is next in line, and maybe she's had some discussion with **Mayor Pat McCrory** as to what the future holds.

• The rapper formerly known as **Hammer** hasn't lost a step, but he sure lost a thread or two at Speed Street.

Hammer did all his hits, like "Can't Touch This" and "2 Legit 2 Quit," but homeboy was so busy getting down, he flat split his britches. But the show went on. Hammer (given name Stanley Burrell) grabbed a towel, draped it over the offending rip and kept on dancing.

Home blitz changes lives of new owners and communities

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pans — everything," she said. Homeownership among African Americans is more



Jackson

evasive than among Americans as a whole. There are 75 million U.S. homeowners, but black ownership is behind whites by 25.9 percent in 2001, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In Charlotte, 15,000 families can't afford a two-bedroom apartment at current market rates, according to Don Holmstead, president of Habitat Charlotte, which is building 16 homes this week.

"We must and we will build a city that is safe and affordable for all of God's children," he said.

Eliminating that gap has led to a series of initiatives launched by the Congressional Black Caucus and federal agencies. HUD has helped 2.6 million black and Hispanic families move into homes since 2002, said HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson, who was in Charlotte Monday to launch National Homeownership Month.

"We're 200,000 homes ahead" of pace to HUD's goal of 5 million new minority homeowners. "When we're talking about homeownership, we're talking about creating wealth."

Grassroots organizations, including Habitat, have worked on the local level to provide affordable housing, and Charlotte has one of the

biggest chapters in the U.S.

"It's a pretty great opportunity," Dykes said. "I feel Habitat really cares about the people they bring in and I'm fairly overwhelmed I didn't know all of this was going to go on. I joined the program in October and this is a pretty big deal."

That's what the reality of owning a home has done for Dykes' family.

The Habitat program will

"change our life, being able to own a home," he said. "I don't think we would've been able to do it on our own. It helps out a lot."

Said Jackson: "We're not only creating wealth for families, we're creating stability. When we talk about home ownership, we're not talking about just putting somebody into a home, we're talking about transforming a community."

Carolinas Juneteenth festival grows

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slaves.

Juneteenth has gone on for more than a century in the Lone Star state, and the holiday's popularity has branched out across North America, Europe and Africa. There are festivals in Canada, the Caribbean islands, and London hosts the largest such celebration in the world. And while many festivals recognize the 19th or the weekend surrounding it, few celebrate like Charlotte, with four days of activities.

In 1997, Ndiaye started the first Juneteenth Festival of the Carolinas out in front of The House of Africa, 2000 people attended that first year. For the next six years Ndiaye had Thomas Avenue and Commonwealth, and soon after Central Avenue closed and held the events in the neighborhood around House of Africa. The event became too big, and crowded in the neighborhood, and was moved to Independence Park, where it will be held again this year.

While attendance and activities are increasing, Juneteenth is universally accepted.

"Sometime people are scared of talking about slavery," said Ndiaye. "It's something that happened, something that was here (in the U.S.). I think it is one of the worst things that ever happened to humanity and I believe we must teach people

about it to be a better person."

This year's festivities kick-off with Ndiaye's the celebration of history children's day camp featuring crafts, drumming, mask making, tie dye, and acting of all kinds, from 10 am to 4pm. "We've invited churches, day cares, camps, everybody. Last year we had 300 children attend, and this year we are expecting more," said Ndiaye.

Each year's festival theme has been education. Juneteenth of the Carolinas logo contains a tree overlaid with children's faces and the words, "From these roots teach the world our history." Ndiaye believes that the education portion and teaching education in the community is the most important part. The committee will give the first Marilyn Griffith Turner Scholarship Award in memory of Ndiaye's longtime friend, business partner, and the Juneteenth of the Carolinas first committee chairperson.

"This is the first year we will be giving a four year full scholarship," Ndiaye said. "It's hard doing this without Marilyn. She was the backbone of The House of Africa and Juneteenth. She was a great lady, and a wonderful warrior."

Students wishing to apply for the scholarship online at the organizations website, www.juneteenthofthecarolinas.com.

Events on Sunday are also geared toward kids, including a youth seminar and a talent show and a tribute to fathers.

"Anytime Juneteenth falls around Father's Day, we always have a tribute," said festival Chairperson Demetria Bell. This year's theme is "The Essence of Father: What makes a good father to you?" Children can enter the essay contest — 150 words or less — by mailing their entry to Juneteenth Father's Day Tribute, 1215 Thomas Ave, Charlotte, NC 28205. The winning essay will receive a gift for Dad courtesy of the House of Africa.

In addition to Thursday and Sunday's activities, the festival will include South African drummers, a stick walker and dancers.

"For the past three years we've had real African weddings at the festival. For this year's festival we're having an actual African engagement ceremony, the way we do it in Africa," said Ndiaye.

Sunday's activities will include HIV seminar and screenings, a health fair village and a gospel music concert.

"Juneteenth is a worldwide festival, with celebrations even in Africa now," said Ndiaye. "It's a piece of American history. Juneteenth is not to recreate the past, but to share in the spirit of freedom."

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