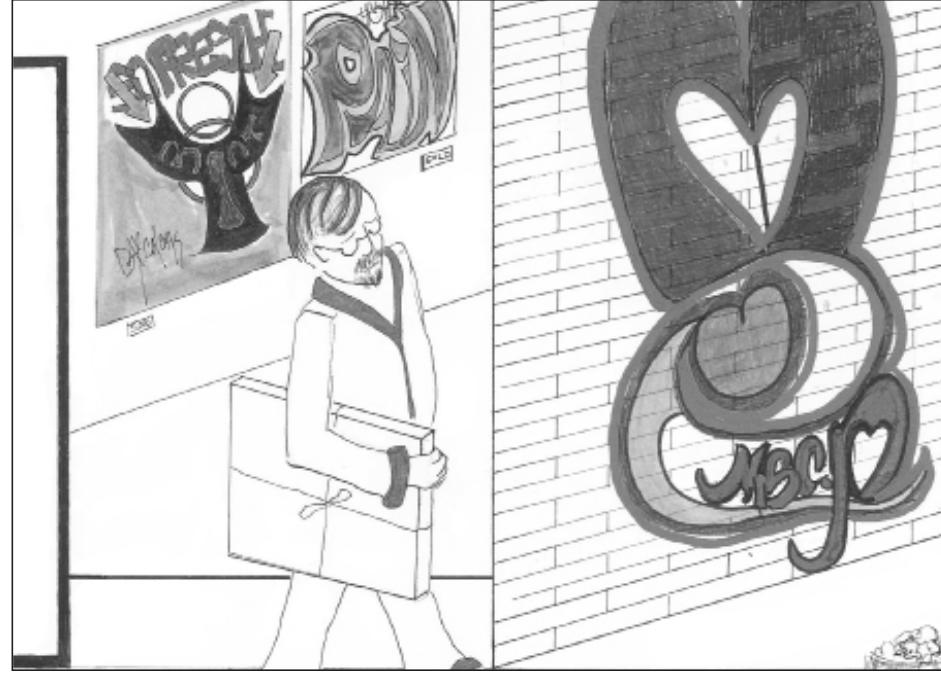


Graffiti can also be great art



By Angelica Gonzales
A Perspective

Painting on the wall is considered a glorious form of art in Egypt, Italy and Mexico, but can get a street artist in big trouble in the U.S. One person's mural is another person's vandalism.

Leonardo DaVinci painted on walls with his brush. Artists today use spray paint and markers as they explore the urban landscape looking for their next concrete canvas. Brilliant artists like Banksy sometimes leave multi-million dollar gifts on the sides of dreary buildings.

Artists of New York made their mark on subway trains in the 1980s, but

they were hardly the first urban artists. Romans, Athenians and Persians had them beat by centuries. Prehistoric man had them beat by millennia as they drew on walls to tell stories and to preserve their history. Art precedes written language.

Art is subjective and many curators and agents act as if they are the ones who determine what is of artist value and what is not. Artists channel creativity from deep inside and share a gift with the world. It does not have to be limited to a canvas. Ask Michelangelo, who made the roof of the Sistine chapel his "canvas."

At an early age children are taught to color inside the lines, whereas urban

artists are thinking outside the lines and outside the box. Unfortunately, homeowners and business owners do not see it that way when they are recipients of an unsolicited commission on the sides of buildings, homes, fences and signposts.

Graffiti conjures images of flowing colors, block letters and images of gangsters "tagging" their turf to let other gangs know whose territory they are entering.

Graffiti artists are waiting for the day when society can separate their art from the vandalism of gang bangers. Spray cans and markers are the only things they have in common.

Graffiti that has no creative merit or artistic expression is merely the defacement of public property and a fair target of law enforcement. Up-and-coming urban artists who share this modern art with their community should not be treated like criminals.

