



Will Racism Disappear in Obamerica?

The Sweet (but Deadly) Enchantment of Color Blindness in Black Face

Madness is rare in individuals—but in groups, parties, nations, and ages it is the rule.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1966): 90

“WE ARE ALL MAD HERE.” ON MADNESS IN THE AMERICAN WONDERLAND

Since the 2008 presidential campaign, Americans have behaved much like the characters in the upside down world of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.¹ In many ways the entire nation succumbed to *Obamania*.² Thankfully some progressive³ critics had a shield that protected them from this social current. They were able to navigate the turbulence for two reasons. First, given that this country does not have a traditional left and has extremely weak labor unions (Aronowitz 1991) it has never been easy to be a progressive in America. Second, now that Obama is the president, many feel vindicated as many of the concerns, issues, and predictions they made during the campaign have become a reality. Unfortunately, this vindication is somewhat Pyrrhic as Obama’s victory has increased (hopefully temporarily) the madness in the nation and reduced even further the space for criticizing him and his polices from the left.⁴

I was one of those progressives⁵ who offered a critique of the Obama

phenomenon and, since an early intervention on the matter, I was criticized by many friends and foes alike (see the preface to this edition). Accordingly, my agenda in this chapter is partly personal (I answer my critics), partly political (I explain in a more systematic way the commentary I offered during the 2008 campaign), and partly scholarly (I argue the Obama phenomenon fits quite well my argument about the centrality of color-blind racism and my prediction about the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the United States). First and foremost, this chapter is my explanation—which I dare call sociological—of the “miracle”: the election of a black man as president of the United States. My explanation runs counter to those who believe his victory represents the “end of racism” and the beginning of the era of “no more excuses” for people of color. In contrast, I contend Obama’s ascendancy to the presidency is part and parcel of the “new racism” and the *All in the Color-Blind Family* soap opera that began running on a U.S. TV station in the early 1970s. Second, this chapter is a call to progressives and liberals who believed in Obama’s message of hope and change to get serious. The election is over and it is time for them to put their thinking caps back on. Obama is now the president and we must all scrutinize his actions as we have done with all presidents before.

Because I know my views will anger some—perhaps many—readers who may shout like the Queen in the famous story, “Off with *his* head,” I state five caveats hoping my would-be executioners forget their decree. First, although I hesitated, I voted for Obama (I thought of voting for Cynthia McKinney). Second, my criticism of Obama is neither of all he stands for nor of all of his actions in office (after all, I label his politics center-right, not right-wing). At the end of the chapter I enumerate some of the good things he has done so far and outline a course of action to make sure he delivers more good things for “we the people.” Third, although I will criticize President Obama’s image, politics, and policies, I want to be absolutely clear on one important point: in comparison to the president he replaced and the Republican candidate he faced, Obama seems like pure gold. Fourth, since Obama emerged as a viable candidate, the bulk of the American intelligentsia ceased its critical mission. Being critical (or analytical) is part of the job of intellectuals in any society and when they are not, they abdicate their responsibility. Fifth, I include material I used in speeches for two reasons: (1) to give the writing some character and a sense of urgency and (2) to provide readers with the *context* arguments I articulated from February 2008 onward. This makes the text seem “personal” in some parts, but I hope readers can separate the grain from the straw. With these caveats out of the way, I can now begin the slow ascent out of the rabbit-hole I call *Obamerica*.

“DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE”: THE REAL QUESTION POSED BY OBAMA’S VICTORY

George Orwell stated a long time ago that “To see what is in front of one’s nose needs constant struggle” (Orwell 1946). In the 2008 election cycle Americans did not see what was in front of their noses; they saw what they wanted and longed to see. Whereas blacks and other people of color saw in Obama the impossible dream come true, whites saw the confirmation of their belief that America is indeed a color-blind nation. But facts are, as John Adams said, “stubborn things” and astute social analysts knew that since the late 1970s racial progress in the United States had stagnated and, in many areas, regressed. The evidence of such state of affairs was, as the title of a report of the early 1990s put it, “clear and convincing.”⁹ All socioeconomic indicators revealed severe racial gaps in income, wealth, housing, and educational and occupational standing. Since I have addressed these inequalities in this book and in previous work (particularly, in Chapter 4, Bonilla-Silva 2001), I review here some economic disparities for 2008—the year Obama was elected president. All the statistics I cite, unless otherwise specified, come from the 2009 report “State of the Dream 2009: The Silent Depression,”¹⁰ a very useful compendium of information from sources such as the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The Black unemployment rate is currently 11.9%. Among young Black males age 16–19, unemployment is 32.8% (v). [Unemployment for whites in 2008 was 5.8%; see page 13.]

According to data from the BLS, by April 2009 the rate increased to 15.0% for blacks, 11.3% for Latinos, and 8% for whites.¹¹ (As I put the finishing touches to this chapter, the general unemployment rate is 9.6 and economists are predicting it will reach 10 to 11% in 2010.)

The median household incomes of Blacks and Latinos are \$38,269 and \$40,000, respectively, while the median household income of whites is \$61,280 (v).

People of color are disproportionately poor in the United States. Blacks and Latinos have poverty rates of 24% and 21% respectively, compared to a 10% poverty rate for whites (v).

People of color are more likely to be poor (24.5%), remain poor (54%), and move back into poverty from any income class status than their white counterparts (vi).

Nearly 30% of Blacks have zero or negative worth, versus 15% of whites (vi).

Citing data from the “State of Black America 2009” report by the Urban League, Earl Graves, Jr., from *Black Enterprise*, said on the wealth disparity the following:

Nationally, the typical African-American family today possesses less than 10 percent of the net worth of the average white family. Almost 30 percent of black families have zero or negative net worth. And far fewer blacks than whites benefit from inherited wealth or assets.¹²

Only 18% of people of color have retirement accounts, compared to 43.4% of their white counterparts (vi).

On the *median*, for every dollar of white wealth, people of color have 15 cents. On *average*, people of color have 8 cents for every dollar of white wealth (vi).

The racial inequality that existed in 2008 and which remains today is not the product of “impersonal market forces” (Wilson 1978, 1987) or due to the presumed cultural, moral, ethical, intellectual, or family “deficiencies” of people of color, as conservative commentators such as Charles Murray in *Losing Ground* (1984), Murray and Herrnstein in *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (1994), Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom in *America in Black and White* (1997), and many others have argued. Racial inequality today is due to the “continuing significance” of racial discrimination.¹³ The scholarly community has documented the persistence of discrimination in the labor and housing markets and has uncovered the co-existence of old-fashioned as well as subtle “smiling discrimination” (Brooks 1996).¹⁴

But racial discrimination is not just about jobs and housing. Discrimination affects almost every aspect of the lives of people of color. It affects them in hospitals (Blanchard and Lurie 2004; Penner et al. 2009), restaurants (Rusche and Brewster 2008), trying to buy cars (Ayres 2002) or hail a cab (Kovaleski and Chan 2003), driving (Meehan and Ponder 2002) or flying (Harris 2001), or doing almost anything in America. Indeed, “living while black [or brown]”¹⁵ is quite hard and affects the health (physical and mental) of people of color tremendously as they seem to always be on a “fight or flight” mode.¹⁶

Indicators of subjective matters denote trouble in paradise, too (I limit the discussion to racial attitudes, but could include data on perceptions of well-being and the like). Although the first wave of researchers in the 1960s and 1970s assumed tremendous or moderate racial progress in whites’ racial attitudes, most¹⁷ contemporary researchers believe that since the 1970s whites developed a new way of justifying the racial status quo distinct from the “in your face” prejudice of the past (see discussion in chapter 1). Analysts have labeled whites’ post-Civil Rights racial atti-

tudes as “modern racism,” “subtle racism,” “aversive racism,” “social dominance,” “competitive racism,” “Jim Crow racism,” or the term I prefer, “color-blind racism.” But regardless of the name given to whites’ new way of framing race matters, their switch from WK–Jim Crow racism to the WK–color-blind racism TV station did not change the basics as the new station is as good, if not better, than the old one in safeguarding the racial order. Despite its suave, apparently nonracial character, the new racial ideology is still about justifying the various social arrangements and practices that maintain white privilege (see chapters 2, 3, and 4).

