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Political Analysis  
Obama's Electoral Path to The White House (Part II)  
By Dr. Martin Kilson, PhD  
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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**INTRODUCTORY**

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Between the completion of the Democratic Nominating Convention on August 28th and the first week of October 2008 as I write this tenth article, there have been several weeks of hard-fought presidential campaigning on the part of Senator Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential candidate, and the Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain. As the *Diageo/Hotline Poll* reported on September 2, 2008—at the same time that the Republican Nominating Convention was underway—the Obama campaign was nursing an advantage over the McCain campaign. The *Diageo/Hotline Poll* put the situation this way:

In a national poll fielded between the Democratic National Convention and the Republican National Convention, Barack Obama leads John McCain in the race for the presidency, 48%-39%, with 8% undecided. ...Obama's nine-point lead comes courtesy of a four-point post-Convention 'bounce'--Obama led McCain 44%-40% in the *Diageo/Hotline Poll* taken immediately before the Convention.

A *Gallup Poll* published on the day following the Republican Convention –September 4, 2008—also had Obama leading McCain, 49%-42%. However, within ten days the McCain campaign—owing to the vibrant appeal of his vice president candidate, Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska—closed this seven-point gap, as shown in a *USA Today/ABC News/Columbia University Poll*

(September 11-14, 2008) which reported a virtual tie—Obama 47%, McCain 45%. This

poll was reported in *USA Today* on a Tuesday (September 23, 2008). And a similar statistical tie was reported in the *Wall Street Journal* on Thursday (September 25, 2008) as follows:

Overall, the race remains a statistical tie, with 48% favoring Sen. Obama and his running mate, Sen. Joe Biden, and 46% favoring Sen. McCain and his vice-presidential choice, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

### **CRUCIAL OBAMA-FRIENDLY TRENDS IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE**

Interestingly enough however, the foregoing *Wall Street Journal/NBC News Poll* (September 19-22, 2008) also uncovered what might be called "voters' attitudinal shifts" favoring Senator Obama's campaign. The *Wall Street Journal* (September 25, 2008) reported this development this way: "...A majority of voters still believe Sen. Obama is best able to handle the economy, and many more believe he would bring real change to the country than say the same of Sen. McCain."

TABLE I shows quite solid evidence of "voters' attitudinal shifts" favoring Senator Obama in three crucial domestic policy areas: "The Economy"; "The Housing Crisis"; and "The Financial Crisis".

**TABLE I**  
**VOTERS' PREFERENCE ON THREE POLICY AREAS**  
**IN WALL STREET JOURNAL POLL**  
**(September 19-22, 2008)**

POLICY AREAS	BARACK OBAMA	JOHN MCCAIN
THE ECONOMY	46%	34%
THE HOUSING CRISIS	38%	30%
THE FINANCIAL CRISIS	35%	30%
SOURCE: <i>WALL STREET JOURNAL</i> (September 25, 2008)		

There is now a broad consensus among major pollsters that, by the last week of September, the crucial "problem-issue" of dominant concern among the majority of American voters relates to the condition of the American economy. However, the rise of the economy as the crucial "problem-issue" among American voters *has been a gradual development*, as shown in TABLE II.

**TABLE II**  
**VOTERS' RANKING OF CRUCIAL PROBLEM ISSUES**  
**SEPTEMBER 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 2008**

PROBLEM ISSUES	Sept. 2007	Dec. 2007	Jan. 2008	Feb. 2008	May 2008	Aug. 2008	Sept. 7, 2008	Sept. 24, 2008
IRAQ WAR	36%	24%	18%	17%	20%	14%	10%	9%
ECONOMY	12%	24%	32%	41%	39%	43%	41%	53%
SOURCE: <i>ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST POLL</i> (September 24, 2008).								

A year ago in September 2007, the "economy problem-issue" ranked at a low 12% as compared with "Iraq War problem-issue" which ranked at 36% among voters. It was not until February 2008 when the "economy" ranked higher than "Iraq War" as a problem-issue among voters at 41%. And the "economy" has continually ranked higher

than "Iraq War" ever since, *standing at 53% as of September 24th in an ABC News/Washington Post Poll*, while the "Iraq War" has fallen to 9% among American voters.

As the housing crisis reached breakdown stage by mid-September (on September 19 the federal government bailed-out Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac) and key financial institutions were collapsing at the same time, an extensive survey of voters attitudes on a variety of subjects—including especially the presidential campaigns—was in process by the *ABC News/Washington Post Poll*. That poll was published on September 24th, *which was just two days before the first of three presidential debates took place on Friday September 26th, 2008*.

Now between the beginning of joint McCain-Palin campaigning on September 5th and the next two weeks, Senator Obama's favorable advantage among voters in a variety of domestic policy areas had declined and McCain was extending his advantage in foreign policy areas. Fortunately for the Obama campaign, however, the expanding economy-housing-financial crises during the first three weeks of September seem to have sparked broad-based popular malaise, as registered in several polls reporting some 80% of Americans believing "the country is on the wrong track".

Accordingly, the *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* published on September 24th produced extensive evidence of the depth-and-range of a broad-based popular malaise among American voters. The narrative report on the poll's findings was titled: "Economic Discontent Boosts Barack Obama Over John McCain". The narrative report on the *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* (September 21-24, 2008) then elaborated on this title as follows:

Barack Obama has seized the reins of economic discontent, vaulting over John McCain's convention gains by persuading voters he both better understands their economic troubles and can better address them. Concerns about the economy have spiked since the global financial crisis roiled the stock market and sparked a proposed government bailout.

Fifty-three percent of registered voters in this new ABC News/Washington Post Poll call the economy the single most important issue in the election, up 12 points in two weeks to an extraordinary level of agreement. The public is cool to the bailout itself, underscoring economic uncertainty. Eight in 10 are worried about the economy's future, half of them are very worried. ...Six in 10 are worried about their family's finances. And 83 percent say the country's seriously off on the wrong track....

It is interesting that a poll conducted at the same time as the *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* by the *New York Times/CBS News Poll* (September 21-24, 2008), simultaneously uncovered changing voters' attitudes in an Obama-friendly direction. Some of the evolving Obama-friendly voters' attitudes are shown in TABLE III.

