

# Obama not for reparations as recompense for slavery

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama opposes offering reparations to the descendants of slaves, putting him at odds with some Black groups and leaders.

The man with a serious chance to become the nation's first Black president argues that government should instead combat the legacy of slavery by improving schools, healthcare and the economy for all.

"I have said in the past — and I'll repeat again — that the best reparations we can provide are good schools in the inner city and jobs for people who are unemployed," the Illinois Democrat said recently.

Some two dozen members of Congress are co-sponsors of legislation to create a commission that would study reparations — that is, payments and programs to make up for the damage done by slavery.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People supports the legislation, too. Cities around the country, including Obama's home of Chicago, have endorsed the idea, and so has a major union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Obama has worked to be seen as someone who will bring people together, not divide them into various interest groups with checklists of demands.

Supporting reparations could undermine that image

and make him appear to be pandering to Black voters.

"Let's not be naive. Sen. Obama is running for president of the United States, and so he is in a constant battle to save his political life," said Kibibi Tyehimba, co-chair of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America. "In light of the demographics of this country, I don't think it's realistic to expect him to do anything other than what he's done."

But this is not a position Obama adopted just for the presidential campaign. He voiced the same concerns about reparations during his successful run for the Senate in 2004.

There's enough flexibility in the term "reparations" that Obama can oppose them and still have plenty of common ground with supporters.

The NAACP says reparations could take the form of government programs to help struggling people of all races. Efforts to improve schools in the inner city could also aid students in the mountains of West Virginia, said Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington bureau.

"The solution could be broad and sweeping," Shelton said.

The National Urban League — a group Obama addressed Saturday without mentioning the issue in his speech — avoids the word "reparations" as too vague and highly charged. But the group advocates government action to close the gaps between White America and

Black America.

Urban League President Marc Morial said he expects his members to press Obama on how he intends to close those gaps and what action he would take in the first 100 days of his presidency.

"What steps should we take as a nation to alleviate the effects of racial exclusion and racial discrimination?" Morial asked.

The House voted last week to apologize for slavery. The resolution, which was approved on a voice vote, does not mention reparations, but past opponents have argued that an apology would increase pressure for concrete action.

Obama says an apology would be appropriate but not particularly helpful in improving the lives of Black Americans. Reparations could also be a distraction, he said.

In a 2004 questionnaire, he told the NAACP, "I fear that reparations would be an excuse for some to say, 'We've paid our debt,' and to avoid the much harder work."

Taking questions at a recent conference of minority journalists, Obama said he would be willing to talk to American Indian leaders about an apology for the nation's treatment of their people.

Pressed for his position on apologizing to Blacks or offering reparations, Obama said he was more interested in taking action to help people struggling to get by.

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## HIV

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The CDC acknowledged what activists have been saying all along: More concentrated prevention efforts are needed if the virus is ever going to be contained among African-Americans.

"The continued severity of the epidemic among Blacks underscores the need to sustain and accelerate prevention efforts in this population," the CDC said.

"While race itself is not a risk factor for HIV infection, a range of issues contribute to the disproportionate HIV risk for African-Americans in the U.S., including poverty, stigma, higher rates of other STDs, and drug use."

Gays and bisexual men — referred to as men who have sex with men (MSM) — represented a significantly greater proportion of new infections in 2006 than any other group.

"MSM accounted for 53 percent (28,700) of estimated new HIV infections in 2006," CDC reported. "CDC's historical trend analy-

sis indicates that HIV incidence has been increasing steadily among gay and bisexual men since the early 1990s, confirming a trend suggested by other data showing increases in risk behavior, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV diagnosis in this population."

Heterosexuals accounted for 31 percent of new HIV infections in 2006.

The new CDC figures were expected to be announced at a news conference Sunday at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. However, after several news outlets violated the scheduled embargo by reporting the findings on Saturday, the embargo was lifted.

CDC said it was able to come up with the new figures showing greater incidences of HIV by using new technology that allows them to pinpoint when a person was actually infected with HIV. In the past, the agency could only determine when a person was diagnosed, which could have been years after the infection.

# Newspaper: Black reporter booted from McCain's rally

Special to Sentinel-Voice

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — A newspaper is asking John McCain's campaign why a Black reporter assigned to cover a rally was singled out by security and told to leave a backstage area.

Stephen Price, a reporter for the *Tallahassee Democrat*, was among four Florida capital press corps reporters behind the scenes at a Panama City rally Friday when a Secret Service agent approached and asked if he were part of the national media traveling with McCain. Price said no, and the agent told him he had to leave. Price said he then pointed out that there were other state reporters in the same area, but was still told to leave. The other reporters were White.

A Panama City police officer quickly approached with his hand on his holster and asked what the problem was, Price said. At the same time *Palm Beach Post* reporter Dara Kam came to Price's defense and was told she also had to leave, Price said.

The other two reporters, Alex Leary of the *St. Petersburg Times* and Marc Caputo of The *Miami Herald*, weren't removed.

Caputo, however, said that initially he also was told he had to leave the area.

"Security was tight and was a bit overcontrolling, which is par for the course at these events. And, as par for the course, I tried to get near the candidate when I saw another reporter there (Alex Leary). Secu-

rity tried to throw me out, but I found a McCain staffer I knew and the person vouched for me," Caputo said in an e-mail to The Associated Press.

The McCain campaign said it asked Secret Service to look into the events.

"The campaign looked into this, and found that no one from the campaign was involved," said McCain spokesman Brian Rogers.

Secret Service spokesman Eric Zahren said two other Florida reporters were removed along with Price and any other reporters who weren't with the national press should have been removed as well. At all campaign events, national and local press are separated for logistical reasons.

"Race played absolutely no role in any actions taken by our employees or anybody else in this case," Zahren said.

Price said he could think of no other reason why he was approached other than his race. He said he had to show his media credentials to get into the area, and that he was there for several minutes before being removed.

"It was just a really crazy situation. We were being carted out of there and everyone was looking," Price said, adding that he felt upset and humiliated. He said he hasn't received an apology from the McCain campaign.

The newspaper's executive editor, Bob Gabordi, said he has sought an explanation. (See *Reporter*, Page 10)

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