

The ADVOCATE

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Letters from readers

Column maligned South End

To the editor:

I'd like to clarify some points that were overlooked or misinterpreted in Jack Cavanaugh's article "An inhospitable spot for affordable housing" (May 28, 2009).

The article painted an unfortunate picture of those of us who live and/or work in the South End — that we are predominantly drug dealers, criminals, or otherwise unfit neighbors. This is an unfair characterization of the worst type, playing into insulting stereotypes of what it means to be among the poor or working-class in an otherwise affluent city. The South End may be more economically disadvantaged than other parts of the city, but it is a dynamic and thriving community in its own right.

As director of Family Services at CTE, I had the pleasure of working with the staff of Jonathan Rose, the developer of Metro Green and DeMarco Management, the managing agent of the property, as well as several members of the South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. We had several meetings about the housing complex, the target resident population and the application process for the mixed-income building. CTE was selected as one of several sites that would distribute application materials. Ads were placed in The Advocate on Feb. 20 and Feb. 27 advising Stamford residents about the application process, which began on March 2.

Contrary to Mr. Cavanaugh's assertion that "hordes of people didn't exactly storm the gates," I gave out over half of the 150 applications that were made available to CTE on that first day and nearly all were gone by the end of the first week. Many of the interested potential applicants were from the South End, but many came from other neighborhoods in Stamford, attracted by the prospect of a new, state-of-the-art green building, conveniently located and competitively priced. Since The Advocate published the news (earlier this week) that the building will not go to a lottery as originally anticipated, I have received dozens more inquiries about applications for the remaining units.

Mr. Cavanaugh misunderstood my remarks about the importance of a broad spectrum of housing options. What I meant to convey was that in order to have a more vibrant and viable community in the South End, we need to have a wide range of housing options available — low income, affordable and market-rate — that reflect the diversity of the city. Mr. Cavanaugh, who grew up around the corner from CTE, claims that he wants to see that happen, but his column plays into middle-class fears of "us" versus "them." It's time to move past this type of thinking. All of us in Stamford will benefit from a revitalized South End.

Deborah Mullin
Stamford

Tale of two parks

To the editor:

I live in Stamford in a condo complex between West Beach and Cummings Park which is a beautiful area. I ride my bicycle all around Shippan, through Cummings Park and down to Cove Park. I also take walks down to Cummings Park along the path starting at Halloween Yacht Club. It could be a beautiful walk, but unfortunately the geese are all over the place along with their droppings all along the walkway from Halloween Yacht Club to the beach area.

Is there a reason that the geese are not at Cove but all over Cummings? Is there also a reason that Cove Park grounds seems to be better taken care of in regards to landscaping and cleanliness? Apparently something must have been done to keep the geese away at Cove. Why does it seem that Cummings Park is neglected in comparison to Cove Park?

Another thing I've noticed around Halloween Yacht Club

and the path down to Cummings is that instead of the city workers using a weed wacker along the edges, they throw down something that kills the grass and turns it brown and dries it out. The pier at Cummings was blown down by a big storm two years ago and is yet to be rebuilt. Why are these things being neglected at Cummings?

Nancy Schmidt
Stamford

About-face

To the editor:

How many of you voted for Barack Obama because you wanted change?

Well, since Obama has become president we have seen monumental change; change from capitalism to fledgling fascism. We have seen our national debt quadruple, our economy decline, tax revenue drop and unemployment rates skyrocket even though Obama promised his stimulus package would jumpstart the economy. We have seen Obama appoint 21 czars to bypass Congress and hire a tax cheat to run the IRS.

We have seen the government take over of two of the three automakers, dictate what these car companies will build, who will run the companies and then see the president say he would not run these companies. We have seen the government cap CEO's salaries, confiscate their incomes and the president fire a CEO. We have seen the government take control of the banking and insurance industries. We have seen the government file charges against Countrywide but turn a blind eye to the corruption at Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We have seen Sen. Chris Dodd and Rep. Barney Frank, who are guilty of facilitating the collapse of the mortgage and banking industries, take no blame for their failure, then be put in charge of fixing the problems they created. We have seen the largest spending increase in national history; Obama will spend more than all 43 presidents before him combined.

We have seen the majority of the mainstream media become like China's state-run media. We will see Obama and Congress attempt to push through a socialist style health care without debate.

So, when you voted for Obama's "change" did you sign up to change our country into a fascist state?

Wynn S. Allen
Westport

Mean streets

To the editor:

I read with concern about the monetary shortage within the Stamford Police Department. This is very unfortunate.

In the same light, I am deeply concerned about the decay in the driving habits of people on the local roads. You have to really be mindful not to get broad-sided when pulling out on a green light, or to get rear-ended when you legally stop for a yellow light.

