are obscured. As relative political outsiders and plus-one candidates, Obama and Richardson rely on political strategies that promote affiliation and achievement over power. In times of war, especially when the war becomes unpopular, affiliation and achievement are more attractive motivations than power. In that respect, Obama and Richardson share a distinct advantage over candidates who voted for and support the war. As perceived outsiders, they may be preferred over politicians who are thought to be insiders or who rely on projecting individual power rather than team affiliation.

Nadra Hashim, PhD, *received her PhD in International Relations in 2006 from the University of Virginia. She was an inaugural Ford Foundation Fellow in Women's Studies at Amherst College in 2001 and formerly an Adjunct Professor in the Pan-African Studies Department at the University of Louisville. Doctor Hashim is currently working on a book on linguistic conflict in Zanzibar and may be contacted at nadrahashim@hotmail.com.* ❑

"Fear Factor" Presidency?: Obama and Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

Karen Callaghan
Texas Southern University

As the presidential election of 2008 unfolds, a key concern for Illinois U.S. Senator Barack Hussein Obama's campaign is voter fear fueled by race, ethnicity, and religion. Historically, white voters have found easy psychological roots for their dislike of African American candidate. Racial fears are still deeply embedded in the American psyche.

However, Arab and Muslim stereotypes may also play a role. Even though Obama is not an Arab American, some media reports and, of course, his critics have recently pointed to his Muslim first and middle names ("Barack" means *blessed* in Arabic; "Hussein" is linked to the prophet Muhammad's family) and his Muslim roots (he spent a few years in childhood with his Muslim stepfather in Indonesia), which may cause some voters to misattribute his ethnicity and/or religion. Despite Obama's self-professed Christianity, when asked about religion, seven percent of Americans say Obama is Muslim while seven percent say he is Christian—and the rest don't know. When asked about the first thing that comes to mind when they hear his name other than his running for president, ten percent mention "terrorism," "Osama bin Laden," and "foreign," while six percent "African American" (*CBS News Poll*, August 8-12, 2007). The fear campaign led by anti-Obama forces to divide voters by faith may be gaining some traction. Arab American stereotypes are severe due to the political climate. Arab Americans (the ethnic group that traces its roots to Arab-speaking countries in the Middle East and Africa) are typically viewed as foreigners, un-American, Muslim, fanatics, violent, and terrorists. Stereotypes about Muslims are largely identical due to the false assumption that "all Arabs are Muslims, and all Muslims are Arabs."

The key questions then become, to what extent will white voters' assessments about Barack Obama be driven by African American, Arab, and Muslim stereotypes, and, when and if these cues are activated, which stereotype will dominate? In other words, will racist fears of a black man running the country be supplanted by irrational fears of a potential Islamic fundamentalist/terrorist in the White House?

In this paper I explore this triangle of stereotypes and fear equations that Obama must overcome to win the presidency. Any presidential candidate facing only one of these barriers would have a difficult time with prejudiced voters. But all three? Perhaps for Obama it will be just as with California's "three strikes and you're out" anti-crime policy. Finally, I tie this discussion to other candidates in the 2008 presidential election, equating voters with participants in "Fear Factor," a popular television show that requires contestants to actively confront their fears and overcome them if they are to win a prize.

In the United States, Arab Americans are stereotyped by "average citizens," government officials, and the media who often actively promote their largely destructive assessments about Arab and Muslim Americans. The equation of Arab Americans with radical Islamic fundamentalists emanates from a variety of sources, including President Bush and his use of the term "Islamofascism" (the ideology of those who use Islam to justify their political extremism), law enforcement agents engaged in the "war on terror," the news media's coverage of 9/11 and the

Iraq invasion, and popular culture sources such as film, television, and music.

Hollywood depictions are the worst of all media portrayals of Arabs with ninety-five percent of Arab characters portrayed in a stereotypic manner. As for depictions of Muslims, minority faith groups are generally non-existent in news coverage, popular culture, and academic texts, and when they are discussed, coverage is usually biased and insensitive.

Political context and its related public opinion climate also play a role in shaping negative views about Arab and Muslim Americans as terrorists and radicals. In *Fueling our Fears: Stereotyping, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion of Muslim Americans* (2007), Brigitte Nacos and Oscar Torres-Reyna found that after September 11, the American media zeroed in on Muslims in America and the world, irresponsibly linking—intentionally or not—Muslims with terrorism. Stereotypes and attitudes toward groups are not fixed but can be influenced by news events and the political climate of the day. For example, both FBI and Arab group reports indicate that the number of attacks against Arab Americans, Muslims, and other citizens mistaken as Arab Americans rose considerably after the 9/11 attacks. Today many Americans view Islam as a religion that encourages extremism, teaches violence and hatred, and does not respect the beliefs of non-Muslims. Thus, realistic group conflict theory, the notion that fear and prejudice are extremely strong when the United States is in conflict with another nation, engenders negative Islamic and Arabic stereotypes so tightly correlated they cannot be distinguished from one another. Ironically, approximately two-thirds of Arab Americans practice Christianity, not Islam.

Voter fear of Arabs and Islam is evidenced by the limited political success Arab American candidates have enjoyed in the U.S. In the 1990s when a significant numbers of Arab Americans sought office in Chicago, all but one candidate lost. For example, Miriam Zayed, an Arab American Democratic precinct captain, lost her race yearly for the school board in a district with the region's largest concentration of Arab students, and each year her total votes decreased as her Arab heritage more and more became an issue. In 1992 and 1994 in California's 43rd congressional district, Arab American Sarkis Khoury, a professor at UC Riverside, narrowly lost to Ken Calvert, a Republican incumbent arrested in a public sex scandal, in an electoral contest infested with ethnic bias, fear, and outright nativism. These events do not bode well for Obama's presidential bid if voters identify him as an Arab American or a Muslim.

