

Obama fends off religious rumors

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Rumors from the conservative right and recent poll results suggest the religious background of presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama overshadows his heritage. Obama, a member of the United Church of Christ, is fending off claims circulating among the conservative right that he is a Muslim trained at Islamic schools in Indonesia, The Washington Post said Thursday. Obama, D-Ill., often speaks of his childhood in Indonesia and notes his paternal grandfather was a Muslim. With religious affiliation at the center of the presidential campaign, polls show a rising anti-Muslim sentiment in politics. An August poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press said 45 percent of those polled would oppose a Muslim presidential candidate, while 25 percent responded in kind about a Mormon candidate, such as the GOP's former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, and 16 percent opposed to an evangelical Christian, the Post said. Conservative voices circulated rumors that Obama "spent at least four years in a so-called madrassa, or Muslim seminary, in Indonesia" and Rush Limbaugh said in September he gets "confused" between Obama and Osama bin Laden. Obama continually denies the rumors, telling an audience in Iowa, "If I were a Muslim, I would let you know."

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