

Opinions and Editorials

Assumptions may interfere with Obama's run for presidency

Erin C. Perkins
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On Jan. 16 Barack Obama made a monumental announcement. He had taken the first step toward becoming a candidate for the 2008 presidential election. And now the junior United States Senator from Illinois and the fifth African American Senator in U.S. history is, according to recent opinion polls, ranked as the second most popular choice among Democratic voters, after Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton.



PERKINS

"The decisions that have been made in Washington these past six years, and the problems that have been ignored, have put our country in a precarious place," Obama said.

Although he won't share his specific plans for presidency until Feb. 10, he seems like a politician who has a profound understanding of the American people and their condition. Obama seems like an exceptional presidential candi-

date with his awareness, knowledge and varied accomplishments. Yet I cannot help but wonder if any of those premium qualities will outweigh the doubt and resistance he might face as some potential American voters believe that he is a Muslim entering a national government that was founded on strong Christian principles. Thus far, Obama's political stint has been successful as a state senator and U.S. senator.

Despite such positive political and personal attributes and achievements, an e-mail currently circulating challenges Obama's sincerity. It alleges that he has not been upfront about his religious background.

It seems to be politically advantageous to be a Christian when you are seeking political office in America. Or at least this is what many Americans expect of political candidates, especially those running for American presidency.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia online (www.wikipedia.org) since 2001, approximately 80 percent of Americans consider themselves to be of the Christian faith.

According to the same Internet site, Obama has never "admitted"

to being Muslim. He has discussed attending both a Catholic and a Muslim school in his youth, which he says was under the guidance of his mother who wanted him to have an extensive education. Although his presumed religious affiliation has been declared by others, Obama has written poignantly about his religious affiliation:

I was drawn to the power of the African American religious tradition to spur social change... I knew and loved—that I was finally able to walk down the aisle of Trinity United Church of Christ one day and be baptized. It came about as a choice and not an epiphany... I felt God's spirit beckoning me. I submitted myself to His will, and dedicated myself to discovering His truth.

Could it be that Obama's Muslim past in Indonesia where he attended school as a child is being used against him? Or is it possible that he may still be a closet Muslim and sympathetic to the Muslim radical cause? At least that appears to be what Americans most fear: bringing "war on terror" inside the confidential and powerful walls of the White House. If a



Photo courtesy of MCT Wire Service

Obama announces plans to be the first African-American President.

nation can't keep the danger off their soil, what can they do when it is inside their own homes? When a group of people that American society has learned to fear and fight against gains a potential leader in America, fear can illuminate ignorance. Well, there is a thin, delicate and fragile

line between stereotypes that draw ignorance, and fear that inhibits knowledge. It is time for the American people to stop straddling that line and postpone judgements and criticism, at least until Feb. 10, when Obama announces what his plan of action is for this upcoming election.

Can a white person teach black culture?

Sharrod Patterson
PHOTO EDITOR

For quite some time the debate has been out: can a white person teach black culture? Can that person teach it to black kids? Some students and parents may consider this for issues other than education. This topic is morally and racially controversial because there are no statistics that answer the question either way.

Woody Harrelson in the 1992 film "White men can't jump" showed everyone otherwise. So what about WSSU, is there a white professor who can do the same?

Dr. Bryan Jack is a professor of American Studies with an emphasis on African-American Culture. He was drawn to African-American culture by racial issues that he encountered in his hometown of Parsons, Kansas. He noticed early in his life that his black friends were being treated differently than him. He realized later on in high school that they were not given the same educational opportunities that he was given, even though some of his friends were smarter

