

# Obama

continued from page 7

It's not everywhere, acknowledges Courtland Milloy, a black columnist for The Washington Post. In a recent dispatch, Milloy described a widespread belief among some black Washingtonians that Republicans are using race against Obama.

"But there unquestionably is racism in some of the opposition," Milloy said in an interview. "And it should not just be up to black people to identify it and have to deal with it. This is an American problem. It's not just a black problem."

That can be difficult for folks who don't see a problem. Joseph, for one, doesn't buy the foundational idea of unconscious bias,

that America remains afflicted by a racist past. "You get in the real world, and I just don't see it," he said.

For him, the bottom line is simple: "I know I'm not a racist, and the conservatives I know aren't racist."

The perils of potential offense can be everywhere. Glisson, director of the racial reconciliation institute, recalls a recent meeting with an unfamiliar group of people, including some African-Americans, and telling them about a good location for a professional retreat.

Then Glisson, who is white, mentioned that the location had excellent fried chicken.

She immediately sensed a change in the atmosphere: "They didn't know that I love fried chicken."

It's a common occurrence: a statement that can be interpreted either way.

Evan Woodson, a black student at Oklahoma State University, often hears other black people call something racist that he sees as benign: "People seriously act



President Barack Obama and his daughters, Malia, left, and Sasha, watch on television as First Lady Michelle Obama deliver her speech at the DNC.



Former Republican Party Chair Michael Steele at the RNC.

as if whitey is still out to get them in 2012 in Stillwater, Okla. I don't think that's the case anymore."

Woodson does believe that the legacies of slavery and Jim Crow still create disadvantages for African-Americans. But when it comes to politics, he sees racial transgressions from both parties, such as Vice President Joe Biden telling black people that Republicans "want to put y'all back in chains."

"No matter how you cut it, politicians constantly seem to be accusing the other party of racism," Woodson said. "People can't identify real racism anymore. They're lost in all the race-baiting."

Even when racism was a raw fact of American life, it wasn't always easy to identify. "Something is holding me back / I wonder, is it because I'm black?" Syl Johnson sang in the haunting 1970 soul classic, "Is It Because I'm Black?"

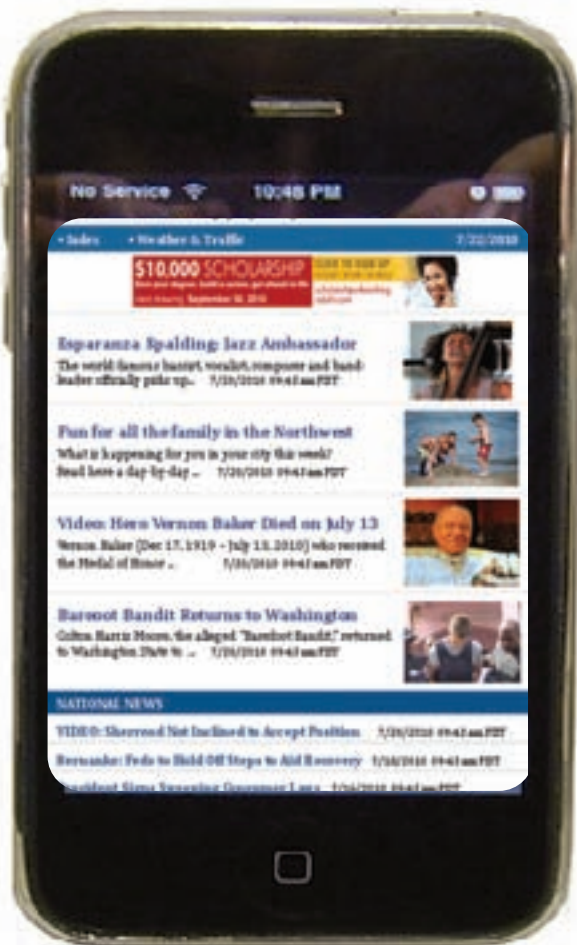
In an interview, Johnson, now 76, said his song was inspired by a twisted saga of land stolen from his family in 1930s Mississippi. He said the song remains relevant today because, he believes, Obama's blackness is indeed holding him back.

And yet: "Everyone that's white ain't no bigot," Johnson said. "Otherwise Obama never woulda become president."

# THE SKANNER

# ONLINE

## Scan our QR code with your app.



theskannermobile.com

