

# Keyes tosses hat into GOP Presidency

WASHINGTON (AP) - Alan Keyes, a Republican whose two previous runs for president ended in failure, is making a third try for the White House. The Maryland conservative announced on his website that he filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission on Friday to make his candidacy official. He joins a crowded Republican field of nine candidates.

Keyes, a former State Department official under President Reagan, made unsuccessful presidential runs in 1996 and 2000. He also has been a Senate



Constitutional scholar Alan Keyes announces on his website that he filed paperwork with the FEC.

candidate from Maryland, and, in 2004, he suffered a 43-percentage point loss to Democrat Barack Obama in the Senate race in Illinois. Republicans drafted Keyes after primary winner Jack Ryan dropped out amid a scandal.

In an interview with radio talk show host Janet Parshall, Keyes noted the wide-open nature of the GOP race. "There isn't a standout," Keyes said. "I'm like a lot of folks, who have just looked at it and been unmoved."

# Islamic forum banned from U.S. Capitol Hill

By Askia Muhammad  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - A coalition of Muslims, totaling dozens of participants from Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina is angry after they were turned away from a pre-approved forum in a Capitol Hill meeting room recently.

The group had scheduled a six-hour conference in the Canon House Office Building under the theme: "Islam Is Not The Enemy."

The group was denied access to the building because of a decision by the House sergeant-at-arms, according to El Hajji Mauri Saalakh, director of the Peace and Justice Foundation, who convened the conference.

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## Politics

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ence. Four Democrats came.

All four top Republican candidates have declined to participate in the PBS-Tavis Smiley "All-American Presidential Forum" scheduled for Sept. 27 at Historically Black Colleges and Universities member campus Morgan State University. All eight Democrats attended the forum at Howard University.

Hate. It's an awfully strong word. Thesaurus.com describes it as being "to loathe," "to despise" or to "look down on contemptuously."

Yet, when considering Republican presidential candidates' apparent diversion to facing Black audiences and Black issues, even some of the most faithful Black Republicans say that "hate" — though strong — sometimes doesn't appear that far off.

"Hate is a strong word. But I can see how some might think that they do," says former U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts of Oklahoma.

"I say this respectfully, but they're running very White voter demographic campaigns."

In an interview with the NNPA News Service, Watts, the former lone Black Republican in Congress, now a Republican strategist, did not tow the party line.

"Look who they are surrounding themselves with. Who are they listening to? Where are the African-Americans in their inner-circles?" he asks. "Where have the Republicans been on the Jena Six case?... Where are those same people that were crying fowl in the Duke rape case? Why have they not cried fowl in the Jena Six?"

This is not the first time that Watts has broken ranks with his overwhelmingly White counterparts.

As a member of Congress, he remained a supporter of

affirmative action. Even now, he implies Republicans are hypocritical on affirmative action, a bread and butter issue in the Black community.

"How can Republicans say, 'We're opposed to affirmative action,' but then we're tweaking the tax code to help some corporation? How can you say you're opposed to affirmative action, but you've got 27 percent of the United States Army who are Americans of African descent, but you have the defense industry who spend less than one percent of their money with Black firms?... Again, when Black people peel the onion and see all of this, you think, 'Whoa, whoa. Something is wrong with this picture.'"

On the other hand, Republican National Committee Chairman Mike Duncan sig-



through economic opportunity... Closing the economic gap is a big part of this," he said.

He says loans from the Small Business Administration, a focus on education through No Child Left Behind, and increasing funding to HBCUs are tackling these problems.

Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers give no evidence of a closing economic gap between Blacks and Whites. In the eight years of the Bush administration, the jobless rate for African-Americans has remained consistently double that of Whites. Also, a majority of Republicans consistently receive nearly all F's on the NAACP Congressional Report Cards on economic and education issues.

Duncan says he has no

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— J.C. Watts  
Former U.S. Oklahoma Rep.

nals that all is well between Republicans and African-Americans.

