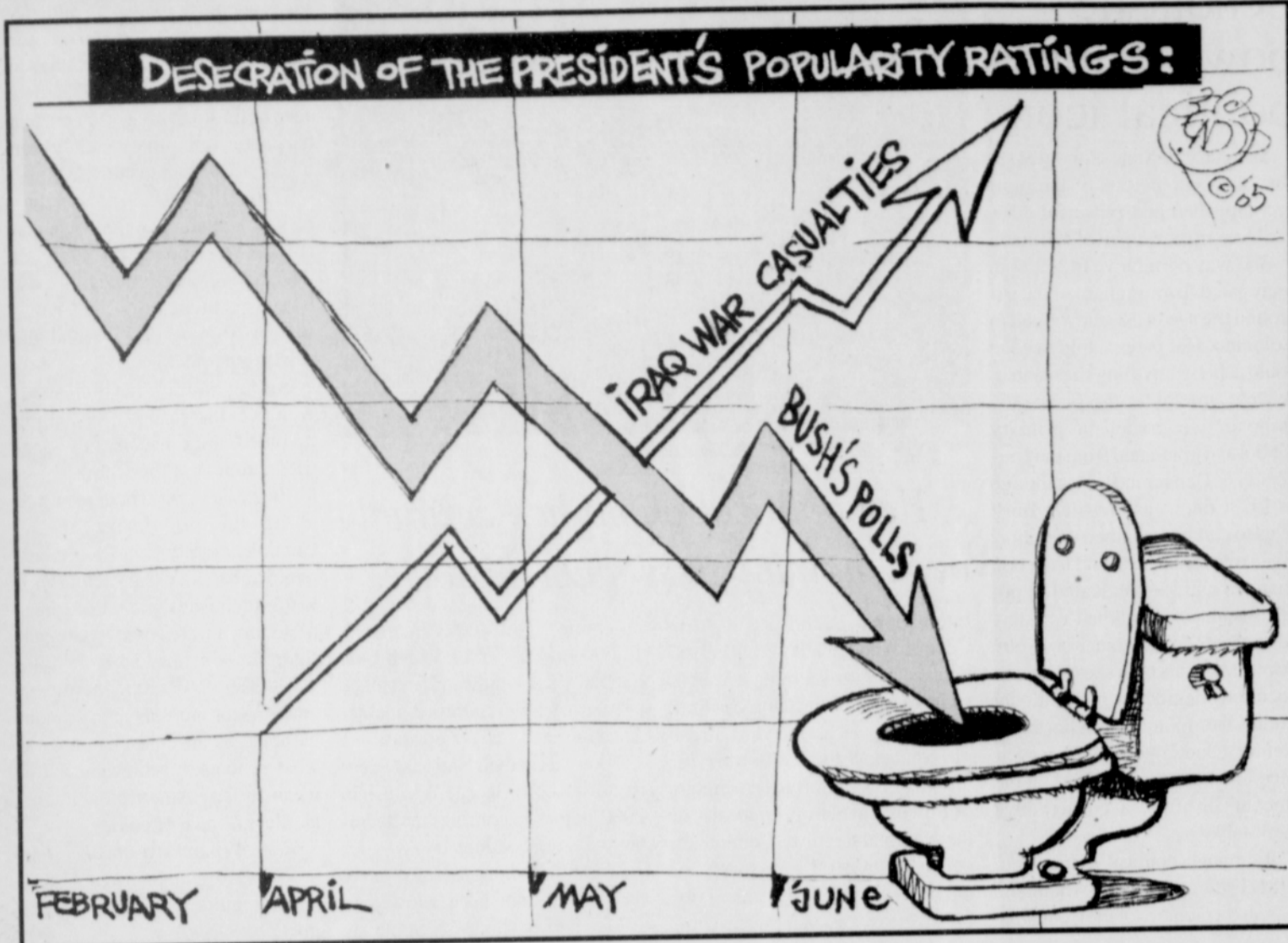


# OPINION

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## Mexican Officials Must Come Clean on Racism

BY EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON



The Mexican government's sale of the racially offensive cartoon character Memín Pinguín as a commemorative stamp is an outrageous sign that top Mexican officials still refuse to deal with the country's racism.

about two percent of the population, and that's only a rough estimate. The Mexican government propagates the myth of a color-blind society and has never designated any racial categories. There is no formal ban in Mexico on employment discrimination.

