

Nike Is Working to Reinstate Mexican Workers' Rights

I would like to respond to Jenny Fowler's Feb. 21 article, "SEJ Goes to the Mattresses Over Nike" and Paige Ammons' Feb. 23 article, "Students Gather, Light Candles to Protest Nike" regarding the labor dispute at the Kukdong apparel factory near Puebla, Mexico, and provide your readers with an update of the current situation. As you know, Nike has worked collaboratively with multiple organizations in sincere efforts to resolve this matter. Much progress has been made and the majority of workers who had not yet returned to work, for various reasons, are now returning to the factory.

On Feb. 5, the independent monitoring group Verité sent a five-person team to begin its monitoring assignment at Kukdong. On Feb. 9, Verité completed the on-site portion of its investigation, and we expect the written report to be completed this week.

Apart from the monitoring report, I am pleased to inform you of several

developments that have recently taken place, which we believe address many of the concerns members of the University community have expressed to us. In conversations with Nike, the factory management, in concert with the CROC union (which represents the Kukdong workers) has agreed to do the following:

Reinstatement of Workers, Wages and Seniority

Factory management has increased its efforts to immediately reinstate all workers formerly employed with the factory who have chosen to come back to work. Kukdong management and the union have employed several tactics, such as fliers in Spanish, telegrams and face-to-face visits, to invite workers back to the factory without question or fear of retaliation, regardless of their role in the work stoppage.

Kukdong has also extended its previously stated Feb. 2 deadline, which required all workers to return to work

VADA O. MANAGER POINT OF VIEW

or face being replaced by new hires.

Returning employees will be reinstated with the same seniority, wage, Christmas bonus and vacation time, all of which are retroactive starting Jan. 1. In addition, returning workers will receive a wage increase that was the result of a recently negotiated annual collective bargaining agreement, which is also retroactive. Workers who elected to receive a cash severance at the time of the work stoppage will also be welcomed back to the factory with the same benefits, but a one-time deduction will be made from their holiday bonus to compensate for the severance payment.

Workers Allegedly Fired for Illegal Work Stoppage

The factory intends to rehire the original five workers who initiated the

work stoppage and has made a formal written request that charges be dropped against the workers in connection with the events of January. This request is currently under review by the presiding judge handling this case. Nike will keep you informed of the judge's ruling concerning this matter.

ILO Training and Freedom of Association

During the week of Feb. 5, Kukdong conducted a training to educate workers about the existing collective bargaining agreement with the CROC union, including the changes resulting from the annual negotiation process (completed in January). In addition, the factory sent a letter, co-signed by the CROC union, to the Mexico City office of the International Labor Organization, which will also conduct training sessions for factory workers. These trainings will address freedom of association and collective bargaining to provide workers with a neutral, non-

hostile environment to independently learn about their options and rights in accordance with local Mexican law.

The ILO training sessions will be held when all the workers who have chosen to do so return to the factory and when both CROC and the ILO are available. Once all workers have received training, they can choose to hold an election for a new union. Nike wishes to reiterate that it is the workers' choice to elect a new union and that all parties involved must respect their rights to hold such elections in accordance with Mexican law and regulations.

Nike has worked collaboratively with Reebok, Arturo Alcalde (representing both the Fair Labor Association and the International Labor Rights Fund) and other parties to help achieve the progress to date and to identify infrastructure issues for review and remediation through the Verité process. Further, we are committed to taking action based on Verité's report

to ensure that Kukdong provides a fair, safe and healthy work environment for the men and women working there.

No factory is perfect, and we believe in continuous improvement of all our workplaces. In the past two years, we have taken steps such as raising age and wage requirements within our factory partners (with the average age of footwear workers currently at 21), improved air quality to U.S. OSHA equivalent levels, and shared best practices with our own internal monitors, independent monitors and knowledgeable third parties. We have also provided workers with extra benefits such as micro-credit for small businesses and education programs at their work sites.

