OBAMA AND THE PALIN EFFECT
Deepak Chopra on Sarah of nearby Russia

Sometimes politics has the uncanny effect of mirroring the national psyche even when nobody intended to do that. This is perfectly illustrated by the rousing effect that Gov. Sarah Palin had on the Republican convention in Minneapolis this week. On the surface, she outdoes former Vice President Dan Quayle as an unlikely choice, given her negligent parochial expertise in the complex affairs of governing. Her state of Alaska has less than 700,000 residents, which reduces the job of governor to the scale of running one-tenth of New York City. By comparison, Rudy Giuliani is a towering international figure. Palin's pluck has been admired, and her forthrightness, but her real appeal goes deeper.

She is the reverse of Barack Obama, in essence his shadow, deriding his idealism and exhorting people to obey their worst impulses. In psychological terms the shadow is that part of the psyche that hides out of sight, countering our aspirations, virtue, and vision with qualities we are ashamed to face: anger, fear, revenge, violence, selfishness, and suspicion of 'the other.' For millions of Americans, Obama triggers those feelings, but they don't want to express them. He is calling for us to reach for our higher selves, and frankly, that stirs up hidden reactions of an unsavory kind. (Just to be perfectly clear, I am not making a verbal play out of the fact that Sen. Obama is black. The shadow is a metaphor widely in use before his arrival on the scene.)

I recognize that psychological analysis of politics is usually not welcome by the public, but I believe such a perspective can be helpful here to understand Palins message. In her acceptance speech Gov. Palin sent a rousing call to those who want to celebrate their resistance to change and a higher vision.

Look at what she stands for:

-- Small town values
-- a denial of America's global role, a return to petty, small-minded parochialism.
-- Ignorance of world affairs -- a repudiation of the need to repair America's image abroad.
-- Family values -- a code for walling out anybody who makes a claim for social justice. Such strangers, being outside the family, don't need to be heeded.
-- Rigid stands on guns and abortion -- a scornful repudiation that these issues can be negotiated with those who disagree.
-- Patriotism -- the usual fallback in a failed war.
-- 'Reform' -- an italicized term, since in addition to cleaning out corruption and excessive spending, one also throws out anyone who doesn't fit your ideology.

Palin reinforces the overall message of the reactionary right, which has been in play since 1980, that social justice is liberal-radical, that minorities and immigrants, being different from 'us' pure American types, can be ignored, that progressivism takes too much effort and globalism is a foreign threat. The radical right marches under the banners of 'I'm all right, Jack,' and 'Why change? Everything's OK as it is.' The irony, of course, is that Gov. Palin is a woman and a reactionary at the same time. She can add mom to apple pie on her resume, while blithely reversing forty years of feminist progress. The irony is superficial; there are millions of women who stand on the side of conservatism, however obviously they are voting against their own good. The Republicans have won multiple national elections by raising shadow issues based on fear, rejection, hostility to change, and narrow-mindedness.

Obama's call for higher ideals in politics can't be seen in a vacuum. The shadow is real; it was bound to respond. Not just conservatives possess a shadow -- we all do. So what comes next is a contest between the two forces of progress and inertia. Will the shadow win again, or has its furtive appeal become exhausted? No one can predict. The best thing about Gov. Palin is that she brought this conflict to light, which makes the upcoming debate honest. It would be a shame to elect another Reagan, who's smiling persona was a stalking horse for the reactionary forces that have brought us to the demoralized state we are in. We deserve to see what we are getting, without disguise.
If you use your ivy league education to help Americans whose jobs have been outsourced, you are a failure. If you use your ivy league education to help outsource American jobs, you are a success.

If you're a minority and you're selected for a job over more qualified candidates you're a "token hire." If you're a conservative and you're selected for a job over more qualified candidates you're a "game changer."

If you live in an Urban area and you get a girl pregnant you're a "baby daddy." If you're the same in Alaska you're a "teen father."

If you grow up in Hawaii you're "exotic." If you grow up in Alaska eating moose burgers, you're the "quintessential American story."

If you name you kid Barack you're "unpatriotic." If you name your kid Track, you're "colorful."