The overall contemporary racial situation I have described is compounded by a mean-spirited white racial animus. The first component of this animus is the anti-affirmative action and “reverse racism” mentality that emerged in the early 1970s and that took a firm hold of whites’ racial imagination since the 1980s (Pincus 2003; chapter 2 in Crosby 2004). This mentality—which became so transparent during the confirmation hearings in July 2009 of Judge Sotomayor for the Supreme Court—and its connection to “racial prejudice” is well-documented (Unzueta, Lowery, and Knowles 2007) and I have addressed it in this book. The second component of the racial climate people of color face is the anti-immigration mood that started slowly in the latter part of the 20th century and has become one of the central axes of racial politics in the early part of the 21st century (Esses, Dovidio, and Hodson 2002). When the first edition of this book appeared in 2003, the anti-immigration sentiment did not seem or feel as intense as today.¹⁸ With the economy in shambles and agitators such as Lou Dobbs¹⁹ fueling enmity towards undocumented workers (he calls them “illegal aliens”), a thick nativist mood is palpable and finding expression in draconian anti-immigrant measures enacted in localities across the nation.²⁰

The last element of the contemporary racial climate is a derivative of the ill-conceived and ineptly labeled “war on terror.”²¹ In the late 1990s and during the first few months of President Bush’s administration, a brief national discussion about racial profiling ensued. President Bush even classified racial profiling as a serious problem in the second presidential debate in 2000 and promised that if elected, he would enact a federal law against it.²² However, that inchoate debate collapsed along with the Twin Towers. After 9/11 the discussion about racial profiling ceased and the practice became, in the eyes of many, a legitimate weapon in the fight against terrorism. In 2003 President Bush issued a ban on racial profiling governing the actions of seventy federal agencies, but left wide open the use of race and ethnicity as valid criteria when “national security” or “terrorism” was at stake.²³ Thus 9/11 has muddled the waters for challenging racial profiling as a racist and, ultimately, ineffective²⁴ policing tactic.

“And then out of nowhere,” paraphrasing the much-maligned Father Pfleger, came a relatively unknown black politician who said, “Hey, I am Barack Obama” and almost the entire nation said like Hillary, “Oh damn, where did this black man come from?”²⁵ Since January of 2008 the nation has been mesmerized by Obama; by his “Yes we can”; by his appeal to our “better angels”; and by his relentless call for national unity. And many Americans have felt inspired, proud, and a few, like MSNBC’s Chris Matthews, have even felt a “thrill going up [their] leg.”²⁶ But the question we must ponder now that Obama is the president of the still (Dis)United States of Amerika²⁷ is: *Were we all wrong?* Were neo-liberal and conservative analysts right when they claimed America had seen D’Souza’s “the end of racism” (1995) or, at least, William Julius Wilson’s “declining significance of race” (1978)? Were the white masses right in their claim that America had become a color-blind nation and that minority folks were the ones who kept race alive by playing the infamous “race card”?

Analytically and politically, too many liberal and progressive commentators dug a deep hole for themselves in the 2008 election as they either went with the flow and assumed Obama was truly about social and racial change or took the stand that white racism would prevent Obama from getting elected.²⁸ But there is a more fitting, historically accurate, and sociologically viable explanation—and one I advanced *before* Obama was elected.²⁹ The “miracle”—the fact that race matters in America tremulously yet we elected a black man as our president—is but an apparent one. Obama, his campaign, and his “success” are the outcome of forty years of racial transition from the Jim Crow racial order to the racial regime I have referred to in my work as the “new racism” (2001). In the new America that presumably began on November 4, 2008, racism will remain firmly in place and, even worse, may become a more daunting obstacle. The apparent blessing of having a black man (and I should truly say “*this* black man”) in the White House is likely to become a curse for black and brown folks.

In the remaining of this chapter I do four things. First, I describe the context that made it possible for someone like Obama to be elected president. Second, I discuss what Obama did in order to be elected president. Third, I review some specific predictions I made during the campaign and offer a few more predictions based on Obama’s ongoing record as president. Finally, I conclude by discussing a few things we can do if we wish to attain real change at this juncture when so many whites (and many people of color) believe we are finally beyond race even though racial inequality remains entrenched.³⁰

“BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING . . .”: THE CONTEXT THAT ALLOWED THE “MIRACLE”

In the midst of the trial against the Knight of Hearts in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the King instructed the White Rabbit to read some verses. The rabbit asked the King, “Where do I begin?” The King replied: “Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop.” Americans have not placed the election of Barack Obama as president in its proper context and, thus, in order to understand where we are today we must “begin at the beginning.”

From Jim Crow to the New Racism Regime

The Obama phenomenon is the product of the fundamental racial transformation that transpired in America in the 1960s and 70s. The new racial order that emerged—the “new racism”—unlike Jim Crow, reproduces racial domination mostly through subtle and covert discriminatory practices which are often institutionalized, defended with coded language (“*Those* urban people” or “*Those* people on welfare”), and bonded by the racial ideology of color-blind racism (for a full discussion of “the new racism,” see Chapter 4 in Bonilla-Silva 2001; cf. Smith 1995). Compared to Jim Crow, this new system seems genteel but it is extremely effective in preserving systemic advantages for whites and keeping people of color at bay. The new regime is, in the immortal lyrics of Roberta Flack’s³¹ song, of the “killing me softly” variety.

This new regime came about as the result of various social forces and events that converged in the post-World War II era: (1) the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s; (2) the contradiction between an America selling democracy abroad and giving hell to minorities at home which forced the government to engage more seriously in the business of racial fairness; (3) the black migration from the South that made Jim Crow less effective as a strategy of social control; and (4) the change of heart of so-called enlightened representatives of capital who realized they had to retool the racial aspects of the social order in order to maintain an adequate “business climate.” The most visible positive consequences of this process are well-known: the slow and incomplete school desegregation that followed the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision; the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Housing Rights Act of 1968; and the haphazard political process that brought affirmative action into life.

Unfortunately, alongside these meaningful changes, whites developed very negative interpretations of what was happening in the nation.³² The

concerns they expressed in the late 1960s and early 1970s about these changes (Caditz 1976) gelled into a two-headed beast in the 1980s. The first head of the monster was whites' belief the changes brought by the tumultuous 1960s represented the end of racism in America. Therefore, since they believed racism had ended, they began regarding complaints about discrimination by people of color as baseless and a product of their "hypersensitivity" on racial affairs. The second head of the beast was that a substantial segment of the white population understood the changes not just as evidence of the end of racism, but also as the beginning of a period of "reverse discrimination."³³ Hence, this was the ideological context that helped cement the "new racism."

Elsewhere I have described in detail how the new racial practices for maintaining white privilege operate ideologically, socially, economically, and politically (again, interested parties should see Chapter 4 in Bonilla-Silva 2001 and, for an update, see Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich forthcoming). Given the focus of this chapter, I just review briefly my analysis of developments at the political level. Nowadays three major factors limit the advancement of people of color in the political arena. First, there are multiple structural barriers to the election of black and minority politicians such as racial gerrymandering, multimember legislative district members, and the like. Second, despite some progress in the 1970s, people of color are still severely under-represented among elected (whites still show a preference to vote for white candidates) and appointed officials—the proportion of elected and appointed officials still lags well behind their proportion in the population. Third, because most minority politicians must either "compromise" to get elected or are dependent upon local white elites, their capacity to enact policies that benefit the minority masses is quite limited.

