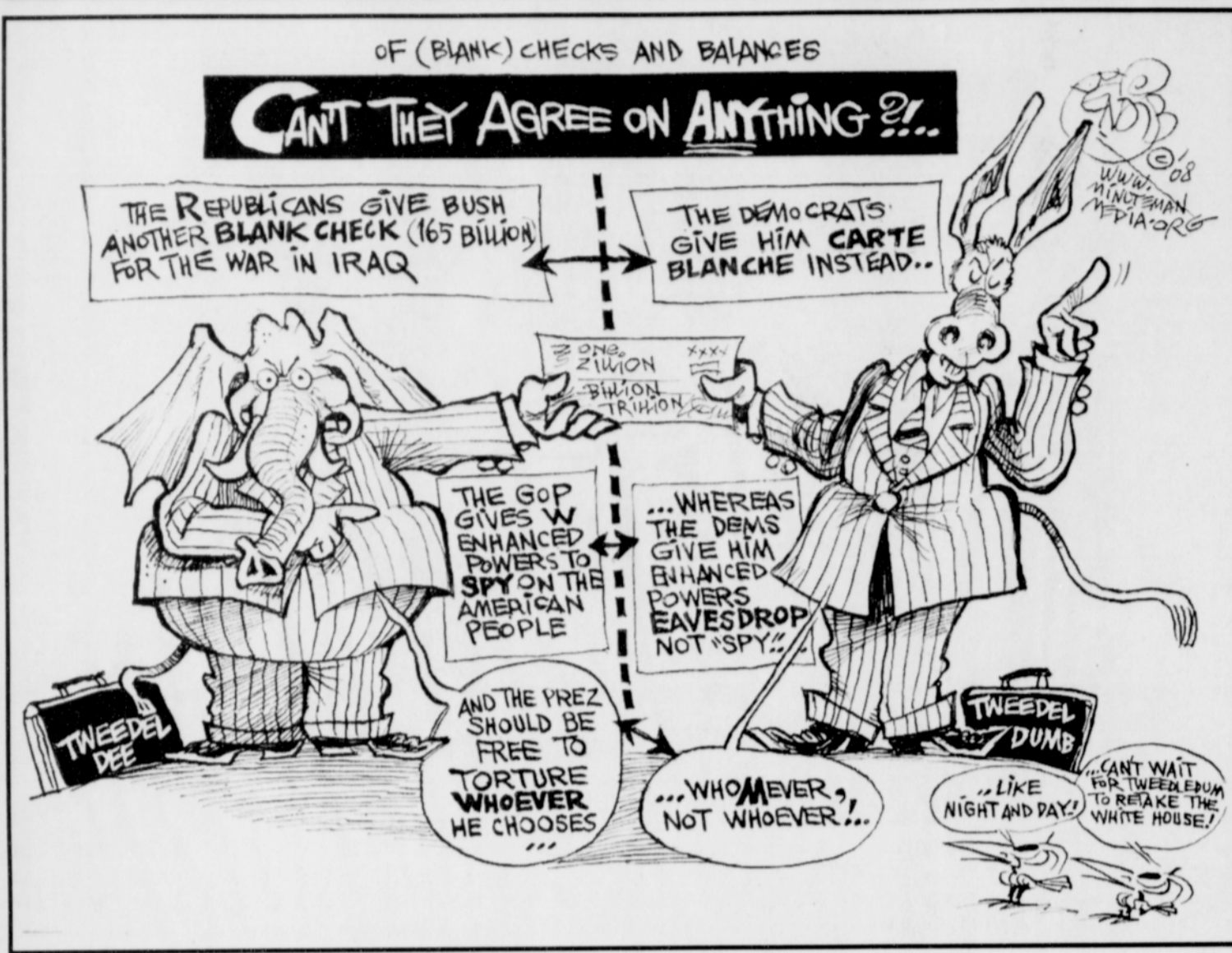


# OPINION

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## It's Summertime and the Living ain't Easy

Economy is weak and growing weaker

BY MARC MORIAL

The Bureau of Labor statistics has now confirmed what we have known for a long time - the American economy is weak and growing weaker. So, we are faced with the fact that more than 100,000 Americans have lost their jobs - 80,000 in March and another 20,000 in April. In fact, this year has seen a steady erosion of employment with a total loss of a quarter of a million jobs since January. By any measure, this is bad news for our economy, but it's even worse news for African Americans.



continued rise in the cost of staples like gas and food is also a huge obstacle to economic stability and will force most low- and moderate-income families to use their government rebate checks simply to keep their heads above water.

The National Urban League recommends an infrastructure stimulus package focused on job creation to improve the lives of struggling Americans across the country.

And with African American teens experiencing a devastating unemployment rate of nearly 30 percent, we are in dire need of the immediate restoration of the Summer Youth Jobs Program.

As the statistics clearly show, employment for a growing number of Americans is still a "dream deferred." As such, we must continue to push for federal policies designed to strengthen our economy and put more Americans back to work.

Black unemployment, now at 9 percent, continues nearly to double the current 5.1 percent rate for Whites. Clearly, African Americans are being hit hardest during this economic downturn.