If you're a Democrat and you make a VP pick without fully vetting the individual you're "reckless." If you're a Republican who doesn't fully vet, you're a "maverick."

If you're a man and you decide to run for office despite your wife's recurrence of cancer you're a "questionable spouse." If you're a woman and you decide to run for office despite having five kids including a newborn... Well, we don't know what that is 'cause "THAT'S NOT A FAIR QUESTION TO ASK."

If you get 18 million people to vote for you in a national presidential primary, you're a "phony." If you get 100,000+ people to vote you governor of the 47th most populous state in the Union, you're "well loved."

If you are biracial and born in a state not connected to the lower 48, America needs darn near 2 years and 3 major speeches to "get to know you." If you're white and from a state not connected to the lower 48, America needs 36 minutes and 38 seconds worth of an acceptance speech to know you're "one of us."

If you're a black man and you use a scholarship to get into college, then work your way up to being the president of the Harvard Law Review, you're "uppity." If you're a conservative and your parents pay your way to Hawaii Pacific University ... you only have four more schools to attend over the next five years before you somehow manage to graduate (it might be five more schools over the next five years.)

If you are a liberal and your unwed daughter gets pregnant, it's "immoral". If you are a conservative, it's called "family values".

If a Democrat uses his children for photo opportunities, he's exploiting them. If Republican uses her children for photo opportunities, she's a "proud hockey mom".

If you are a Democrat and the media digs into your past and prints it, it is called "good journalism and getting to the truth". If you are a Republican and they do the same thing, it is called a "smear campaign"

If you have studied international affairs for several decades, you're "inexperienced at foreign affairs". If you live in a state that is geographically near a foreign country, you have "foreign policy expertise"

If you're a black woman, with advanced academic degrees, and you have children while married, you're a "baby mama". If you're a white woman who barely graduated from college, and you get knocked up and then get married after you're pregnant, you're a "SuperMom"
If you're a Republican and your underage daughter gets pregnant out of wedlock, it's a "blessing."
If you're a Democrat and you get a blow job, it's a matter for the Supreme Court.

If you're a young American serviceman abused by enemy captors on a daily basis, you're a hero who stoically endured inhumane torture and put country first.
If you're a young Arab or Pakistani grabbed in a battle zone, shipped to an American military prison by way of a third country, and held indefinitely without trial, you're a vicious Islamic terrorist who doesn't deserve to be treated like a human being.

If you're a Republican, you swear Jesus is a registered member of your party.
If you're a Democrat, you appreciate that Jesus was a community organizer.

If you chant "Drill, Baby, Drill" you are positing an effective and responsible energy plan, science and logic be damned.
If you chant "Yes, We Can" you are a mindless automaton.

If you're a Republican with a questionable academic background, you're a champion of American education.
If you're a Democrat who was editor of the Harvard Law Review, you want to destroy America's schools.

If you're a 13-year-old Chelsea Clinton, the right-wing press calls you "First Dog."
If you're a 17-year-old pregnant unwed daughter of a Republican, the right-wing press calls you "beautiful" and "courageous."

If you cheated on your first wife with a rich heiress, left your disfigured wife, and married the heiress the next month, you're a Christian.
If you have been married to the same woman for 19 years and raised 2 beautiful daughters, you're "risky".

If you're a Democrat and you prefer wine over beer, you are an "elitist."
If you're a Republican and you prefer a beer heiress over your first wife, you are a "committed family man."

If you spend 18 months building a campaign around the theme of "Change," it's just "empty rhetoric."
If one week before your party's national convention you SUDDENLY make your candidacy about "Change," that's "red meat."

If you're black and never served in the military, but fight for veterans' benefits and were right in predicting the disastrous Iraq war would be a mistake, you don't care about the troops.
If you're a white former POW and spend 26 years in the Senate voting against virtually every bill put forward to help veterans, and want to stay in Iraq indefinitely, you're a hero.

If you're a Republican president and you engage in illegal war costing 4000+ lives, bankrupt the country, and legalize torture and spy on US citizens, that's okay, because Jesus is your favorite political thinker.
If you're a Democratic president and you generate the largest increases in wealth for all economic classes, preside over a balanced budget, and create an unprecedented surplus, you get impeached.