More significantly, in my early analysis on these matters I mentioned (but did not delve deeply into the matter) the emergence of a new type of minority politician. By the early 1990s it was clear that both major political parties (but the Democratic Party in particular) had learned from the perils of trying to incorporate veteran civil rights leaders such as Jesse Jackson. Regardless of the limitations of Jackson as a leader and of his "rainbow coalition" strategy of the 1980s, he and his coalition proved to be too much of a challenge to the "powers that be."³⁴ Hence, both parties and their corporate masters developed a new process for selecting and vetting minority politicians. After the Democratic Party co-opted civil right leaders such as John Lewis, Andrew Young, and the like, they began almost literally manufacturing a new kind of minority politician (the Republican Party followed suit later). Consequently today's electorally-oriented minority politician (1) is not the product of social movements, (2) usually joins the party of choice while in college, (3) moves up quickly

through the party ranks, and, most importantly, (4) is not a race rebel.³⁵ The new breed of minority politicians, unlike their predecessors, are not radicals talking about "the revolution" and "uprooting systemic racism." If Republican, they are anti-minority conservatives such as Michael Steele (currently the chairman of the Republican National Committee), Bobby Jindal (governor of Louisiana since 2008), Alan Keyes (conservative commentator and perennial candidate for *any* office), J. C. Watts (former Congressman from Oklahoma and still a very influential leader in the GOP) and, if a Democrat, post-racial leaders with center to center-right politics such as Harold Ford (former congressman from Tennessee and currently head of the conservative Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) and an MSNBC commentator), Cory Booker (Newark's mayor since 2006), Deval Patrick (governor of Massachusetts since 2006), Adrian Fenty (D.C.'s mayor since 2006) and, of course, Barack Obama. Not surprisingly, plutocrats love these kinds of minority politicians because, whether Republican or Democrat, neither represents a threat to the "power structure of America."³⁶

Obama's case is illustrative. Although during his carefully orchestrated presidential campaign he and his team touted his credentials as a "community organizer," Obama's real story at the moment of his political conception is quite different. During the campaign Obama said "community organizing is 'something I carry with me when I think about politics today—obviously at a different level and in a different place, but the same principle still applies.'" ³⁷ His wife, Michelle Obama, added, "Barack is not a politician first and foremost" but "a community activist exploring the viability of politics to make change."³⁸ The historical record, however, is quite different. First, Obama accomplished quite little in his two years as a *paid*³⁹ community organizer (all reports, including Obama's own account in *The Audacity of Hope*, reveal he was very disappointed with the pace of change) and second, by 1987 he had all but abandoned Saul Alinsky's ideals of the community organizer and was dreaming of getting elected to office. Hence, in the same article, which is sympathetic to Obama, the author states the following:

Based purely on his organizing background, one would have expected Obama to become a bread-and-butter politician, a spokesman for his constituents' immediate needs. Instead, Obama became a politician of vision, not issues—one who appealed to voters' values rather than their immediate self-interest Obama has also eschewed the retiring persona of the organizer. Initially awkward as a speaker, he became a charismatic politician whose run for president has produced something very much like a movement. And, while his campaign has used some techniques from community organizing to rally state-by-state support, it is the antithesis of the ground-up, locally dominated, naturally led network of community groups that Alinsky envi-

sioned. *Obama, in short, has become exactly the kind of politician his mentors might have yearned against.*⁴⁰

The record also shows that by the time Obama ran for office in 1996, he had already acquired many of the typical characteristics of post-Civil Rights minority politicians. After he won the Illinois state race in 1996, Adolph Reed, a black political science professor and contributor to various progressive magazines, said the following about Obama:

In Chicago, for instance, we've gotten a foretaste of the new breed of foundation-hatched black communitarian voices; one of them, a smooth Harvard lawyer with impeccable do-good credentials and vacuous-to-repressive neo-liberal politics, has won a state senate seat on a base mainly in the liberal foundation and development worlds. His fundamentally bootstrap line was softened by a patina of the rhetoric of authentic community, talk about meeting in kitchens, small-scale solutions to social problems, and the predictable elevation of process over program—the point where identity politics converges with old-fashioned middle-class reform in favoring form over substance. I suspect that his ilk is the wave of the future in U.S. black politics, as in Haiti and wherever else the *International Monetary Fund* has sway. So far the black activist response hasn't been up to the challenge. We have to do better.⁴¹

Obama negotiated Chicago Democratic politics quickly and successfully and by 2002 had become the darling of the city's black elite, and soon after, of Chicago's elite. Christopher Drew and Mike McIntire in a 2007 article in *The New York Times* state that Obama raised "improbably" fifteen million dollars for his senate campaign.⁴² But their characterization of this quick turnaround (from having problems settling his campaign debt from his loss to Congressman Bobby Rush in 2000 to the success of his campaign in 2004) as "improbable" is inaccurate because by 2003 Obama had already received the benediction from the Democratic Party elders and financiers. Paul Street describes this process as follows:

A corporate, financial, national and legal vetting of Obama, with an emphasis on the critical money-politics nexus of Washington, D.C., began in 2003. That's when "Vernon Jordan, the well-known power broker and corporate board member who chaired Bill Clinton's presidential transition team after the 1992 election, placed calls to roughly twenty of his friends and invited them to a fund-raiser at his home," according to Silverstein. The fund-raiser "marked his entry into a well-established Washington ritual—the gauntlet of fund-raising parties and meet-and-greets through which potential stars are vetted by fixers, donors, and lobbyists."⁴³

Street states that "Obama passed this preliminary trial with *flying colors*" (My emphasis. 2009: xxiii). The people in the meeting liked his acca-

demie background, suave and cool style, and political outlook. Attendees such as Gregory Craig (big time attorney and former special counsel to Bill Clinton), Mike Williams (legislative director of the Bond Market Association), and other big wheelers appreciated that Obama was not a "racial polarizer" (that is, that he was not Jesse Jackson-like) and that he was not "anti-business." This explains the seemingly "improbable" victory of Obama in the 2004 Senate race and the 700 million dollars he was able to raise in the 2008 presidential campaign. According to an investigative report by Ken Silverstein (2006) and a book by David Mendell (2007), Obama rose quickly beyond the confines of Illinois because the American elite resolutely loved his "reasonable tone."

Therefore, post-Civil Rights minority politicians like Obama are not truly about deep change, but about compromise. If they were truly about fundamental change and frontal challenges to the American social order, they would not be the darlings of the two mainstream parties. Although some post-Civil Rights minority politicians may, from time to time, "talk the talk," their talk is rather abstract almost to the point of being meaningless and they seldom if ever "walk the walk." For instance, Obama talked during the campaign about corporate lobbyists, but said nothing about *corporate power*; complained about "big money" in politics yet raised more money than *any* politician in American history (see later about corporate donors versus the "little donors"); subscribed to the Republican lie about a crisis in Social Security and is likely to follow through with policies to "save" a program that is actually solvent,⁴⁴ and talked about alternative energy sources and clean energy yet was in bed with folks in the "clean coal" and "safe nuclear energy" camp (see chapter 1 in Street 2009). Also, readers should examine the commercials by the energy sector that ran on national TV in the late spring and early summer of 2009 and how they used Obama's speeches during the campaign to bolster their agenda).⁴⁵

Based on all the information at hand there is no question that politicians like Obama are "accommodationist" (Marable 1991) *par excellence* and teach the "wretched of the earth" the wrong political lesson: that electoral, rather than social-movement politics,⁴⁶ is *the* vehicle for achieving social justice. In the next section I show that Obama's political road to the (still) White House fits to a T the practices and tone of post-Civil Rights minority politicians.

