

FUND SB 740 for Kids:

In neighborhoods where 70 percent or more of children are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, California's public charter schools provide an education that is critical to success in the 21st century. But without funding to keep these school buildings open, the most disadvantaged students will fall even further behind.

Despite an endorsement from the Governor, the SB 740 Charter School Facility Grant Program is in danger of being cut from the budget. SB 740 provides immediate funding for the facilities crisis our schools are facing.

Without a reliable way to address the rising costs of rent and building maintenance, it may be almost impossible to give California's most disadvantaged children alternatives to unsafe, low-performing schools.

Public charter schools give teachers, parents, students and community members the opportunity to create and maintain schools that are open to all students and have high-learning standards. *Let's make sure they stay open!*

Don't let bureaucrats fail California's kids. Tell our decision makers to fully fund SB 740

"...call me a FREE MUSLIM...

a Radical, outspoken, Conservative, NRA, American, Proud Muslim...an ANTI-TERRORIST MUSLIM...a bad ass, no nonsense, in your face Muslim, a SUFI...ANYTHING BUT a moderate... to me the moderates are the ones who sit on the fence and watch which way the wind blows before they speak or act (if they ever do)... moderates have no heart, no passion, and no action...neither up nor down...for or against...neither black or white always gray...moderates are leftist liberals who don't have the guts to stand up and say so...moderates are politically correct...afraid to call someone a terrorist and a murderer because...well...I mean ...ya know...like... I mean ...they are oppressed by the system...like ...I mean...they just want to live their lives...and ...like...I mean they had...like... a bad...life

I used to want to be called a Republican, but with Bush behind "The Immigration Deform Bill" I'm beginning to think I'm sliding towards libertarianism...just don't call me late for dinner" - Abdul Mu'min, member of The Free Muslim Coalition - www.freemuslims.org

Girls...Be Afraid

By Vesta Copestakes

So what happens when three women who come to the aid of a girl being gang raped get ridiculed and threatened instead of revered and honored?

You pay attention!

If this story passed you by, it might be because you're not a mother. These kind of stories get the hair on our necks standing up tall. Let me inform you, in case you missed it.

I'm not telling this tale because it's ugly. I'm telling it because it's frightening to all girls and young women and these are the very people who need to be paying attention and protecting themselves. It's nasty out there - any women will tell you that. Every mother tells her daughter scary stories about date rape, etc. and so often our girls think we're nuts, or stupid and old-fashioned - or just trying to scare them.

We are. Scare them aware.

True story: College party at a parent's house. Young people from late teens to early twenties. Plenty of alcohol, etc.

Three college soccer players (women) were about to leave the party when a female partygoer came up to them to tell them there was "a girl in the room with eight guys."

"That didn't sound right. We had no idea who she was, but we knocked on the door."

One of the men opened the door and another shouted at them that it was "none of your f---ing business! Get out of here!"

The women saw a young girl on a mattress on the floor being sexually assaulted by one of the men. They shoved their way into the room, confronted the men, and "weren't very nice. We were swearing like sailors. I couldn't believe some of the words that were coming out of my mouth."

They got the guy off the girl, tried to get her to stand up but she couldn't, asked for help and received none. They had to scoop vomit out of her mouth before lifting her. Then they draped the girl's arms around their shoulders and dragged her out. No one helped these women.

"She was literally lifeless. Her eyes were completely shut. On the way to the hospital, I had to keep my hand under her nose to make sure she was breathing."

It was later determined that the vomit in the girl's mouth was not her own.

And what comes out of this is that the men in the room aren't talking - nor are they identifying the man who was assaulting the girl, (although the police have questioned the son of the homeowners who claims any sex was consensual - consensual sex between parties within three years age of each other is not considered statutory rape) - can't press charges ("We don't think

a crime did occur. But I'm not going to drag a 17-year old girl through the dirt to explain what we found." said the attorney for the homeowners), - the law says that if they believe this is consensual sex then there is no case.