‘Jim Crawford’ Republicans

The GOP is working to keep eligible African-Americans from voting in several states.


It was a mainstay of Jim Crow segregation: for 100 years after the Civil War, Southern white Democrats kept eligible blacks from voting with poll taxes, literacy tests and property requirements. Starting in the 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court declared these assaults on the heart of American democracy unconstitutional. Now, with the help of a 2008 Supreme Court decision, Crawford vs. Marion County (Indiana) Election Board, white Republicans in some areas will keep eligible blacks from voting by requiring driver's licenses. Not only is this new-fangled discrimination constitutional, it's spreading. GOP proponents of the move say they are merely trying to reduce voter fraud. But while occasional efforts to stuff ballot boxes through phony absentee voting still surface, the incidence of individual vote fraud—voting when you aren't eligible—is virtually non-existent, as "The Truth About Vote Fraud," a study by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, clearly shows. In other words, the problem Republicans claim they want to combat with increased ID requirements doesn't exist. Meanwhile, those ID hurdles facing individuals do nothing to stop the organized insiders who still try to game the system. The motive here is political, not racial. Republicans aren't bigots like the Jim Crow segregationists. But they know that increased turnout in poor, black neighborhoods is good for Democrats. In that sense, the effort to suppress voting still amounts to the practical equivalent of racism.

In Crawford, the court upheld an Indiana law essentially requiring a passport or driver's license in order to vote. But more than two thirds of Indiana adults have no passports and nearly 15 percent have no driver's licenses. These eligible voters, disproportionately African-American, will need to take a bus or catch a ride from a friend down to the motor vehicles bureau to make sure they obtain a nondriver photo ID. Otherwise, they cannot vote in Indiana this year.

In Wisconsin, a swing state. Republicans officials there are suing to enforce a "no match, no vote" provision in state regulations, where voters must not only show a photo ID, but establish that it matches the name and number in the Department of Motor Vehicles or Social Security Administration database. (Democrats are resisting the suit.) These lists are riddled with errors in every state, as the Brennan Center has proven in its report, "Restoring the Right to Vote." How error prone? Florida wrongly purged tens of thousands of law-abiding, mostly Democratic, voters from the rolls in 2000, claiming they were felons. (This, among other things, cost Al Gore the presidency). Even after the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and worldwide attention, the Florida software is still flawed. It requires only an 80 percent match to the name of a convicted felon. "So if there's a murderous John Peterson, the software disenfranchises everyone named John Peters," Andrew Hacker writes in a recent New York Review of Books.

Voters caught in these snafus can have their rights restored but not if they fail to straighten things out before Election Day. Otherwise they are granted "provisional ballots" that are sometimes counted and sometimes not. Even obtaining a provisional ballot can require an appearance in front of a judge in some states. Faced with the hassle, most voters just give up. The ability of actual felons to get their right to vote back varies by state. It's especially hard for felons to vote in Virginia; a bit easier in Pennsylvania and Michigan. (Other countries are far more generous to ex-convicts, figuring that having paid their debt to society they should be allowed to vote again.) All of this would seem to favor John McCain over Barack Obama this year, but some voting-rights trends are pointing in the opposite direction.

In Ohio, where the governor and secretary of state changed in 2006 from Republican to Democrat, a new law allows voters to register to vote and fill out an absentee ballot at the same time between Sept. 30 and Oct. 6. This will mean a week of furious campaigning and early voting in a key state. Advantage Obama. With 470,000 students enrolled in Ohio's public colleges and universities (and nine out of 10 are Ohio residents), expect a bumper crop of young voters. The combination of voter suppression and early voting make turnout predictions perilous. And without knowing turnout, most polling is deeply flawed.

So about the only thing we know for sure this year is that with the Crawford decision we are seeing a return to the days when one political party saw a huge advantage in preventing as many poor people as possible from voting. That's understandable politically, but also un-American.

State by State Voter Laws and Registration Deadlines
http://www.declareyourself.com/voting_faq/state_by_state_info_2.html