Please visit our Web site at <http://www.nikebiz.com> for more details and the most current information about Nike's corporate responsibility programs.

Vada O. Manager is the director of Global Issues Management for Nike.

The 'Anybody-But-Songer Candidate' Shows CAA Woes

What a mess. First this wrestling guy goes on TV, lies, then retreats it. And now Eric's secretary is in a coma.

Oh, sorry. Slipped into "Billy Madison" there for a second. But take out comatose receptionists and gay ex-wrestlers, and it's just like the latest Carolina Athletic Association nonsense!

Or something. Seriously, the melodrama unfolding within the hallowed halls of Suite B is getting quite ridiculous. And it seems it could continue this way for a while if Reid Chaney doesn't grow a pair and nip this behavior in the bud early on in his administration. I have serious doubts this will happen.

Some background: When I had only the vaguest notions of CAA's internal strife, two bright-eyed young men came before the editorial board to solicit its support for their presidential bid.

One clearly knew his stuff. He had diagrams of a proposed seating change and a letter from a high-ranking Educational Foundation official saying the plan to add risers to the other baseline in the Smith Center was a distinct possibility. He had what appeared to be a workable and hassle-free plan for ticket distribution. He pledged to get rid of the questionable 169 seats allotted to Carolina Fever.

Most importantly, this guy looked me in the eye and vowed to reject the slush fund of tickets that has allowed Mr. Tee to hook up his boys with tickets all year, including a rumored eight for our beloved student body president and Pruitt's roommate Brad Matthews.

Then his opponent came in. The young man, as nice as he could be, was visibly nervous. He had a few good ideas, the best being the plan to have bracelet distribution in the Pit.



MATT DEES EDITOR

honest guy. But let's not kid ourselves.

This was a vendetta against someone who had the guts to put into public view problems in a student-run organization.

Unfortunately, it was a successful one. The bottom line: CAA kids allowed their personal biases to cloud their judgment, resulting in an inexperienced and, frankly, clueless candidate getting elected. The sad thing is the CAA rank and file probably like it that way.

So Chaney, to salvage any hopes of pulling CAA out of the gutter, must commit a slight breach of political etiquette by adopting many of Songer's platform initiatives. First and foremost, he too should make the pledge to reject the ticket slush fund. He should hold the drawing of the random number out in the open and find a system that can in no way be susceptible to fraud.

Chaney should streamline Cabinet to eliminate unnecessary positions. Finally, he should get rid of or further reduce Fever's tickets. As a senior, I watched my last home basketball game from the upper level, as did a thousand or more of my classmates. Meanwhile, Fever kids, many of whom are underclassmen, watched from better seats.

This is inherently unfair, especially when a friend of mine in Fever has confirmed that he does next to nothing when he attends olympic events.

Chaney, if he does have a pair and any sense of basic fairness, should implement these sound ideas, regardless of how unpopular it will make him.

But I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he remains that same timid, aw-shucks guy in the edit board meeting and lets his own organization walk all over him.

Matt Dees is a senior journalism and political science major. Reach him at mdees@email.unc.edu.

But that was about it.

We felt bad and liked him. He clearly just didn't have what it takes. We thought anyone in his or her right mind would agree. We were wrong.

The first guy, the one with all the good ideas, was Michael Songer.

The latter is the new CAA president. Did we completely misjudge Mr. Chaney? I really don't think so.

Throughout the campaign's hairier moments, we didn't hear so much as a peep from Chaney. He let the most eloquent Bryan Hart do the talking for him.

Ah ha, dear Watson! The game is afoot. That wouldn't happen to be the same Bryan Hart who was CAA vice president a few weeks ago jumping on the bandwagon of someone who he doesn't really know but someone who vows to keep the Fever faction afloat?

Why, I do believe it is! Well done, Holmes!

Elementary. Quite so.

You see, what was underlying this whole mess was not who was the better candidate, it was who supported Fever and who wasn't Michael Songer.

Reid Chaney truly was a pawn.