The heroic soccer players don't see it that way at all. After all, the girl was unconscious. Do people actually think that a conscious - straight - girl would willingly let someone vomit in her mouth? OK, there are girls who might want to have consensual sex with eight men - maybe even when she's straight. But the vast majority wouldn't consent to someone vomiting in her mouth.

So maybe the girl drank a bit too much. Maybe she was getting giddy with one guy, got flirtatious and one thing led to another. Maybe someone slipped a date rape drug in her drink, took her to the room and invited guests. At some point flirtatious fun turned into dangerous rape. Would the men have noticed this unconscious girl choking to death on that vomit while they raped her? Probably not.

Did the heroic soccer players save the 17 year old girl? Yes. In fact, they probably saved her life.

So why are strangers coming up to these women and accusing them of lying, etc.? The sheriff says, "The culture now is not to be a snitch, not to say anything."

And who among people involved care about the girl other than these three heroes and her parents. Just another girl who made a mistake of judgment. Happens every day.

ADDENDUM: This case is now going to the State Attorney General for review.

Open Letter to the Closed Meeting

By Mary Moore

On Sunday, June 3, a group of community activists from Sonoma County met with five members of three of the families who recently lost loved ones to killings by local law enforcement. While the stories differed in many ways the common theme was that the details of these killings as described by the family members were very different than the initial reporting by the Press Democrat who gets their information from law enforcement sources. In fairness to Jeremy Hay, a P.D. reporter who has been heavily edited before his stories run, he has tried to get the truth out there. The Press Dem has also refused to run the many letters of outrage they have received since the killings claiming that they were all too similar. This lack of fair coverage was just one of the issues taken up by the twenty people gathered to hear the families stories and to brainstorm the best way to support them.

But the point I want to address in this writing is about the "Community Meetings" called by local elected officials

to "address concerns" after the killing of Haki Thurston, Jeremiah Chass, Richard DeSantis, Walter Heller and Luiz Sanchez in less than eight weeks. For many of us this spate of killings by law enforcement in Sonoma County took us back ten years to another time when a similar spate of killings caused the community to insist that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights come here and conduct special hearings on police abuse. The report that ensued (published in 2000) contained recommendations that if implemented could have prevented some if not all of the recent killings. But instead, law enforcement circled the wagons, and waited out the storm of community indignation. Nothing changed but for awhile the killings stopped. Today much needed trainings and real oversight remain mere suggestions.

Now in 2007 with a whole new set of law enforcement chiefs, District Attorney and elected enablers. special closed meetings are happening with carefully selected members of the community. There is NO representation from the affected families, NO Latinos or Indians and NO activists who were involved ten years ago—so no historical memory. It is as if those killings a decade ago, the Commission hearings and report never happened. After the first "community meeting" without the community, Rev. Curtis Byrd of the NAACP was quoted as objecting to the closed aspect yet nothing changed and they are continuing with only the politicians and chiefs hand picked people. Fortunately some of the chosen have integrity and have continued to point out the necessity of opening up these meetings. At the least this select group of "leaders" should have to hear what the families have to say about how their loved ones died. And more to the point, dates should be set immediately for open forums for all of the community to participate and ask questions.

Between the unwillingness of the main newspaper in Sonoma County to publish the many passionate letters they received on this subject or to report both sides of these murders and the unwillingness of local public servants to meet with all of us and to hear all sides, we find ourselves encountering the perfect storm to keep all this quiet and buried. Fortunately for those of us who care about basic justice, there is hope coming from outside Sonoma County. Last Thursday night KGO's Gene Burns devoted a whole hour examining our problem with law enforcement and their enablers. He started out wondering why none of the families had received the official police reports about their loved ones death. He said that they had tried all of Thursday to find out from the official sources why the reports were being delayed and that he was stonewalled by everyone he contacted.

We are not surprised. We can relate. Open up the newspaper to public dialogue and open up your closed meetings to all of the people.