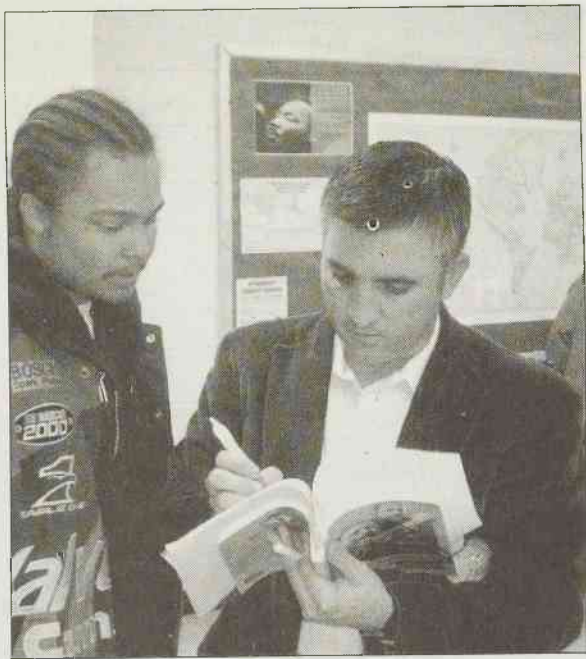


Photo by Sharrod Patterson

Dr. Bryan Jack does not let color differences interfere with education and teaching.

than him.

On a quest to learn why this was so, Jack earned his B.A. in history at Baker University in Kansas, his masters at Alabama, and his Ph.D. at St. Louis University.

Jack has been teaching since 2004 and is as enthusiastic now as he was three years ago. "I believe that race is the central issue in American life and to understand America you have to learn and understand race," he said.

Staci Harris, a senior mass communications major, has had Jack for both U.S. History and Black American Culture. "Dr. Jack is a wonderful teacher and you can really tell that he is passionate about black culture and enjoys teaching," Harris said.

Jack has not encountered any opposition while teaching here at WSSU, a predominantly black school, and says he feels very comfortable here.

What does Black History Month mean to WSSU?

Gabrielle Leonard
STAFF WRITER

Do lackluster events of the past and unmotivated students make Black History Month at Winston-Salem State University feel like just another day on campus?

"The month of February does not make a real impact on me," says Lakesha Gravely, a junior at WSSU. "I cannot recall one event from last year that stood out to me and made me think, 'Wow, this is what it is like celebrating my history on the campus of an HBCU.'"

While some students may feel that the month of February has little or no significance on campus — with monotonous events and lack of participation — others would like to see it become more meaningful.

When asked if events taking place during Black History Month mean anything to him, junior Danny Harris said that the events do mean a lot. However, considering the reasons for which minorities celebrate Black History Month, he observed, students do not come together enough for it to matter.

"The students never come out and support the events that take place. They do not understand that the student body tries to bring Black History Month to us in order for us to have a chance to participate," he said. "But if it is not a party, or something that appeals to everyone, then no one shows. It is pretty sad, especially since we are at a HBCU."

Some students say that lack of interest among their peers is a problem, while others think that a major problem lies within other parts of the university.

