

Women Seeking a Man like Obama

President seen as 'Ideal Black Man'

(AP) -- Monica Weeks has met many men, but at age 51 she says she still hasn't found her "Barack."

Among Weeks and her friends, President Barack Obama's name has become shorthand for a black man with integrity, character and spirituality, one who loves and values his wife and makes his family a priority — in other words, the kind of man that many black women had despaired of finding.

Weeks said probably every single woman she knows is looking for her "Barack."

"He absolutely makes me think it's attainable," said Weeks, a divorced mom in Somerset, N.J. "For women who are older and seeking a man, I think we can look at him and say, 'All is not lost.'"

The story is the same elsewhere among black women, who say the new code word for Prince Charming has become so commonplace that they have been asked "Have you found your Barack?" or told others "I'm look-

ing for my Barack."

Obama's sex appeal hasn't hurt — what other president would get high marks in a swimsuit competition? But he has touched a nerve among black women in particular, who consider him an IBM (Ideal Black Man) — educated, eloquent, tall, attractive, family oriented, ambitious and down to earth.

For years, single black women have been commiserating about the perceived shortage of eligible black men. It's laughed about in movies ("Waiting to Exhale") and backed up with statistics: The May unemployment rate for black men was 16.8 percent for those ages 20 and older, compared to a national rate of 9.8 percent for all adult men. Black women outnumber black men almost 2-to-1 on college campuses. Most black babies are born to unwed mothers.

"There are a large number of African-American women who have largely given up on finding a mate," said Sheri Parks, associate professor



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of American studies at the University of Maryland. "Their men are not there."

Renee Breeden didn't have much hope she would find a life partner after dealing with what she called "extremely selfish" black men. At one point, the 35-year-old divorced mom had stopped dating black men alto-

gether.

But watching the Obamas has renewed her faith that she can have a loving relationship with a black man.

"There's no denying the love between them, and it made me feel like 'Wow, there's still hope for me,'" said Breeden, an administrative assistant and online radio talk show host in

New York. "There is still someone who is going look at me and see my value."

It's Obama's relationship with first lady Michelle Obama that makes him especially appealing.

For black women, it's significant that Obama has a black wife and values her education and professional aspirations. Black men are more likely to marry outside of their race than black women, according to the U.S. Census.

To be sure, there are plenty of famous, attractive black men to dream about, but people don't know as much about Denzel Washington's relationship with his wife, for example.

These days, there's little people don't know about the Obamas, said Marc Lamont Hill, associate professor of education at Columbia University. The first couple's relationship has been on public display with romantic date nights and charming interview banter.

"Having access to that much of a person endears you to that person," he said.

Multiracial is America's Fastest Growing Group

Challenging notions of race

(AP) -- Multiracial Americans have become the fastest growing demographic group, wielding an impact on minority growth that challenges traditional notions of race.

The number of multiracial people rose 3.4 percent last year to about 5.2 million, according to the latest census estimates. First given the option in 2000, Americans who check more than one box for race on census surveys have jumped by 33 percent and now make up 5 percent of the minority population — with millions more believed to be uncounted.

Demographers attributed the recent population growth to more social acceptance and slowing immigration. They cited in particular the high public profiles of Tiger Woods and President Barack Obama, a self-described "mutt," who are having an effect on those who might self-identify as multiracial.

"Multiracial unions have been happening for a very long time, but we are only now really coming to terms with saying it's OK," said Carolyn Liebler, a sociology professor at the University of Minnesota who spe-



cializes in family, race and ethnicity.

"I don't think we've nearly tapped the potential. Millions are yet to come out," she said.

In Middletown, N.J., Kayci Baldwin, 17, said she remembers how her black father and white mother often worried whether she would fit in with the other kids. While she at first struggled with her identity, Baldwin now actively embraces it, sponsoring support groups and a nationwide multiracial teen club.

"I went to my high school

prom last week with my date who is Ecuadorian-Nigerian, a friend who is Chinese-white and another friend who is part Dominican," she said. "While we are a group that was previously ignored in many ways, we now have an opportunity to fully identify and express ourselves."

Demographers say that while some multiracial Americans may feel burdened or isolated by their identity, others quickly learn to navigate it and can flourish from their access to more racial networks.

For the parents of multiracial children, Barack Obama's rise has been a vindication of sorts, a presidential rebuttal to a society that has not always been kind to their offspring, labeling them half-breeds, mutts, mixed nuts and other derogatory names.

Promoting Sustainable Living

Local teacher studies in Costa Rica

Jesuit High School mathematics and science teacher Jennifer Cournia departed on a nine day research and environmental expedition last week to Coope Tarrazú, a farming cooperative located in the small town of San Marcos de Tarrazú in Costa Rica.

The expedition is part of Earthwatch Institute's research on many different coffee farms.

"As a teacher, I am particularly interested in the relationship between environmental sustainability and cultures and people," said Cournia. "The research on this project will not only improve the treatment of the land on which coffee is grown in Tarrazú, but will also help local farmers better understand the environmental impacts of their actions and achieve higher quality coffee and higher yield crops, resulting in greater incomes."

The goal of the project is to understand the practices that lead to more sustainable production of coffee and result in higher quality and yield.

Cournia intends to take the

lessons she learns in the coffee fields back to the classroom this fall. "Taking a trip like this comes with great responsibility: very few of my students will have such an experience, so I will try to absorb all the information and insight I can from



the coffee farmers and researchers so that we can have an educated discussion about sustainable land management in class next year," said Cournia.

Jennifer Cournia

Vector Control seeks volunteer advisors

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

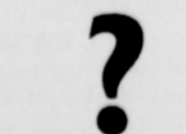
Multnomah County Vector Control seeks members for their Vector and Enforcement Advisory Committee.

Vectors are animals or insects, such as rats and mosquitoes, that can transmit diseases to humans. Examples of vector-borne diseases include West Nile virus and Hanta virus.

Members of the Advisory Committee are asked for a commitment of one to three years, and to attend two-hour meetings every other month. Committee members may provide advice on such topics as:

- Preventing illegal dumping in your community.
- How should the county develop a rodent control plan for public parks?
- Developing educational messages on vector-borne disease prevention such as West Nile virus.

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