"Republicans campaign with African-Americans the same that they campaign with other Americans. They talk about their values," Duncan said. He lists "lower taxes, less government, individual responsibility and a strong national defense" as Republican values.

Republican remedies are simply different, Duncan says.

He notes the wealth gap between the typical White family and the typical Black family.

"We lower that gap

influence on whether Republican presidential candidates speak to Black audiences. But, he says the reason they haven't is largely due to conflicts in priorities, scheduling and strategies.

No excuse, says Tavis Smiley, host of the All-American Forums being aired live by PBS at HBCUs said the absence of the top four Republican candidates at the forum next week will reveal how they really feel about Black people.

Arizona Sen. John McCain, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and

former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson have all declined to attend.

Smiley says he will highlight their absences by frequently focusing on the empty podiums.

"The message we should take from this is that we are

**"You shouldn't even be considered seriously as a candidate if you are leaving Black and Brown folk out of the conversation."**

— Travis Smiley  
Host of All-American Forums

not a priority for them. That's the only message I know," Smiley says. "I think it's a fundamental lack of appreciation for the role that we play in America. I believe that their disrespecting Black and Brown folk by not appearing at these debates... is going to become a watershed moment in this campaign."

He continues, "We live in the most multi-racial, multi-ethnic America ever. No one should be elected president in 2008 — Black, White or Brown, male or female, Republican or Democrat — if they're not going to speak to every community of color in America. You shouldn't even be considered seriously as a candidate if you are leaving Black and Brown folk out of the conversation."

Shannon Reeves, executive director of the RNC's African-American Leadership Council, says his job is to make sure that kind of conversation happens between Blacks and Republicans.

"I'm dealing with a five-year strategic plan to build relationships and to begin to identify and to have an advocacy group of leaders within the Republican Party to advocate on behalf of the

African-American community," he said.

Reeves, who was at the NUL convention where there were no Republican candidates, is making rounds among Black organizations, "Not preaching to people, but saying, 'How can the party



be relevant in your life and in the lives of your organizations and your members," he said.

He says he is also working with state and local development for the RNC, helping Republican officials to learn "how to have relationships with communities like ones you've never lived in so that within the next 10 years the Republican Party landscape will look totally different than the way it looks today."

Watts is sharply critical of such advisory positions by Black Republicans.

"I really don't care to do those advisory committees anymore because I think they're hogwash. I think they're cosmetology. It took me eight years to realize that," he said.

In the past, the Republican Party has formed leadership and advisory councils to not only advise Republicans, but recruit them, especially young Blacks.

Ashley Etienne, 29, a media strategist and communications specialist with the Dewey Square Group, a consultant to several Democratic campaigns, says she has compared both parties.

"I was raised to be aware of the policies of both parties," said Etienne. "I think the Democratic Party is more concerned with the issues that are more important to our community. But, I think that there needs to be more of a dialog between the Black community and the Democratic Party. I mean that's without a question."

Even some Blacks who became Republicans are now coming back to the Democrats.

Terone B. Green, 46, who has been an active and outspoken Virginia Republican for about 12 years, says he has finally had enough.

"I don't see the Republicans doing anything to develop and promote young African-Americans for positions or for appointments," he said. "It's not about hate, but it's clearly racism. People are just comfortable with people who look like them. You only see them reach out when they need other demographics to help them with their win."

Green says he is leaning toward Sen. Hillary Clinton after quitting the Republican Party two months ago after years of speaking out against perceived biases within the party.

Love or hate, Republicans must wake up, says Watts.

"As much as we would love to have a color-blind society, we are very naive to think that we are," said Watts, an ordained minister.

"And I'll go another step further. We are very naive to think that we're ever going to get there. And I don't think that's a bad thing. God didn't mean for us to be a color blind society. God didn't mean for all of us to be White or to be Black. God is the author of another person's skin color. So, if diversity of color is okay for God, it ought to be okay for Republicans."