**TABLE III**  
**VOTERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CANDIDATES ON KEY POLICY ISSUES**  
**SEPTEMBER 21-24, 2008**

KEY POLICY ISSUES	BARACK OBAMA	JOHN MCCAIN
Confident Can Make Right Economic Decisions	64%	55%
Not Too/Not At All Confident Can Make Right Economy Decision	34%	45%
Cares More About Interests Of Large Corporations	16%	52%
Cares More About Interests Of Ordinary People	70%	30%
Confident Can Make Right Decisions On Iraq War	56%	58%
Not Too/Not At All Confident Can Make Right Decisions On Iraq	42%	41%
SOURCE: NEW YORK TIMES/CBS NEWS POLL (September 21-24, 2008)		

It should also be mentioned that the narrative analysis provided in the *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* (September 21-24, 2008) gave the following overall summation of three key policy areas in which Senator Obama now prevails over Senator McCain:

He's recovered to a 14-point lead over McCain in trust to handle the economy, and leads by 13 points specifically in trust to deal with the meltdown of major financial institutions. Obama leads by more, 24 points, 57-33 percent, in better understanding the public's economic problems. Tellingly, after trailing by 17 points, he's pulled even with McCain in trust to handle a major [international] crisis. ...*McCain's [post-Convention] bounce—on individual issues and attributes as well as in overall preference—is gone.*

A final point should be mentioned regarding the explosion of Obama-friendly attitudes among American voters during the last two weeks in September. Namely, Senator Obama moved solidly ahead of Senator McCain in a variety of national polls. First, in the extensive *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* (September 21-24, 2008), the narrative section reported the following:

Barack Obama takes lead, reclaims 'change' mantle. ...The contest has shifted from a 49-47 percent McCain-Obama race immediately after the Republican Convention. Democrat takes 52-43 lead among Likely Voters, erases Republican's post-Palin pick gains. Barack Obama has seized the reins of economic discontent, vaulting over John McCain's convention gains by persuading voters he both better understands their troubles and can better address them.

The foregoing *ABC News/Washington Post Poll* results giving Obama a nine-point lead over McCain was the widest Obama lead among a variety of major polls published during the last week of September. Nevertheless, a survey of several major polls by

*USA Election Polls.com* (September 28, 2008) reported that Senator Obama had moved ahead of Senator McCain by at least five-percentage points. Here are the findings by *USA Election Polls.com*:

...As for the three national tracking polls released today [September 27], Obama maintains a 5-6% lead. *Gallup Tracking*: Obama 49, McCain 44. *Rasmussen Tracking*: Obama 50, McCain 44. *Hotline/Financial Dynamics*: Obama 48, McCain 43, They all seem to agree with Obama's average of 49%, and McCain's average of 44%. A clear 5% advantage for Obama.

## **VIABILITY & LEGITIMACY OF THE BLACK VOTER-BLOC**

In my fourth article on the Obama campaign for *Black Commentator* (March 13, 2008), I suggested that what might be called a "high Black-vote saturation for Obama" in key primary elections *was crucial to the overall electoral viability of the Obama campaign*. In regard to the Maryland-Virginia-South Carolina-Wisconsin primaries, I made this suggestion in my fourth article in the following terms:

In the states of Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and Wisconsin, where Obama gained high double-digit victory margins, the Black vote for Obama was in the 85%-plus range. The Obama campaign sustained the 85%-plus Black voter support in the Ohio primary—89% to be precise. And Obama gained 85% of black voters in Texas. This might be dubbed a "Black voter-bloc saturation" of the Obama campaign.

As shown in TABLE IV, this phenomenon of a "Black voter-bloc saturation" pattern in the Obama campaign occurred in a variety of major primary contests from the South Carolina primary onward. Of course, given this "Black voter-bloc saturation" pattern in favor of the Obama campaign, it was inevitable that it became a newsworthy topic. One form of its newsworthiness was in a "straight-reportage mode", so to speak, like the following report that was in the *New York Times* (May 7, 2008):

**TABLE IV**  
**BLACK SUPPORT FOR OBAMA IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES**

<b>2008 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES</b>	<b>BLACK SUPPORT FOR OBAMA</b>
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b>	<b>85 %</b>
(January 26 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>GEORGIA</b>	<b>88 %</b>
(February 5 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>SUPER-TUES. 22 STATES</b>	<b>80 % Average</b>
(February 5 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>TEXAS</b>	<b>85 %</b>
(March 4 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>OHIO</b>	<b>89 %</b>
(March 4 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>	<b>91 %</b>
(May 6 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>INDIANA</b>	<b>92 %</b>
(May 6 <sup>th</sup> )	
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	<b>90 %</b>
(April 22 <sup>nd</sup> )	

**SOURCE: EXIT POLLS**

In North Carolina, Mr. Obama's performance was bolstered by a strong black vote. He captured more than 90 percent of those votes in that state, where blacks accounted for one in three [Democratic] voters.

Another form of the newsworthiness of the "Black voter-bloc saturation pattern" toward

the Obama campaign was in a "critical vein", so to speak, and this occurred especially among columnists and pundits on the conservative side of the political spectrum. For such columnists and pundits, what I call the "Black voter-bloc saturation" support for Obama was discussed in a manner that suggested it was an illegitimate form of ethnic-bloc voter support. Note, for example, the following commentary by a columnist in the *Wall Street Journal* (May 7, 2008):

The [Obama]campaign's increasingly bitter focus on race is a turn-about from its start more than a year ago, when Sen. Obama promised to transcend the country's historic racial divisions as well as its political ones. The Illinois senator drew significant white support in this year's early contests. But his margins with white voters have grown smaller, and black voters have largely abandoned Sen. Clinton....

Although the foregoing commentary by a conservative *Wall Street Journal* columnist is an indirect way of criticizing the "Black voter-bloc saturation" support for the Obama campaign during the primaries, it implies that an African-American candidate's mobilization of African-American voters somehow represents *an illegitimate form of ethnic-bloc voting in American politics*. But this is patently not true, *because ethnic-bloc voter support patterns for candidates in American political culture have been historically legitimate*.

It happens that a variety of White ethnic groups like Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Jewish-Americans, Polish-Americans, etc. evolved into political and electoral effectiveness from the late 19th through the 20th century *through "ethnic-bloc voting"*. Thus, the "Catholic voter-bloc" supported White Catholic politicians; "Irish voter-bloc" supported Irish politicians; "Italian voter-bloc" supported Italian politicians; "Jewish voter-bloc" supported Jewish politicians, so forth and so on.

Also, however, from the 1950s onward widespread inter-ethnic or cross-ethnic voting patterns among White groups evolved. The first major manifestation of this at the national level of presidential candidates occurred in the 1960 presidential election, when the first Catholic-American, Congressman John F. Kennedy—who was also Irish-American—won election as president of the United States. This amounted to the top-side of what might be called a "*dualistic ethnic voter-bloc pattern*" in 20th century American political culture.

It should also be mentioned that African-American voters understand well what might be called the "*dualistic ethnic voter-bloc pattern*" in 20th century American politics (that is, voting for both "one's ethnic-politicians" and "other-ethnic politicians"), *because they have a long history of voting for White-ethnic candidates during much of the 20th century when only Blacks residing in the North could vote*. However, when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 expanded African-American electoral opportunities the Black ethnic-bloc voters naturally gave important support to African-American candidates. Put another way, just as it was legitimate politically for White-ethnic groups like Irish-Americans to support both Irish ethnic-bloc politicians and general White politicians, it is also legitimate politically for African-American ethnic-bloc voters to practice the "*dualistic ethnic voter-bloc pattern*".

