

OPINION

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Bush to Welfare Recipients: Drop Out of School

BY MATTHEW ROTHCHILD

Lost in the flood of big news stories—Iraq, the financial scandal, Israel and Palestine, fast track—was a little gem from George W. on the subject of welfare reform.

Speaking in Charleston, South Carolina, on July 29, Bush castigated Senate Democrats for trying to take some of the nastier edges off of his welfare bill.

"Under the way they're kind of writing it right now, out of the Senate Finance Committee, some people could spend their entire five years—there's a five-year work requirement—on welfare, going to college," Bush said to applause. "Now, that's

not my view of helping people become independent. And it's certainly not my view of understanding the importance of work and helping people achieve the dignity necessary so they can live a free life, free from government control."

A higher education doesn't help people become independent or achieve dignity?

Bush would rather force poor women into any low-paying job than have them get a college degree.

This is compassionate conservatism from our Education President?

Matthew Rothschild writes for the Progressive Media Project to bring diversity to America's opinion pages

Mediation Figures Wrong

I want to correct several quotes and figures attributed to me in a story entitled "Mediation Program Labeled Too Expensive," which appeared in your July 18 issue.

I was misquoted as follows: "Portland is driving a big, fat, gas-guzzling Cadillac while everyone else is driving Toyotas."

You should know that I did not use the word "fat."

A second mistake is far more serious and has caused some people to question statistical methods used by this office.

Lee Perlman wrote: "Last year, Portland's program cost \$372,000, handled 575 cases and 'successfully' mediated 216 of them. This comes to a cost of about \$1,700 a resolved case, compared to \$500 elsewhere, Lannon said."

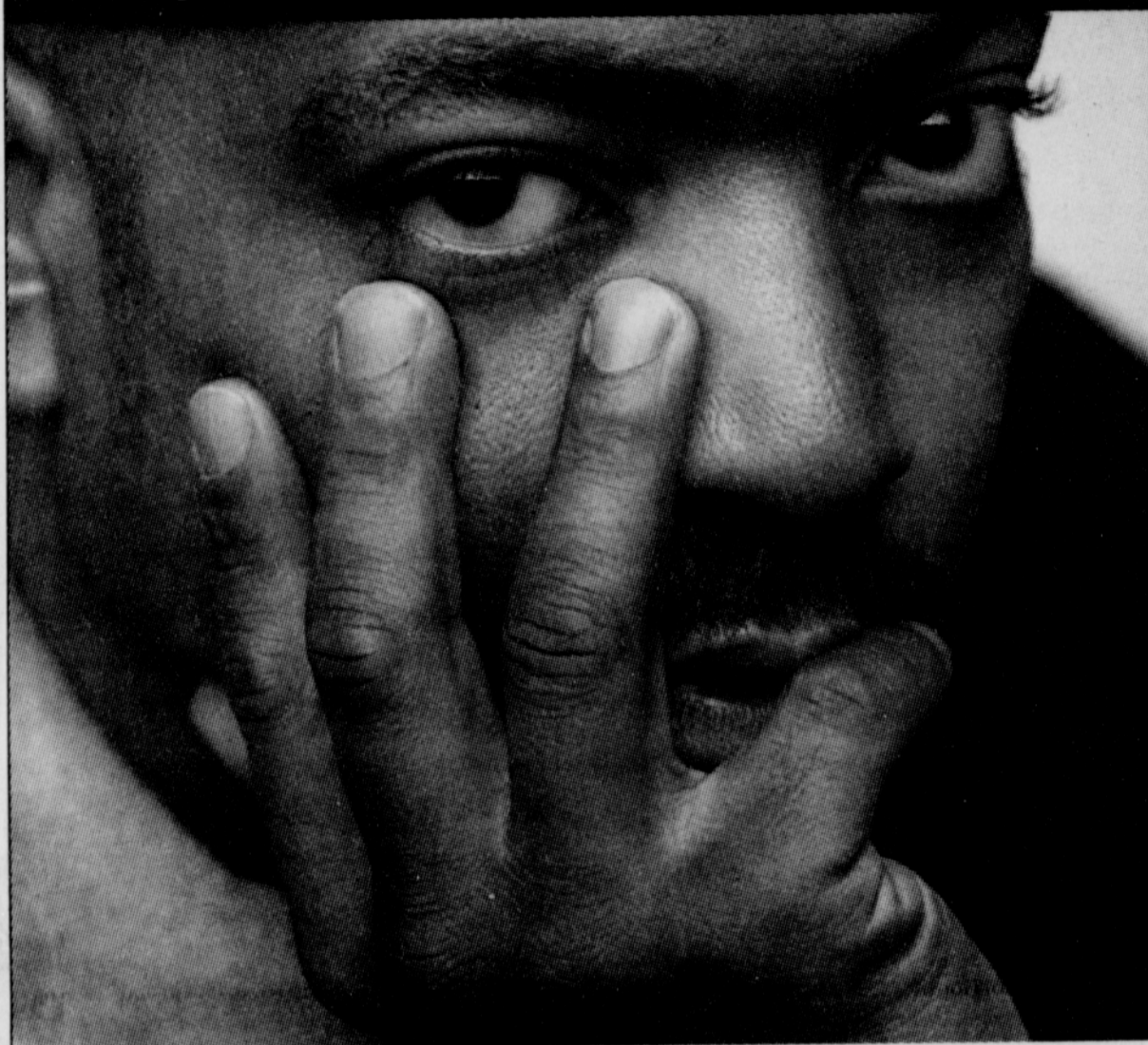
While the first sentence is fine, the second one implies that \$500 is the cost of a "successfully resolved case" in other cities.

I did not give Lee any such statistic, and in fact, took pains to point out how difficult it is to quantify "successful" in different mediation programs. In fact, I carefully cautioned him to simply use "cost per case" rather than "cost per successful case." I also provided him with a printed page of statistics to avoid gross errors like this one. Nowhere on the page I provided him will you find a statistic regarding the average cost per successful case in other programs. This distinction is more than technical.

While the Portland program is indeed considerably more expensive to operate than most other programs in the country, it is certainly not on the order of magnitude suggested by the Mr. Perlman's article.


--Thomas Lannon, Fiscal and Administrative Manager, Office of Neighborhood Involvement

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