"'WHO ARE YOU?' SAID THE CATERPILLAR": ON THE MEANING OF OBAMA'S POLITICS

When questions arose during the campaign about Obama's progressive-ness due to his support of FISA⁴⁷ and other seemingly reactionary posi-

tions he held, Obama said in an interview with *The New York Times* that “I am someone who is no doubt progressive.”⁴⁸ However, true to the style of post-Civil Rights minority politicians, he insisted he did not like to be “labeled” as right or left and preferred to be regarded as a “non-ideological” and “pragmatic” politician. As the campaign advanced, Obama’s non-ideological stand betrayed a conservative bent and some commentators questioned his commitment to “progressiveness.” For instance, in harsh yet prophetic words, *Huffington Post* blogger Taylor Marsh labeled Obama’s brand of progressiveness as “progressive cannibalism.” He was referring to Obama’s willingness “to do whatever he can to get elected, cannibalizing his own and our ideals as he goes; bringing as many people along as he can, including conservatives who will have no allegiance to what progressives have worked for over decades to achieve.”⁴⁹

In this section I restate doubts I raised about Obama during the campaign and argue his politics and tone were not, as so many liberals and progressives believed, *tactical* maneuvers to get elected but represented who Obama truly *was* and how he *will be* as president. Because the concerns I expressed about the Obama phenomenon in events during the campaign were on point, I reproduce them here almost verbatim. I maintain the present tense I used, but print the statements in a different font to distinguish them from the brief (and contemporary) discussion that appears after each one.

The first concern I have is that Obama does not represent a *true* social movement, but an undercurrent of various actors and contradictory forces that did not necessarily agree on fundamental issues. Lacking a social movement with a common agenda, I believe his presidency will become problematic as we have no way of predicting his actions and will not have people “in the streets” to curb them if needed.

When I wrote this, many commentators thought Obama had a “grass-roots” approach to politics.⁵⁰ However, all his political praxis during the campaign was in line with mainstream party politics (in fact, all he did was *through* the Democratic Party) and did not emanate from or create a social movement.⁵¹ The massive rallies and the 700 million-plus dollars he raised in the campaign⁵² did not emanate from the organized (or unorganized, as many social movements follow a more spontaneous path [Piven and Cloward 1978]) efforts of activists with a common agenda. The mantra of his campaign, “Change we can believe in,” was so abstract that almost anything and anyone could have fit in. The most significant matter, however, was that Obama supporters lacked a common agenda and belief system. What I surmised⁵³ during the campaign—that white support was not indicative of post-racialism—has now been corroborated in

post-election studies. Noted survey researchers Professor Tom Pettigrew from UC-Santa Cruz and Professor Vincent Hutchings from the University of Michigan found that Obama’s white voters were just slightly less prejudiced than McCain’s white voters. And because Obama’s white voters were younger than McClain’s, I suspect that as they age and face real life issues (e.g., getting a job, getting married, selecting a neighborhood and schools for their kids, etc.) they will regress to their racial mean—that is, will develop views similar to those of older whites today.⁵⁴ (Professor Pettigrew puts some weight on the fact that most young whites voted for Obama, while Professor Hutchings is less impressed with this fact.)⁵⁵

Second, none of the policies Obama has offered on the crucial issues of our time (health care, NAFTA, the economy, immigration, racism, the Wars, etc.) is truly radical and likely to accomplish the empty yet savvy slogan he adopted as the core of his campaign: *change*.

I will say a bit more about some of Obama’s policy preferences later but want to point out here that few of his ardent supporters had a clue about his policy proposals and even about his positions on crucial issues. For instance, while on vacation in the summer of 2008, I had a discussion with several minority professors about Obama and they told me I was “too harsh” on Obama. As the discussion proceeded, I said, “I cannot not believe you are all for Obama so blindly given his support for the death penalty.” One of them laughed and told me that Obama was not for the death penalty. I urged the colleague to check the matter on the Internet and, a minute later, the person said, “Well, but Obama has a *nuanced* position,” to which I replied, “When one is *dead* there is no *nuance*.”⁵⁶

Third, Obama has reached the level of success he has in large measure because he has made a *strategic* move towards racelessness and adopted a post-racial persona and political stance. He has distanced himself from most leaders of the Civil Rights movement, from his own reverend, from his church, and from anything or anyone who made him look “too black” or “too political.” Heck, Obama and his campaign even retooled Michelle Obama⁵⁷ to make her seem less black, less strong, and more white-lady-like for the white electorate!

Obama’s post-racial stand during the campaign was not a new thing. Those who have read his books *Dreams of My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* are familiar with his long-standing attempt to be if not *beyond* race at least *above* the racial fray. Hence, I was not the least surprised when President Obama answered the only question he was asked about race in his first press conference by suggesting race was a factor in life but that

he was dealing with America's "real" problems.⁵⁸ I was also not surprised when in his second press conference he answered a question by Andre Showell, a black journalist, about what specific policies he had enacted to benefit minority communities, with ideas reminiscent of how conservatives frame race matters!

So my general approach is that if the economy is strong, that will lift all boats as long as it is also supported by, for example, strategies around college affordability and job training, tax cuts for working families as opposed to the wealthiest that level the playing field and ensure bottom-up economic growth. And I'm confident that that will help the African-American community live out the American dream at the same time that it's helping communities all across the country.⁵⁹

As part of his post-racialism, Obama has avoided the term *racism* in his campaign until he was forced to talk about race. And in that "race speech" that so many commentators heralded and compared to speeches by MLK (a truly heretic view), he said Reverend Wright's statements "expressed a profoundly distorted view of this country—a view that sees white racism as endemic" and classified them as "divisive." This should be surprising to race scholars across the nation who regard racism as indeed "endemic" and know that race has been a "divisive" matter in America since the 17th century!

For readers of this book who are familiar with my work (particularly, Bonilla-Silva 1997 and 2001), it should not be surprising to learn that I agree with Reverend Wright about his claim that racism is endemic to America. Thus, I do not believe his statements were "divisive." As I suggested in my speeches, our nation has been deeply divided by race (and class and gender as well) since colonial times! Obama's speech was clearly a *political* speech intended to appease the concerns of his white supporters riled by the media-driven frenzy in March of 2008 based on a snippet of a sermon given by Reverend Wright.⁶⁰ The text of the speech⁶¹ can be deconstructed as a play with five acts. In the first act Obama stated that America is a great country, but recognized that it is still a "work in progress." His campaign, Obama insisted, had worked to continue the long "march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America." In the second act he inserted his usual "I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas." In the third act Obama chastised Reverend Wright and expressed his profound disagreement with his views, but said he could not "disown him more than (he could) disown (his own) grandmother" who had also uttered racist statements in the past. In the all-important fourth act of the play, Obama justified the anger both whites and blacks have and stated that

"racism" has affected both groups (he said white racial resentment was partly "grounded in legitimate concerns"). In the last act of the play Obama called for racial reconciliation and for all Americans to be our "brother's keeper" and continue working together "to build a more perfect union."