### **IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION ON BLACK VOTER-BLOC**

Of course, the directors and technicians running the Obama campaign for the presidency fully understand what I call the "*dualistic ethnic voter-bloc pattern*" in American politics, and as a result the Obama campaign during both the primaries and now during the presidential contest have given serious attention to electoral

mobilization among the African-American voter-bloc. Indeed, the Obama campaign's serious attention to mobilizing the Black voter-bloc grows out of what is now a decades-old tradition by the Democratic National Organization of cultivating the Black voter-bloc. This can be seen at a basic level like the delegates-composition at Democratic National Conventions extending back to the 1990s, as shown in data in TABLE V.

**TABLE V**  
**DIVERSITY OF DELEGATES AT DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS**  
**1996-2008**

DELEGATES' DEMOGRAPHICS	1996	2000	2004	2008
WOMEN	49.9%	49.8%	49.9%	50.1%
MEN	50.1%	50.2%	50.1%	49.8%
WHITE	66.7%	64.8%	60.7%	56.7%
BLACK	19%	20%	20.4%	24.5%
HISPANIC	9%	9%	11.6%	11.8%
ASIAN	2.9%	3%	3.9%	4.6%
NATIVE AMERICANS	1.4%	1%	1.8%	2.5%
Total Delegates	--	--	--	4,438

SOURCE: *USA Today* (August 25, 2008). *Democratic National Committee Reports*.

At the 2008 Democratic Convention, African-American delegates made up one-quarter of the total 4,438 delegates, as compared with other minority group delegates like Hispanics (11.8%), Asians (4.6%), and Native Americans (2.5%). By contrast with the Republican National Convention held in St. Paul, Minnesota, the *Wall Street Journal* (September 5, 2008) reported the following:

Of the more than 2,300 Republican delegates who gathered this week, just 36—or 1.5%—were black, the lowest portion in 40 years, according to a study by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington think tank that focuses on black issues. That is substantially below the figure in 2004, when a record-setting 6.8% of Republican delegates were black. The number of black Republican candidates running for federal office also has fallen sharply, to about seven from a high of 24 in 1996.

In a vivid article in *New York Times* (August 29, 2008), by reporter Mark Leibovich, on delegates at the Democratic Convention, there was a fascinating connection drawn between the sizable representation of Black delegates and the upcoming Obama campaign. "The crowd [at the Convention] was multiracial," the *New York Times* article observed, "but with a large African-American presence." The article continued:

Black voters, echoing one another, said they simply could not miss this moment. Lillian Woods, 50, of Phoenix arrived at 1 p.m., seven hours before Mr. Obama would speak. "I had to be here for the whole thing," she said, passing the time in the hot sun. "It's history in the making." ...Audrey Thornton, a black woman who is 82 and does not walk so well anymore, has been registering voters for months, going into Philadelphia's homeless shelters, nursing homes, even into a minimum security prison. She had a wide-brimmed purple hat to go with a purple blouse, and she was beside herself. "You talk about living the dream," she said. "I'm 82 years old, and I never thought I would see this. Never, never. Never."

The awesome interplay between Black delegates' experiencing the new phenomenon of an African-American presidential nominee for the Democratic Party, on the one hand,

and on the other hand the upcoming mobilization of Black voters by the Obama campaign was reflected in Bob Herbert's *New York Times* (August 30, 2008) column on the Democratic Convention which he experienced via television at an African-American restaurant in Detroit. Through interviews with African-Americans present at the Detroit restaurant, Herbert relates the incredible impact that Obama's nomination and his nomination address had on the African-American 21st century consciousness. Here's one such interview:

Jennifer West, a 47- year old insurance executive told me: "We're all sitting on feelings we don't usually talk about. We're starved for a collective sense of affirmation. Barack is the son, the brother, the uncle, the cousin who made good. Who overcame. God bless him for what he means to us."

In another interview related in Bob Herbert's column that reported on Obama's nomination address, Herbert connects the almost mystical sway of Obama's nomination address among today's African-American voters and the country's arduous oppressive racial legacy. He introduced this interview with the proposition that "The suddenness of Mr. Obama's rise added to the sense of amazement."

"It's so very exciting," said Pearl Reynolds, who is 92 and whose elegant bearing and dress belied her hardscrabble origins in tiny Oak Ridge, La., where she worked as a child in the cotton fields. "I got married at 14 only because I wanted to get out of there", she said. "I had to. At 14, I was just being promoted from second grade because we could only go to school when we weren't working in the fields." She became quite emotional during Senator Obama's speech. "Barack Obama is a measure of how far we've come as a country since I was a little girl," she said.

It's quite clear, then, that the historic events at the 2008 Democratic National Convention surrounding Barack Obama's presidential candidate nomination and his brilliant historic nomination address, *translated into an awe-inspiring historic electoral and political process for African-American citizens generally*. The New York Times article by Mark Leibovich related biographical tales of Black delegates like 82-year old civic activist Audrey Thornton who experienced an awe-inspiring African-American political transformation witnessing Obama's nomination address. And the New York Times columnist Bob Herbert's tales about the personal reactions of African-Americans' watching Obama's nomination address at a Detroit restaurant, also communicated the awe-inspiring experience poignantly, I suggest. *This amounted to "A New World A'Comin" African-American phenomenon, as it were.*

### **BLACK FUND-RAISERS FOR OBAMA AT DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Another important article in the *New York Times* (August 29, 2008) relating to the Democratic Convention's historic awe-inspiring political impact on African-Americans warrants reference here, because it concerns a crucial nitty-gritty dynamic connected with the Obama campaign's mobilization of the Black voter-bloc. The nitty-gritty dynamic I have in mind *is political fund-raising*.

That New York Times article, written by reporter Michael Luo, relates interviews with leading African-American professionals who have emerged in the past decade as top-level Democratic Party fund-raisers and who have played major fund-raising roles for the Obama campaign. The New York Times article commenced with a keen proposition: "Mr. Obama's acceptance of his party's nomination on Thursday [August 28th] on the 45th anniversary of the speech by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during



the March on Washington, signifies a powerful moment of arrival for blacks."

An interview with the African-American lawyer Gordon Davis anchors the New York Times article, so to speak, pointing out that "When Gordon Davis, a top fund-raiser for Senator Barack Obama, made partner at his white-shoe law firm in New York in 1983, it was a vastly different world for aspiring black professionals like him. At the time, there were just five black partners at major law firms in New York, Mr. Davis recalled."

