



Letters to the Editor, Sept. 5



Focus on fighting poverty to beat achievement gap

Poverty and resulting lower socioeconomic status — not racism in Montclair or its schools — remain the primary cause behind our local racial education achievement gap. Instead, we've spent way too much time of late finger pointing to "racism" here as the main cause and needed fix.

That was particularly true by the most recent prior, Board of Education members and just departing school Superintendent. Not only did they mistakenly make "racism" the central administrative direction that seemed to redirect all educational energies, they ignored possible real supervision inequities among staff under their watch, which have now blown up into litigation. Fortunately, those with this point of view are now off the school Board.

While U.S. societal racism is a major underlying cause of today's on-going income and SES disparities (and in some parts of the country racism remains the major factor) — focusing solely on racism HERE in Montclair today — was not and is not the core solution.

Instead, early Pre-K for all remains the best dollar fix we have available today to most quickly begin to level

the playing field. And THIS should be a key directive to figure out how to pay for it for today's BOE members, and for the combined majority vote of the Town Council Board of School Estimate. Those who oppose this effort, because they believe it will take monies away from tutoring and counseling that help children in later grades, would do well to remember the old adage: That "the enemy of the good is the perfect."

To date, we've made very little progress here over the years statistically to help solve this problem.

That's because by age three, studies have shown that children in lower income African American homes may hear as many as 30 million fewer words than children in white, wealthier families. By the third grade, there are already significant differences in literacy and math testing scores.

Montclair's "racism" did not cause these early developmental disparities.

(apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education)

While there is of course still some racism within our schools, therefore efforts should continue to educate teachers and administrators to help stop negative stereotyping and other needed equity and attitudinal shifts — a "racism" solely focused approach is not going to turn things around.

Reinstating Pre-k for all here is an important step if we are actually serious about doing something to reduce our achievement gap locally, rather than just keep talking about it, or debating who, or what is really to blame.

MARTIN SCHWARTZ

Montclair

Why can't Montclair find a long-term superintendent?

The Montclair school district recently hired a new "interim" superintendent for an annual salary of \$191,984. He is expected to work four days a week. Seriously?

I have been a Montclair resident for 40 years, my children used the public schools, I pay a substantial amount of taxes. I also work in town and I am proud of being an active part of this amazing community.

I have a question for the school district: What is the reason why we are not able to find a stable and long lasting superintendent?

I am sure there are plenty of well qualified candidates. Does one have to be "politically correct?"

It cannot be the salary and all the benefits, is it?

And I was just wondering if our schools are open five days a week, why is the superintendent required to work only four days a week?

I might apply for the job. I am willing to work more hours and earn less.

AURORA DEJULIIS CARLUCCIO

Montclair

Republican Club's mural reaction is off track

In the Aug. 29 issue of the Montclair Local, a letter from the president of the Montclair Republican Club (MRC) stated that the MRC's reaction to the "Never Again" mural located at the underpass near Montclair High School was to have their attorneys draft a "request to be granted NJ Transit-owned space of equal prominence for their Second Amendment-themed mural." Although it is wrapped in thinly-veiled praise of NJ Transit for "allow[ing] political speech" that "tackle[s] important issues in the public square." The actual premise of the MRC's position is both obvious and false.

As is standard practice for gun rights organizations like the MRC, they imply that the counterargument to opposing gun violence is to support the Second Amendment. Once held up to daylight, it becomes clear just how false and disingenuous this premise is.

The counterargument to an anti-violence message is a pro-violence message, and the counterargument to opposing gun violence is to support gun violence.

There is nothing contrary to the Second Amendment about promoting sensible gun-safety measures. Gun-rights organizations like the MRC know that, so they couch their argument in insincere platitudes about "encouraging debate and discussion."

Please do not take the bait. Debating Second Amendment rights versus sensible gun-safety measures is a false equivalency. One is either pro or anti-gun violence. Full stop.

GLENN METSCH-AMPEL

Montclair

Applauding students who painted train trestle mural

The newly painted south wall under the Chestnut Street railroad trestle has a unique history in Montclair. On March 21, 1995, four people were killed and one seriously injured with a gun in the Watchung Plaza Post Office. That for me was the saddest moment of my many years here. Then in 1996, there were two or three domestic incidents involving deaths by gunshot.

The original murals under the trestle were first designed and painted by students from Glenfield school in response to these killings and for 20 plus years reminded us of the several deaths by handguns during a short

period of time in Montclair.

I applaud the Montclair High School seniors for cleaning and then designing and painting the south wall. I have never thought that the anti-gun violence message was disturbing, and parents can speak with their children about this issue. I hope the north wall can be likewise restored.

My heartfelt thanks to all the students involved in this worthy project.

PETER M. GIUFFRA

Montclair

Speak up at Freeholders meeting here Sept. 11

If you've never made it to Newark for a Freeholders meeting, you're in luck because they're coming to you. Wednesday evening, Sept. 11 at 7 p.m., Montclair Town Hall, 205 Claremont Ave.

This is your chance to ask the freeholders why they're collaborating with Trump and ICE, locking up 800 people for the crime of not being American citizens.

The freeholders are all Democrats in the bluest of counties. They have the power to end the contract so why are they taking millions of dollars a year cooperating with Trump in his 'Keep America White' project. Please come.

JIM PRICE

Montclair