Racism goes much deeper in the country. Even while Mexican writers and politicians rail in articles against American racism, many Mexicans are quick to boast of differences in skin color among their own family members.

Then there's Pinguín. An entire generation of Mexican school children (and many adults) has grown up delighting in the zany frolics of the popular comic hero. Pinguín has grossly distorted monkey like features, a baldhead and big ears. His mother is a grotesquely fat, bandanna-wearing mammy. The black mammy domestic was the stock racist image of black women in countless 1930s and 1940s American movies. But Pinguín's mother isn't a domestic. She routinely wears her bandanna around their house, and it's a ramshackle house in a poor barrio.

A few years ago, a Mexican-American friend made me acutely aware of the rigid race differences in the country. When I told him that I'd be traveling extensively in Mexico, he urged me to pay close attention to the workers doing the hardest and dirtiest work in restaurants and hotels, and who the beggars and peddlers on the streets were.

The Pinguín series ran in Mexican newspapers and magazines during the 1960s and 1970s. It was created by Sixto Valencia Burgos, one of Mexico's top creative artists.

They were overwhelmingly dark, and in most cases with pronounced Indian or African features. Many Mexicans refer to dark skinned persons, both Mexican, and non-Mexican, as negritos or little black people. This is not seen as racially offensive, but rather as a term of affection, even endearment. Ads have featured blacks in Afros, black face, and distorted features. The most popular screen stars in film and on TV, and the models featured on magazines and billboards, are white or fair skinned with sandy or blond hair. That's the standard of beauty, culture, and sophistication that's held up as the ultimate standard to emulate, and that standard is unabashedly commercialized, and peddled as top commodities in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The Pinguín series is so popular that decades after Burgos discontinued the series, fan clubs still sprout up on both sides of the border. The comic books are still wildly popular collector's items in Mexico, and other parts of Latin America, and continue to be much discussed and much read.

Mexican President Vicente Fox and most of Mexico's past presidents, top officials, business leaders, educators, and government leaders, for instance, are light skinned or Castellan Spanish. They routinely boast that they can trace their bloodlines to Spain.

Gilberto Rincon, President of the National Council to Prevent Discrimination, noted that a report on racism in Mexico was released prior to Fox's racially loaded quip in May about blacks and immigrant jobs. That was a small sign that top Mexican officials grudgingly realize that race does matter in Mexican affairs. Now Mexican officials can take another small step and dump the Pinguín stamp. Then they can take the bigger step and fully come clean on the country's racism and do something about it.

Blacks in Mexico suffer from those attitudes. They make up

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is a columnist for BlackNews.com, an author and political analyst.

## Congress Should Hold Hearings on Slave Reparations

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

On July 7, a federal judge tossed out a lawsuit brought against corporations, including R.J. Reynolds Tobacco and Loews, that profited from slave labor, saying Congress or the president should decide the 'political' issue. While the judge's decision dealt a disappointing blow to the reparations movement, his insistence that this is a topic the executive and legislative branches should explore is justifiable. From the 1450 to 1865, over 4-million Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the United States; this free labor allowed the United States to build its wealth and position itself as the most prosperous nation in the free world. To begin to heal the deep racial wounds that continue to persist in this country, the U.S. government must first officially acknowledge that, without slavery, America - and many wealthy whites - would not be in the position they are in today.

'studding' of black males caused a breakdown in the black family. Most of our people were denied education - to learn to read was to die. And, as slave women began to bear the master's children, color issues, introduced by whites to separate us, further divided an already weakened society. Unfortunately, when slavery ended, the suffering con-

sent H.R. 40, Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, to Congress. Conyers has re-introduced H.R. 40 every year since and says he will continue to do so until it becomes law. The bill would require the American government to establish a commission to study slavery and the discrimination

United States. The extent to which federal and state laws supported the institution of slavery and years of racial and economic oppression would also be studied.



