

Maternal Flame

Sarah Palin's family-friendly appeal.

By Steve Sailer

WHY, IN ONE UPROARIOUS week of American politicking that not even H.L. Mencken would have expected, has the obscure governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin, outraged roughly one half of the country and overjoyed the other?

What intrigues people about elections aren't the platform planks. Deep down, political contests are about picking symbolic champions. Just as Barack Obama, recently of the Illinois legislature, has excited tens of millions by his emphasis on his bloodlines, by his implication that national racial reconciliation is "in my DNA," the overstuffed life story of the caribou huntress and mother of five (and soon to be grandmother at age 44) embodies the oldest boast Americans have made about their homeland: the fecundity of the frontier.

Compared to Obama's much-lauded but tedious life, cautiously plotted in countless Chicago backrooms, the Alaskan-sized lustiness of Governor Palin's full-throttle biography—the only-in-Alaska factoids about her keep piling up like an Old West tall tale—always leaves me laughing.

Consider, for example, Palin's husband Todd. What kind of man could be married to a woman so hormonally exuberant, with her dual archetypes straight out of a Camille Paglia reverie: half Alaskan Amazon, half Venus of Willendorf? Exactly the kind you'd expect: he works as both a North Slope oilfield roughneck and a salmon fisherman. He's also won the state's snowmobile championship, the 2,000-mile Tesoro Iron Dog race, four times. He only finished fourth this year because he had to ride the last 400 miles

with a broken arm after being thrown 70 feet. Did I mention he's part Eskimo?

Mrs. Palin's instant ascent to frontier folk hero explains some of the unhinged hatred felt by Obama supporters. They'd been fantasizing about their genetically nuanced man of the future, their political Tiger Woods, when they were blindsided by a figure out of America's buried past, a merrily comic Wild West character in the tradition of Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane. She's already inspired hundreds of one-liners in the Chuck Norris mode—"As head of Alaska's National Guard, Sarah Palin taught troops how to scare a grenade into not exploding"—the modern equivalent of all the yarns about Davy Crockett.

The even more fundamental reason underlying all the fury on one side and amusement on the other is that this brouhaha centers around female fertility.

In more than a few liberals, she sets off the same creepy stalker behavior that Michelle Malkin has endured for years. Palin has the accent of Francis McDormand's classic character Marge Gunderson, the heavily pregnant lady sheriff who shoots the bad guy in "Fargo," but, as Obama has discovered, Palin has an old point guard's sharp elbows. The little-studied but no doubt sizable Nerd Bloc is excited by pictures of an attractive woman shooting big guns, just like in their favorite Angelina Jolie movies.

Human beings can't help feeling strongly about making babies. Look at the celebrity gossip columns. The who-is-sleeping-with-whom stuff can't compete with the pregnancy news. Stars now auction off exclusive rights to the first photos of their offspring, even

though all newborns look alike. Pictures of the new twins from the most celebrated breeding stock—Jolie and Brad Pitt—went for a reported \$14 million.

An obsession in politics with breeding is both very old (hereditary monarchy) and very contemporary. The main qualifications of the current president and this year's Democratic runner-up are that they are, respectively, the scion and consort of ex-presidents. More subtly, Obama launched himself at the 2004 Democratic convention by devoting the first 380 words of his famous speech to detailing the two stocks from which he was crossbred. He implied that, like the heir to a dynastic merger of yore—think King Henry VIII, offspring of a Lancaster-York marriage that ended the War of the Roses—he is the one we've been waiting for to end the War of the Races. (Obama left out the part about his mom being 17 when his polygamist father, who already had a family, got her pregnant.)

To the outrage of Obamaphiles, Palin has horned in on all that subliminal symbolism with her own old-fashioned American brand. She's had five kids while throwing out the crooks and nepotists. And now she has a 17-year-old pregnant daughter engaged to a strapping 18-year-old hockey player in one of the few places left in America where a young man with a strong back can support a family.

Thus, Blue State whites are alarmed and enraged to be reminded that Red State whites can afford to outbreed them.

Frontier fecundity is hardly a new concept. In 1751, Ben Franklin pointed out that America's low population density meant higher wages and lower land prices, which in turn allowed earlier marriages and more children.

In this century, the fundamental engine painting low-density areas red and high-density areas blue is what I call Affordable Family Formation. Where wages are high compared to home prices, people can afford to marry earlier and have

more children. For instance, Todd Palin, who is not a college graduate, earned \$93,000 last year between fishing and oil-field work. (He would have made even more, but to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest for his wife in her dealings with oil companies, he stepped down from a management position to a unionized rank-and-file job.) According to ACCRA cost-of-living data on Best-Places.net, the standard of living you can enjoy in red Wasilla, Alaska for \$93,000 would cost you \$159,000 in blue San Francisco. Due to its remoteness and frigidity, Alaska isn't a cheap place to live, but housing costs in exurban Wasilla are only 35 percent of what they are in San Francisco. Moreover, Alaska's distance

from the Mexican border means that blue-collar wages are high.

Not surprisingly, Alaska is second only to Mormon Utah in total fertility among non-Hispanic white women, with 2.28 babies per lifetime, 38 percent higher than in crowded California.