Suburban and inner city law enforcements use taxpayer money to rid the streets of graffiti, but sometimes they also wipe out an urban Mona Lisa. Encinitas city fathers were far too eager to destroy the magnificent "Surfing Madonna" mosaic exhibited under a bridge near the beach. Calmer heads prevailed and the stunning piece will have a new home nearby.

Hotlines are available where "concerned citizens" can report graffiti they see on public property. Other concerned citizens should take action to support urban art and preserve it. Public property, after all, belongs to the public.

Evening classes have advantages

By Enrique Raymudno
A Perspective

Night time is the right time at Southwestern College. Too bad more students do not stick around to enjoy the night life.

Day classes can be crowded, tough to get and filled with immature students. They have students sitting on the floor and professors doing as much traffic control as teaching.

Teaching night classes often falls to younger part-time instructors. They are the ones who travel between campuses, bounce between classrooms and teach at odd hours. Adjuncts are often brilliant, usually dedicated and always glad to be there.

Andrew Rempt, English professor and Learning Assistance Services Coordinator, said students attending night classes tend to be older and better behaved than daytime students.

"Evening students generally seem more serious and involved," he said.

Students attending for job training often have busy day schedules, so night classes make sense. These students help create a better learning environment, because they contribute experience and wisdom.

While daytime classes might be packed with gossiping children just out of high school, evening classes are filled with learned and experienced people. And they only come out at night.

New Years resolutions are doable when broken down into small bites



By Ana Ochoa
A Perspective

It feels great to make New Year resolutions – until we realize we have not kept them.

There is an art and science to making good resolutions. Here are a few tips:

Weight-conscious students who want to leave Twinkies behind need to make healthy choices. Create a chart listing unhealthy snacks on the left side and healthy snacks on the right. Writing a list makes it harder to choose Doritos over carrots. Over time, making better eating choices will become a habit and there will be no more stomach cramps or sugar highs.

Keeping a calendar can be very helpful for students who want to stay on top of their game. Writing appointments and homework in a calendar is old-fashioned but it works. Children of the Steve Jobs Era may use smart phones or other electronic calendars. It is easier to remember when a small shiny screen alerts you to check Blackboard before class. Whatever method works, stick to it!

Determination is imperative for students who resolve to get good grades.

Reading the assignments is key. Reading ahead pays off. Knowing what a professor

is talking about when she refers to a specific page can be a relief. Thanks to new technology, students can rent books online. There is also a link on the SWC website that allows students to read library books directly online. It allows students to stay on top of their studies while in the comfort of their own couch, rather than a cold desk.

One of the most popular resolutions these days is to quit smoking. Giving up cancer sticks is a hard one. One great way to knock out this destructive habit is by getting an electronic cigarette. They have less nicotine and are a good transitional tool. By the way, SWC is a soon-to-be smoke-free campus, so leave the ciggies at home.

Some students yearn to finish community college in less than three years. Students who hop on that bandwagon without a real plan are doomed to fail. Making an appointment with a counselor is the first step. Getting a Student Education Plan is second. Once students have their road laid out, the college journey is easier.

Beginning a new year with the right goals is a great step leading to a better life. It takes time and true dedication to become a better student, but we can all do it, one step at a time.

Letters To The Editor

Time to bring back all laid off SWC employees

The time list included in the most recent copy of the SWC Sun left out one important item, the 2009 decision by the "District" to lay off five employees due to a "lack of work or a lack of funds."

Many of us believed then and still believe that these "layoffs" were made for political and personal reasons, NOT because of a "lack of work or funds." Past administration and governing board leaders had to parse the language in our layoff policies and procedures until they found an interpretation to justify their actions. Past leadership refused to listen and caused good employees to lose jobs, lose income, suffer ruined credit, to move and to hire lawyers.

The actions of past leadership resulted in lawsuits being filed against our district. Luckily, new governing board members and an interim president came into office. These leaders were also asked to "re-org the re-org" in more than one public venue.

Both the old and new leadership failed to reinstate some of these former employees in a timely fashion even when they were counseled to do so by our own attorneys and had to pay out hundreds of thousands in one settlement.

