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on issues affecting African Americans  
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**Palin Hates Native Alaskans, Black Folks Too**  
**Color of Law**  
**By David A. Love, JD**  
**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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Perhaps it is the understatement of the century to say that that Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska— that Trojan Moose running mate of Senator John McCain—knows absolutely nothing about foreign policy. The person who aspires to be a heartbeat away from the presidency only received her first passport last year. And the extent of her international affairs experience involves Alaska's proximity to Siberia.

What receives far less attention, however, is Palin's inability to deal with cultural diversity within the borders of her own state. With a quarter of its population as people of color, including one-fifth Native- Americans and around 10 percent African- and Asian-Americans combined — Alaska is far more diverse than one would conclude at first glance. Yet there is ample evidence that the governor has little else than utter disrespect for Alaskans of a darker hue.

As for Alaska Natives, who have experienced years of being treated as less than human, crowded out and pushed aside to make way for White settlers, Palin has continued the policy of degrading and suppressing the state's first inhabitants. Don't be sidetracked by the fact that [Palin's husband is of Yup'ik Eskimo ancestry](#). There have been the affronts to the Native community, such as when Palin allegedly fired the highly regarded Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan, a Native, because he refused to remove Palin's former brother-in-law from the state police force. And when she assumed her office, the governor tried to appoint a White woman to a seat on the state's wildlife management board, a seat which had been occupied by a Native for 25 years.

Subsistence fishing and hunting are very important to the traditional way of life for Native peoples, and Gov. Palin has done everything in her power to oppose tribal subsistence rights, to the benefit of commercial and sporting interests. And she has continued a [lawsuit which would eliminate all federal fishing protections for Native Alaskan people](#). In addition, she opposes tribal sovereignty, and has refused to

acknowledge native languages and give them the respect they deserve. A federal court ordered Palin to provide voter materials in indigenous languages.

And as [Earl Ofari Hutchinson recently noted](#), Alaska is rife with racial inequality. Infant mortality for Native children is double that of Whites. Native students are 12 percent of the children in public schools, but 25 percent of the dropouts. Native Alaskan men are 10 percent of the population, but 40 percent of the prisoners. Chronically unemployed and victims of discrimination, the indigenous population is underrepresented in employment in the legal, child welfare and criminal justice fields. Before Palin took office, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission called for a host of reforms to deal with these racial disparities, but Gov. Palin, maverick and reformer that she is, hasn't budged on implementing any of the recommendations.

Then, there is Palin's disrespect for Alaska's African American population. Yes, I was just as surprised as you are. On April 29, a group of [African American leaders met with the governor](#) to discuss their dissatisfaction with her record on diversity in hiring. According to Gwen Alexander, head of the [African-American Historical Society of Alaska](#), Palin told the group that she did not have to hire any Blacks, and didn't intend to hire any. Further, Juneteenth—that well-known day of slave emancipation celebrated by Blacks throughout the country — has been an official holiday in Alaska since 2001. However, as veteran journalist [Linn Washington notes](#), Palin did not attend the celebration, and did not send a representative. The governor similarly declined requests for her attendance to town hall meetings on issues affecting communities of color.

The extent of Gov. Palin's record on diversity seems to amount to ignoring Native Alaskans' basic rights, telling Black folks she doesn't have to hire them, and snubbing Juneteenth. So, where does all of this lead us? What is the punchline to this cruel joke known as the vice-presidential candidacy of Sarah Palin? Well, in the end, Palin's record represents an indictment of the GOP narrative of small town America. As the new poster child for the conservative cause, Palin gives small town people a bad name. To be sure, many people in small towns are just as clueless, narrow-minded and averse to cultural diversity and civil rights as the governor of Alaska. But many more are not, and these people must decide very soon if they will allow Sarah Palin to speak for them.


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