Now Tee and company will tell you, while trying to keep from foaming at the mouth, that this was about upholding the integrity of CAA (an oxymoron after the last few weeks) by keeping out a dis-



University Has Long Strides Ahead in Integrating Races

Almost 50 years ago, a court mandated that the University of North Carolina grant full admissions to graduate school students when equal facilities and programs were not available elsewhere. On June 12, 1951, four African-American students (Harvey Beech, James Lassiter, Floyd McKissick and Kenneth Lee) attended their first day of classes at the University of North Carolina, making UNC the first white university in the South to admit black students.

Within the last two weeks, during Black History Month no less, The Daily Tar Heel ran a three-part story on 50 years of integration at UNC. This was only the second time this year I saw some mention this golden anniversary.

The first time was a brief reference in The Black Ink, a publication of the Black Student Movement. Not even a word was written about this occasion in the Carolina Alumni Review's January/February issue.

Unfortunately, this did not surprise me.

Though UNC is often viewed as an activist university, it has a tendency to overlook and to marginalize important social and cultural issues. As was the case with the 1951 integration decision, administrators historically have only made efforts to integrate the University if legally mandated or socially pressured to do so.

Every Carolina student, alumnus, faculty and staff member committed to social justice and equality should be outraged that Carolina is not willing to recognize and to celebrate its students of color in a comparable fashion.

The fact that UNC is not willing to celebrate is a slap in the face to the four men who bravely left the security of N.C. Central University to enter UNC's School of Law hoping to get a better education. It's a slap in the face to all of its students committed to sincere integration efforts, students like Frank Porter Graham, 1909, who worked to improve race relations long before it was politically correct; Richard Epps, 1972, UNC's first student of color to be elected student body president; and Karen Stevenson 1975, the first UNC woman and the

KATIE ROSSINI POINT OF VIEW

first black woman in the nation to be named a Rhodes Scholar.

It's a slap in the face to all of UNC's faculty members committed to equality, professors like Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone whose dream of a freestanding Black Cultural Center will only be realized 24 years after its conception. It's a slap in the face to all of Carolina's staff members who built this University, including the slaves owned by former UNC President and Klansman Saunders, whose names don't appear on academic buildings.

The thing about UNC's 50th integration anniversary that disappoints me the most is the student response, or should I say lack of response?

Progress at UNC has always come from grassroots student movements. Take the Sonja H. Stone Black Cultural Center for example. Although several

recent references to the BCC in the DTH have been negative, I think that this was by far Carolina's greatest integration effort.

There would be no BCC without the collaborative effort of the Campus Y, the BSM and student government.

Any time the administration has refused to act, student groups have taken it upon themselves to voice their concerns. It was nine student groups that protested the segregation of black and white students at football games in the 1950s.

It was more than 200 students who protested at a lecture by Klansman David Duke in 1975.

It was thousands of students whose direct action for a freestanding BCC brought national support from Jesse Jackson, Spike Lee and others.

When UNC refused to recognize certain groups that contributed to the success of this University in its Bicentennial Celebration, the Campus Y sponsored Dawn of Justice to recognize those groups not celebrated by the University.

I have seen dozens of fliers all over UNC advertising conferences and lec-

tures on race, ethnicity, gender and class, but none of these conferences look at UNC's own integration efforts.

Thoughtful, honest self-reflection must precede the analysis and the criticism of others.

On Feb. 26, 2001, The Daily Tar Heel said the Board of Governors and the Committee on Community and Diversity will examine ways to promote better access to the UNC system "during the next five to 10 years."

This doesn't help the students of color attending Carolina today. This doesn't help the high school students of color applying to Carolina today. This doesn't help the white students who came to or who hope to come to Carolina in search of a diverse college experience.

I was discussing this timetable with a class recently and was told that these things take time. That response reeks of white privilege. Martin Luther King wrote in "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," "The Negro's great stumbling block ... is the White moderate ... who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advised the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.'"

