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From the Los Angeles Times

Letters to the editor

September 8, 2007

Sanctuary: shelter or sham?

Re "A haven for illegal immigrants," *Opinion*, Sept. 2

Grace Dyrness and Clara Irazábal write of religious leaders who believe that illegal aliens have basic rights of "due process, respectful treatment and, in the case of children, the right not to be separated from parents."

Why does any of this pertain to Elvira Arellano? She had due process during her trials and convictions for identity theft and immigration law violations that led to her deportation order. She had respectful treatment. She was not arrested for a year while a church-based scofflaw and did not complain of disrespect at law enforcement's hands. Her separation from her son is her choice -- not the government's. Nothing prevented her from taking him to Mexico.

No matter what any religious leader says, a person's desire to live in the U.S. does not trump American laws that determine who can and cannot live here.

This article made a compelling case for disregarding churches' claim of sanctuary status -- and for amending the Constitution so that at least one U.S. citizen parent is required for a U.S.-born baby's citizenship.

Andrew Sussman *Rancho Santa Margarita*

The young boy who said, "The police are going to get them and send my parents to Mexico. . . . I'm scared," doesn't realize that his illegal parents made a conscious choice to have a child in the U.S. fully knowing that at some time in the future they could be caught and deported. Who is responsible for the breakup of this family? The parents.

I did not see one mention in this article about the parents' responsibility, but plenty of mention about "the plight of the millions of immigrants who live in fear of arrest and separation from their families." Responsible parents would never leave their children in the U.S. or even consider having children if there were the slightest possibility of some sort of future upheaval or separation.

Leslie Shores *Corona*

Dyrness and Irazábal recount the origin of the sanctuary movement in the 1980s to advocate for the rights of refugees fleeing civil war and political violence in Central America. While they acknowledge that the beneficiaries of today's sanctuary movement are victims of "social and economic inequities" rather than refugees, they fail to recognize the crucial moral and legal distinction between these two types of immigrants. Law and common decency dictate that we grant asylum to all people who are fleeing for their lives. But it is far from clear that we have the obligation or the ability to accept all the people who are seeking better lives here. By conflating economically motivated immigrants with true refugees, the new sanctuary movement has lost some of its moral authority and, most likely, its support from many Americans.

Daniel J. Freed *Santa Monica*

As a member of a sanctuary church, First Unitarian Los Angeles, I feel it is time for the religious community to declare its resolve to make amends to the poor people who have lost their lands, their businesses and their countries to punitive economic trade policies initiated in this country. Our trade policies caused the human tragedy of mass migrations, and now we insist on blaming the victims.

Rochelle McAdam *Santa Monica*

All aboard

Re "O.C. planners hope Metrolink expansion lures more riders," *Sept. 1*

The article fails to mention the Metrolink service on the Orange County line. Since the inauguration of weekend service, I have ridden Metrolink from San Juan Capistrano to Los Angeles or Santa Ana at least six times a year. I have used the service to visit museums, attend social events and meet friends who live in the Los Angeles area. I have even had houseguests from Sweden who used Metrolink and the Red Line subway to reach Universal Studios.

While passengers boarding weekend Metrolink trains in south Orange County may resemble the affluent commuters discussed in the article, by the time the train reaches central county, the boarding passengers are far more ethnically and economically diverse. When the train pulls into Union Station, the train is often full, with a mix of young families and older passengers, most of whom are not affluent south Orange County residents with

matinee tickets or Getty Museum reservations. The passenger mix is diverse, and the service appears to benefit a broad mix of residents.

James Sperber *San Juan Capistrano*

The trap in the 'achievement gap'

Re "School scores yield uneven numbers," Sept. 1

The country needs to reconsider the pressure it is putting on schools to close the so-called achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind Law is based on the false assumptions that all children have the same ability to learn and that any achievement gap must be the fault of teachers or administrators.

In reality, some children are quick to learn, most are near average, and some are slow. Given this fact, it is not fair to the students to require the same achievement from all of them, and it is unfair to schools not to take into account the abilities of the students they have to work with.