If the Stamford Police Department would put more effort into traffic control and issue more tickets for all of this terrible driving, then there might be more money coming in from the associated fines.

That would help to make the roads safer and give more funds to the cash-strapped Police Department.

Darrell Hoss
Stamford

The Advocate welcomes letters reflecting readers' diverse views. Those of 350 words or fewer are given preference. Letters are edited for grammar, clarity, accuracy and brevity. Address and day and evening telephone numbers are required for verification purposes, although this information is not published. Address letters to: Letters to the Editor, The Advocate, 9 Riverbend Drive S., Building 9A, Stamford, CT 06907. Letters also can be submitted by fax (964-2345) or at letters.advocate@scni.com.

Editorial

Thumbs up — Thumbs down

Thumbs up to a life well lived and many lives saved.

The Rev. Richard Shuster retired last week as executive director of St. Luke's LifeWorks, one of the noblest outposts in the entire city of Stamford — make that state of Connecticut — which he led for 22 years.

For so many people, St. Luke's has been the place that has said "come in" when others said "go away." The agency provides educational services and housing to individuals and families, including those living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

But it was on the brink of financial collapse when one day in 1986 the chair of its advisory council asked Rev. Shuster to perform an assessment to gauge the outlook for the future. The job was supposed to take three days. It wound up lasting a bit longer than that.

When Rev. Shuster first came to St. Luke's, the agency served fewer than 50 people a year. Today the number exceeds 400. But statistics can only tell a small part of the story.

In our region of the country in particular, success so often is measured by the big house, boarding schools or the new BMW. But how those things lose their luster when placed

The Issue:
The good, the bad and the baffling in recent local news

next to, say, number of lives saved, children given a future, people given back their dignity. By that measure, it's hard to name a more successful man than Richard Shuster.

Thumbs down to trying to make a buck by endangering the health of kids. Those who've become readers of Stamford 411, the new blog by Advocate news staffers, may have seen an entry last week from reporter Wynne Parry that went like this: "The Corn Refiners Association is fighting a district-wide prohibition on the use of high-fructose corn syrup in cafeteria food."

A Nutrition Committee of the Board of Education, in soliciting a new food services contract, adopted standards including no trans fat, no MSG and no corn syrup. (**Thumbs up** to them for that.) That prompted a fax, backed up by phone calls, from the association touting the safety of corn

syrup and warning that banning it could drive up costs.

More costly than obesity, diabetes and a host of other potential health problems? We think not.

Thumbs down to the re-emergence of Newt, as in Gingrich, who was in Stamford last week trying to revive Connecticut Republicans' pulse, and perhaps continue positioning himself for a presidential run.

Here was the former House Speaker's analysis of President Barack Obama and former Vice President Dick Cheney and their recent "showdown" over Guantanamo:

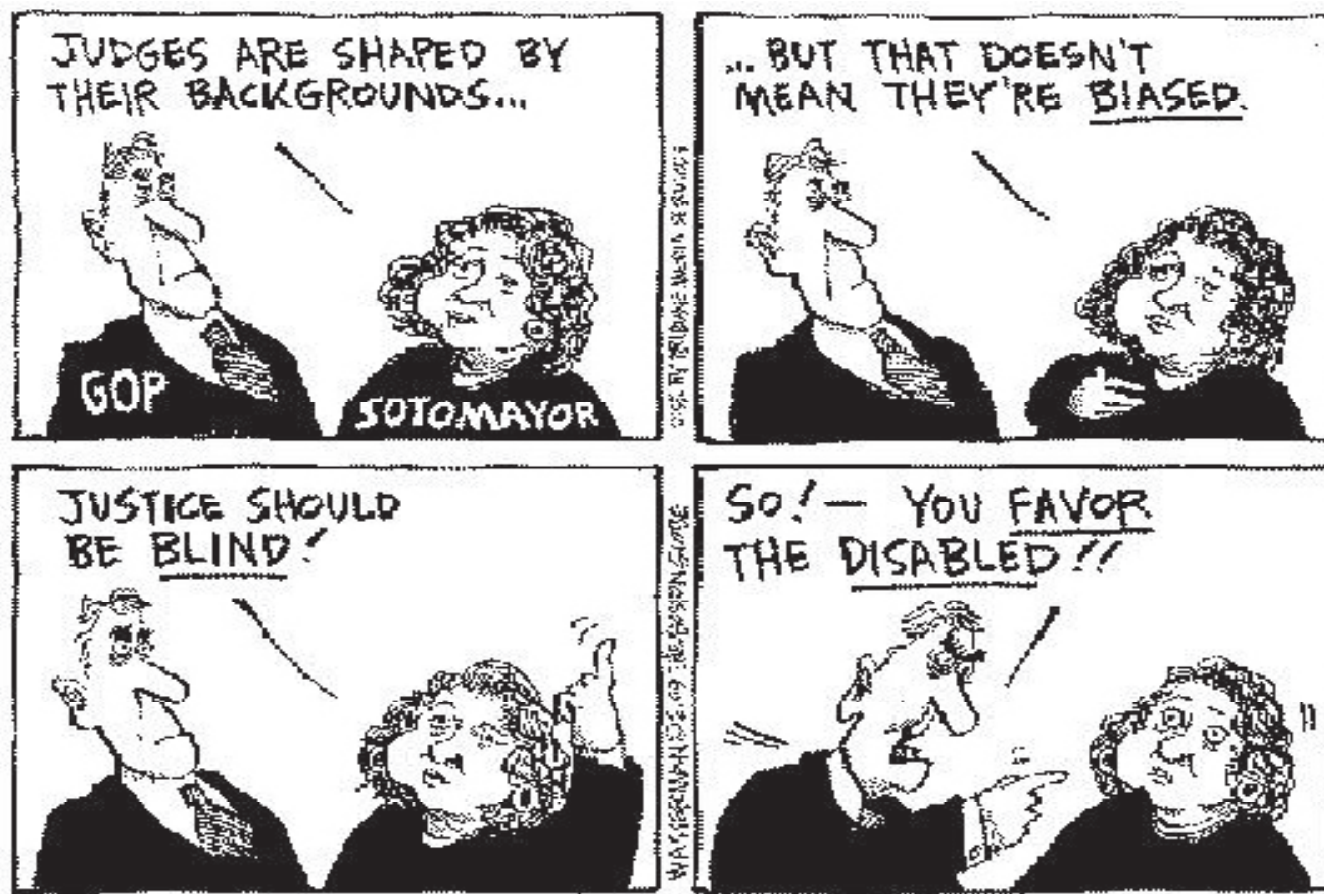
"One was chief of staff, secretary of defense and a vice president who concentrated on national security. The other read a couple of left-wing books on the CIA."

Newt was predictably throwing a little red meat to his base, but that doesn't excuse the substitution of vitriol for analysis.

Twisted, inaccurate personal attacks against the players instead of serious consideration of their words, plans or actions — the hallmark of our era of bitter partisanship, spoken by the guy who helped usher it in.

More of this, we don't need.

Dan Wasserman's View



De Tocqueville said this would happen

After touring Jacksonian America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville would write a wide-ranging, eloquent and still highly relevant analysis of "Democracy in America," the title of his masterwork. But he was interested in more than the America of his time. He was also intrigued by the future of democracy in America.

What shape, he wondered, would tyranny assume when it came to this new, ever-bubbling democracy? Being both a Frenchman seeking refuge from the violent swings of politics in his own country (from autocracy to democracy to terror and back again), and a student of classical political theory, he had little doubt that democracy would prove a prelude to tyranny.

He was in doubt only about what shape such a tyranny would take. For in this new, unique society, surely tyranny, too, would come in a new, unique form. He saw democracy in America as always teetering between its two desires: liberty and equality. Which would triumph?

After long deliberation, the



Paul Greenberg

answer came to him: In the end, an oppressive equality would settle upon the land. But it would be a velvet-gloved oppression new in the annals of man. He explained how it would work in a chapter entitled "What Sort of Despotism Democratic Nations Have to Fear."

Tocqueville envisioned a ruling power that would be "absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild," one that keeps its subjects "in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness as a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security,

foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances. What remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?"

If you doubt the relevance of Alexis de Tocqueville's dusty old ideas to today's bright, shiny Twittering America, just look around at the web of maternal regulations we follow from dawn to dusk, and that hovers over us even as we sleep on mattresses with tags we are enjoined not to remove under penalty of law. Or just try to fill out your own income tax form without being shown the way by a certified (public accountant) guide.

Whether by intention, accident or just inertia, the maze of rules and regulations we live under, each with its own extensive bureaucracy to administer it, keeps growing — much like the Internal Revenue Code. And all of it is always For Our Own Good, of course.

In the end, shall we have to

commit the contents of old books to memory, like the characters in "Fahrenheit 451," lest the book-burners send them up in flames? Think of the Russian poets in the Soviet era who carried their subversive lines around in their heads — lest the KGB find evidence of thoughtcrime on the premises.

Those who construct Brave New Worlds always begin by erasing the past, for its values must be stamped out, lest the next generation realize that there was once an alternative to the New Order. It is no coincidence that Winston and Julia, the lovers in "1984," rendezvous above an antique shop. Their original sin is to treasure the past. After that, their fate is sealed; it is only a matter of time before the Thought Police come bursting in. These two subversives must be apprehended. And re-educated. For their own good, of course.

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