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They're immigrants -- not aliens

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Given the complex nature and polarizing effects of the debate over immigration reform in this country, it may seem petty to split hairs over semantics. However, I respectfully but firmly disagree with the Sun-Times' dehumanizing word choice in the headline "Illegal aliens tied to gangs targeted," published June 19. Gang members or not, 'illegal' immigrants or not, it is important to recognize that these people are just that -- 'people,' not 'aliens.'

My own biases as an immigrant advocate aside, the journalism industry backs my contention with the word "alien." In fact, style guidelines caution, "do not use the phrase illegal alien . . . in copy or in headlines . . . such terms are considered pejorative not only by the people to whom they are applied but also by many people of the same ethnic and national backgrounds who are in the U.S. legally."

While I certainly do not condone the actions of gang members of any immigration status in this country, I cannot stand behind the application of such a disparaging label to any group of human beings.

The overwhelming majority of the 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country spend their days working and providing for their families -- not engaging in gang-related activities -- and the media play an important role in shaping the public's perception of them in a fair and "human" way.

Sylvia Puente

Executive Director

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Cepeda's gotta be kidding!

People who have struggled with weight and have lost more battles than they've won know the risks of being overweight, the pitfalls, the aggravations and the disappointments of being large in today's "thin" society. Columnist Esther Cepeda is fortunate if she's never had to fight that particular battle.

I would suggest to Ms. Cepeda that if she's cold when she's in public places, she contact the appropriate people and let them know she's uncomfortable. Don't blame being too cold in public places on obese people. That's just ridiculous!

Janet L. Mosley,

University Park

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