



Hub Puerto Rican activists livid at racial e-mail gaffe

Yawu Miller

It happens to everyone at least once. An absent-minded click of the mouse. The eye's momentary inability to distinguish between "reply" and "reply to sender and recipients."

But not everyone makes this mistake with words that can offend well-known members of their community. Throw in a racial slur, and it can get ugly.

That's the predicament Boston School Committee member Angel Amy Moreno found himself in recently. That is, former Boston School Committee member.

One can only imagine what went through Moreno's head on Oct. 9 when he referred to José Massó as "el negrito del batey," which translates loosely into "the little black yard boy."

Moreno sent his e-mail — he says as a joke — in response to an invi-

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tation to a coffee house hosted by longtime activist Jaime Rodriguez at the St. Andrew Community Church on Amory Street to showcase talent in the local community. The e-mail was sent to a list of prominent activists in Boston's Puerto Rican community.

Moreno says there is no literal translation for "negrito del batey," but says it's a term of endearment.

"The phrase doesn't convey any racism at all," he says, noting that the word "negrito" is used widely as a term of endearment, even among light-skinned or white Puerto Ricans. "Inside our culture, it doesn't have any negative connotations. It's an affective term, like if I call you 'sweetie' in English."

But Massó, who was born and raised in the Puerto Rican capitol of San Juan, disagrees.

"You would think that someone enlightened enough to have a Ph.D. in history would be able to put that phrase in its historical context," he says. "It's not a phrase you would use in a joking manner."

Massó was not the only one offended by the e-mail. In the ensuing storm of messages — Massó

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President Bush (left) presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to civil rights pioneer Benjamin Hooks during a ceremony held Monday in the East Room of the White House. For more on the presentation, see story on pg. 2. (AP photo/Ron Edmonds)

Minority enrollment stays strong in Mich.

Kenneth J. Cooper

The number of minority freshmen at the University of Michigan remains about the same this fall, despite a ban on affirmative action approved by the state's voters a year ago.

The flagship public university in Ann Arbor, Mich., has been able to maintain its minority numbers without considering race or ethnicity in admissions partly by enrolling a larger class. The 11 percent expansion appears to have allowed admissions of-

ficers to reach deeper into the pool of applicants to find more students of color with SAT scores and grades comparable to whites who were also accepted.

The larger freshmen class has also caused slight declines in the percentages of minorities, except for Asians, but the overall results contrast with big drops in minority freshmen at the University of Texas, University of Washington, University of California, Los Angeles and Uni-

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Boston youth speak out on violence, education, health

Talia Whyte

As the old saying goes, children should be seen, not heard. But today, with quality of life problems growing for many Boston kids, more adults are recognizing that the city's youth need to be part of the conversation about finding solutions.

Aiming to help jumpstart the dialogue, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) has hosted a series of recent community meet-

ings intended to give youth a chance to voice their opinions on a range of health and safety issues.

"Whether the topic is public health or violent crime, the youth of this city should be our partners in identifying the strategies and solutions for problems that also affect them," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "Their voices should be heard."

The meetings have focused on a BPHC status report broken down by neighborhood that examines edu-

cational attainment, school dropout rates, and the impact of violence and sexually transmitted diseases on youth. The goal of the meetings is to get feedback from youth on the report and make sure the information is updated.

"The information we currently have is limited, and we don't have the whole story," said BPHC Executive Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer during a meeting held last Thursday at English

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Boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard visited youngsters at Children's Hospital Boston last weekend as the ex-champ made the rounds in the community with fighters from the latest season of the

ESPN series "The Contender." The reality show held its season finale at the TD Banknorth Garden on Tuesday night. (Photo courtesy of Children's Hospital Boston)

ESPN's 'Contender' boxers hit Dudley Sq.

Bridgit Brown

ESPN sent the four semi-finalist fighters from the third season of its series "The Contender" to the heart of Roxbury last Saturday.

Sakio Bika, Jaidon Codrington, Sam Soliman and Wayne Johnsen greeted youngsters from the Fit Kidz program of the nonprofit Body By Brandy 4 Kidz on Washington Street.

They spent more than an hour with the kids, signing autographs, gym clothing and equipment donated by Everlast. They also worked out with the children, showing each one how to properly wrap a boxing glove, throw a jab and duck a left hook.

Produced by acclaimed reality TV king Mark Burnett, "The Contender"

stars hall-of-famer Sugar Ray Leonard as host and mentor to the boxers.

"The Contender" has helped so many boxers realize their dreams and it's been a wonderful way of humanizing the sport of boxing, which has been looked down upon because of the nature of the sport," said Leonard in an interview with the Banner.

The final episode of the season took place in Boston on Tuesday night at the TD Banknorth Garden.

Stooping to autograph the water bottle of a tiny 6-year-old, the six-foot-tall Johnsen smiled and talked about his upcoming fight.

"I'm nervous, but it's in a good way. I love what I'm doing," he said.

Johnsen, a native of New Jersey, faced Soliman for third-place honors

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