This Baby Gap helps paint the electoral map red or blue. In 2004, Bush carried 25 of the top 26 states in the total fertility rate (expected number of babies per woman per lifetime) among whites, while Kerry was victorious in the bottom 16. It's all about the ratio of land and resources to people. Even excluding Alaska, the counties that Bush carried in 2004 are four times as large in area as Kerry's counties.

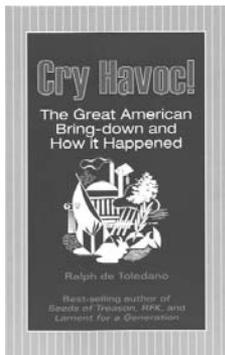
The policy implication of this was clear

to Ben Franklin a quarter of a millennium ago: restricting immigration benefits Americans. The political implications of the Baby Gap should be equally clear to Republican leaders today, but there's little evidence that John McAmnesty has noticed.

In Palin's case, having this much of a life might be too much for a president. (Margaret Thatcher once told my wife that she was glad she had twins so she could get having babies over and done with and get back to work.) Still, John McCain, who lost five planes yet survived and who picked up the GOP nomination by the random chance of winning in winner-take-all states, may have stumbled into another piece of luck. ■

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Connerly Cashes In

The anti-preferences activist gets rich off of affirmative action.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

THIS WAS SUPPOSED to be a banner year for Ward Connerly, the former University of California regent and the Right's most visible anti-affirmative-action activist. His 2000 biography, *Creating Equal: My Fight Against Racial Preferences*, was re-released in February. His latest book, *Lessons From My Uncle James*, was set to hit shelves this summer. More significantly, he was to be the driving force behind a series of ballot initiatives that would have forbidden state governments from "grant[ing] preferential treatment to any group or individual on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in areas of public contracting, public education, or public employment." He marketed this effort as Super Tuesday for Equal Rights.

George Will gave his imprimatur to Connerly and his mission in a *Washington Post* column: "Will the superstitions surrounding race ever fade away? Not before governance is cleansed of the sort of race-based policies opposed by Connerly, who intimately knows the increasing absurdity of racial classifications and the folly of government preferences based on them."

But Connerly's plans are unraveling. His biography is absent from most stores and barely registered in conservative book clubs. His second book is mysteriously delayed. His ballot ambitions were scaled back, first from 10 states to five. Then legal challenges and organized opposition winnowed the tally down to just two.

This is unfortunate because anti-affirmative-action ballot measures usually pass when put to a vote. Connerly would

know. He and the nonprofit organizations he founded helped three such measures pass—in California in 1996, Washington in 1998, and Michigan in 2006.

But don't spend too much sympathy on Ward Connerly. The Right's point man on affirmative action doesn't need political successes to be a success. While his plans sputter and his former achievements are overturned, Connerly is still being handsomely rewarded. Once he received favored status from the conservative movement, his future was guaranteed. As an activist, Connerly has made millions opposing affirmative action. As a businessman and consultant, he has also made hundreds of thousands in large part because of it.

Between 1999 and 2005, Connerly's nonprofits, the American Civil Rights Institute and the American Civil Rights Coalition, didn't challenge a single affirmative-action law. Yet donations climbed to almost \$2 million per year. The share that Connerly paid to himself, or to his private for-profit consulting firm, Connerly and Associates, also dramatically increased. In 1998, 22 percent of his nonprofits' revenue was paid to Connerly in salary or to his firm. By 2001, Connerly's salary and the fees charged by Connerly and Associates ate up 49 percent of the nonprofits' combined revenue. Most of the money paid to the firm was listed on tax forms as "speaking fees." In 2006, when Connerly took up a concrete goal in political activism—ending Michigan's affirmative-action policies—the cut of nonprofit revenue paid to him and his firm rose to 66 percent of total receipts, nearly \$1.6 million.

Connerly's nonprofits employ him for 30 hours a week and two others full time. The nonprofits then hire him from Connerly and Associates to make speeches. In 2003, ACRI and ACRC paid him \$314,079 while he managed two people. By comparison, that year the National Action Network, which receives about \$1 million in public funds, only paid Al Sharpton about \$4,000. The Claremont Institute, a neoconservative think tank in California, paid its top executive \$132,000, and its staff is 9 times the size of Connerly's. The Heritage Foundation paid its president \$292,000 to manage a staff of over 180. The primary financial responsibility that Ward Connerly had at his nonprofits that year was paying his firm over \$400,000 for Ward Connerly the consultant, Ward Connerly the speaker, Ward Connerly the political maven—and occasionally a security detail to guard him.

Is this illegal? The IRS makes clear in its statute that nonprofit organizations cannot be used to enrich one individual or company, but few of these cases are prosecuted. In 2006, during the heat of Connerly's Michigan push, Congressmen John Conyers and Charles Rangel asked the IRS to look into his dealings. An IRS spokesman said that he could not comment on a case under investigation. Connerly defended himself by saying that he avoids any trickery on his IRS forms and dutifully pays taxes on all the money he receives.

Not long after the *Sacramento Bee* and the House members began inquiring about his compensation, Connerly changed procedures at his nonprofits.