In terms of the other employees who were laid off, one employee had to take a voluntary demotion. She lost thousands of dollars in income. It took over 18 months for her to be restored to her former position.

Another employee was forced to take settlement money because she had already moved out of the area.

One employee came back after a significant time period also having lost thousands of dollars in income. This person has since been promoted to the position of dean, which calls into

question the rationale for her having been laid off in the first place.

The last employee worked at SWC for 18 years before being laid off. Excellent evaluations and the whole hired-last, fired-first concept did not protect him. He was the only Student Services employee laid off in the 2009 employee hacking. He is currently trying to exercise his rights to employment reinstatement under Education Code Section 88117, the 39-month reemployment measure.

The district is resisting his re-employment even though both the spirit and the letter of the law are in that employee's favor.

I read in the press that members of the current SWC leadership are "committed to proactively addressing past practices."

It is the perception of many that some of our past practices have included favoritism, nepotism, sexism and patronage in hiring and promotion. Some have been perceived as including forced resignations.

Some of our past practices have included inequitable responses when complaints or grievances have been filed. I am certainly nervous about putting these comments in print, but as Emiliano Zapata said, "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees."

Our current governing board needs to do the right thing. Past leadership played God with the lives of five employees. They were singled out to bear the brunt of harassment, intimidation and retaliation. Bring the last of the "5" back into the SWC fold. SWC employees need to see you walk your talk. SWC employees need to see actions not just to read words.

Corina Soto
Counselor

Leave college logo alone

A recent article in the Sun purported that the Southwestern College logo is wrong. It is the article itself that is wrong. Apparently little or no research was done to understand even the basics of graphic design. For evidence of that, consider "VW" for the one word "Volkswagen" or "TV" for "television" and the notion of changing "SWC" to "SC" becomes just plain silly.

Logos seldom follow grammar or syntax rules because they are designs, not writing. Letters are often used simply as elements of design. In the SWC design, the "S" and the "W" connect in order to clearly show

the success of any logo is best measured by how it transcends itself and becomes part of the vernacular. Most say Scotch tape instead of cellophane tape, Coke instead of cola. I say and even write SWC when I refer to the Southwestern College. I also say, "Leave the SWC logo alone! It has done its job and done it well."

Joe Schmidt

Disabled student tired of interrogations

I am handicapped and I have cerebral palsy. I have had this disability since birth, which has affected the whole left side of my body. It has limited my ability to coordinate, maneuver, grip, and clasp objects in my hand. It has also limited mobility in my leg and foot, forcing me to limp, which has affected my spine.

I have had my fair share of incidents with people who say I am not a disabled person. At Southwestern College I have experienced profiling and prejudice.

One day, as I was about to exit my car, I saw a police cruiser behind me. I already knew what to expect. The policeman asked for my license and registration along with proof of my placard. His condescending tone made him feel as if he has caught me

in the act. Realizing that I am in my rights to park where I have, he tactfully justified his reason for investigating me was specifically due to complaints of impostors using handicap placards. He undoubtedly profiled me because of my age and appearance.

I refuse to embellish the limp I already have, put my headphones on half way to class, or wait until there is no one else around to get out of my car. My disability should not prevent me from going to the college. My disability should not be the concern of people who unfairly judge. I would gladly trade your functional body for my placard and disability so you can fight for the rights of the disabled and, of course, park closer.

Albert Sarinana

Praise for PLA article

The Southwestern Sun article "Unions seek corner lot PLA" (Winter Edition, 2011) was excellent in my view. Seldom with a complicated item such as Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) does a reporter understand, get the facts straight and report them in a fair and objective manner as your Nick Furr did with the very difficult controversy around the SWC Prop "R"

construction bond.

As you know, there has been highlighted attention over the last few years about PLAs in general and Prop G in South Bay in particular. The residents, taxpayers and your readers are entitled to honest and competent reporting which the Sun delivered.

Thanks and keep up the good work.

Ken Seaton-Msemaji