*With a few notable exceptions ... the reparations movement in general has been met with resistance from the powers that be.*

While the U.S. economy flourished during the slave era, African culture and communities did not; languages and customs were lost and families were destroyed. The

continued. To this day, millions of African-Americans continue to feel the effects of slavery, in what is clinically known as Post Traumatic Slavery Disorder. Psychologists point to the disparate numbers of blacks in prison, addicted to drugs and living in broken homes as evidence of the damage slavery has caused in our communities.

blacks faced once freed and examine the impact slavery and American apartheid has on modern-day African Americans. The commission would then make recommendations to Congress on appropriate solutions to addressing these issues. Additionally, the commission would look into the way slaves were captured, transported and sold, as well as explore how they were treated once they reached the

United States. The extent to which federal and state laws supported the institution of slavery and years of racial and economic oppression would also be studied.

As a result of discussions about the Holocaust, Japanese internment camps and the devastation colonists inflicted upon Native Americans, Jews and the Japanese have received reparations and Native Americans have received land. A good start for African-Americans would be congressional hearings to determine what modern day corporations directly benefited from the slave trade and how they can begin to repay for the sins of slavery.

Judge Greg Mathis is Chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a National Board Member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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## Tax Breaks for Millionaires Shameful

War climate wrong time for cuts

BY CHUCK COLLINS

Was there ever a time when congressional tax cuts for multi-millionaires were more unseemly? Recently, President George W. Bush spoke about the war in Iraq on national TV, asking Americans to be patient and to bear in silence the heavy sacrifice of American soldiers' lost lives. That number is getting close to 2,000.

\$140 billion in tax breaks.

Now, the Senate is preparing to vote on repealing the estate tax, a tax that is only paid by multi-millionaires and billionaires, fewer than 1.5 percent of all estates each year.

Meanwhile, almost 60 percent of Americans disapprove of the way Bush has handled the war. Indeed in 2001, when terrorism czar Richard Clark was trying to get high-ranking

If there ever was a time to limit tax breaks for multi-millionaires, this should be it. The cost of our military involvements is growing, and we need to make additional investments to protect homeland security. Meanwhile, our budget

Today the lives of U.S. citizens are again at risk as they face prolonged service in Iraq. Others are feeling the pain of recession, losing jobs, savings and security.

State and local governments, facing the worst budget cuts since World War II, have gutted crucial community services.

Rather than facing these problems and appropriating the money to resolve them, congressional leaders are using the fog of war to pass another tax cut for the wealthy that would exacerbate long-term budget shortfalls at all

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The body bend and move. When the nerves are finally as healthy as they should be, the body will reflect that by being flexible and well rested. If you have had problems with muscle stiffness, trouble resting or if waking up gives you the feeling that you've been through World War II, it's a great time to wake up to the feeling of Chiropractic! Call today for an appointment. Isn't it time you stepped up to Chiropractic?

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*The cost of our military involvements is growing, and we need to make additional investments to protect homeland security.*

Bush administrators to meet about the al-Qaida threat, the administration was mounting a campaign to pass tax cuts for multi-millionaires. In June of that year, it succeeded in achieving cuts of \$1.35 trillion over 10 years. The major beneficiaries had the highest incomes in the land.

surplus has disappeared, shifting from a 2001 estimate of \$5.6 trillion in the black to \$5.2 trillion in the red today.

levels. While the public's attention is riveted on the war in Iraq, Congress shirks its duty to find money to pay for it, and instead moves to repeal the estate tax, our most progressive tax.

In 2003, as our troops were marching on Baghdad, Bush and Congress were pushing for \$330 billion in additional tax cuts, 57 percent of which went to households with incomes of over \$337,000. Last summer, as the death toll for American troops was passing 1,000, the administration was fighting hard to give corporate donors an additional

Bush has asked for and gotten close to \$200 billion in emergency war funds, and it is rumored he will ask for more. Where is this money to come from?

There is only one word for advocating such an inequality of sacrifice: Shame.

It is unprecedented in U.S. history to push for tax cuts to the wealthy in a time of war. For over 200 years, estate and inheritance taxation has been linked with military mobilizations.

Chuck Collins, co-author with Bill Gates, Sr. of "Wealth and Our Commonwealth: Why America Should Tax Accumulated Fortunes," is senior fellow at United for a Fair Economy.