His speech had three serious problems. First, Obama assumed racism is a moral problem (he called it a "sin") that can be overcome through goodwill. In contrast, I have argued that racism forms a structure and, accordingly, the struggle against racism must be fundamentally geared toward the removal of the practices, mechanisms, and institutions that maintain systemic white privilege. Second, Obama conceived "racism" (in his view, prejudice) as a two-way street. In the speech he stated that *both* blacks and whites have legitimate claims against one another, that is, that blacks have a real beef against whites because of the continuing existence of discrimination and whites against blacks because of the "excesses" of programs such as affirmative action. Obama was wrong on this point because, as I explained in chapter 7, blacks do not have the institutional power to implement a pro-black agenda whereas whites have had this kind of power from the very moment this country was born.⁶² He was also wrong because whites' claims of "reverse discrimination" do not hold much water empirically (see chapter 4 and Vincent Roscigno's 2007 book *The Face of Discrimination*). And when he hints at the "excesses" of the 1960s, which he did in this speech and has done in many other speeches, he is truly talking nonsense! The data shows that affirmative action has been at best a Band-Aid approach to deal with the hemorrhage of racial inequality. Third, Obama's post-racial call for everyone to "just get along"⁶³ so that we can deal with America's real problems shows the Achilles heel of his stand: he truly does not believe racism is a serious structural problem in America. Otherwise he would not insist—and he has continued this line of argument—that we must get on with America's *real* problems such as the economy, health care, the wars, and the like. Yet the speech accomplished its mission: it placated his white supporters who, from then on, hardly showed more concerns about Obama's racial views.⁶⁴ The speech, accordingly, can be classified as a "neoslave narrative" as sociologist Tamara K. Nopper has aptly suggested.⁶⁵

Some readers may be surprised by the fact that many blacks liked Obama's "race speech."⁶⁶ This puzzle, however, can be solved. First, whites and blacks heard Obama's race speech and interpreted the controversy over Reverend Wright *differently*. A poll commissioned by Fox News indicated that whereas 40 percent of whites had doubts about Obama because of his relationship with Reverend Wright, only 2 percent of blacks did.⁶⁷ Thus, for blacks, his association with Reverend Wright was not a big deal. A CBS–New York Times poll taken in late March of 2008 showed that

blacks regarded Obama's campaign and his "race speech" as having had a positive effect on "race relations."⁶⁸ Hence, blacks viewed the entire Obama campaign as a positive step on race relations. Second, progressive black dissenting voices on this speech and on all matters related to Obama did not get much play in the media. Hence, the black public did not see or hear on mainstream TV stations or on black stations or radio shows a critique of this speech. Third, the black masses experienced (and as I write these lines, still are experiencing) an understandable yet problematic *nationalist moment* that did not allow for meaningful dissent about Obama and his politics to be expressed in the black community (see end-note 127 on nationalism). Accordingly, all these factors help explain why blacks heard Obama's condemnations of racism and his comments about the continuing significance of discrimination, but paid little attention to his implicit definition of racism, his acquiescence to whites' claims of "reverse racism," or his rather desperate attempt to placate whites' concerns in the speech.

Fourth, as Glen Ford, executive editor of The Black Agenda Report, Adolph Reed, Angela Davis, Paul Street, and a few other analysts suggest, Obama is a "craze."⁶⁹ His supporters refuse to even listen to facts or acknowledge some very problematic positions Obama has, such as his support for the death penalty.

Anyone who lived in the United States during the 2008 presidential campaign knows that the entire country was captivated by Obama who, despite my criticisms, is a truly outstanding orator, astute politician, and remarkably charismatic man. The problem, however, remains. If Obama's charisma and charming smile obfuscates us from asking the hard questions, probing his record, and acknowledging his actual positions on issues, we risk endorsing style over substance and flowery rhetoric over truly progressive positions.

Lastly, perhaps the most important factor behind Obama's success, and my biggest concern, is that he and his campaign mean and evoke different things and feelings for his white and nonwhite supporters. For his white supporters, he is the first "black" leader they feel comfortable supporting because he does not talk about racism; because he reminds them every time he has a chance he is half-white; because he is so "articulate" or, in Senator Biden's words, echoed later by Karl Rove, Obama was "the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy";⁷⁰ because Obama keeps talking about national unity; and because he, unlike black leaders hated by whites such as Jesse

Jackson and Al Sharpton, does not make them feel guilty about the state of racial affairs in the country.⁷¹

Since very early on in Obama's campaign, his white supporters were *not* on the same page as his minority supporters. I knew this based on how white colleagues, friends, students, and the general white population was framing and interpreting Obama. He quickly became for whites an Oprah- or Tiger Woods-like figure (and it was no small potatoes that Oprah encouraged him to run⁷² and, after he entered the race, endorsed him wholeheartedly and campaigned for him), that is, a black person who has "transcended" his blackness and become a symbol.⁷³ For instance, Katie Lang, a white woman profiled in a *Washington Post* article entitled "How Big a Stretch? For Barack Obama, Winning the White House Would Mean Bridging the Biggest Gap of All," stated that: "Obama speaks to everyone. He doesn't just speak to one race, one group," and added, "He is what is good about this nation."⁷⁴ Mrs. Lang also said:

Kind of like, if I could compare him to Tiger Woods. When I look at Tiger Woods, I see the best golfer in the world. So when I see Barack Obama, I see a strong political candidate. I do not see "Oh, that's a black man running for president, or African American or multiracial black." It's not what comes to mind first. What comes to mind first is: great platform, charismatic, good leader, attractive.⁷⁵

And many whites, like Joyce Heran in the article I cite above, said without much hesitation that if Obama were like Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton, they "probably wouldn't like him as much."⁷⁶

In sharp contrast, for many nonwhites, but particularly for blacks, Obama became a symbol of their possibilities. He was indeed, as Obama said of himself, their Joshua⁷⁷—the leader they hoped would take them to the Promised Land of milk and honey. They read between the lines and thought Obama had a strong stance on race matters. For the old generation desperate to see change before they die,⁷⁸ and for many post-Reagan generation blacks and minorities who have seen very little racial progress during their lifetimes, Obama became the new Messiah of the Civil Rights movement.

Since Obama's victory in the Iowa caucus, black America projected onto Obama its dreams, history, and pride. This, as I stated above, is understandable. In a country with a racial history such as ours and where successful black leaders end up killed (Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X), vilified (Malcolm X, Minister Farrakhan, and Reverend Al Sharpton), or ridiculed (almost all black politicians), one understands why the possibility of a having a black president became a symbol of the aspira-

tions of the entire black community. In interviews with dozens of blacks from across the nation after the Iowa victory, *The New York Times* reported they “voiced pride and amazement over his victory [in the caucus] and the message it sent.”⁷⁹

The love fest between blacks and Obama that began in January after an initial period of doubt⁸⁰ has not ended. As I finish writing this chapter, few public black figures or commentators have broken ranks with Obama.⁸¹ Although blacks’ nationalist moment has a *raison d’être*, people ultimately do not eat pride, cannot find a job by feeling good about themselves, or fight discrimination by telling white folks “We have a black president so you better behave” (would this have helped Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates?).⁸² Professor Ronald Walters, a black political scientist at Maryland, has wisely said about the honeymoon Obama is enjoying from black America that “*one should not let the honeymoon that President Obama is enjoying among blacks and their leaders extend too far into the future*” (my emphasis).⁸³

**“THERE IS NO USE TRYING; ONE CAN’T
BELIEVE IMPOSSIBLE THINGS”:
DEBATING THE OBAMA PHENOMENON
DURING THE 2008 CAMPAIGN**

Given the Obama craze (and I am using the term sociologically), critical engagements on Obama during the 2008 campaign were mostly futile. There was almost no communication as facts meant very little.⁸⁴ Hence, when I mentioned in my engagements things such as,

