

Clueless Sarah Palin Equates US Debt with Slavery

The most remarkable thing about former GOP vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin is her boundless knack for sneaking a racial dig into one of her screwy trade mark swipes at President Obama and the Democrats. The latest Palin race card play is her likening the country's debt to China and other foreign nations as slavery. Palin is hardly unique in playing on the slavery analogy to make a point. A legion of GOP officials and GOP leaning mouth-pieces have made a studied habit of tossing the slavery analogy out whenever the person that they want to assail is African-American or faintly touches on an issue in which there is an explicit or implied benefit to minorities be it affirmative action, federal spending, government backed social programs, or education reforms.

It's always done with a wink and a nod to stir and pander to ultra-conservatives and plain border line bigots. We just witnessed that a few weeks back when GOP ultra-conservatives new darling Dr. Ben Carson branded Obamacare as worse than slavery. For that he got the predictable praise and assent from the hard right. But Palin brings a special mastery to the play on racism and other sub-



THE LAST WORD

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

tle code racial analogies to savage Obama. That's because she remains the fount of an utter lurid and prurient fascination by many in the media. They know that she's always good for an eye popping quote that's guaranteed to make news and get the tongues wagging.

GOP leaders early recognized that Palin was the perfect stalking horse to say what top party leaders couldn't say on race. A tip of her usefulness on this attack line came during the 2008 presidential campaign. Palin at the time took some heat for telling a meeting of Alaska's black leaders in April 2008 that she didn't have to hire any blacks. The black leaders had complained to Palin about the invisibility of blacks and minorities on her staff and in state governmental departments. Even more damning, she purportedly told the black leaders that she did-

n't intend to hire any. Palin's campaign manager and a staff representative hotly denied to this writer that Palin had made the comment. However, they quickly declared that Palin was absolutely color-blind in hiring and insisted that she did not push any special programs to boost minority hiring. Palin was as good as her word. There was a glaring paucity of blacks, Asians, Hispanics on her

to question the validity of Obama's birth certificate.

She again fanned the latent bigotry among her fans with her Going Rogue book tour. She flatly said that she'd avoid the big city liberal media hot-beds and tour in mostly small and mid-sized towns in the Heartland states. This was a not so subtle code guarantee that her audience would be overwhelmingly white, working class,

have made foot-in-the-mouth racist cracks. Their response when called on the carpet has always been the same. They make a duck-and-dodge denial, claim that they were misquoted or issue a weak, halfhearted apology. And each time the response from top Republicans is either silence, or, if the firestorm is great enough, to give the offender a much-delayed, mild verbal hand-slap.

Palin never has had that problem. Even though she has long fallen out of favor with GOP leaders and has proven toxic wherever she appears to try and stir support for a far right GOP candidate. But it's the media's fascination with her combined with her noisy far-right constituency that revel in her potshots at Obama, especially the ones that have the odor of race attached to them, that gives her political shelf value. The slavery crack is just the latest, but it won't be the last. As long as Obama sits in the White House, the slavery comparison to anything the right wants to attack and everything that it connotes will always be a serviceable term to toss out with the secure knowledge that it will jangle the desired chord among Palin's GOP fan club and sadly many beyond.

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staff and relatively few in top state jobs. Also during the campaign, Palin was mute on the series of racist emails that some state employees sent out on state of Alaska accounts.

Palin gave another boost to the bigots by almost single-handedly reviving the withered on the vine, unabashed, racist tinged, birther campaign. Palin accomplished that neat trick with her off the cuff quip to a conservative radio talk show host that it was "fair game"

and conservative. That's exactly the audience she got. It's an audience that won't make her uncomfortable.

This didn't type Palin as a racial bigot. But it did type her as the latest in the long train of right-side GOP politicians who calculate that they can score big with a subtle play of the race card. During the past decade, a parade of Republican state and local officials, conservative talk show jocks and even some Republican bigwigs

Student Success Hinges on Parental Involvement

In recent years, the debate about ways to close the achievement gap and adequately prepare primary and secondary African American students for success has focused on such remedies as ensuring resource equity, expanding preschool opportunities, and raising teacher quality. While all of these are necessary, one area that is often overlooked is the importance of parental involvement.



TO BE EQUAL

Marc Morial

revealed in a new National Urban League survey, "Engaged to Achieve: A Community Perspective on How Parents are Engaged in Their Children's Education."

The survey solicited the views and opinions of K-12 teachers, school administrators and volunteers in communities across the country about their perceived differences in parental awareness, parental involvement and opportunities for student achievement and success based on race and economic background.

A joint effort of the National Urban League Washington Bureau and the National Voices Project with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the study shows that when there was a difference in how parents were perceived, African-American parents were more commonly perceived as being less aware and less involved in their children's education than white parents. Report authors suggest that when these perceived disparities are not addressed constructively, they may affect the type and depth of parent engagement efforts directed to low-income parents and parents of color. Other key findings include:

African American parents' engagement in their children's education was felt to be more reactive than proactive, i.e. confronting perceived racial bias or addressing discipline issues. Parents who resided in communities

where efforts were made to address racial disparities were nearly twice as likely (82 percent vs. 45 percent) to report they felt more aware of their child's academic progress than parents in communities where no such efforts were made.

Though most respondents felt that students and parents typically understand the connection between education and economic opportunity, they felt that race and income played a significant role in

students' access to the experiences that help to promote success. The survey suggests ways to bridge some of the gaps in parent engagement, including:

Educational requirements should be clear and easy to understand for all parents, regardless of their educational background.

Parents must be regularly updated about their children's academic performance in a manner that provides clarity about how students are meeting, or not meeting, spe-

cific requirements.

Efforts to engage parents must take into account practical barriers to entry that parents may face and tailor such efforts accordingly.

In communities where racial and ethnic disparities are pervasive, there must be targeted investments and customized approaches to improving parent engagement.

Marc H. Morial, former mayor of New Orleans, is president and CEO of the National Urban League.

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Educational requirements should be clear and easy to understand for all parents, regardless of their educational background

No one disputes the fact that children are more likely to perform better, graduate from high school and be better prepared for college and the world of work when their parents are actively involved, both at home and at school, in their education. But for many low-income African American parents who may be single and struggling to make ends meet, finding the time and energy to help with homework, volunteer at school and communicate regularly with teachers, can be especially challenging. They need help. And schools and districts that serve low-income students and students of color must do more to overcome greater barriers to effectively engaging parents. These and other findings are