

AH, THE CURRENT MADNESS of what we call the 2008 Presidential election. Shameless mud-slinging exists, along with accusations of past decisions in order to persecute the character of what could be the leader of our country in the new year. Each campaign will stop at nothing to twist seemingly innocuous words of another candidate into a controversial commentary of a certain issue. While I've heard lots of complaints about how voters wish the candidates would focus on what they will do as opposed to what they won't do, there's a general consensus that people have made a decision early on about who they will vote for. This is obviously a landmark year. Our future president could very well be the first African-American in office, the oldest to begin his first term as president, or the first to have a female vice president on the ticket. While we anticipate a bright future of historic proportions, there is no denying the fact that with these novel characteristics come potentially divisive camps on each side of the campaign.

Let's step away from the immediate election for a moment to examine some of these hot button issues that affect the image as well as perception of these leaders. In my opinion, it's not an accident that race, gender, age, socioeconomic and even party background all play a role in specific stereotypes that taint us from having accurate views of each candidate. These have polarized our American society for quite some time and they will not go away anytime soon. Senator Barack Obama, has an articulate delivery and thoughtful stances on the issues but there are still skeptics based on his lack of experience and age. There are also voters out there who fear they will be labeled racist if they don't vote for him. The other side of this is because of his extensive education, blue-collar workers fear that he will not be able to relate despite his history of proposals and desire to help the working class. As for Senator John McCain, I've heard opinions voiced that he is too old for office, or that because he's Republican and sided with current President Bush on a lot of issues that he will allow our country to remain stuck in the same pattern with the country's problems. Recent media appearances have drawn fire for his lifestyle and numerous properties that paint him as a wealthy politician who could care less about the concerns of those who are not as well off. It just goes to show there's not much people can do to take aim at Senator Biden other than to ask about hair plugs (therein lies the age issue again). Lastly, ever since Governor Sarah Palin was appointed on the Republican vice presidential candidate, the media has gleefully poked fun at her by devising any caricature they can of this woman. It's a bit odd that the more attractive a woman is, the more the media feels the need to take aim with sexist remarks. Or the more controversial decision she's made in leadership, the more they jump on her with catty behavior or scrutiny.

The differences between the Democratic and Republican parties (not to mention independent representatives) are so stark in contrast that there are bound to be citizens who are unhappy no matter who is elected. Chances are, at this point in the campaign you have already made your decision. I know I have, despite a particular bias, but I did make an informed decision after perusing the stances of each candidate and listening to the

recent debates. The danger in listening to commentaries, editorials and media representation is that instead of deciding on each candidate's stances, voting can become an emotional decision. Therefore, I urge you to examine the views that mirror your own and make an informed decision based on that. Don't go blindly to the polls!



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