



Symposium on immigration

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McCorry responded, "The commission has been working diligently to gather facts and data and work based on information rather than emotion."

The Mayor's Commission has made a preliminary presentation and will disband on Dec. 14 with its final findings. "We felt we had no other option than to set-up a committee to look at the illegal immigration issue from the community standpoint and the standpoint of all workers affected," said Macon.

The Illegal Immigration Committee of the Millions More Movement has been meeting since April. The Committee's task was handed down from the Ad Hoc Committee of the Black Political Caucus.

"We have four questions that need answering," Macon said. What impact has illegal immigration had on the economy of legal work; What impact has it had on the economics of the black community and black work force; How has the influx of illegal immigrants effected lending to black businesses; and who besides the illegal immigrants profit from illegal immigration?"

Millions More began working with representatives from the eight community groups to find answers and to elimi-

nate the stereotypes that blacks and Latinos are at odds.

"I'm really disturbed by the fact that they are showing the black and Hispanic communities at odds," said Maudia Melendez of Jesus Ministry and a member of the Mayor's Commission Public Safety subcommittee. "They are portraying it as if blacks feel Hispanics are coming here to steal their jobs. Hispanics and blacks have lived well together in the community for years."

Both Melendez and Macon are hoping people come out to the symposium Saturday morning, so that they do not believe everything they read in the general media.

"Immigration is an issue that pertains to all of us, especially the Spanish community, since we are the ones on the spot right now," said Melendez. "We're the same as all the other communities that came to the US in the past, but currently, we are being blamed for all of the 'diseases' in the US."

In Mecklenburg County (Charlotte), the Hispanic population grew by 791 percent from 1990 to 2004, from 6,692 people to 59,645.

Melendez added that following a drunk-driving accident in Gastonia in which a teacher was killed, and the

Arturo Romero open container incident, the environment for Hispanics has been a negative one.

"The situation for Hispanics has been very bad," said Melendez. "[This] was an incident politicians picked to blow the immigration issue out of proportion. What we are seeing now is public opinion being formed out of propaganda. Nothing is rooted in fact."

Melendez said questions should be asked by community members in order to start to get at facts, and move past stereotypes.

"Why do we still have illegal immigrants," asked Melendez? "What motivates them to keep coming? Is the US in any way helping Latin America? There are lots of issues behind immigration not being put on the table," said Melendez.

The dialogue will include a discussion of the definition of illegal vs. undocumented, the economic impact of illegal immigration, and deportation. Millions More will release a public document afterward.

"If the community understands those three issues, it will be the ground work of

understanding," said Macon. "I don't think the community understands what is happening with deportation, but I think they would be outraged if they were aware."

Organizers hope Saturday's conversations is the first of many.

"We are calling this Phase 1; we're expecting more Conversations Across Borders to happen. But we want the audience to dictate continuation," said Macon.



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PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

Gabby Felipe (right) and Rhys Jones play during an after-school program at the Morrison YMCA in Charlotte. YMCA is one of 97 agencies in the Charlotte region that receive money from United Way of Central Carolinas. Earlier this week, United Way campaign leaders said the agency faced an \$800,000 shortfall to its fund raising goal of \$44 million.

United Way struggles to meet campaign goal

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few days left in its fund raising campaign and \$500,000 behind, the community rallied.

Baker is hoping for a repeat.

"I think people don't give because we don't make it important enough to them to give," he said.

The campaign ended this afternoon and the United Way will make an announcement about the amount of money it raised.

The Charlotte Post

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