

Economics Is Giving Voodoo a Bad Name

To the Editor:

"Voodoo Bankers," "Voodoo Voters," "Voodoo Stamps" say the headlines on the Op-Ed page (Sept. 13). "Voodoo" has always been used to connote something malevolent or primitive; the reader immediately understands the inherent symbolism.

You might be interested to know the word "voodoo" is derived from the African word *vu-DU*. It is from the Fon people of Dahomey (now Benin) and means spirit, or family of spirits. People are said to "serve" the spirits, or to practice *vu-du* — one of the world's oldest religions. When the slave trade brought the African religion to Haiti and other parts of the New World, the religion was forced underground and thought to be something evil by the white-skinned plantation owners, who were frightened by whatever came out of Africa.

In reality, *vu-du* (or "voodoo" as it came to be called) was not something frightening at all. Rather it is quite a beautiful religion, based on a pantheon of deities, ancestor worship and elaborate ceremonies. Besides being practiced in Africa and the islands of the Caribbean Sea, it is practiced today by thousands of New Yorkers



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(and other Americans), most of whom are of African descent.

It is not the word "voodoo" that should be applied to bankers, economics and other matters. For if the word (and the religion) were truly understood, it would be seen that these economic policies are giving "voodoo" a bad name, not the other way around.

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