

# Coalition leader praises black election victories

**Associated Press**

SANTA FE — Joe Johnson, executive director of the National Rainbow Coalition, said Thursday that progressives and blacks got a major uplift from this week's off-year elections.

Electoral victories by liberal black candidates show that "white America is maturing" into a multiracial society and is more comfortable with black candidates, Johnson said.

The Rainbow Coalition, named to symbolize its constituent racial and ethnic minorities, was founded by the Rev. Jesse Jackson to launch his first unsuccessful presidential candidacy in 1984.

Johnson, secretary of the New Mexico Health and Environment Department in 1985 and 1986, was picked by Jackson to head the National Rainbow Coalition last July and charged with bringing more unity to the loose-knit coal-

tion.

Johnson said the Rainbow Coalition has established itself as the most progressive political group in the country and that citizens are supporting it with their votes.

He said the coalition's philosophy has been validated by the victories of David Dinkins as mayor of New York, Norm Rice as the mayor of Seattle and John Daniels as the mayor of New Haven, Conn., and for the apparent victory of Douglas Wilder as governor of Virginia. All are the first black men to win those posts.

The coalition's highest priorities for 1990 will be statehood for Washington, D.C., and a possible third presidential bid for Jackson.

The coalition's state chairwoman, Sheryl Williams of Albuquerque, said high priorities for the state organization are building membership and voter registration and emphasis in legislation on educa-



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**Joe Johnson** will speak in Las Cruces today.

tion and housing.

Johnson will speak at 7 p.m. today at New Mexico State University's Corbett Center. The event is free to the public.

He is speaking as part of Omega Psi Phi fraternity's National Achievement Week. Johnson, a graduate of NMSU, also will speak to several classes during his visit.