

Assuming Mexicans are illegal insults hard workers



Kelsey Landhuis

So who was surprised when illegal immigrants got busted at the Mexican restaurant? Hardly anyone?

Yeah, that's what I thought. Some people, however, might be surprised about El Vaquero owner Taly Lopez's indictment for, among other offenses, allegedly committing Social Security fraud and harboring illegal aliens (See story, page 1). What is important about this indictment is not whether Lopez is guilty of the charges — he is presumed innocent

until proven otherwise — but the lack of scrutiny, up to this point, of his role in the events. The focus on the undocumented workers themselves as the sole possible perpetrators of wrongdoing reveals a deep prejudice and demonstrates the negative consequences of letting this prejudice serve as a substitute for critical thinking.

After the raid occurred, Lopez seemed to play the role of the innocent business owner who got hoodwinked by those darn illegals, and we were only too happy to let him (See the April 3 issue of the Index). Media coverage focused on the actions of the illegal workers themselves, while the words of their employer were taken at face value: The immigrants were

stealing the Social Security numbers and the jobs of honest, hard-working Americans, and there was no way their boss could have known about it.

But employers are the ones who should be responsible for verifying the citizenship statuses of their workers and that nowadays Social Security numbers can be verified online. Never mind that one of the illegal workers in question was Lopez's brother-in-law -- so as long as family ties weren't severed, we hope Lopez had some idea of whether he was a citizen or not.

But we simply took Lopez's word for it when, according to the article in the April 3 issue of the Index, he said he had no way of knowing whether

or not an employee was an illegal immigrant. We could see where he was coming from when he said the only way he can think to avoid a problem like this in the future is not to hire Mexicans to work at the restaurant — never mind that it is unlawful to refuse to hire individuals based on their race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

But this is not an indictment of Lopez — he already got one of those. It is, however, a warning and a lesson for the rest of us about the danger of replacing critical thinking with prejudices and assumptions.

Assuming that a person of Mexican origin is an illegal immigrant is an insult and an injustice to the millions of legal Mexican immigrants and people with Mexican heritage who work hard and make valuable contributions to American society every day. In fact, the situation at El Vaquero has shown


that even illegal workers can make valuable contributions to American society. Forming an opinion about illegal immigrants — or any individual or group of people — based on prejudice and stereotypes is unhealthy and unfair.

There are no easy solutions to the problem of illegal immigration. If there were, it would have been solved long ago. However, the current attitude of anger and hostility toward Mexican immigrants that many Americans have has proven to be ineffective and even counterproductive to improving the situation. It is time to assess the problem from a fresh perspective so that unfortunate incidents like the one at El Vaquero can be avoided in the future.

Kelsey Landhuis is a junior English major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa


AROUND THE QUAD

What do you think about the new luxury apartments coming to Kirksville?




"I took that survey they had about it, and what's good about it is it's all on one bill."

*Nicole VanCleave
Sophomore*




"I guess they sound cool but I don't think I'd pay for it."

*Molly McKay
Junior*



"If I lived there, I'd never leave."

*Kara Bollinger
Junior*



"There are new luxury apartments coming to Kirksville?"

*Philip Schaefer
Senior*

If more students campaigned, more would see benefits of Senate



Andrew Kindiger

Last Sunday, the first floor of Dobson Hall was congested with students who anxiously were awaiting the free pizza promised by signs scattered throughout the residence hall.

However, the long line of residents quickly dissipated as more people working their way back through the line affirmed that there was a catch. I knew free pizza was too good to be true and began to look for the quickest way out of the residence hall, expecting the line to soon lead to a church youth group meeting or a class registration seminar.

However, I soon found out that the catch was not as undesirable as I had anticipated. As the line shortened, students wearing blindfolds while eating slices of pizza without the ability to use their thumbs soon became visible through the glass of the main lounge.

The actual purpose of the free pizza was to help raise awareness for individuals with disabilities. Not everyone who had a slice of pizza was required to eat it with a disability, so only a few students had to experience the catch that had turned so many residents away.

I thought it was pretty unfortunate that an activity of this nature would not attract the interest of more people,

but I became more frustrated as it became apparent there was absolutely no benefit for those who took the time to participate. As soon as people in the main lounge finished their pizza they left, and those who were asked to mimic a disability were simply asked to remove their blindfolds or continue eating like normal. There was no presentation or even an explanation for the gathering. The only realization reached by the clusters of confused students was that a slice of pizza was not going to suffice for Sunday dinner.

