

# Hispanics see increase in thefts in area

BY ELIZABETH B. SHERMAN  
STAFF WRITER

A Carrboro man was robbed at gunpoint June 16 — the latest in a series of more than 30 armed robberies of Hispanics in the Triangle area.

Oscar Mendez-Mendez was walking down Jones Ferry Road to his apartment when a black 1995 Pontiac sped by him, then turned around and pulled up to where Mendez-Mendez was standing, according to police reports.

Two men exited the car. One was tall, thin, black and in his late teens. The other was short, black, heavier set, balding and in his early 20s.

The men forced Mendez-Mendez to give them all his cash, which totaled \$100.

When Mendez-Mendez went to the construction site where his roommates were working to tell them what had happened, Bill Newnam, owner of Red Wolf Construction, overheard the conversation.

Mendez-Mendez told Newnam he didn't want to report the robbery to police because he was afraid of being deported to Mexico, Newnam said.

Newnam called the police and reported the crime without giving Mendez-Mendez's name.

After being assured that he would not be deported, Mendez-Mendez did cooperate with police.

Two suspects were identified in the Mendez-Mendez case, but as of July 28 no arrests had been made, said Lt. Jim Phillips of the Carrboro Police Department.

Capt. J.G. Booker, also of the police department, said armed robberies of Hispanic residents have occurred sporadically during the last few years but never as frequently as in recent months.

Four men arrested and charged with similar robberies of Latinos are awaiting trial.

Carrboro police arrested Antonio L. Smith, 29, of 415

Sapphire St. in Durham and John W. Hodge, 36, of 112 Camden Ave. in Durham and charged them with the armed robbery of a Hispanic man on April 30.

Chapel Hill police arrested Christopher Lamont Mason, 27, of 806 S. Roxboro St. on May 14 and charged him with armed robbery of a Hispanic man.

Kenneth Kery Carrell, 36, of 202 S. Driver St. in Durham was served May 29 on an outstanding warrant regarding the armed robbery of a Hispanic man when he was arrested and charged with larceny of cigars at the Mini-Mart on Airport Road. Carrell is being held in Orange County Jail on \$20,750 bail.

Carrboro Police Chief Carolyn Hutchison said some criminals take advantage of Hispanic residents, who she said might not report a crime because they do not trust the police.

Local police departments are trying to foster communication with the Hispanic community.

Hector Perez, director of El Centro Latino in Carrboro, said he has been working with Hutchison to come up with ways to make Hispanic residents feel comfortable talking to police officers.

"We've had the police chief come and speak to the women's group about crime in Carrboro," Perez said. "We've suggested to the police chief that they may want to do more outreach programs."

"The biggest challenge is not whether we have the ability to communicate with (Hispanic people)," Hutchison said. "The cultural bias is our biggest challenge."

Booker said police departments are not required to report illegal immigrants to authorities and advised residents not to be hesitant to call police. "We're just here to investigate the crime," he said.

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

ANALYSIS

# Scandal prompts ethics queries

Focus of journalists turns inward

BY JOSEPH SCHWARTZ  
STAFF WRITER

Professors and administrators at UNC's prominent School of Journalism and Mass Communication and other journalism programs across the nation said it will take a combination of increased accountability and re-evaluated ethics to restore some of the faith lost in journalism.

The admitted plagiarism and fabrication of stories by New York Times reporter Jayson Blair and the subsequent resignations of Times Executive Editor Howell Raines and Managing Editor Gerald Boyd have damaged the public's trust of those who cover the news.

Blair resigned May 1 amid allegations that he had made up or plagiarized sections of many of his stories. After enduring mounting criticism of management's handling of the situation, Raines and Boyd vacated their posts June 5. Bill Keller, former Times managing editor and foreign editor, was named as the paper's new executive editor on July 14.

The Times widely is regarded as the embodiment of U.S. journal-

ism, and the notion that such an incident as the Blair scandal could take place within its walls has led to a general air of skepticism.

"The whole incident is a major blow to our credibility," said UNC journalism Professor Frank Fee. "At the same time, it's an unfair blow to a lot of people who are out there every day doing the best job they can under hard conditions."

Fee said that the entire scandal could have been avoided and that Times management should be held accountable for it. "I've been a daily newspaper journalist for 30 years, and in no newspaper I have worked with would I allow that to happen," he said. "I'm not talking about one screw-up — I'm talking about a pattern."

Lorraine Branham, director of the School of Journalism at the University of Texas-Austin, said she wasn't surprised by Blair's fabrications due to his age and position.

"When you make a big leap to a paper such as the Times, people take it for granted that you understand (newspaper ethics) — and sometimes, you don't," she said.

Branham said she believed the

problem could be traced back to what Blair might have been taught in school. "Sometimes we send mixed messages that an interesting story is better than a correct one."

Although Tom Bowers, associate dean of UNC's journalism school, did not mention any changes to be made to the school's curriculum, he did say the scandal highlights a need for students to re-evaluate the importance of journalistic ethics in the newsroom. "Students have to look at the situation and think, 'What is the right thing to do?'" he said. "And making up stories is not the right thing to do."

Journalism Professor Chuck Stone, a close personal friend of Raines, downplayed the notion that journalism has suffered irreparable harm due to Blair's actions. "I'm optimistic having been in the profession for 45 years," he said. "We've made enormous progress, and I don't think the actions of one stupid individual affects that."

But the scandal has brought journalism "no end of harm," Fee said, adding that journalism programs need to re-examine their emphasis on ethics.

Further complicating the issue is the doubt cast upon the need for the two editors' resignations. While

it is clear that Blair was guilty of fabrication, it is unclear as to what degree Raines and Boyd should have been held accountable.

Fee said the Blair fiasco gave Raines' detractors plenty to hold against him. "Howell Raines was in a way a target waiting to be shot at," he said.

The former editor often was criticized for his dictatorial style and the ease with which he promoted some reporters. Some critics have said that Blair, who is black, was given his position in an attempt to achieve newsroom diversity despite a lack of qualifications.

Stone said that Blair achieved a status higher than his abilities warranted and that Raines suffered a lapse in judgment. But he also pointed out that the Times' staff won seven Pulitzer Prizes during Raines' tenure with the paper.

"I told him he's still my best friend and a remarkable person," Stone said. "He made some mistakes and he was a little dictatorial, but every administrator will suffer shortcomings. The important thing is to realize what good he brought to the institution."

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