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Opinion

The Congressional Black Caucus Needs to Get to Work on the Western Sahara

The transition towards a new Congress is underway. Democrats are beginning to assume leadership positions as a result of their gaining a House majority. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) should now have many issues to bring forward and one of them needs to be the Western Sahara.

Once upon a time the CBC was one of the most significant so-called mainstream players in the realm of US foreign policy. In the 1970s-1980s the CBC was central to work against white minority rule in Southern Africa. Some of its members also pushed the envelope on the US blockade of Cuba. Yet, over the years the voice of the CBC on US foreign policy has become far more distant. Yes, they have paid attention to matters such as US trade policy with Africa, but they have shied away from addressing conflicts in Africa, let alone other major international issues.

The question of the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony illegally occupied by the Moroccan government, is one such conflict site that the CBC has spent precious little time addressing. It is not that they don't care, at least from



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The Global African

what I can tell. Former Congressman John Conyers, for instance, was the co-chair of a Congressional committee on the Western Sahara. Yet, what has been missing is the passion and engagement that should be associated with resolving Africa's last remaining colonial question.

The Western Sahara is not a matter on the tip of everyone's tongue. In part because there has been a long-term truce between the Moroccan occupation forces and the national liberation movement known as POLISARIO, Morocco's litany of human rights abuses and its denial of national self-determination to the Sahrawi population rarely gets into the headlines. Yet the potential for regional destabilization is ever present particularly as Morocco ignores United Nations and African Union calls for the respect of national self-determination.

Quite obviously, the conflict in the Western Sahara is an inner-African struggle. This colonialism is carried out by one African country against another, rather than a struggle against European

powers.

The CBC can take an active role. It needs to put the pressure on the USA to pull back from its nearly unqualified support for the Moroccan monarchy and its illegal occupation of the Western Sahara. This can begin by the CBC making the Western Sahara a very public issue and showing the world the manner in which the Moroccan government is permitting the people of the Western Sahara to be robbed by foreign corporations in search of cheap natural resources.

The CBC truly needs its own foreign policy platform within which the Western Sahara should play a prominent role.

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colonialism. Nevertheless, it represents a struggle over the future of Africa not only because it may explode once again but because it calls into question the terms under which peace and justice can truly emerge on a continent divided as it has been by boundaries originally estab-

The White-Washing of Santa Claus

For starters (spoiler alert) Santa Claus is an imaginary character — not real. The jolly guy in the goofy red suit is an American icon of popular culture. Although portrayed as magical, he's mythical. The Santa story is a fabled fairy-tale — not true. A lavish legendary yarn. The roly-poly male with the white beard is a fictional character. Flying reindeer, a toy manufacturing center at the North Pole, and hardworking elves — not real. And Mrs. Claus is imaginary as well.

Santa is modeled after St. Nick, a real man, but what was the color of the bishop's skin — and does it matter? Saint Nicholas of Mira, fourth-century Christian saint, was a breathing and sneezing person. Santa Claus is not. Santa Claus is also known as Kris Kringle and Father Christmas. Because Santa is a myth, he can be made into whatever race or ethnicity his followers want him to be.

Does Santa only speak the English language? How does he communicate when he drops off toys to children in other countries? Is there a translator at the mall?

And Santa doesn't claim a



Melissa Martin, Ph.D.

Guest Columnist

religion. Do Americans assume he's Christian? And if so, is Santa Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Mormon, non-denominational, or other?

“Because Santa is a myth, he can be made into whatever race or ethnicity his followers want him to be

Aisha Harris penned a 2013 article on Slate about growing up Black in a world with a White Santa Claus. Harris writes, “Seeing two different Santas was bewildering. Eventually I asked my father what Santa really looked like. Was he brown, like us? Or

was he really a white guy? My father replied that Santa was every color. Whatever house he visited, jolly old St. Nicholas magically turned into the likeness of the family that lived there.”

Let's revisit the landmark 1954 civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Researchers questioned small children using a Black doll and a white doll to measure perceptions about race. The tool measured attitudes about what color has to do with being (“pretty” or “good”) or (“ugly” or “bad”). The “Doll Test” was cited by the Supreme Court in support of its conclusion that segregation harmed the psyches of Black children. And Anti-black racism is internalized by young Black children.

Former Fox anchor Megyn Kelly, Rush Limbaugh, and Bill O'Reilly (all Caucasian) spoke out to proclaim and defend a traditional White-skinned Santa. Folks, Santa is not a real person. And he's neither conservative nor liberal — Santa doesn't vote.

Why is there racial controversy over the color of a fictional character's skin? Just because it's a long-told traditional tale does not mean San-

ta real.

My list of solutions:

1. Make Santa's skin the colors of the rainbow,
2. Stop lying to kids about Santa being real and do away with him,
3. Be inclusive and respectful of an African American Santa, a Hispanic Santa, an Asian Santa, a Native American Santa, a multi-racial Santa, an African Santa or a Santa Claus of any color, race, ethnicity, culture.

White families can still visit their White Santa at the mall; however, they need to zip their lips when families of other skin colors choose to visit with their Santa of color.

And stop telling White children that Santa is only white-skinned. Santa can be any color of skin because Santa is not a real person. And Santa can represent all human beings.

Racism in our celebration of the Christmas holiday needs to end in the USA and in other countries.

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