- Obama received 46 percent of his money from corporate America and a lot through the magic of bundling;
- Obama said in a speech in Selma, Alabama, that we were “90 percent on the road to racial equality” (see endnote 77);
- Obama stated he wanted to expand the military by 90,000 and deepen the American intervention in Afghanistan;
- Obama’s opposition to the war was suspect (his opposition was not anti-imperialist as documented by Paul Street in 2009 and by Matt Gonzales in his piece entitled “The Obama Craze” (see endnotes 43 and 2, respectively);
- Obama was an ardent believer in free market capitalism albeit with some regulation;
- Obama’s civil rights program was nothing more than the liberal stance on race matters and not much different from Hillary’s program;

- Obama’s stand on foreign policy matters, whether Palestine, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, Iraq, or Afghanistan, did not represent a break with American imperialist positions;
- Obama was the darling of the DLC;⁸⁵
- Obama’s chief advisers from Chicago and Harvard were regarded as “non-ideological”;
- or Obama’s stand on FISA, religion, “personal responsibility,” workfare, and on, and on, and on.⁸⁶

people either did not know these things (“Obama got more money from Wall Street than McCain?”—actually, Obama received more money from corporate America than McCain⁸⁷) or, worse yet, knew them but argued these were *tactical* positions Obama needed to espouse in order to get elected. Of course, since Obama’s stand on most of these matters *practices* his run for the presidency, they cannot be “tactical” positions. Obama’s liberal and progressive supporters wanted to believe, in ahistorical fashion, that Obama was a stealth progressive who once elected would turn left.⁸⁸ But, paraphrasing Martin Luther King Jr., “leaders should not be judged by the color of their skin but by the *content of their politics*” and the content of Obama’s politics was (and is) center to center-right on almost all fundamental matters. Black and progressive America, unfortunately, seems destined to learn this lesson after this “neo-mulatto”⁸⁹ rents the White House for a short while and does not do any meaningful renovation!

**“‘WELL! WHAT ARE YOU?’ SAID THE PIGEON. ‘I
CAN SEE YOU’RE TRYING TO INVENT
SOMETHING!’”: MY PREDICTIONS DURING THE
CAMPAIGN AND MY SCORECARD**

Social scientists must always verify how their analyses hold up over time. In this section I restate predictions I made during the presidential campaign and assess my “batting average.” I made two large predictions. First, I predicted the voices of those who contend that race fractures America profoundly would be silenced. Obama’s blackness, I suggested, would become an obstacle for people of color as whites would throw it back at them—as well as his words and actions (and even Michelle’s)⁹⁰—as evidence that race was no longer a big deal in America.⁹¹ Second, I argued Obama’s election would bring the nation closer to my prediction about racial stratification in the United States becoming Latin America-*like* (see chapter 8). Obama’s presidency, I claimed, would accelerate the pace toward *symbolic* unity without the nation enacting the social policies needed for all of us to be truly “*all* Americans.” And like in Latin Ameri-

can countries, Obama's nationalist stance ("There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America")⁹² might shut the door for the recognition of race as a central factor of life! *Obamercia* may bring us closer than ever to a "multiracial white supremacy"⁹³ regime similar to those in Latin America and the Caribbean where "racially mixed" folks are elected to positions of power without that altering the racial order of things or how goods and services are distributed in the polity.⁹⁴

These are two broad predictions that cannot be easily assessed at this juncture. Although I believe both are happening—and the first one is clearly happening, I will let history and readers judge the accuracy of these two predictions. I now review more targeted predictions I made and offer a few new ones based on President Obama's first year in office. First, based on promises and remarks Obama made during the campaign, I predicted he would increase the size of the military, wait longer than planned for withdrawing from Iraq, increase the scope of the military intervention in Afghanistan and, more problematically, bomb Pakistan if he got "actionable intelligence." So how did I fare? Although the severe economic crisis has prevented President Obama from fulfilling his promise of increasing the size of the military by 100,000, Defense Secretary Gates announced in late July of 2009 that he was going "to increase the size of the U.S. Army by up to 22,000 troops."⁹⁵ Regarding Iraq, the president has already taken a much weaker and slower approach. Instead of the sixteen months he promised during the campaign, he is now talking about troop withdrawal in nineteen months and has stipulated that a "residual force" of between 35,000 and 50,000 will remain. He has justified the latter by arguing that most troops will not be "combat forces" but rather "advisory training" and "assistance" brigades. Euphemisms aside, we should be aware that 30,000 to 50,000 American troops in Iraq will be viewed as an occupying force no matter what we call them. It is also very unlikely that a peaceful and stable Iraq will be in place when American troops leave (presumably in 2010) given that the invasion created a "multi-faceted civil war" with "political, sectarian, and ethnic" tonalities.⁹⁶

On Afghanistan, President Obama has already sent 21,000 troops increasing the size of the American forces to close to 60,000 even though he acknowledges that a successful campaign there must be fundamentally about winning "the hearts and minds" of the Afghan people. On Pakistan, reports indicate the United States has been bombing this nation for some time. President Obama himself authorized two drone attacks that reportedly killed at least fifteen and twenty-two people respectively just days into his administration. One report stated that, "Since September (2008), the US is estimated to have carried out about 30 such attacks,

killing more than 220 people."⁹⁷ (The drone attacks continue and the BBC reports that since August 2008, nearly fifty strikes have killed 450 people in the region.)⁹⁸ And if Iraq was (and still is) a quagmire, increasing the scope of the intervention in Afghanistan and bombing Pakistan are even more problematic ventures. No foreign power has ever been able to conquer Afghanistan and the last one that tried (the Soviet Union) was forced out after eight years even though it maintained about 100,000 troops in the territory during its intervention. The Soviets lost more than 14,000 soldiers and rotated over 600,000 soldiers in this costly incursion.⁹⁹ To complicate matters further, whereas Iraq is a country of just 29 million people, Pakistan is the sixth-largest nation in the world with 179 million people and Afghanistan has close to 37 million people spread throughout a very harsh and difficult landscape. Hence, one needs not be a military expert to know that the size of the population, terrain, and history do not bode well for the success of an American military campaign in Afghanistan (Coll 2004) or for *any* kind of military intervention in Pakistan.

Second, I suggested Obama was going to put together a very conservative cabinet. As I predicted, the conservative people who advised him during the campaign are now the core of his cabinet. Worse yet, Obama's intention of mimicking Abraham Lincoln by having a "team of rivals" pushed his cabinet unnecessarily further to the right. I review the background of some¹⁰⁰ members of his Cabinet for the benefit of young readers:

- Hillary Clinton, after a long, contested, and divisive campaign where charges of racism were leveled against her and her husband,¹⁰¹ was appointed Secretary of State.
- Bob Gates, Secretary of Defense for George W. Bush, was retained in the post. Bob Gates' pedigree is that he worked at the CIA and the National Security Council for twenty-six years and served at its director from 1991 to 1993 under President George H. W. Bush. He was also president at Texas A&M University and in that capacity decided not to accept the Supreme Court decision reversing the Hopwood decision, allowing race to be used as a factor in admissions. Secretary Gates has been instrumental in maintaining many of Bush's policies in Obama's administration.
- Larry Summers was a member of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers and was Secretary of the Treasury under President Clinton. He was appointed by President Obama as Director of the National Economic Council. This means he is Obama's chief economic advisor. Larry Summers' economic views are center-right.¹⁰² He helped President Clinton pass a capital gains tax measure in 1999 and described the bill that deregulated the banking industry, which

is today regarded as the culprit for the current economic catastrophe in the world, in the following manner: "Today Congress voted to update the rules that have governed financial services since the Great Depression and replace them with a system for the 21st century."¹⁰³ But Summers is perhaps best known for his remarks at the National Bureau of Economic Research conference in 2005 where he speculated that women's underrepresentation in technical and scientific jobs may be based on genetics.¹⁰⁴ Summers' views on women were not surprising for many in the Harvard community because under his tenure as president of the institution the hiring and retention of women decreased significantly. He also had a contentious relation with minority faculty that became a matter of the public record after he reprimanded well-known African American professor Cornel West in 2002.¹⁰⁵ Professor West let people know his feelings and views on this matter and left the institution for Princeton.

