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**Obama's Asian Sister
on Campaign Trail**

Brings another aspect to his multicultural identity

(AP) -- The throng of Asian-American donors drew closer to hear Barack Obama's sister describe the wide arc of his life: beyond politics and Chicago, into his childhood in Indonesia and Hawaii.

To many in this San Francisco crowd, Obama's Asian-American half-sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, represents yet another aspect of Obama's identity that makes him unique as a presidential candidate, although it has been underplayed amid the excitement surrounding his shot at becoming the first black president.

"It would be the first time that the first family is comprised in part of Asian-Americans — as well as African-Americans, of course," said Keith Kamisugi, a coordinator with Asian-Americans for Obama.

Soetoro-Ng and Obama have different fathers and the same mother. Her father is Indonesian, his is Kenyan. Her husband is Chinese-Canadian.

Initially, as the campaign focused on fighting out the primaries, state by state, "the idea was to downplay to some degree race and ethnicity," said Soetoro-Ng.

Nine years younger than her brother, she considers him "the



Maya Soetoro-Ng



Barack Obama

strong male force" in her life.

It was with Obama she attended her first blues concert and her first

voter registration drive, she said. The two remain close: She was there when Obama's oldest daughter, Malia, 9, was born, and plans to help celebrate her 10th birthday on the 4th of July, on the campaign trail.

Soetoro-Ng's appearances give voters a chance to get to know Obama as a person. Her stories illustrate the development of his character, from his days as a teenager who loved basketball and bodysurfing and didn't always get the strongest grades, to his growing sense of civic duty in the summers she spent with him in Chicago.

"We are ready for a more complex construction of identity as a country," she said, dismissing the possibility some voters might find it hard to relate to Obama's multiethnic background and foreign experience.

"Maybe not everybody is as mixed or as hybrid as he is. But he gets Kansas, because we have Kansas," she said, referring to their mother's background. "He gets the Midwest. He gets the south side of Chicago."

And he "has a lot of affection for Asian cultures, in all of their various forms," she said.

New GI Bill Welcomed

For education benefits increase

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Jim Willis and Gov. Ted Kulongoski welcomed the signing of a new GI Bill for veterans that significantly expands education benefits for veterans.

The federal legislation passed in Congress and was enacted by President Bush on Monday as part of new funding for the Iraq War.

"In Oregon, we've done a lot to help our veterans with education benefits," Kulongoski said. "This new GI Bill keeps the faith with those who serve our country and will make an invaluable investment in our future."

The new GI Bill has been likened to that of the GI Bill offered to World War II veterans in that it provides for nearly all the costs of attending school.



Ted Kulongoski

"One of the reasons the World War II generation is the greatest generation is because they came home from war, went back to school, and then began leading our nation," Willis said. "With this bill, we

can make another great generation of future leaders."

The following are the highlights of the new GI Bill:

Service members no longer will have to "buy-in" to the program by paying \$1,200 to sign up. Instead, eligibility is based on months of active duty post Sept. 11, 2001.

For most veterans, the program pays full cost of tuition and fees at any public institution, a living stipend, and a \$1,000 per year book stipend.

The average value of the benefit will rise from \$9,900 to \$18,815.

The time limit for using the New GI Bill increases from 10 years to 15 years after discharge.

"I have been supporting this effort to expand the GI Bill since the legislation was drafted," Willis said. "Ensuring that our veterans can have the best education our nation has to offer is the right thing to do," he said.

Abortion Protest Too Much for Builder

Backs out of MLK clinic

(AP) — A construction company set to help build a Planned Parenthood clinic in northeast Portland has dropped the project, citing pressure from anti-abortion activists.

But the developer, Beech Street Partners, has assembled a new team of builders and will act as its own general contractor to keep the plans on track.

Walsh Construction Co. owner Bob Walsh, said he was approached two years ago to build a medical clinic. But when Planned Parenthood of the Columbia/Willamette

signed on as the anchor tenant, Walsh said, he called other builders who had dealt with aggressive anti-abortion activists. He was told that protesters had gone as far as staking out contractors' homes.

"It's disruptive and very threatening," he told The Oregonian. "I just didn't want to put my family through that."

Walsh said his decision was not based on moral judgment.

James Adamson, a Beech Street associate, said protesters have the right to voice their opinion. "And we also have fair protection under the law," he said. "It's basically a big exercise of free speech."

Building designer Kip Richardson, of Ankrom Moisan

Architects, said he's stayed with the project despite the protests because Adamson is a long-term client who's developing an area where the city has had trouble attracting investment.

"He's really trying to do the right thing and improve that neighborhood," Richardson said.

Completion is set for July 2009. Planned Parenthood will use the space for both medical clinics and its regional headquarters and will bring an estimated 140 jobs to the neighborhood.

The nonprofit provides sexual and reproductive health care to women, men and teens. According to its annual report, only about 3 percent of its clients seek abortions.

Pioneering Black Pilot Dies at 87

(AP) -- Lt. Col. Charles "Chuck" Dryden, one of the first of the pioneering black World War II pilots known as the Tuskegee Airmen, has died. He was 87.

Dryden died June 24 in Atlanta of natural causes, said Roger Neal, a spokesman for the National Museum of Patriotism in Atlanta. Dryden was on the museum's board of directors.

"He was not just a part of American history; he helped to make it," museum founder Nick Snider said Thursday.

Dryden's 21-year military career included combat missions in Korea and assignments in Japan, Germany and U.S. bases. He retired from the Air Force in 1962.

About 1,000 pilots trained as a segregated Army Air Corps unit at the Tuskegee Army Flying School in Alabama during World War II.



Lt. Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. (on wing) talks with Lt. Charles W. Dryden in this 1943 photo before Dryden goes on a mission in a P-40 fighter plane at the Army air base in Tuskegee, Ala.