An enlightened approach would be to stop aggregating test scores by race and concentrate on each child's aptitude for learning. The goal should be to allow and encourage every child to advance as rapidly and as far as his or her ability and willingness to work. How well schools meet that goal would be a completely fair way to evaluate them.

George L. Clark *Manhattan Beach*

Labor movement?

Re "Labor relations," editorial, Sept. 3

How interesting to consider the evolution over the years of The Times concerning the labor movement. What a shame that, over the many years of labor-management relations, workers and others have died trying to obtain some of the profits that generously enrich capitalist management and individual entrepreneurs, The Times included.

We accept the legitimate claims of labor now, but how disgusting to see the old editorials talk of "strike-breakers" who "endure," the "potato peelers' union in a big hotel gets sick and tired some day at the very sight of spuds and decides to strike" and a "tiny well-placed minority can paralyze a great industry."

Labor supply and demand never was a fair way to reward workers, and it isn't now. Labor is the last wall of defense for the common, sometimes undereducated worker whose honest labor has for many years been a defining icon for those trying to support their families. The inequitable sharing of wealth is surely a harbinger of dark days ahead.

Ralph Mitchell *Monterey Park*

As an elementary school teacher who also volunteers her little free time as a union activist, I have noticed little respect or a cooling from The Times with regard to labor.

The paper has repeatedly and recently classified working people like me negatively by labeling us with the title of "union bosses." I have found your stance to be profoundly "anti" the majority of citizens who do most of the essential work in our community. Whatever respect and appreciation you have for us has come from the empowerment people in the labor movement struggled and even died to obtain. Your understanding of how unions work is practically nil.

My organization follows the principles of a democratic republic to a degree I no longer see in our government because of its corporate bosses. Perhaps The Times would have more readers if it presented the issues of labor with more balance.

Madeline Shapiro *President, East Whittier Education Assn.*

Misdiagnosing homesickness

Re "Trip of faith takes skeptical turn," Sept. 2

Your article on Salahudin Ali's pilgrimage to Cairo is couched in all sorts of divisive and baseless rhetoric. The headlines include such words as "skeptical" and "disillusionment," but nowhere in the article is there any suggestion of anything other than homesickness. The initial appeal of the place had worn off for the young man, and he began to miss the familiarity of home; it became easier to reside in that nostalgia than push further into the new culture in which he found himself.

This is something that happens to all travelers; it is about the uncertainty of not knowing a foreign world in deeper terms, not about being disappointed by it.

I am not sure then why The Times framed the article in more polemical terms, ones that intimated a poor opinion of the Islamic world, a regrettable and inaccurate stereotype pervasive in our Western media.

Claudio Cambon *Long Beach*

Infected with incompetence

Re "Finding roles for workers at closed hospital," Sept. 2

This revealing article tells of a problem with less-than-satisfactory workers at Martin Luther King Jr.-Harbor Hospital. It points out the problem of where these people should be assigned now that the hospital is closed, in part because of their lack of competence. It is clear that there is a problem with the system and those who administer it. Moving incompetence will only bring more troubles to an already overburdened system and hasten the complete collapse of the Los Angeles County's healthcare system.

The county Board of Supervisors needs to face the reality of the situation. For too long the supervisors have tried to be politically correct; now that failure has come, they should not spread the infection.

Richard B. Pridham *Downey*

Straighten up

Re "Nuñez proposes panel to redraw districts," Aug. 31

I have a solution to the partisan redistricting problems. The following amendment to the state Constitution would end the hypocritical wrangling that goes on every 10 years to draw impossibly shaped districts whose only purpose is to ensure that the party in power remains in power.

The amendment would read: Each district shall have boundaries consisting of four straight lines joined by four 90-degree angles. Shorelines and state-line borders shall be considered straight lines, and the angles of lines intersecting with state lines and coastlines shall be considered right angles.

Tony Medley *Marina del Rey*

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