

Americans on Obama winning Nobel: What?

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U.S. President Barack Obama's selection as winner of the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday left many Americans puzzled about why he deserved the honor.

"It would be wonderful if I could think why he won," said Claire Sprague, 82, a retired English professor as she walked her dog in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. "They wanted to give him an honor I guess but I can't think what for."

Hospital worker Itya Silverio, 33, of Brooklyn, said: "My first opinion is that he got it because he's black. What did he do that was so great? He hasn't even finished office yet."

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who won the prize in 2002, said Obama's win showed hope he had inspired globally.

"It is a bold statement of international support for his vision and commitment to peace and harmony in international relations," Carter said in a statement.

Some Americans resented Obama's popularity in Europe and other parts of the world.

"Obama gives speeches trashing his own country and he gets a prize for it," said conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh, who has a wide following.

The peace prize announcement quickly became one of the top discussions on social networking website Twitter. One user commented: "Why not give him the literature prize? At least he's actually written a couple of books."

Political blogger Jon Henke tweeted: "So far, the right, left and media all seem to agree that the Nobel Peace Prize committee just beclowned itself."

An online straw poll by MSNBC asked whether Obama deserved the honor. About 62 percent of more than 194,000 answers said no, about 24 percent said yes, while 13 percent said some day, but the award was premature.

"It looks less like an objective award than it does a political endorsement," said William Jelani Cobb, a history professor at Spelman College in Atlanta.

Some people believed the award was political.

"This is the Nobel committee giving Obama the 'you are not George W. Bush' award," said Brian Becker, national coordinator of Act Now To Stop War and End Racism. "Unfortunately Obama is continuing many of the same policies of Bush and is in fact expanding the war in Afghanistan rather than ending it."

Haag Sherman, director of Houston-based investment firm Salient Partners, said Obama's win also showed the global strength of the United States. "It illustrates that the U.S. is still the prevalent power in the world and that the world really is seeking engagement with the United States," he said.

In Chicago, retiree June Latrobe, 68, was also nonplused. "In all candor he hasn't done anything yet," he said.

Many seemed happy even if they weren't sure why Obama won.

"Somebody was very anticipatory," said George Fleming, 64, a career transition coach from Phoenix. "It is a marvelous selection ... he has sounded all the right notes for a more productive and harmonious international political community."

Others were willing to go with the flow.

"Obama won? Really? Wow," said David Hassan, 43, of Pine Brook, New Jersey, from his coffee and pastry cart in Times Square. "He deserves it I guess, he's the president. He's a smart guy and I guess he's into peace."