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## Okay, Barack. Now Show 'Em Your White Side.

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By Bomani Armah  
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So it's official. Sen. Barack Obama is black enough. Now it's time for him to switch gears. Okay, maybe not Obama himself -- he does a good job of appearing to be above the political and racial fray, as his speech last week proved again -- but his supporters. They need to start pushing the idea of how white he is.

Yes, that's right: Barack Obama is as white as he is black. The one-drop rule is not a genetic law or a social fact; it is a construct of this country's racist imagination. For Pete's sake, he's a distant cousin of Dick Cheney's. We need to start stressing the idea that his universal appeal is partly due to his being white, like all the presidents before him.

I know, I know. For a while the big issue was Obama's blackness. But the King (Jesse Jackson) and the Prime Minister (Al Sharpton) of black people announced he'd passed the test. Of course, it took a gang of white people in Iowa voting for him before they felt comfortable anointing him, but it happened. All of a sudden, Bill Clinton looked less like a gumbo of James Brown, John Coltrane and Magic Johnson and more like a potluck dinner of Tom Jones, Kenny G and Larry Bird.

Black people all over the country felt liberated: Finally they could support an African American who wasn't guaranteed to lose. In fact, I personally take credit for helping Obama solidify the black vote, because every time someone asked me that asinine "Is he black enough?" question, I would quip, "What do you expect the first black president to be? A dashiki-wearing, Afro-with-a-pick, fist-waving ex-Black Panther?" Little did anyone know that Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr., is a dashiki-wearing, fist-waving, might-as-well-have-been-an-ex-Black Panther (not sure, I'll call the FBI to check).

Before you knew it, the world had been introduced to the astonishing idea that some black people (okay, all black people except Armstrong Williams) believe that this country was founded on some nefarious principles and might still be involved in activities aimed at undermining the black community. Cable news pundits and radio talking heads were stunned to find out that large segments of the community think that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were merely propaganda -- grand talk that the country didn't intend to live up to but has been forced to conform to over the past few centuries because of blacks, women, the poor, non-Christians and numerous other minority groups calling them out on the promise of "all men being created equal."

Blacks do believe that this country is the greatest on Earth, but we sleep with one eye open because of the nightmares of our past.

So, now that the uncomfortable secret of Obama's blackness has finally been uncovered, it's time for him to promote his other half. Okay, I know what you're thinking:

*But Bomani, we need to appeal to the historic significance of his being black, or try to make him non-racial!*

Not so. In all honesty, the more I watch Obama talk and interact with people, the more I'm convinced he's a "soul brother." He walks with a rhythm, slaps skin when he shakes hands with even the most white-bread politician and speaks in a cadence that would make Rudy Ray Moore proud. Even though these attributes are part of the reason he has garnered support among important blocs of voters -- African Americans, young people, liberals, antiwar activists and the highly educated -- they will also serve to galvanize a voting bloc that hasn't had to come together before in the history of our country. That is the all-important "Aw Hell No!" voting bloc.

That's right. The "Aw Hell No!" political bloc has lain dormant for 200 years, waiting for a moment to flex its political muscle. Don't forget that this country is more than 60 percent white and that less than half the population votes. This means that a lot of white people could care less about the political process. They believe that national politics are really out of their reach and that it's not worth taking time off from work to participate. As long as the federal government stays within some superficial norms, they aren't worried about who does what in November. That is, until a black man (and to be honest, a woman) got a real chance to become president.

This attack on the laws of the universe is destined to cause a spike in participation by these once-apathetic voters. This is a group that includes young and old and has members in both rural areas and urban communities. "AHN" members are comfortable with their lives and just aren't ready for such a dramatic change in the White House. I wouldn't even be surprised if some members of this bloc have spoken glowingly of Obama -- maybe even attended his rallies. They may not realize that they're members of this group until the curtain is closed behind them in the voting booth.

This is why I say, play up Obama's white heritage as much as possible. He needs to start posing with his mother's family a lot more, not the United Nations crew of brothers and cousins he's normally seen running with. Staffers need to start snapping as many pictures as possible of him putting mayonnaise on his sandwiches and shaking hands straight up and down (no more low-fives that evolve into a shake with that pat on the back). He should also be banned from speaking at any kind of Baptist church (not just the United Church of Christ) and should just stick to churches that only use a pipe organ and where folks sing their songs solemnly and straight from a hymnal.

He should be given diction lessons so he stops cutting off his y's (no more "li-ber-teh" and "e-kwa-li-teh"). And for heaven's sake, when he's campaigning this summer, no rallies on the "south side" of any city. (Is there some cute, Anglo-sounding nickname that we can use as short for Barack? I'm open to suggestions. Hey, I've got it -- Barry!)

Okay, I hear you again:

*But Bomani, playing into racial stereotypes has to be counterproductive! And having him fake anything takes away from the realness that gives him such broad appeal!*

Look, Obama's amazing background and upbringing allow him to play any role in our tragicomedy of black vs. white thoroughly and authentically. After he wins the presidential election, I will personally show up on Pennsylvania Avenue during his inaugural procession, wearing the African flag colors of red, black and green, with the rap group Public Enemy (pre-Flavor Flav's "Flavor of Love"), screaming at the top of my lungs like a teenager running behind Muhammad Ali in Zaire: "Barack, bomaye! Barack, bomaye!"

Until then, I am not taking any more chances acknowledging him as a black man.

[info@notarapper.com](mailto:info@notarapper.com)

*Bomani Armah is a Washington poet, hip-hop artist, satirist and educator.*

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