It is thus a new political era today (it never happened before!) that African-American professionals in law, business, media firms, banking, financial management, etc. *are now in driver-seat roles as fund-raisers for the Democratic Party's National Organization and especially for the Obama presidential campaign.* Furthermore, some interesting professional-class attributes of 67-year old Gordon Davis (dubbed by the New York Times as "an elder statesman [of black fund-raisers]") should be noted as well. Because Gordon Davis is a second-generation African-American professional leadership figure.

He hails from a professional African-American background where his father, Professor Allison Davis, was a leading social psychology scholar from the 1930s through 1970s at two Black universities (Dillard University and Howard University) and at the University of Chicago; and Gordon Davis's uncle, Professor John Aubrey Davis, was a leading political science/public policy scholar at a Black university (Lincoln University--Pennsylvania) and at City University of New York. *Gordon Davis brings an important African-American professional legacy to his role as an elder statesman Black fund-raiser for the Obama presidential campaign. And so does another major African-American fund-raiser for the Obama campaign discussed in the New York Times article—namely, Valerie Jarrett whose parents were medical professionals and whose uncle, Vernon Jarrett, directed the Chicago National Urban League—the country's most effective branch—for several decades.* I discussed Valerie Jarrett's pioneering role in launching and guiding—in fact, engineering—the Obama campaign in my seventh article for *Black Commentator* ([May 29, 2008](#)).

Accordingly, among a total of 300 top-level fund-raisers on the Obama campaign's National Finance Committee, *some 57 are African-Americans.* Each National Finance Committee member is responsible for raising at least \$250,000—a task, as the New York Times article notes, that is "formidable...and typically requires deep business networks, something relatively few blacks had until fairly recently." The article then proceeds to inform us of several key African-American fund-raisers for the Obama campaign:

The list of top Obama [African-American] bundlers includes John W. Rogers Jr., the founder of Ariel Investments, the country's first black-owned money management firm; William E. Kennard, the first black chairman of the Federal Communications Commission [during the Clinton Administration]; and Mr. [Gordon] Davis, who... [was] the first black parks commissioner of New York City and the first black president of Lincoln Center. Mr. Kennard and Mr. Rogers are among a half-dozen black bundlers who have raised more than \$500,000 for Mr. Obama, putting them in a select group of just three dozen fund-raisers. ...Valerie Jarrett, a close friend of Mr. Obama and one of his most trusted advisers...[is another top-level fund-raiser].

Thus, as I discussed in the foregoing subsection, *there is no doubt whatever regarding the legitimacy in our American political culture of the Black voter-bloc.* Just as there are legitimate White ethnic voter-blocs like the Irish voter-bloc, Jewish voter-bloc, Polish voter-bloc, Italian voter-bloc, so forth and so on. Furthermore, the August 2008

Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado, will go down in history as an *"historic strategic African-American political event"*.

One that produced not only the first-ever African-American presidential candidate of a major political party. But it was also an "historic strategic African-American political event" for another reason. Namely, the 2008 Democratic Convention *interconnected a variety of old-era African-American socio-cultural patterns (represented by the attendance of the 82-year old Black civic activist Audrey Thornton) with new-era African-American socio-cultural patterns (as represented by the role of top-level African-American fund-raisers for the Obama campaign).*

### **ENSURING MAXIMAL BLACK VOTER MOBILIZATION IN NOVEMBER**

Of course, for the directors and technicians who manage the day-to-day operations of the Obama campaign, their main task between now –the last week of September—and November 4th is to intertwine the enormous political-elan among African-Americans who attended the Democratic Convention and the fund-raising skills among African-American professionals, on the one hand, with the electoral-mobilization goal among millions of African-American voters, on the other hand. This task that I call "maximal Black voter-bloc mobilization" will have to be executed effectively by the Obama campaign. Also, this task must be executed on a scale heretofore never achieved by a Democratic Party presidential candidate's electoral organization.

It is, however, an achievable task for the Obama campaign. One factor contributing to this achievement is shown in TABLE VI. Namely, the fact that as of mid-September 2008, the overwhelming majority of African-American voters are recorded in several polls as favoring the Obama candidacy.

**TABLE VI**  
**MINORITY VOTER BLOCS' PRESIDENT CANDIDATE PREFERENCE**  
**September 8, 2008**

MINORITY VOTER BLOCS	BARACK OBAMA	JOHN McCAIN
ALL MINORITY VOTERS	79%	21%
AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTERS	96%	4%
HISPANIC VOTERS	66%	23%

SOURCE: ABC NEWS/WASHINGTON POST POLL (September 8, 2008).  
PEW HISPANIC CENTER POLL (August 2008).

Another factor that will contribute to the achievement of a "maximal Black voter-bloc mobilization" for the November election has already been discussed above. Namely, what I call the high-level *"Black voter saturation support for Obama" during the long season of Democratic primaries*.

As shown above in TABLE IV, this "Black voter saturation support" pattern commenced in the crucial South Carolina primary (January 26th) with 85% Black votes for Obama that gave him a victory. It continued through the critical Super Tuesday 22-state primaries (February 5th), with an 80%-average Black voter pro-Obama support. The crucially important boost the Obama campaign gained on Super Tuesday, thanks to the Black voter support, was captured in a summary report carried in the *Boston Globe* (February 6, 2008):

Obama scored a coup [on Super Tuesday] by winning Connecticut, where Clinton had led until a few days ago. He also captured Georgia and Alabama,

again beating Clinton handily among black voters, who make up about half of the electorate there. He carried his home state of Illinois, which was expected, along with Delaware....

Another Black-vote related advance also occurred on Super Tuesday. In Connecticut, Illinois, and Delaware, the Obama campaign significantly expanded its lead in pledged delegates on Super Tuesday—thanks to the large Black voter-bloc in cities like New Haven, Hartford, Chicago, and Wilmington.

Furthermore, the pro-Obama “Black voter saturation support” pattern persisted through the important Pennsylvania primary (April 22nd), with 90% Black votes for Obama. Those Black votes helped keep the Clinton victory under 10%—at 9.4% in fact—*thereby keeping the Obama campaign electorally competitive with the Clinton Machine, especially in regard to providing Obama a quite sizable share of pledged delegates in Pennsylvania.* Moreover, the pro-Obama “Black voter saturation support” pattern sustained itself in two crucial subsequent primaries, producing thereby a significant number of pledged delegates for Obama and reinforcing his overall delegate-count lead.

