

## Social issues top Democratic platforms

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Gender and race emerged as top-tier issues in the Democratic presidential race as the field tightened following the contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. The emergence of gender and racial issues in the Democratic race is seen as inevitable, with Sen. Hillary Clinton, N.Y., running as the first viable female candidate and Sen. Barack Obama, Ill., matching that significance as a black candidate, The New York Times said Monday. The rhetoric may increase as the Democratic race moves into South Carolina and California where the black vote plays a key role in the contest. Obama tried to side-step social issues, painting his campaign as more of a grass-roots movement while Clinton told NBC's Tim Russert Sunday she hoped race and gender would not be the main issues in the presidential contest. Obama supporters expressed concern Clinton was deliberately bringing race to the forefront while Clinton's supporters said Obama was trying to draw black voters away from Clinton ahead of the South Carolina primary. Both camps, however, said they were concerned over the volatile rhetoric emerging in the Democratic race.

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