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## For blacks, no singular opinion of Obama

Tara Haelle

Daily Texan Staff

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The record number of blacks across the nation who have registered to vote leaves little doubt that Sen. Barack Obama's campaign has brought a large group of new voters to the political table.

The assumption that blacks universally back Obama's chant for change, however, is as deceptive as other generalizations about black people, said some black students and government professors.

"I think people assume everybody who is black is going to vote for Obama," said marketing junior Arnell Davis, who voted in his first presidential election this year. "So people think there's no real reason to get their opinions, because they feel race is going to trump every other issue for African-Americans."

Davis said the media are not deliberately ignoring the black population, but he said there are misconceptions about how this minority views the election.

"There could always be more positive discussion about race and attempting to understand things that aren't so surface-level," Davis said. "If nothing else, I hope this election shows there is so much diversity in the black community."

The oversimplification of blacks' perspectives is not new, said mechanical engineering sophomore Bayo Adeyeba, also a first-time voter.

"Generalizing for black people is done all the time," Adeyeba said. "There are black people who aren't voting for Barack Obama because they're scared of having a black president. What if he misrepresents black people?"

That possibility goes to the heart of a deeper anxiety some harbor about Obama's potential to win.

"Some people didn't think he was black enough," Davis said about Obama's decision to run last year. "It's complicated. I've been in situations in which people have questioned my background or my right to own blackness for a variety of reasons."

But even this apprehension misses the point, some say. Most black people are proud that he simply epitomizes a positive representation of an African-American in the news, said communications junior D'Andrea Young.

"We closely follow Barack Obama because he's African-American but also because he's someone we can be proud of," she said. "We were more inclined to turn on the television before and see something about an African-American raping somebody or killing someone."

Young points to the vindication of the black community's diversity and character as progress in itself.

"We turn on the TV now, and we're excited about him representing us as a community, because we see change," she said. "We see what he's trying to do with America, and a lot of us agree with it."

That transformation implies a hopeful future for blacks in politics, said assistant government professor Eric McDaniel.

"All the recruiting and training Obama is doing to help his own campaign, these are people who can run their own

campaigns now or volunteer with another campaign," McDaniel said. "He's getting people on a national scale used to voting for a black candidate."

Associate government professor Tasha Philpot agreed his candidacy opens more doors for blacks.

"I think there was a lot of doubt when he initially announced he was running," Philpot said. "Even if he loses, that he got this far is an inspiration to others to run for public office and enter professions they may not have thought of prior to his candidacy."

Davis said Obama's appeal is more than skin-deep. It is inspirational to see someone who had to make his own way in life become a viable candidate when most politicians grow up privileged, he said.

"Yes, he's black, but it's Barack's story that really draws people to him," Davis said.

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