Those primaries were the following: North Carolina primary (May 6th) with 91% Black votes for Obama; and the Indiana primary (May 6th) with 92% pro-Obama Black votes. We should mention that the Obama campaign's effective maximal mobilization of Black voters in the North Carolina May 6th primary has now (late September) translated into *putting the 15 North Carolina electoral votes into play for Obama in November--* an outcome that was not conceivable when the Democratic primary season ended in June. Thus, as of September 30th the *USA Election Polls.com (September 30, 2008)* reported Obama leading McCain in North Carolina—47% to 45%! As the *Wall Street Journal (October 3, 2008)* reported: “Polls...show traditional Republican strongholds such as Indiana and North Carolina to be tossups.”

Indeed, as the Obama campaign for the presidency of the United States enters the final month of the election season (I write this on October 4th weekend), another quite important transformation in the American electoral-college map has shifted favorably for Obama. That transformation relates to the fact that the *polls show state-level voter preference now favoring Obama.* Data on this overall transformation of state-level voter preference in favor of Senator Obama are shown below in TABLE VII.

The electoral significance of this for the two presidential candidates—as their campaigns enter the last four weeks before election day—was graphically remarked upon in the lead article in the “Campaign '08” section of the *Wall Street Journal (October 3, 2008)*, which was titled-- “McCain Abandons Michigan As State Contests Shift.” The “Campaign '08” lead article remarked as follows:

National polls suggest Sen. Obama has a small lead nationally--somewhere between two and six percentage points. *But the race is really fought state-by-state, with victory going to whoever corners 270 electoral votes. And the movement in the states is all toward the Illinois senator.* Several polls show Sen. Obama either ahead or running even in states Republicans won in 2004, notably Ohio and Florida. Beyond Michigan [abandoned by McCain campaign Thursday, October 2], where Sen. Obama campaigned before large crowds Thursday, he leads in the other big Democratic state Sen. McCain is targeting, Pennsylvania. (Emphasis Added)

Moreover, on the same Thursday, October 2nd, when the McCain campaign announced that it would no longer continue spending \$8 million campaigning in Michigan, the main

article on the national presidential race in the *New York Times* (October 2, 2008) informed readers of the what might be dubbed the "surge" in state-level voters' preference for Obama. As the article put it: "...A series of polls taken in highly contested states released...on Tuesday [September 30] suggested that Mr. Obama was building leads in states including Florida, Pennsylvania and Virginia." The article continued to inform readers that: "Polls by Quinnipiac University, taken Sept. 17 through Sept. 29, showed Mr. Obama ahead in Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Time/CNN polls also showed Mr. Obama with a lead in Minnesota and Virginia, a state that has been on the top of the pickup lists for Mr. Obama."

A similar *New York Daily News* article (October 3, 2008) reporting Obama's advances in the most recent polls—titled "The Wind Is At Obama's Back"—focused readers' attention on developments in state-level voters' preferences. "Obama gains in polling," the *Daily News* article commenced, "getting a lift from the credit meltdown and the first [presidential] debate. He's now ahead in Florida, Missouri, Nevada, Virginia and Minnesota, and up 6 points in national polls. He's officially the odds-on favorite now."

More evidence of a solid competitive capability by the Obama campaign appeared in an article titled "Obama Gaining Crucial Ground" published in the *Boston Globe* (October 4, 2008). Noting that there are only "31 days until the election", the *Boston Globe* article reported that Democrat Barack Obama's road to the White House is widening, and Republican John McCain's electoral path is narrowing. The McCain campaign's decision this week to abandon Democratic-leaning Michigan is the most obvious and dramatic sign, a major tactical retreat that limits the ways he can reach the magic number of 270 electoral votes on Nov. 4. But McCain is in as bad or worse shape in other battleground states. Barring a dramatic change, he is on course to lose Iowa and New Mexico, both states barely won by President Bush four years ago in his narrow victory over Democrat John Kerry.

**TABLE VII**  
**SELECTED STATE-LEVEL POLLS OF VOTERS' PREFERENCE**  
**AS OF SEPTEMBER 21-OCTOBER 6, 2008**

POLLED STATE	B ARACK OBAMA	JOHN McCAIN
California	53%	43%
Colorado	51%	45%
Florida	51%	43%
Indiana	45%	48%
Iowa	54%	43%
Michigan	51%	38%
Minnesota	55%	37%
Missouri	50%	45%
Nevada	53%	43%
New Hampshire	53%	43%
New Jersey	48%	39%
New Mexico	52%	44%
New York	58%	36%
North Carolina	50%	47%
Ohio	50%	42%
Oregon	53%	39%
Pennsylvania	54%	39%
Virginia	54%	42%
Washington	53%	43%
Wisconsin	49%	42%

SOURCE: Based on a variety of state polls conducted between September 20 and October 2, 2008. Among these polls are the following: Quinnipiac University Poll; Rasmussen Reports; Survey USA; Public Policy Polling; Detroit Free Press Poll; Wall Street Journal/Washington Post Poll; Insider Advantage Poll; CNN/Time Poll; CNN/Opinion Research Surveys; among other polls. For examples of these polls: See the "Daily Poll Summary" produced by *USA Election Polls.com*.

First, in states that have sizable-to-fairly-sizable Black voters (e.g., Florida, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia), Obama's edge over McCain seems significant. It's an 8-point gap in Florida, 13-points Michigan, 9-point gap New Jersey, 22-point gap New York, 8-point gap Ohio, 15-point gap Pennsylvania, and 12-point gap in Virginia.

Second, in states that have sizable-to-fairly-sizable Hispanic voters, Obama's edge over McCain also appears significant. For example, while it's a small 4-point gap in Colorado, it becomes an 10-point gap in California, an 10-point gap in Nevada, and an 8-point gap favoring Obama in New Mexico.

Third, the states with sizable-to-fairly-sizable African-American and Hispanic voter-blocs *are also states that fall in the middle-to-high Electoral College ranking*. Such as California (55 E.C.), New York (31 E.C.), Florida (27 E.C.), Pennsylvania (21 E.C.), Illinois (21 E.C.), Michigan (17 E.C.), New Jersey (15 E.C.), Virginia (13 E.C.), and Massachusetts (12 E.C.), Missouri (11 E.C.), Maryland (10 E.C.), Minnesota (10 E.C.), and Wisconsin (10 E.C.).

According to polling data available to the *Boston Globe* (October 4, 2008), Senator Obama now leads Senator McCain in the projected Electoral College count: 269-Obama, 185-McCain. And according to the highly regarded "Daily Poll Summary" provided by *USA Election Polls.com* (October 7, 2008): "Barack Obama has moved above 350 electoral votes in the poll of [state] polls estimate for the first time ever. Virginia is supposed to be a firm Red State [McCain state] but we have two polls that each show Obama ahead by double digits." Of course, victory on November 4th will be Senator Barack Obama's if this projection holds up.

