

OPINION

Taxes on the Rich and Everyone Else

Fairness lost with loopholes

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Even though Republican Presidential candidate Mitt Romney is hesitant to release his tax returns, he is on record saying that he is probably at a 15-percent tax rate.

This means that Romney, who has a net worth of over \$200 million, has a lower tax rate than most middle-class American workers. By comparison, Presi-



dent Obama had a 26-percent tax rate in 2010; the income that was taxed included his book royalties, which undoubtedly totaled more than one million dollars.

Romney's wealth and his comparably low tax rate highlight a very important issue: income equality.

In the U.S., income inequality, that is the gap between the rich and everyone else, has grown steadily for decades. With the recession and subsequent job losses moving more and more

people from the middle class into poverty, the discussions over wealth and taxes have taken on an entirely different -sometimes-hostile - tone.

It is unconscionable to think that CEOs of major companies can earn tens of millions of dollars each year, while their employees, who work long hours to generate the profit that would net such a large salary, earn much less and probably pay a higher tax rate.

Warren Buffet, one of the richest men in the world, shockingly revealed that his own sec-

retary pays a higher tax rate than he does. Like most of us, Buffet doesn't see how this could possibly be fair.

Romney is so rich that he doesn't actually work. Instead, he lives off the interest off his investments.

These investments are taxed at a much lower rate than the standard 35-percent that is normally levied onto the salaries of wealthy Americans. Romney is using a special provision to ensure less of his money goes into government coffers; a practice that many think is unfair.

Changes have to be made in our nation's tax code so that everyone is paying taxes comparable to their income.

No one is asking for a socialist system where everyone makes the same. However, it is only fair that the tax burden on lower and middle-income workers is eased a bit and loopholes for the super-rich be eliminated.

Judge Greg 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.

Red Tails Movie Shoots Down Stereotypes

The power to overcome any barrier

BY MARC H. MORIAL

I attended the New York premiere of a new George Lucas film about the heroic exploits of the all-black fighter pilot squadron that helped America defeat the Nazi's in World War II. I am not in the business of promoting new movies, but there are several reasons that compel me to highlight the release of "Red Tails," the story of the pioneering Tuskegee Airmen.



First, the movie has a virtually all-black cast with black male heroes, a rare depiction by Hollywood. Cuba Gooding Jr., Terrence Howard, Nate Parker, David Oyelowo, and NE-YO all play key roles.

Lucas has said that the black theme and black cast were major reasons Hollywood repeatedly declined to back the film. He struggled 23-years to get major studio financing.

"I showed it to all of them," he said, "and they said no, we don't know how to market a movie like this." He wound up pouring \$58 million of his own money

into the project.

The second reason I am excited about this film is that recent comments by political candidates denigrating the African American community and reviving out-

lowed a few days later by a comment from Newt Gingrich that "African Americans should demand pay checks not food stamps." Gingrich has called Barack Obama "The best food

United States military. They were trained at Tuskegee Institute, now Tuskegee University in Alabama. Despite discrimination during World War II, these brilliant airmen fought

Lucas teamed with black co-executive producer, Charles Floyd Johnson, and black director Anthony Hemingway to create a film they all hope will inspire a new generation of African-American youth.

The message of the movie, and the lesson of the Tuskegee Airmen, is clear: We have the power to overcome any barrier to serve our nation and achieve our dreams.

One movie won't solve the problem, but we think it's an important step in the right direction.

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

"We hope what youngsters get out of the story is that under some dire circumstances we prevailed. We performed successfully and we opened doors that they don't have to fight to."

-- Col. Charles McGee, "Red Tails" technical consultant and surviving member of the Tuskegee Airmen.

dated stereotypes, make it more important than ever to spotlight the historic contributions and public service of black Americans.

In just the last few weeks, two presidential candidates, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich, have perpetuated false and destructive racial stereotypes in desperate attempts to score political points.

In a discussion of social assistance programs, Santorum said he doesn't want to "make black people's lives better by giving them someone else's money." Santorum's appalling comment implied that people of color are a drain on resources mainly provided by whites, even though about 70 percent of food stamp recipients are white.

Santorum's statement was fol-

lowed a few days later by a comment from Newt Gingrich that "African Americans should demand pay checks not food stamps." Gingrich has called Barack Obama "The best food

stamp president in American history."

We are outraged by the comments of both candidates and denounced them in separate statements. The fact is, social safety net programs serve families in dire circumstances from all walks of life. Many of those who now find themselves in need, whatever their ethnic background, are the very people who have paid into these programs and made sacrifices to support their families and our nation throughout their working lives.

Which brings me back to the Tuskegee Airmen.

In the 1940s, before our armed forces were integrated, the Tuskegee Airmen became the first black aviators in the

fascism abroad and returned to fight racism back home.

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