I can't understand how a white "liberal" university can justify five to 10 more years. Is not 50 years of "integration" long enough? If that's not long enough, how about 208 years of institutional, systematic educational discrimination and oppression?

Time's up. Katie Rossini is a graduate student in the School of Social Work. She served on the Campus Y Executive Committee from 1994 to 1996. Reach her at rossini@email.unc.edu.

Dale Earnhardt's Recent Death Gives NASCAR a Wake-Up Call

The world of motorsports lost its greatest driver in the last mile of its greatest event last Feb. 18 as Dale Earnhardt struck the outside wall in between turns three and four in the Daytona 500. Traveling at a speed of nearly 180 miles per hour, Earnhardt's car sling-shot from the bottom of the track and collided with a 10-foot thick block of concrete virtually head-on. Though one could never be completely sure, Earnhardt's death, along with those of Adam Petty, Kenny Irwin and Rodney Orr, may have been prevented if NASCAR forced the tracks to live up to the high standards of safety that car owners and equipment manufacturers must meet before every race.

As the sanctioning body of the long-running Winston Cup series, NASCAR has a history of making changes to increase the safety of its drivers when the push for such modifications becomes apparent. For example, when reigning champion Joe Weatherly's head smacked a concrete wall at Daytona in 1964, the net on the driver's side window was put into place. When the technology to improve a car's safety arrives, it is approved. When the technology to improve a car's safety is needed, but not in existence, it is found.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for the tracks.

The Intimidator's tragic end was the third death in the past year on the Winston Cup circuit alone. When you consider that there are fewer than 60 regulars on tour, the mortality rate for this sport's top tier is astounding. And what do all three fatalities have in common? They were all the result of a sudden collision with a virtually indestructible source, concrete.

While smaller and slower local race tracks continue to use steel guard rails to keep cars on the track, larger and faster venues have gone almost exclusively to what has become a driver's greatest threat. The concrete that encloses everything from 2.5-mile superspeedways to half-mile short tracks was put into place because it absorbs only about 10 percent of the force of a crash, which makes the substance very durable. That's great for a greedy track owner who never has to pay to fix something that cannot be broken but not so

DAVID LAWSON POINT OF VIEW

good for the driver whose car and body must deal with the other 90 percent of the force of the wreck.

At road courses in Sonoma, Calif., and Watkins Glen, N.Y., the majority of walls are buffered by much softer tires.

When a car runs off course the rubber tires absorb a greater percentage of the blow and the car usually bounces off with less damage to the car, and more importantly, its occupant.

This track design is nothing new. In fact, advances in track safety have been in development for years. Tests with metal guard rails buffered by reinforced Styrofoam barriers show that a driver will absorb only about 20 percent of the force of a wreck when they are in place instead of concrete. Shouldn't it be the drivers who get the lighter end of the load instead of the wall? Styrofoam blocks are expensive and would have to be replaced in the middle of a race if they were destroyed in an accident. Plus, they would have to be thicker than the ten-foot concrete fences currently in place. This would mean cutting the first few rows of seats. It would appear to be a small price to pay for a human life, but some prefer it this way.

Smith's New Hampshire track saw the deaths of both Petty and Irwin this summer. The changes in track configuration that have taken place since then: none. Smith's Texas track has been deemed unsafe by numerous drivers because of its thin turns, high bankings, and even higher speeds.

This summer one driver speculated that in twenty years the NASCAR community might look back and be amazed that members actually risked their lives on tracks surrounded by concrete. If the death of the sport's greatest ambassador is not enough of an impetus for change, that particular driver might be amazed that in 20 years men like himself are still risking their lives on tracks surrounded by a material meant for driveways, not death markers.

David Lawson is a junior English and political science major from Kernersville, NC. His father, Billy Lawson, raced on the NASCAR modified circuit for almost 30 years. Send comments to drlawson@email.unc.edu.

OPEN TO ALL

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader submissions. Their opinions do not necessarily represent the opinions or views of the DTH or its editors.