The overall impact is that many people are not able to secure the income needed to support their families and keep them healthy. The

*Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.*

## Reclaiming Our Youth *Fighting the pull of the streets*

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Last week, Rainbow PUSH launched its national "Reclaim Our Youth" campaign at its annual conference in Chicago.



in short supply and teachers aren't familiar with the material they teach.

Teachers complain that students lack interest and commitment. They say some parents

likely to live below the poverty level as high school graduates. They also earn \$35,000 less per year than college graduates - over the course of a lifetime, this adds up to about \$1 million.

The job market is competitive

six point pledge promising to take their kids to school, meet teachers, exchange phone numbers, turn off the television for three hours a night and with their children, join a spiritual institution.

This last step is critical: Communities of color are faced with so many challenges; our faith is what will help us overcome. Involved parents motivate students, making their path to academic success that much easier.

There is proof that, with a somewhat level playing field and committed adults in their corner, our children do more than achieve, they excel.

Rainbow PUSH is working to create such a playing field, one that combines pressure on lawmakers to develop education focused public policy with a network of parents, caregivers and students who acknowledge just how important their commitment is to overall success.

*Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.*

*By working together, students, parents, teachers and lawmakers can improve our education system and save our children.*

are ghosts, not attending school function and showing little to no interest in their child's education. School administrators say they are doing the best they can with the limited resources available to them.

It is no wonder the drop out rate for black and Latino students is so high: About half finish high school, compared with one third of white students. Drop outs are twice as

and positions for those with only a high school education are rare; without one, an individual will struggle. This is a problem that affects us all. By working together, students, parents, teachers and lawmakers can improve our education system and save our children.

The 150 superintendents who support PUSH's campaign have agreed to bring together parents in their districts to ask them to sign a

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## An Oil Conspiracy?

Let's consider the evidence

BY DONALD KAUL

As we all know, gas prices have taken off like a Jupiter rocket and people are mad as hell about it. They're thrashing around, looking for somebody to blame.

Last month, Congress held hearings on the matter, the 40th they've held this year, trying to find out what is causing these ungodly prices.

They haven't found out yet (it would take Congress five hearings to learn how to find its hip pocket with its left hand) but they're getting closer.

The main suspect these days seems to be speculation. As John (He Who Speaks With Straight Tongue) McCain said recently: "Investigation is underway to root out this kind of reckless wagering, unrelated to any kind of productive commerce, because it can distort the market, drive prices beyond rational limits, and put the investments and pensions of millions of Americans at risk."

If you don't understand that, don't worry about it. I don't either.

supposed to accept that Lee Harvey Oswald was a lone assassin acting alone and to do it without giggling. I know that. But I'm an old-fashioned kind of guy and when I see something that looks like a conspiracy, walks like a conspiracy and quacks like a conspiracy I say "Damn the torpedoes, it's a conspiracy."

Let us consider the evidence: Mr. Bush (whose family fortune was made in munitions and oil) took us to war in Iraq on a series of premises that had the tensile strength of wet toilet paper.

We went to war not because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or Saddam was giving sanctuary to terrorists or even because he was a bad, bad man (although he was).

We went to war because President Bush and the oil gang wanted to install a puppet regime to ensure that Iraqi oil flowed to favored oil companies.

Mr. Bush's White House then proceeded to botch the war but the conflict did help drive up oil prices resulting in record profits for the oil companies. In the meantime, Vice-President Dick Cheney's old company, Halliburton, made a ton of money helping to botch up the war.

*We went to war because President Bush and the oil gang wanted to install a puppet regime to ensure that Iraqi oil flowed to favored oil companies.*

It's not English. It's not Spanish. It's not even Esperanto. It is Washingtonese, a language used by politicians to disguise the fact that they don't have anything to say.

Personally---defender of Free Enterprise that I am---I've always thought speculation was the purest form of capitalism. You buy a commodity or piece of land or whatever in the expectation it will rise in price. If it does, you sell it and make a lot of money. If it doesn't you say "Waiter, check please."

So I really don't think that speculation is the reason your eyes fill with tears every time you have to fill your tank.

But I do have a theory. I think it's the fruit of a vast conspiracy set in motion by the oil companies in collusion with high-ranking members of the Bush administration, including the two rankst. I mention no names.

I know it's not fashionable to believe in conspiracies. We're all

So everybody was happy (with the exception of the families of the young people who were actually fighting the war, not a large cohort).

Meanwhile, back at home, the administration was making every effort to thwart efforts to reduce consumption of oil, from pooh-poohing the threat of global warming to refusing to consider an EPA report that suggested raising mileage standards for autos would be good for the economy.

Oil prices kept rising until the time was right for proposing more oil-gang assaults on the environment---offshore drilling, tapping into Alaska's Arctic Wildlife Refuge. And then, last month, Iraq leaders tentatively OK'd no-bid oil contracts with the Western oil giants: ExxonMobil, Shell, Total and BP.

Hark! Was that a quack I just heard?

Me thinks it was.  
*Don Kaul is a Washington correspondent.*