In a similar fashion, racial fear may also work against Obama. Despite a substantial liberalization of racial attitudes and a sharp decline in restrictive institutional racial policies, racial prejudice remains the dominant explanation for black electoral defeat. Voters who perceive Obama's African heritage as a racial threat may engage in behavior that protects social and political supremacy, which includes rejection in the voting booth.

Which fear will be the strongest—race, religion or ethnicity? There is a certain percentage of white Americans who won't vote for Obama no matter what. However, if media scrutiny keeps the Arab-Muslim connection active, the triangle of stereotypes may be more obtuse than equilateral, that is, perceived Arab or Islamic ties may trump racial stereotypes, or may create a synergistic effect.

In the TV show "Fear Factor," the stunts often involve jumping off a building or ingesting something revolting. However, in my hypothetical version of the show, the numerous 2008 presidential candidates represent voters' potential fears based on voters' underlying stereotypes—race (Obama), gender (Clinton), ethnicity (Obama, Richardson), religion (Obama, Romney, Kucinich, Giuliani)—and voters are the contestants who must choose which candidate triggers the least amount of fear. Recent surveys by the Gallup Organization indicate that approximately ninety-four percent of respondents would vote for an African American for their party's nominee while only eighty-three percent would vote for a woman [read Hillary Clinton] (www.publicopinionpros.com). Further, forty-five percent freely state that they would not support a well-qualified Muslim for office, twenty-five percent would not vote for a Mormon (read Romney), and eleven percent and seven percent hold negative views toward Jewish and Catholic politicians (*Pew Research Center,* August 1-18, 2007). Thus, whether or not Obama was influenced by Islamic beliefs when he was a young child in Indonesia may prove to be irrelevant; the Arab-Muslim association emerging in some media reports may be enough to trigger Arab American stereotypes and therefore negative vote assessments among prejudiced voters.

There is a twist, however. In the TV show,

contestants who are repeatedly forced to come into contact with something they consider revolting often get over their initial fears and become more accepting. Repeated exposure to a fearful situation reduces anxiety. From this perspective, "fear factor" candidates may be paving the way for the success of future candidates. Studies show that exposure to a person of a different race, gender, ethnicity, or religion results in the disconfirmation of negative "group-related" expectancies or stereotypes, making the person being observed appear less stereotypical and threatening. Thus, at some point in the new millennium with an enlightened, tolerant political process, voters may come to equitably assess candidates based on their merits. Lamentably, for the 2008 presidential campaign, the fear factor remains strong.

Karen Callaghan, PhD, *teaches in the Political Science Department, Barbara Jordan/ Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs, Texas Southern University. She was a visiting professor at Vanderbilt University (2004-2005) and Rice University (1992-1993). Her research appears in the Journal of Politics, Political Communication, Women in Politics, Research in Micropolitics, and elsewhere. She is co-editor of Framing American Politics (2005) and co-author of a forthcoming book on news processing and media behavior. She may be contacted at callaghank@tsu.edu.* ☐

Democratic Candidate Authenticity in Campaign Books

David Greenberg
Rutgers University

No presidential candidate dares enter the race anymore without a campaign book—a memoir, manifesto, or meditation on an anodyne theme (see *Leadership* (2002) by Rudolph Giuliani). Despite their general vapidity, these books have assumed a large role in our politics. Notably, with the book tours for *Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir* (1999) and *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (2006), John McCain and Barack Obama became overnight contenders for their parties' crowns.

It might seem foolish to seek insight into the candidates from these volumes. Invariably ghost-written, they teem with pabulum designed to give no offense. They're closer in spirit to those television ads featuring undulating flags than to real vessels of self-disclosure. To review them as literature, scholarship, or even memoir would be not only tedious but mildly dishonest, since doing so would implicitly accept their phony premises and deny their strategic essence. Nor is it fruitful to peruse them for detailed information about their author's ideological orientations. Novices could glean important differences between Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney from reading her *Living History* (2004) and his *Turnaround: Crisis, Leadership, and the Olympic Games* (2004)—but it would be nothing they couldn't learn from the newspapers.

Still, the memoirs can shed light into how candidates wish to portray their "authentic" selves—the scare quotes indicating the contrivance behind the personae to which they aspire. After all, we inhabit an age of unremitting spin—one in which, as Obama writes in *Audacity*, voters are "wise to the ways of admen, pollsters, speechwriters, and pundits." In such a context, offering a glimpse of what appears to be the candidate's true self has become a *sine qua non*. In this spirit it's worth considering the books "written" by the four leading Democratic candidates: Clinton, Obama, John Edwards, and Bill Richardson. (A similar reading of the Republican memoirs might be equally profitable, but editorial space and the author's patience are limited.)

If voters had to read all of these books carefully, *Between Worlds: The Making of an American Life* (2005) might help the languishing candidacy of New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. Though full of the same canned prose and cautious banalities as the others, it does accentuate Richardson's natural political talents. Although resemblances to George W. Bush hardly make for selling points these days, not long ago Democrats were pining for an easy-going, smooth, and charismatic standard-bearer ordinary voters could relate to. With his prep school and fraternity background, love of baseball (a subject to which Richardson returns embarrassingly often), and penchant for bestowing nicknames, Richardson seems to think he can win the presidency one handshake at a time. He even describes the art of flesh-pressing in *Between Worlds*: "You should take someone by the hand *and* the elbow. Then look in their