

# Blacks in Alaska: Palin cares little about inclusion

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PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) — While many across America consider Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin some kind of phenomenon, many Blacks in Alaska see the governor of their state as a person not interested in the inclusive posture of her predecessors.

"Blacks don't have the levels of access to the governor and state commissioners as with past administrations," said attorney Rex Butler, an Alaska resident since 1983. "It seems the posture of [Palin's] administration with Blacks is: Don't need them — don't worry about them."

Eleanor Andrews, board chair of the Anchorage Urban League, said she is unaware of any programs or outreach to Alaska's Black community by Palin.

"It's not a disengagement, it's just no connection. She does not have relations with African-Americans," said Andrews, a businesswoman and 44-year resident of Alaska.

Alaskan Blacks fault Palin for not hiring African-Americans for her administration, dismissing Blacks from government posts and spurning repeated requests to

meet with Black leaders to discuss issues of concern.

Palin's increasingly rocky relations with Alaska's Black community seeped down to the "Lower 48" weeks ago, following an Internet posting by the president of Alaska's African-American Historical Society, Gwendolyn Alexander, who detailed controversies such as Palin's staffing practices, Palin allegedly stating she "doesn't have to hire any Blacks" for major projects and her refusal to attend that state's major African-American celebration — Juneteenth.

Palin denies telling Black leaders she did not intend to hire Blacks in her state where African-Americans comprise 4 percent of the population.

Palin, through spokespeople, defends her staffing record, citing that top aides and advisers include a Filipino, a Korean and a person of mixed African-American ancestry.

"I'm African-American, and I am a big rebuttal to those charges," said Bill McAllister, Gov. Palin's press secretary and former broadcast journalist.

"She is not averse to hiring African-Americans," said McAllister, who joined Palin's staff two months ago. McAllister said Palin's office

"never" compiled statistics on minorities in her administration.

Rev. Alonzo B. Patterson chuckles at Palin's claims of being color-blind, saying she's "not sensitive to [having] African-Americans in her administration."

Patterson, who's worked closely with previous governors, mayors and other elected officials during his 45 years in Alaska, feels Palin has "totally departed from the past practices" of previous Alaska governors.

"Past administrations have had Black administrative assistants to the governor, state commissioners and department leaders," said Patterson, who served as chair of Alaska's Board of Paroles for 13 years.

While McAllister said Palin "hires on the basis of merit" not ethnicity, gender or race, one frequently cited example of Palin's crony-based appointments is her elevation of a high school classmate to the \$95,000-a-year post heading the State Division of Agriculture. Palin defended that appointment citing this real estate agent's childhood love of cows.

McAllister termed the agriculture appointment as "not major" because Alaska does

not have much agriculture. McAllister said Palin's hiring of political opponents for important posts shows she does not hire only "within a circle of friends."

Earlier this year, Patterson participated in a meeting of Black leaders with Palin. This meeting followed months of requests to Palin.

"We gave her a list of concerns and have received no response," said Patterson, pastor of Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Anchorage.

Concerns presented by this group included hiring minorities at all levels of state government plus contracting and employment practices in

major projects like the planned new pipeline construction project.

This group also invited Palin to participate in a town meeting during the summer with other racial and ethnic minorities in Alaska to discuss issues of common concern including economic growth, educational deficiencies, family disintegration and young gang problems. Palin spurned that invitation.

"She has not met with us since that March meeting," Patterson said. "I think she was intimidated by us not being intimidated by her."

Patterson heads the American Baptist Churches of Alaska and that state's

Martin Luther King Jr. Foundation.

A person from the area of Wasilla, the city where Palin served as mayor, said she's very vindictive, a behavior pattern that chills criticism of her.

While commending Palin as an enchanting person with maverick ways, the person said "Sarah is not ready" for the office she holds or higher office. This person did note that Palin's employment practices may not be as discriminatory as they appear because "she is devoted to her people and there are few Blacks in Wasilla."

