

# OPINION

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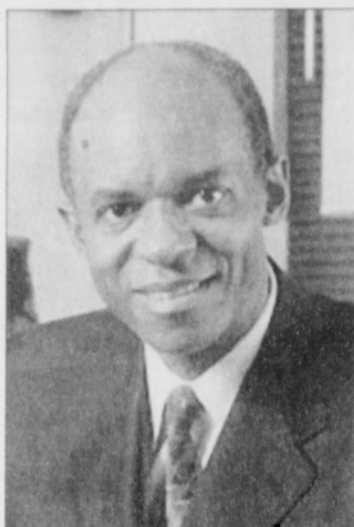
## Privatizing Social Security Will Hurt Everyone

Current system keeps people out of poverty

BY REP. WILLIAM JEFFERSON

A plan to privatize Social Security will hurt everyone. Privatization would take \$1.8 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund in the next decade, endangering the benefits of current retirees and directly cutting benefits by more than 50 percent for future generations.

Unfortunately, African Americans are already behind the curve. African Americans are more likely to earn a modest living during their lifetimes; more likely to have experienced spells of unemployment or underemployment; more likely to retire with less income from private



pensions, assets or personal savings; and, more likely to experience disability or early death.

The current system is tremendously important for African Americans and their families: An estimated 68 percent of disabled

Arguments detailing reasons African Americans should support privatization are racially misleading and use highly deceptive language.

African Americans are kept out of poverty by the current disability benefits; Almost 80 percent of African Americans age 65 and older depend on Social Security for more than 50 percent of their income and more than one-half depend on Social Security for 90 percent of their income.

Without Social Security, the Social Security Administration estimates the poverty rate would more than double.

Deep cuts in guaranteed retirement, survivors, and disability benefits are likely under any plan to privatize Social Security and African American families cannot afford any cuts due to the disparities in income and unemployment.

Arguments detailing reasons African Americans should support privatization are racially misleading and use highly deceptive language. The plans tout the lack

of 'inheritable wealth' as a reason African Americans should support privatization; however, the plans offer no solution to this problem and would cut the guaranteed benefits on which African Americans currently depend.

Proponents also say that Social Security gives African Americans a lower rate of return due to higher mortality rates. This argument fails to address the importance of the comprehensive benefits Social Security offers through survivor and disability benefits.

Simply put, diverting money to fund private accounts completely undermines the survivor and disability benefits. The comprehensive family insurance structure offered in the current Social Security system is particularly important for the African American children who represent 20 per-

cent of all retired worker child beneficiaries, 23 percent of all child survivor beneficiaries, and 21 percent of all disabled worker child recipients.

As the voices of the American people, Congress must focus on devising ways to assist our citizens in asset development that can supplement Social Security's guaranteed foundation of financial support not only for retirement but also for survivor and disability benefits for children and loved ones.

We must explore funding options without using misleading, racial arguments that undercut Social Security's importance as a vital source of income support for generations of African Americans, past and present."

Rep. William Jefferson is a member of Congress from Louisiana.

### Letter to the Editor

#### Opponents of Racism

Thanks for your front page reporting on community groups coming together to protest the actions of the Tualatin Valley Skins. However, your report ignored the contributions of one community group: non-racist punks.

Not all the people protesting against the TVS were pretty, clean people, as both your article and accompanying picture imply. Many of the people out in the rain, standing against racism and bigotry in general, were punks and other ostensible derelicts, some of whom even called themselves "psychos".

It's important to realize that someone can look delinquent but be a decent citizen of the human race.

Thanks again for all you contribute to our community.

M. Casey Condon  
Northeast Portland

## Clinging to a Misguided Policy

BY REV. JESSE L. JACKSON SR.

President Bush is exercising his right to select Condoleezza Rice as his Secretary of State. But the questions and challenges before Rice - and the Bush Administration - go far beyond these perfunctory confirmation hearings.

The foreign policy of the Bush Administration toward Iraq and the Middle East - advocated and defended by Rice - is morally and legally indefensible. The fundamental and primary pretext for the war - the declared "existence" of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the imminent threat posed by Iraq - has now been exposed as misleading and misguided.

The Bush Administration has admitted as much and officially ended the search for WMD and



While the Senate can confirm Ms. Rice, it must not confirm the Bush policy.

sent its investigators home. But while the pretext for war has been exposed as faulty, the Bush Administration and Rice will not admit to any mistakes. They cling to a misguided policy sinking in the sands of Iraq with no end in sight. The Jan. 30 "elections" will only

compound the problems in the region.

The results of the Bush Administration's misguided leadership in Iraq are many: We have lost thousands of lives, spent billions of dollars, and the U.S. is now more isolated in the world

community.

The Senate must challenge President Bush on this matter. We are going in the wrong direction faster and deeper. And while the Senate can confirm Ms. Rice, it must not confirm the Bush policy.

I commend California Sen. Barbara Boxer for vigorously questioning Condoleezza Rice and for her pursuit of answers that were not forthcoming. Senator Boxer refused to go along with the script in this perfunctory showcase (the Senate hearing), and she should be commended for doing so. The struggle for peace in Iraq and the Middle East will continue.

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson Sr. is a longtime civil rights activist and founder and president of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

## Freedom to Build on Dreams

Break the bondage of poverty around the world

BY U.S. REP. AL GREEN

This week, America watched as President George W. Bush was sworn in for a second term. We salute him.

In his inaugural speech, the president spoke passionately about the need to spread democracy and freedom abroad. He said, "the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world."

We could not agree more -

for we in this country have fought to plant the seeds of opportunity that reaped an invigorating harvest of freedom. Sadly, that is not shared by all.

We want to work with both the president and our colleagues in Congress to ensure that the fruits of freedom and liberty are realized at home and the world over. To this end, we want to ensure that the millions suffering and dying in the Congo and Sudan at the hands of genocide realize their freedom.

We want to ensure that the 150,000 African children who die each month can live free of malaria.

At home, we want to ensure that the bondage of poverty is broken - so that all Americans

realize: livable wages for their families, higher education for themselves and good healthcare for their children.

Recently, while traveling the tsunami stricken region of Asia, I was awestricken by the resilient and optimistic spirit of the Sri Lankan people in the mist of such vast devastation. There, I saw a poster that read, "Every man is the architect of his own fortune."

We, the Congressional Black Caucus, want to make real this ideal and will remain vigilant in our fight to address the needed policy challenges to do so.

We will work to ensure that people here and across the globe have the freedom, liberty and



U.S. Rep. Al Green

opportunity to build upon their dreams such that every person can truly be the architect of his own fortune.

Congressman Al Green is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. He represents Houston and the 9th Congressional District of Texas.

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