- Paul Volker was Chairman of the Federal Reserve from 1979 to 1987 under Presidents Carter and Reagan and is now Chairman of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board under President Obama. As chairman of the Fed, Volker raised interest rates in the early 1980s so high that unemployment skyrocketed to levels not seen since the Great Depression (the official rate was about 11 percent in 1982 but if one includes the group labeled as "discouraged workers," the rate was probably closer to 15 percent). He also praised President Reagan for breaking the back of unions.¹⁰⁶

- Timothy Geithner, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York is now Secretary of the Treasury. Although he has had, unlike other members of Obama's team, a relatively quiet history, Geithner overviewed matters in the most important Fed during the beginning of the current economic crisis and did relatively little to change things.¹⁰⁷ Michael Hirsch suggested in an article titled "Whose Plan Is This?" in *Newsweek* that Geithner's plan to deal with the so-called toxic assets (the bad loans that have lost much of their value in Wall Street) was the brainchild of Warren Buffett, an investor and head of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. who is reportedly the richest man in the world. Whereas critics such as Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz and friends such as Robert Reich (former Secretary of Labor under Clinton) have urged for deeper market reforms, Geithner has followed much more modest reforms consistent with the wishes of Wall Street tycoons.¹⁰⁸

Obama's Lincoln-like "team of rivals" has been described by independent journalist David Sirota as a "team of zombies!"¹⁰⁹ So far, President Obama does not have a *strong* radical voice in his team except perhaps for

Hilda Solis (Secretary of Labor) and, arguably, Eric Holder¹¹⁰ (Attorney General). Lacking progressive people in his cabinet, who will defend the interests of poor and working people in his administration? Who will push Obama to think hard about American interventions abroad? And let's not forget that Obama's cabinet is not as diverse as one would expect¹¹¹ and that the few people of color in his cabinet are in secondary positions (in most press conferences Obama is flanked by white folks).

Third, I suggested Obama was going to compromise on his promise of taxing the rich. He has already delayed doing so until 2010 when Bush's tax cuts expire and when he hopes the economy will have improved. But what will President Obama and his advisers do if the economy does not improve substantially by 2010?¹¹² Will they stick to the plan and raise taxes for those making \$250,000 or more a year or continue on his "pragmatic" track and change course again? What will progressive Americans do if President Obama follows *McCainomics*? As most readers recall, presidential candidate John McCain was the one who said that taxing the rich was problematic because they created jobs and wealth in America. Delaying taxing the rich now and hesitating doing so in 2010 if the economy is not doing well indicate President Obama's economic views are in line with the "Chicago School."¹¹³

Fourth, I suggested Obama's health care plan was weak and that his "pragmatism" was going to make it even weaker. Specifically, I argued that his proposed reform was far off from what the country needed: a universal, single-payer health care plan.¹¹⁴ This was a bone of contention during the campaign as independent observers commented that Obama had the weakest health care plan of all the contenders for the Democratic Party's nomination. The big issue critics raised was that Obama's plan did not *require* everyone to have insurance. Instead, he hoped all in need would buy health care once it was made "affordable."¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, by not requiring everyone to have insurance, Obama's plan would create the classic "free rider" dilemma. People in certain positions (e.g., students, independent workers, small business owners, etc.) can game the system by not buying insurance unless they get sick. And because Obama's plan requires HMOs to not exclude people for medical pre-conditions, free riders will not be penalized. If this version of the health care reform is enacted, the artificially high cost of health care will remain as HMOs will pass their increased costs on to the insured.¹¹⁶

Obama himself is not an advocate of a single-payer system and has tried to exclude members of his own party such as Congressman John Conyers from Michigan, a leading proponent of a single-payer system from meetings on health care reform. Conyers, after he threatened to picket outside the White House, was invited to the summit and, later on in a presentation at Thomas Jefferson University described the attendees

of the meeting as follows: “It was very heavy with corporate health care interests—Big Pharma, insurance companies—the people who don’t want single payer.”¹¹⁷

Fifth, I predicted that because of Obama’s weak stand on race and his post-racial persona and appeal, he was not going to enact any meaningful race-specific policies to ameliorate racial inequality. Obama’s so-called middle ground position on race can be examined in chapter 7 of his book *The Audacity of Hope*. There he insists that although race still matters, “prejudice” is declining and as proof he heralds the growth of the black elite whose members do not “use race as a crutch or point to discrimination as an excuse for failure” (Obama 2006: 241). He acknowledges the existence of significant gaps between whites and minorities in income, wealth, and other areas and makes a tepid support for affirmative action, yet engages in a Bill Cosby–like critique of blacks and states they watch “too much television,” engage in “too much consumption of poisons,” lack an “emphasis on educational achievement,” and do not have two-parent households (244–45). So what is his solution to deal with racial inequality? “An emphasis on universal, as opposed to race-specific, programs” which he believes “isn’t just good policy; it’s also good politics” (247).¹¹⁸ He also discusses the problem of the black “underclass” and chastises those unwilling to accept the role of “values” in their predicament (254). Albeit he mentions that “culture is shaped by circumstances” (255), his emphasis is on behavior (see 255–57).

Is there evidence that President Obama’s universalist stand has affected his decisions in office? I believe the \$789 billion stimulus package his administration passed in early 2009, which gave control to localities on how to use the funds, is a case in point. Giving money directly to localities without any controls is quite problematic as localities have historically distributed funds in a way that preserves existing inequities.¹¹⁹ Unless one adopts what John Powell labels “targeted universalism”—a perspective that takes into consideration that people are differently situated in the social order and, thus, that some may need more resources than others—“universal” efforts such as this one will not reduce racial inequities.¹²⁰

President Obama’s “race lite” stand was vital during the campaign and remains so. He has avoided any serious discussion on race and, when forced to talk about it, has remained intriguingly vague. For instance, in an interview with ABC’s George Stephanopoulos, he took seemingly all sides on affirmative action. He talked about the importance of *in situ* affirmative action is carried out, mentioned that race still matters, said his daughters probably will not need affirmative action, and hinted at a class-based program. In a comment on Obama’s performance in the interview, Peter S. Canellos observed in *The Boston Globe* that Obama rarely deals with the substance of the policies, but focuses on the values, a tactic that

seems to go well with his supporters.¹²¹ In his first press conferences as president, for example, when asked about race matters, Obama has circumvented the questions and suggested he has bigger issues before him.

Further evidence of President Obama’s weak stand on race matters was his decision not to attend the 2009 UN-sponsored World Conference on Racism at Geneva. The reasons he cited for not attending were quite similar to those of his predecessor—concerns about reparations and some attendees classifying Israel as a racist state. And in what should have been interpreted as a sign of disrespect by minority organizations, Samantha Power, Obama’s national security aide, had a conference call with Jewish leaders to let them know how Obama was processing his decision on whether or not to attend this meeting (all interested parties should have been consulted).¹²² Lastly, in his much-heralded trip to Ghana in July of 2009, unlike Presidents Clinton and Bush, who even apologized for slavery, Obama did not contextualize the sad state of much of Africa and excoriated African nations for their problems in “governance.”¹²³

Sixth, I criticized the progressive and liberal community in America for being in “silly season,” to use Obama’s terminology, regarding the amount of money he raised (close to 730 million dollars!), how he raised it (bundling), and for ignoring the implications this money would have in his administration (for a good discussion on these matters, see chapter 6 in Paul Street’s *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics*). Are we not concerned that Wall Street and HMOs support Obama?¹²⁴ Do we believe that 700 million dollars of donations will not affect his administration? (Assignment: Check which companies received bailout money and which did not and then assess if there is any relation to their contributions to Obama’s campaign.)