In this connection, in an interesting press conference given by the assistant director of the highly respected Quinnipiac University Polling Institute in Connecticut, he addressed the issue of the recent sharp shift in state polls in the several key states (Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania) solidly in favor of Obama. In Florida, for example, Obama's advantage was only 2-percentage points before the first presidential debate but within a week following the debate it stood at 51% to 43% McCain. In Ohio, Obama's advantage was 1-percentage point before the debate but grew to 8-percentage points after the debate. In Pennsylvania, Obama's advantage was 6-percentage points before the debate but grew to 15-percentage points after the first presidential debate. Here's what the assistant polling director for Quinnipiac University Polls, Peter Brown, offered as an explanation of the electoral meaning of these developments:

*It is difficult to find a modern presidential race that has swung so dramatically, so quickly and so sharply this late in the campaign.* Sen. John McCain has his work cut out for him if he is to win the presidency and there does not appear to be a role model for such a comeback in the last half century. (See *Boston Globe* (October 2, 2008)). (Emphasis Added).

A similar formulation regarding the likely pro-Obama outcome in Electoral College count on November 4th was proffered in a data-rich article on the Electoral College dynamics in the *Boston Globe* (October 4, 2008). "The pendulum of the race has swung each way more than once over the course of the campaign", the article commenced.

But the Obama surge, coinciding over the last 10 days with the crisis on Wall Street and the debate over a federal bailout, has left McCain on the ropes in eight states with a combined 101 electoral votes that Bush carried four years

ago. The Republican is slipping further behind not only in Michigan, but also in four other states that went Democratic four years ago, but which McCain hoped to pull into the GOP column this year.

To reinforce the foregoing prognosis, the Electoral College ranking provided by *USA Election Polls.com* (October 4, 2008) reported the following: "...Obama is ahead in 10 of 12 battleground states if looking at the latest poll in each of the [twelve]states. ...New Hampshire and Nevada are meant to be battleground states but Obama is ahead by double digits." In the battleground state of Minnesota McCain is also behind which causes the *USA Election Polls .com* (October 5, 2008) report to observe "Minnesota looked like a promising state for John McCain but this latest poll has McCain down 18%." Similarly, behind by 13-points in Pennsylvania and 8-points in Ohio—both battleground states—McCain's problematic Electoral College ranking causes the *USA Election Polls .com* (October 5, 2008) to proffer a quite dire prognosis:

McCain cannot win without Ohio and he may not be able to win without Pennsylvania—depending on how many Bush 2004 states Obama picks up. *So expect McCain to play the race card as a last ditch attempt to secure the 2008 presidency. Because without the race card , he may not win.* (Emphasis Added).

Accordingly, I would therefore suggest that, things being equal, an Obama election victory in November is very likely to occur. This outcome is assured especially if the Obama campaign achieves its core electoral goal of a "maximal Black voter-bloc mobilization". So I say to all the fine readership of Black Commentator.com: try to contribute your energies during the next several weeks *toward assisting the Obama campaign in galvanizing the Black voter-bloc at unprecedented maximal levels.*

### **NOTE ON BARACK OBAMA'S LEADERSHIP AUTHORITATIVENESS**

When discussing the Obama campaign's crucial twin goals of "Black voter-bloc mobilization" and the mobilization of the "Liberal White Voter-Bloc", mention must be given to what might be called Senator Barack Obama's "*top-level leadership authoritativeness*". Especially among Black voters and liberal White voters , there is little doubt that Obama's top-level leadership authoritativeness (that is, his *high professional-leadership aura*) emits political respect and motivation. Thus that Senator Obama exhibited his first-class leadership authoritativeness so effectively during the first presidential debate at the University of Mississippi on Friday September 26th, *was an historic occasion that reflected a long tradition of African-American leadership achievements.*

The first measurement of popular reaction to the first presidential debate was undertaken by two one-night polls—one by CNN-Opinion Research Corp. Poll, the other by CBS News Poll. As reported in the *Boston Globe* (September 28, 2008), these two polls findings were as follows:

Fifty-one percent of respondents said Obama, the Democrat, did a better job in Friday night's face-off while 38 percent preferred the Republican McCain, according to a CNN-Opinion Research Corp. survey of adults. *Obama was widely considered more intelligent, likable, and in touch with peoples' problems , and by modest margins was seen as the stronger leader and more sincere.* (Emphasis Added) \*\*\*

Furthermore, in a poll of 701 adults a poll on the Saturday following the debate by USA Today/Gallup Poll (reported in *USA Today* (September 29, 2008)), the results were

again in Obama's favor. "A majority of debate watchers in a USA Today/Gallup Poll taken Saturday picked Obama over Republican John McCain when asked which candidate offered the best proposals to solve the country's problems, 52%-35%. They said Obama did better overall than McCain, 46%-34%." After pointing out that "Last week, McCain tried to delay the debate because of the Wall Street crisis," the USA Today article continued as follows:

Obama was the only leader or institution [nationally] with a net positive rating on handling the crisis in a USA Today/Gallup Poll taken Friday and Saturday [Sept. 26-27]--46% approved, 43% disapproved. For McCain, the numbers were 37% approve, 58% disapprove. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and President Bush also did poorly. Four national polls Sunday [Sept. 28] showed Obama with leads 5 to 8 percentage points. The Gallup Poll had the largest margin, 50%-42%.

Another noteworthy feature of the *USA Today/Gallup Poll (September 26-27, 2008)* warrants mentioning. That feature is that the poll showed that "Independent Voters" said Obama "did a better job in the debate", 43% favoring Obama, 33% favoring McCain. Middle-class and upper middle-class White voters make up a sizable part of "Independent Voters", so I'd say their response to Obama's debate performance suggests that the Obama campaign's important goal of mobilizing what I call a "Liberal White Voter-Bloc" is attainable.

Also new data in a *Time Magazine Poll (September 2008)* show that White women now favor Obama over McCain 48% to 45%. Thus, assuming the high organizational savvy of Obama campaign is effectively applied to the twin-goals of "maximal Black voter-bloc mobilization" and a viable mobilization of a "Liberal White Voter-Bloc", the chances of an Obama victory on November 4th are very good indeed.

## **REPUBLICANS & DUMBING-DOWN OF AMERICA'S POLITICAL CULTURE**

### **A. Rightwing Cynical Politics Of Dumbing-Down**

Finally, mention should be made here of the McCain campaign's shrewd maneuver in selecting Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska as the Republican vice president candidate, with its two-prong political goals. The first goal being to reinforce the conservative Republican base; and the second goal being to derail the Obama campaign's electoral chances by hiving-off sections of Democratic-leaning White women voters and middle-class White voters. In light of the hyper-rightwing conservative makeup of Sarah Palin and her skill at conservative populist articulation (demonstrated so well at the Republican Convention), that maneuver produced a couple of weeks of what might be called "electoral-stasis" for the Obama campaign—that is, slippage in Senator Obama's narrow poll lead over McCain.