This failed interactive presentation is only one example of the University's problem with apathy from both students and organizations on campus. This Tuesday and Wednesday, students were supposed to vote for new Student Senate representatives, but only 905 students voted of the about 5,800 students at the University. But who could really blame them with only one person running for Senate president?

The Senate elections would seem a little more important if there was even a slight competition for the highest office of the organization. How are students supposed to care if their participation really doesn't matter? Of course, there also was no competition for all the other Senate positions. But the apathy shown for the most important position is an initial deterrent that has people asking, "Why care in the first place?"

University students face not only a problem of apathy but also a problem of massive disassociation. It's hard to get excited about a club, student organization or even an interactive presentation if those in charge are not taking what they

are doing seriously.

The biggest problem with the failed disabilities presentation was that there was no real explanation of what was going on at the event or ahead of time. There might have been a better response or at least a more captive audience if the presentation was advertised as such and not as just a free pizza party in the Dobson main lounge.

More people should be concerned about the state of Senate and ask themselves why only one person ran for president of the organization. It should be alarming that out of 5,800 students, only one individual wanted to take on the responsibility of leading an organization that has the potential to greatly affect student affairs. If at any point students think that this sense of apathy should be replaced with a stronger resolve for taking on responsibility, interest is going to have to be sparked somehow.

But how to make students excited about the politics associated with their university is not a task that can be completed with free pizza alone. A desire to take on a particular type of responsibility has to be met by those who actually care about shaping the future of the school. Disassociation and disinterest in regards to Senate are not problems that only should concern the organization.

If more people started to care about Senate and actively participate when it came time to vote or get involved with a decision, more people would see the importance of Senate and the benefits of becoming involved.

Andrew Kindiger is a freshman English major from Liberty, Mo.

Being 'worst Mexican ever' isn't good material for bragging rights



Jackie Gonzalez

I'm the worst Mexican ever. All right, maybe I shouldn't be so hard on myself — I'm the worst Mexican-American in the state of Missouri. I already can hear the groans from my parents when they get this issue in the mail. Then again, they might agree.

Clearly, this is not something I brag about. If you're a regular Index reader, you might have noticed my last name, Gonzalez, and automatically characterized me as an ethnically sensitive young woman who's completely in tune with my cultura. Unfortunately, you'd be wrong.

If you saw me walking down the street (crutch and all), you'd never know. In fact, you'd be more likely to notice my Latina features (I'm being generous here) and think nothing much of it. You might assume I knew where I came from and that I would never struggle in a Spanish class (but you know what

assuming does).

Soy Mexicana. Yet according to contemporary stereotypes, I might not be Mexican at all. I am not part of a culturally based sorority or campus organization, I'm not a super-Catholic and I haven't been that far into Mexico. I don't even have a passport.

I do, however, enjoy Mexican food (as should everyone with decent taste). But I also love Taco Bell. I'd like to think I have rhythm, but then again, I sometimes dance like I'm having a seizure.

The most embarrassing factoid about me as a Mexican-American is this: I don't speak Spanish. It's shocking, I know. It's almost a requirement to be a Mexican-American. These days, I feel like in order to consider myself a real Mexican-American, I must speak Spanish. People almost seem offended when I admit I don't know the language. Thus, by some, I am often referred to as the fake Mexican.

Spanish was my dad's first language. There was a time my little sister knew more Spanish than English. My mom also is fluent.

I've tried to learn. I've taken Intermediate Spanish twice but ended up dropping the course halfway through both times. I'm now taking beginners' Spanish, and

my skills still lack a certain luster. I come home from school, visit my family and the issue always comes up. I never can be a good Mexican-American until I learn my español. I envy bilinguals. I really do.

Even though I've had a very American upbringing, my parents have tried to bring out the Latina in me. I had a quinceañera when I was 15. I got involved with Mexican folk dancing, and I go to Mass in Spanish occasionally. Naturally, I mark "Hispanic" on applications I fill out.

Being the worst Mexican in Missouri does have its advantages. Living in a more conservative area than my hometown, I'm able to live comfortably as an American and not be judged by others based on my heritage. It's sad, but true.

But just because I'm a bad Mexican doesn't mean I'm not a proud Mexican. I love my family's history, and my lack of Spanish skills has become more of a quirky and embarrassing fact versus something I'm horribly ashamed about. Maybe one day I'll learn, but until that point, I'll just continue to eat at Taco Bell and be the worst Mexican-American in the state.

Jackie Gonzalez is a junior communication and history major from San Diego, Calif.