Bishop Dave Thomas, a  
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## Rainbow

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"We have to make a way for our future," Clayton continued. "Our children look up to us to provide them the support that they need to grow and learn. Clayton also spoke about the civil rights walk of fame inspired by Dr. King to bring Blacks and Whites together.

They have collected shoes from Rosa Parks when she was on the bus, Medgar Evers when he was killed, Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton, and Thurgood Marshall among others. Clayton was deeply moved by the dedication

Rainbow Dreams Academy founders

Diane and Anthony Pollard relished the chance to bestow such a fine honor on a great woman.

"We have opened up the doors for our children to be innovators and not imitators," Anthony Pollard said.

"We think that the best gift that we can give to our children is to brighten their horizons through education so that they can have a free spirit of opportunity, growth, and development to be more creative, innovative, and more successful in life."

Rainbow Dreams is open to the public, but has a waiting list. The school is located at 950 W. Lake Mead Blvd. The phone number is 702-638-0222.

## Debate

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Also, Obama argued that McCain would perpetuate the policies of the unpopular Bush, while McCain cast Obama as a risky liberal who backs more government spending.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve and five other central banks on both sides of the Atlantic implemented a coordinated emergency interest rate cut, but the move supplied only a short-lived bounce to world markets. Major stock indexes on Wall Street and in Britain, Germany and France all ended the day down again.

In separate statements as the day began, Obama and McCain applauded the Fed's action. Each portrayed himself as the only one on the side of anxious Americans watching the economic upheaval drain their retirement accounts and hinder their ability to get loans.

"I am committed to protecting the American worker in this crisis," McCain said. He promoted his plan, announced at the debate the night before, that would di-



Republican presidential candidate John McCain (right) greets his Democratic rival Barack Obama ahead of their presidential debate at Belmont College in Nashville on Tuesday.

rect the Treasury Department to buy up bad home mortgages by using nearly half the \$700 billion from the recent bailout package. "I will get the economy back on track," McCain added.

The Republican also said he would balance the federal budget by the end of his term,

although the Bush administration predicts the deficit and a recession would further complicate that task.

Initially, Obama sought to reclaim a piece of McCain's mortgage proposal. He previously had said the government should consider doing just that, and on Wednesday

said the Treasury Department officials "should use the authority they already have to purchase troubled assets, including mortgages." He also renewed his call for a second economic stimulus package for the middle class, saying: "More urgent and vigorous action is necessary to stem

this crisis."

Later, after McCain released more details of his plan, Obama's campaign said McCain's plan would end up rewarding troubled mortgage companies with even more taxpayer dollars and assailed it as "even more costly and out-of-touch" than ever imagined. In a shot aimed at raising doubts about McCain's temperament, they called his plan "erratic policy-making at its worst."

McCain's aides also assailed Obama's character anew, e-mailing more news releases highlighting the Democrat's association with former 1960s radical William Ayers, now a college professor in Chicago. It fed into McCain's pitch that voters can't trust Obama.

Polls consistently show Obama has an edge over McCain on the question of who would best handle the economy and the current crisis. But an Associated Press-Yahoo News poll last month also showed that more people view McCain as honest and ethical.

McCain may be trying to

capitalize on this edge.

On Wednesday, McCain unveiled a commercial that asked "Who is Barack Obama," called him "the most liberal" senator and mocked him for complaining that the Republicans are lying about his record. "Mr. Obama, we all know the truth," it said. "Not presidential."

Obama, in turn, announced a TV spot that said: "Here's the truth" to McCain's healthcare plan. "Instead of fixing healthcare, he wants to tax it."

Judging by history, McCain's government mortgage buying plan may not change the trajectory of the campaign.

"When times are really bad, voters are looking to put the other team in power and kick the current guys out," said Thomas Mann, a scholar at the Brookings Institution think tank. "They're not evaluating specific proposals for the economy. They're looking for reassurance and evaluating whether the candidate of the other party looks trustworthy."