Now given the absence of serious evidence of genuine professional and intellectual capabilities on Sarah Palin's part, the euphoria that Palin's candidacy evoked at and following the Republican Convention, struck a progressive Democrat like myself as bizarre. The euphoric response of a sizable segment of Republican voters to Palin was enormous; some 51% of Republicans told pollsters that Palin's vice presidential nomination was super-motivating, that it reinvigorated their support of the Republican ticket.

As I noted however, for a progressive Democrat like myself (and I suspect for many others on the liberal-moderate-progressive side of the American

political spectrum), that euphoric response by Republicans to Palin's nomination was bizarre. Why bizarre? Because it constitutes, I suggest, a kind of "Know-Nothing populism". It amounts, therefore, to "*the dumbing-down of American political culture*"— a kind of dilapidated political dynamic that our crisis-riddled corporatist-plutocratic and corporatist-hegemonic democracy does not need here in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Let me briefly elaborate this characterization of the wider meaning of the "Palin phenomenon", if you will. Remember that starting in the 1980s with the Reagan administrations, it has been conservatives generally (aided sadly enough by a cabal of conservative Black academics like Thomas Sowell, Glenn Loury, Stephen Carter, Alan Keyes, and Shelby Steele) who have relished in demonizing liberal policies associated with affirmative action practices, trashing the positive upside of those practices as they translated into advancing professional mobility for African-Americans. Thus, it is absolutely astounding that the McCain campaign and its fervent Republican voter-base wildly applaud and glamorize *the patently regressive low-standards downside of affirmative action reflected in the Sarah Palin vice president choice*. By contrast, liberal African-American leadership groups and their allies among White liberals have supported the high-standards upside of affirmative action policies.

Be that as it may, a *USA Today/Gallup Poll (September 5-7, 2008)* found that "More than half of Republicans surveyed—53%—say that having Palin on the ticket makes them more likely to vote for GOP nominee John McCain. Believe it or not, that's far more than the 20% of Republicans who said they were more likely to vote for George W. Bush in 2000 after he chose Dick Cheney as his vice president." Talk about "*the dumbing-down of American political culture*"...! (See *USA Today (September 12, 2008)*).

#### B. Republican Pundits Cynically Celebrate Dumbing-Down

Of course, a battery of rightwing media organs/pundits joined in applauding and glamorizing the low-quality Republican vice president candidate Sarah Palin, such as the *Wall Street Journal (September 12, 2008)* which was pleased that "Palin energizes GOP hopefuls [candidates]." Ralph Peters, a lead columnist in the ultra-conservative *New York Post (September 20, 2008)* titled his glamorized Palin portrait "Our Sister Sarah", and proceeded to celebrate what he called "Palin's anti-elitist charm".

Indeed, the *New York Post's* Ralph Peters was downright infantile, noting with a special flair and satisfaction that "Yes, she's 100 percent Ivy-free." Infantile as well was the *New York Post's* front page following the Biden-Palin debate on October 2nd. Washington University in St. Louis, for at top-center of the *New York Post's* front-page was a photo of Palin winking her eye and beside it the quotation- "I felt sorry for Joe". Talk about "*the dumbing-down of American political culture*"...!

There's not much doubt, of course, that Sarah Palin wasn't educated at an Ivy League college, for as the *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert noted her nomination amounts to a national crisis. Writing in the *New York Times (September 27, 2008)*, Herbert observed:

The country is understandably focused on the financial crisis. But



there is another serious issue in front of us that is not getting nearly enough attention, and that's whether Sarah Palin is qualified to be vice president—or, if the situation were to arise, president of the United States. History has shown again and again that a vice president must be ready to assume command of the ship of state in a moment's notice. But Ms. Palin has given no indication yet that she is capable of handling the monumental responsibilities of the presidency if she were called upon to do so. ...The alarm bells should be clanging and warning lights flashing. You wouldn't put an unqualified pilot in the cockpit of a jetliner. The potential for catastrophe is far, far greater with an unqualified president.

Keep in mind , by the way, that during the two weeks following the Republican Convention, it was common to have all manner of pro-Republican pundits—indeed John McCain himself—expressing the incredible gall to compare favorably Palin's professional and leadership abilities with those of Senator Barack Obama. My initial reaction to this was—and remains—that such comparison would not have occurred had Obama been a White American.

I mean, there's literally nothing in Palin's credentials—her educational and professional experience—to match the stellar quality of Obama's higher education, to match his law school achievements at Harvard Law School where he was chosen president of the august Harvard Law Review, and to match his teaching career for a decade as an adjunct professor of Constitutional Law at University of Chicago's elite Law School. Or even to match Obama's political career as a legislator, first in the Illinois State Legislature for seven years and for two years in the United States Senate. I repeat: *Had Obama been a White Democratic Party presidential nominee, pro-Republican Party pundits and Republican leadership figures wouldn't dare compare Palin's low-level credentials favorably with Senator Barack Obama's.*

However, interestingly enough and to my surprise , an inkling of genuine criticism of Palin's nomination from top-level conservative columnists was finally forthcoming by the middle of September. While not sharply formulated as the New York Times columnist Bob Herbert's criticism of Palin as the Republican vice president candidate, the critiques of the “Palin phenomenon” from several conservative columnists were nonetheless solid.

The sophisticated conservative columnist David Brooks, in his column titled “Why Experience Matters” in the *New York Times* (September 16, 2008), proceeded in a quite convoluted philosophical manner to answer a question he put thus: “Is Sarah Palin qualified to be vice president”? His answer in final essence was “no”. Here's how Brooks said this:

Sarah Palin has many virtues. If you wanted someone to destroy a corrupt establishment, she'd be your woman. But the constructive act of governance is another matter. She has not been engaged in national issues, does not have a repertoire of historic patterns and, like President Bush, she seems to compensate for her lack of experience with brashness and excessive decisiveness. While the philosophically oriented conservative columnist David Brooks packaged his critique of the “Palin phenomenon” in a rather convoluted manner, another leading conservative columnist spoke more

candidly. Richard Cohen, a conservative columnist for the Washington Post, set aside his philosophical conservatism interests and went for the juggler, so to speak. Characterizing the choice of Palin as "McCain's Personal Treason" in the title of his column for the *Washington Post* (September 16, 2008), Cohen is as straight-talking and candid as he could possibly be in lambasting the Republican vice president nominee as unqualified:

His [McCain's] opportunistic and irresponsible choice of Sarah Palin as his political heir—the person to whom he would leave the country—is a form of personal treason, a betrayal of all he once stood for. Palin, no matter what her other attributes, is shockingly unprepared to become President. McCain knows that. *He means to win, which is all right; he means to win at all costs, which is not.* (Emphasis Added)

### C. Cultural-Hypocrisy & Racism Aid Dumbing-Down Our Politics

Whether or not solid critiques of the Palin appointment by several leading conservative pundits will contribute to a weakening of Palin's Know-Nothing Populist political appeal, remains to be seen. However, there have been several astute critiques of the Palin phenomenon's "dumbing-down of American political culture" by progressive African-American analysts that will, I believe, contribute to a weakening of Palin's Know-Nothing Populist political appeal.