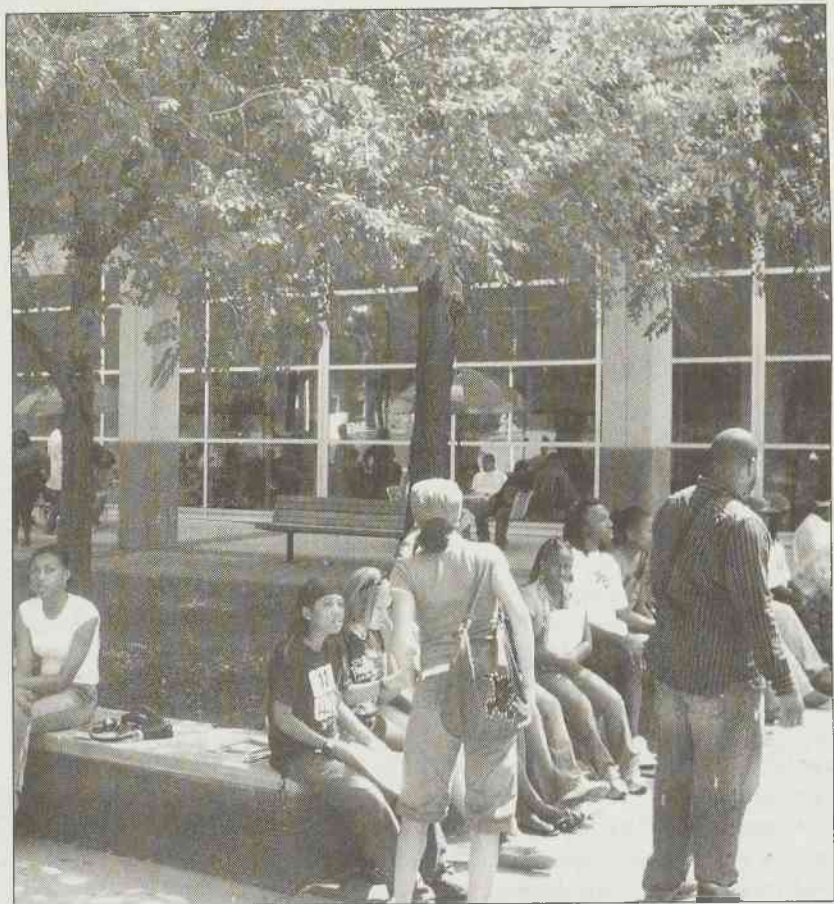
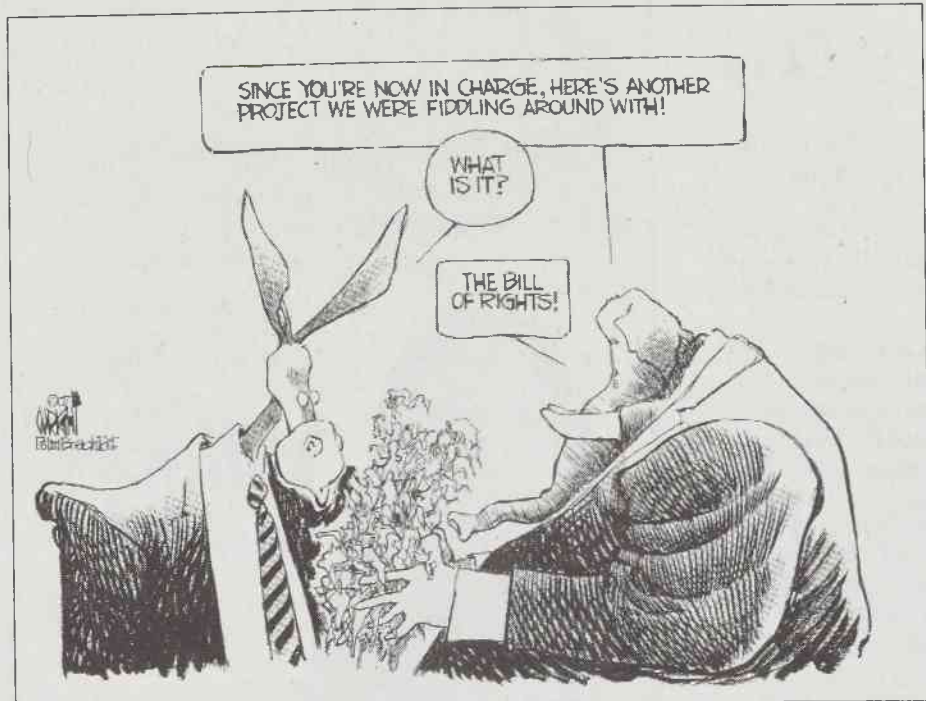


Photo by Sharrod Patterson

Students may be skeptical about Black History Month.

"My teachers never comment on the fact that it is Black History Month, nor do they incorporate that into our environment during the month of February," says Shawntivisa Belk, a junior at WSSU. "It is bad enough that we do not recognize our history all year, every year, but when it does come around, our staff acts like it does not matter; more specifically, people who are not the minority."

So when February rolls around, where will you be? What will you participate in? Whatever your decision is, this month will offer opportunities to celebrate the past, serve as a guidepost to the present, and represent the hope that WSSU brings to the future.



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