

## OPINION

## Family Matters for Gov. Martinez

Wrong-headed logic would take away her citizenship

BY LEE A. DANIELS

New Mexico's new Republican Governor Susana Martinez has drawn significant national attention not only because she's the first Latina to hold that high office in the U.S., but also because she's pushed a hard-line against undocumented immigrants—most of whom, of course, are from Latin America.

She has opposed passage of the DREAM ACT, and has made repeal of a New Mexico law allowing undocumented immigrants to get state drivers licenses (the law also requires that they register their cars and buy automobile insurance) a centerpiece of her political platform.

Now, Martinez has drawn even more attention for another, family-related reason: In the 1920s her paternal grandfa-

ther, and perhaps her paternal grandmother as well, crossed the Mexican border into the United States without the proper papers. In other words, at least one of them was an undocumented immigrant.

The Governor tersely acknowledged her complicated family heritage last week after news reports of the possibility had been swirling for weeks, and local news organization's check of the 1930 census did not find her grandfather's name listed.

"I know they arrived without documents, especially my father's father," the Governor said in an interview in Spanish with the Albuquerque affiliate of Univision.

She later issued a statement that her paternal grandfather had abandoned her family when his father was a year old, and that she has never met him.

"Frankly, I am an American citizen," she later said to another television station's reporters. "I have been elected governor and it is my job to do New Mexicans' jobs ... to do what they're asking me to do ... I'm fighting to repeal a law that makes

people in our state unsafe ... that makes our country unsafe."

There is no question that Martinez, who was born in El Paso, Texas, has lived her entire life in America; graduated from the University of Texas and the University of Oklahoma law school; served three terms as a popular, elected

though born in the U.S., are, in their parlance, themselves "illegal" and not eligible for any of the benefits of American citizenship. Applying that wrong-headed logic to the case of Susana Martinez would mean that she has never been an American citizen.

But Susana Martinez has always been



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-- New Mexico's Governor Susana Martinez

prosecutor in her adopted state; won the popular vote for the Governor's office; and has already been mentioned as a rising Republican star.

And yet, according to the stance of the conservative immigration hardliners who opposed the DREAM Act and who want to repeal the "birthright citizenship" provision of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the children (and grandchildren) of undocumented immigrants,

an American citizen, and she has used her matriculation at two of the finest public universities in America to forge an already estimable career in public service. Isn't it fortunate, for her and the citizens of New Mexico, that in her case at least, some of the immigration policies she advocates are not the law of the land?

Lee A. Daniels is Director of Communications for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

## Economy Takes Its Toll: America gets poorer

Poverty should be a priority for government

BY GREG MATHIS

We don't need a study or news report to tell us the economy has taken its toll on the average American. Indeed, many people need only to look at their dwindling bank accounts to know that the country isn't any better off financially than it was two years ago.

News reports and studies do, however, help paint a broader picture so that we may all understand just how deep this recession goes. The most recent report on Americans and their income, released by the Census Bureau, reveals that the number of people in this country living in poverty has reached its highest level in 51 years.

One in six Americans, over 14-percent of the population, are currently living below the federal poverty level. Additionally, over 20-percent of the nation's children live in poverty and, in what may be a surprise to many, much of that is

being fueled by an increase in poverty among white Americans.

These numbers tell us that poverty can no longer be dismissed as an inner city or rural problem: it affects Americans in cities and suburbs, whether they be black, white or Latino. Those who were, before the recession, struggling financially are no better off than they were before, and the middle class is sliding into poverty with them.

The data stands in sharp contrast to a report that revealed 25 of the nation's top companies paid more to their chief executives than they did in federal taxes: Verizon paid its top dog Ivan Seidenberg \$18.1 million and received a \$705 million refund; eBay's CEO John Donahoe earned \$12.4 million and the company banked a \$131 million tax refund.

Multi-billion dollar corporations are using federal loopholes to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. To add insult to injury, the refunds they receive are reinvested back into their companies instead of being used to create jobs and shore up the economy.

This isn't the first time corporations have appeared to win out over average

Americans: the federal government bailed out the banking and auto industries, costing taxpayers several hundreds of billions of dollars.

With so much money spent, it is not unreasonable to expect these industries would have created more jobs or community initiatives. Instead, taxpayers stand to lose over \$14 billion of the money spent and, on a personal level, have very little to show for it.

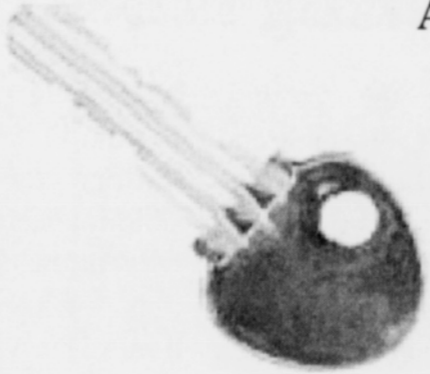
Saving entire industries from financial ruin was a necessary step. That point cannot be argued. But the federal government must also work to save families from financial ruin.

Pulling families out of poverty must be a key priority of our government.

Judge Mathis is a longtime advocate for equal justice. His life story of a street youth who rose from jail to judge has provided hope to millions.




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