Two of these progressive critiques have appeared in the pages of Black Commentator. Writing in her regular essay titled "Represent Our Resistance", the seminal critical -theory analyst Lenore Daniels, is masterful at deconstructing the "Palin phenomenon". She astutely *decodes the frightful interface of political-authoritarianism and cultural-hypocrisy represented by Palin's Know-Nothing Populist appeal*. Listen to Daniels' unmasking of the political-authoritarian dynamics hidden under Palin's Know-Nothing Populist garb:

The once-mayor of a tiny town in Alaska, hockey mom, and now governor of a state with the population of Milwaukee is bad news for all women in the U.S. The 'grooming' of Palin is an old Trojan Horse trick to break, to capture the will of independent-minded Women and strangle our memory of First Women—Black women.... Palin is a patriarch! She speaks with the mouth, lipstick and all, of a patriarch. Palin's mind is cluttered with the language of war. Her jab about community is evident of a non-thinking robot, courtesy of her makers—the patriarchs. ...Governor Palin, the patriarch of Alaska, would favor Women bowing, as she does, before the altar of the warmongers!

But also hidden under Palin's Know-Nothing Populist garb is another buttress of today's corporatist-plutocratic American democracy now fostered by the Republican Party's "Palin phenomenon"-- blatant cultural-hypocrisy. As Dr. Lenore Daniels informs us in Issue [291](#) of **BC**:

...Then there's Hockey Mom's pregnant daughter Bristol. Conservatives like Palin are 'experts' in telling others how to raise their children. *What happened to the good wholesome Christian values in that house? 'People in glass houses....'* Roe vs. Wade is

blasphemy for Mrs. Hockey Mom—the female voice of patriarchy.  
(Emphasis Added).

We must also mention another core foundational feature of the “Palin phenomenon” that, to my knowledge, has gained visibility in only one media organ that I’m aware of—the Online magazine *Black Commentator*. The core foundational feature of the “Palin phenomenon” I have in mind is the disgraceful rightwing record of Governor Palin's Alaskan administration vis-à-vis Alaska's Native American community and Alaska's African-American community. Our knowledge of this is provided by the prominent civil rights lawyer and former Amnesty International lawyer David Love. In an essay titled “Palin Hates Native Alaskans, Black Folks Too,” published in *Black Commentator* ([October 2, 2008](#)), David Love breaks new ground regarding the tawdry substance of the “Palin phenomenon”. Listen to David Love.:

What receives less attention [regarding Palin], 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 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. ...Native Alaskan men are 10 percent of the population, but 40 percent of the prisoners. [Native Alaskans are] chronically unemployed and victims of discrimination....

Love also notes the state of Alaska's official practices in regard to other of its colored citizens are equally riddled with neglect and disrespect.

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 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.* (Emphasis Added).

### **A CONCLUDING NOTE**

Meanwhile, there is, fortunately, growing evidence that the earlier conservative euphoria surrounding the Republican Party's “Palin phenomenon” has weakened. For example, a poll by *Pew Research Center* (*September 27-29, 2008*) found 51% of voters saying Palin is “not qualified to be president”, while only 20% said Senator Joe Biden was “not qualified to be president”.

Moreover, this ebbing of the euphoria surrounding the “Palin phenomenon” has been particularly striking in New York state.

Several weeks ago a Siena Research Institute poll reported that McCain had eaten into Obama's earlier double-digit lead in New York state, closing the gap with the aid of the

"Palin phenomenon" to 5-percentage points –46% Obama, 41% McCain. An article on the most recent Siena Research Institute poll in the *New York Daily News* (October 3, 2008), announced a reversal in McCain's status. Titled "Dem Jumps To 22-point Lead Over McCain In Latest Poll," the article reported that:

Obama leads Sen. John McCain 58% to 36%, an incredible jump from Siena's poll three weeks ago that said the Illinois Democrat's New York lead had shriveled to just 5 percentage points. ...[Furthermore] as New Yorkers have gotten to better know Palin her unfavorable rating has risen to 52%, up from 30% three weeks ago. Her favorable rating was at 36%, down from 46% three weeks ago.

Simultaneously with the ebbing of the appeal of the "Palin phenomenon" among some Democratic-leaning voters like White women and Independents—as the Siena Research Institute poll suggests—*there's been a veritable "surge" in Obama's standing in the Electoral College count as measured by state-level polls.* Sunday's *New York Times* (October 5, 2008) four weeks before November 4th election day, informed us of Obama's steady advance in the Electoral Count as follows:

Mr. Obama now has a solid lead in states that account for 189 electoral votes, and he is well positioned in states representing 71 more electoral votes, for a total of 260, according to a tally by The New York Times, based on polls and interviews with officials from both campaigns and outside analysts. It takes 270 electoral votes to win the presidency. McCain has solid leads in states with 160 electoral votes and is well positioned in states with another 40 electoral votes...for a total of 200. Just six states representing 78 electoral votes—Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio and Virginia—are tossups.

Thus, it appears that as of the first week of October, there's mounting evidence of a solid shift of voters' preference in the presidential campaign toward Senator Obama's candidacy. His candidacy's chances of victory in the November election remain good indeed.

Click [here](#) to read Part I.

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**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member Martin Kilson, PhD hails from an African Methodist background and clergy: From a great-great grandfather who founded an African Methodist Episcopal church in Maryland in the 1840s; from a great-grandfather AME clergyman; from a Civil War veteran great-grandfather who founded an African Union Methodist Protestant church in Pennsylvania in 1885; and from an African Methodist clergyman father who pastored in an Eastern Pennsylvania mill town - Ambler, PA. He attended Lincoln University (PA), 1949-1953, and Harvard graduate school. Appointed in 1962 as the first African-American to teach in Harvard College, in 1969 he was the first African-American tenured at Harvard. He retired in 2003 as a Frank G. Thomson Professor of Government, Emeritus. His publications include: [Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone](#) (Harvard University Press, 1966); [Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience](#) (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970); [New States in the Modern World \(Center for International Affairs\)](#) (Harvard University Press, 1975); [The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays](#) (Harvard University Press, 1976); The Making of Black

Intellectuals: Studies on the African American Intelligentsia (*Forthcoming. University of Missouri Press*); and The Transformation of the African American Intelligentsia, 1900-2008 (*Forthcoming*). Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Kilson.

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