

Muslim issue is 'no-win' for him, says Obama: A catch-22

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Democratic senator Barack Obama admitted to a recent journalists' conference in Chicago that correcting assertions and rumors that he is a Muslim has him cornered in a "no-win situation" in his race for the White House.

"I have repeatedly said I'm not a Muslim, but this whole strategy of suggesting that I am is indicative of an anti-Muslim strategy that we have to fight against," Obama told the UNITY quadrennial convention for journalists of color.

If he aggressively confronts the misidentification, some analysts note, he risks giving the impression that he thinks there is something wrong about being a follower of Islam, and perhaps that it is slanderous for a Christian to be mistaken for a Muslim.

"If you were a Muslim and somebody consistently said you were a Christian, I suspect that you would want to have that corrected," he told the hundreds of assembled journalists.

Shortly before his July 27 appearance at the UNITY meeting, Obama's campaign headquarters announced the appointment of Mazen Asbahi to head outreach efforts to Muslim Americans as well as Arab-Americans. The twin portfolio is "tricky," noted a Politico.com blogger. Most Muslim Americans are not of Arab heritage and not all Arab-Americans are Muslims.

Asbahi is a senior associate at the law firm of Schiff Hardin in its corporate and securities group in Chicago. A 2000 Northwestern University School of Law graduate, Asbahi also serves as general counsel to some nonprofit entities.