Cost of hospital birth far outweighs risk of employing midwives



Phil Jarrett

In the old days, babies were made on the cheap. A couple bucks were paid to a midwife, a few prayers were said and then a kid was squeezed out on the kitchen table.

Breakfast was never the same after that: "You will eat your porridge. You know what I went through on this table for you?"

It is easy to look at the practice of midwifery like a relic of the Dark Ages — something people did before they learned better. At the turn of the 20th century, maternal death rates were at nearly one in 100. In the United States today, that number is at about 13 out of 100,000. In that time, births have progressively moved from home to hospital. Newborns are being caught more often by physicians and less often by midwives. Many conclude the hospitalization of the birthing process has been a good change.

But in one of those weird twists of history, too much of a good thing, in this case institutional medicine, might not be as good as it would seem.

According to the National Committee to Prevent Infant Mortality, the U.S. mortality rate for infants 28 days old or younger in 1989 was slightly more than 10 per 1,000 live births. Despite having the most sophisticated and expensive system of maternity care in the world, that same year 20 other countries with less technology had more babies survive. Many of those countries, like Holland and Denmark, use midwives as the primary caregivers for healthy women during their pregnancies and births.

The cost of a standard hospital delivery is nearly \$8,000. C-sections bump that price tag up to nearly \$12,000. In 2006, more than 30 percent of U.S. deliveries were done surgically, a number far higher than years past and even more astonishing when compared to the 10-percent figure in other developed countries with lower rates of infant mortality. In that same year Missouri had 771,690 uninsured citizens, and baby-making is not just for the insured. Talk about being born into debt.

Midwifery costs, on the other hand, begin at about \$1,000. And although this

line of work probably deserves a certain amount of skepticism, is it so unnatural to want a healthy birth aided by a trained professional without the killer price tag?

In the U.S., there are two main divisions of modern midwifery. The first, nurse-midwives, have a master's degree in nursing, public health or midwifery and provide gynecological and midwifery care to healthy women who can expect a normal pregnancy. These nurse-midwives often work in hospitals and work closely with obstetricians. The second, direct-entry midwives, are not certified as nurses but are educated about the birth process through self-study, apprenticeship, a midwifery school or a college. Under this umbrella of direct-entry, there is a sub-class of Certified Midwives who

must pass the same exam as the nurse-midwives.

Direct-entry midwifery is unlawful in Missouri. Practicing without a nurse-midwife license is a felony. These are some of the harshest penalties for out-of-hospital birthing in the nation.

In May 2007 the Missouri Legislature passed a bill intended to increase private health coverage for the uninsured. Tucked into this legislation was a one-sentence provision added by Sen. John Loudon that effectively legalizes certain direct-entry midwifery. Through the unnoticed use of the word *tocology*, the practice of obstetrics and childbirth, instead of midwifery, Loudon was able to seemingly legalize what had been thrown out by prior legislation. Last August, a judge ruled the midwifery law illegal — a just move because of Loudon's sneaky tactics.

But now Loudon is taking a new approach, pushing a bill that would create a state midwives board that will certify legal practice in the state. As expected, his proposal is being sidelined.

However, Missourians should give midwifery a second look. Home birth research studies indicate much lower rates of infection in the mother and the baby than are likely in the hospital, where antibiotic-resistant diseases are known to thrive and painkillers are prescribed that can harm the child. Not only this, the experience with a midwife is more intimate, less complicated, safe and much cheaper.

In the end, autonomy should win. If a mother is healthy, it should be her decision how and where she has her child.

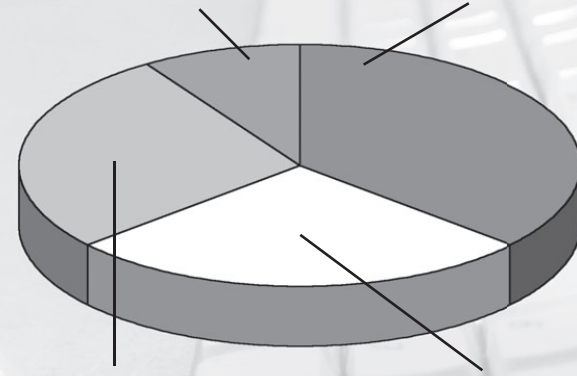
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WEB POLL

How should the tie for third place in the school board election be resolved?

One should concede
(9% — 5 votes)

Cage match
(37% — 20 votes)



A new election
(27% — 15 votes)

Coin toss
(27% — 15 votes)

This week's question:
Would you ever attend a drag show?

Vote online at trumanindex.com