These were my predictions and arguments about Obama and sadly¹²⁵ many have become a reality and others seem very likely. Obama is clearly not a stealth progressive, but a centrist, pro-market, traditional politician with a *quasi*-color-blind view about race matters in America. Obama himself has accepted part of this characterization as when, in a meeting with centrist members of his party in April of 2009, he described himself as a “new Democrat” and as a “pro-growth Democrat,”¹²⁶ both clear signifiers of his pro-business stance.

To be clear, my characterization of President Obama is political and policy-based rather than moral or personal. In fact, at some level I share a lot of the pride blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans feel for Obama. In this sense, I am part of the nationalist moment I have mentioned in this chapter (but I have done my best *not* to let this nationalism¹²⁷ cloud my analysis). More significantly, I do not believe *all* of Obama’s policies are wrongheaded. For example, the closing of the detention camp at Guantánamo Bay,¹²⁸ the cessation of so-called “enhanced interrogation tech-

niques (torture),¹²⁹ his public statements about wanting to extend a hand to leaders of “rival nations,”¹³⁰ the possibility reforming our health care system (even if it ends up not delivering a single-payer system, a reformed bad system will be better than the current one), his support of the “Employee Free Choice Act” which would facilitate workers’ efforts to get unionized (even though Obama has already hesitated and urged workers to find a “compromise” with the business community),¹³¹ his new emission and mileage standards,¹³² and his legislation to exert some control over the credit card industry¹³³ are good for the nation. Like so many Americans, I also believe President Obama is a more capable, dignified, and shining representative of this country in the world platform than his predecessor. There is little doubt that Obama projects to the world community a much better image of this nation and its possibilities. Even before he was elected, international polls showed that up to three-fourths of people in the world believed that “an Obama presidency would see improved U.S. relations with the rest of the world.”¹³⁴ This early enthusiasm for Obama has remained high. A post-election poll, for instance, revealed that two-thirds of those surveyed in seventeen nations, compared to 47 percent in 2008, believed America’s relations with the rest of the world will become better.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, having clarity about who Obama is, what his policy stands, preferences, and proclivities are, and what his likely political trajectory will be are important matters as we can use this information to craft a better political strategy for the near future. The contour of such political strategy is what I address in the last section of this chapter.

**“TUT, TUT, CHILD! SAID THE DUCHESS.
‘EVERYTHING’S GOT A MORAL, IF ONLY YOU
CAN FIND IT.’; LET SOCIAL JUSTICE NOT
DIE AT THE ALTAR OF “PRAGMATISM”
AND COLOR BLINDNESS**

In this chapter I explained why I was not enchanted with Obama, his policies, and the meaning of his election for the nation. My overall claim was that the Obama phenomenon was not a “miracle” or an event that denotes how far we have come in the arena of “race relations,”¹³⁶ but the product of forty years of racial transition from Jim Crow to the regime I have labeled the “new racism.” As such, instead of signifying the “end of racism,” Obama’s election as president may help bring to the fore a more powerful type of racial domination: a Latin America-like multiracial white supremacy order. In *Obnmerica* the space for talking about race mat-

ters may dwindle as whites have gained the upper hand symbolically. Although little has changed in the fundamentals of the racial order, having a black man “in charge”¹³⁷ gives the impression of monumental change and allows whites to tell those who research, write, talk, and organize against racial inequality that they must be crazy. Whites can now say “How can racism be important in a country that just elected a black man as its president?” and add “By the way, I voted for Obama, so I cannot be a racist.” (Racial ideologies are always work in progress; thus, the “I voted for Obama, so . . .” may join the list of semantic moves I listed in chapter 3.)

I also argued that Obama’s politics and stand on racial matters epitomize the character of America’s racial regime which, among other things, brought forth the post-Civil Rights minority politician. Although Obama is the most successful exemplar of this new kind of politician, the Democratic and Republican landscape is dotted with them and I forecast many will emerge as central political figures in the near future. Let us not forget, for example, that before Obama, former Secretary of State General Colin Powell could have run for president in 1996.¹³⁸ In that year an exit poll conducted the day of the election revealed that had Powell, rather than Bob Dole, been the candidate for the Republicans, he would have won the election.¹³⁹

President Obama has emphasized his interest in “bipartisanship,” on not being “ideological,” and on his “pragmatic” approach to politics as policy.¹⁴⁰ But what does this mean and what does it imply? I argued his pragmatism and distaste for what he calls “ideology” betrays his center-right stand on most issues. My argument is not entirely original as *New York Times* writer David Leonhardt dissected Obama’s policy views in a piece titled “Obamanomics” where he described Obama as a “University of Chicago Democrat” and suggested that “Obama simply is more comfortable with the apparent successes of laissez-faire economics.”¹⁴¹ More tellingly, Leonhardt wrote that “[i]nvolving pragmatism doesn’t help the average voter much; ideology, though it often gets a bad name, matters, because it offers insight into how a candidate might actually behave as president.”¹⁴²

Interestingly, like all Democratic presidents and presidential candidates since Lyndon B. Johnson, Obama depends on a strong electoral support from minority communities. If at some point black and Latino supporters, who were crucial for Obama’s victory,¹⁴³ realize he is not going to enact policies that will benefit them they may walk out of his electoral coalition. But since there are no other electoral options at this juncture, what political options are there for people of color and progressives to make sure the change they were promised is delivered?

“‘ARE YOU CONTENT NOW?’ SAID THE CATERPILLAR”: TO-DO LIST FOR “CHANGE” TO BE DELIVERED

Since Obama emerged as a political possibility, I raised concerns about his lack of connection with social movements and about what he was calling a “grassroots movement”—in truth, Obama engaged solely in mainstream work in the party system with a predictably short shelf life. Accordingly, the first thing in the “to-do list” is to work hard in organizing social movements—the plural is important. If Americans truly want Obama’s campaign slogan—“change we can believe in”—to become a reality, they must develop the vehicles and mobilize the people that will allow them to produce it. This is exactly the same suggestion I articulated before (see the second edition of this book and the Rowman & Littlefield website), but it is still valid since progressives have not advanced much in this political agenda and, in fact, wasted valuable time, emotions, money, and time in the cultish Obama phenomenon. The more Americans continue buying into mainstream politics, as they did in 2008, the less likely will they be able to effect the social change the nation needs. On this the words of Adolph Reed in 2007 ring as true today as when he wrote them:

It’s a mistake to focus so much on the election cycle; we didn’t vote ourselves into this mess, and we’re not going to vote ourselves out of it. Electoral politics is an arena for consolidating majorities that have been created on the plane of social movement organizing. It’s not an alternative or a shortcut to building those movements, and building them, takes time and concerted effort.¹⁴⁴

Second, in the process of building these social movements, we must develop *individual* and *collective* practices to resist class, race, and gender domination. These resistance experiences are the political school for those who truly aspire to live in an America without the “k” in an America where real substantive democracy has emerged.¹⁴⁵ Far too many of the young (and the not-so-young) Americans who participated in Obama’s campaign have not experienced the deep political experience of working *with* real people and *for* real causes in social movements. Thus, I urge liberals, progressives, leftists, and people of consciousness to move away from mainstream Democratic party politics and engage in social movement-type work for health care reform, in anti-racist groups and campaigns, in pro-labor and feminist organizations, and in all sorts of anti-systemic political work. These experiences will immunize them against what passes as “politics” and “political participation” in this country and open their eyes and minds forever.¹⁴⁶

Third, liberals and progressives must radicalize the spaces they inhabit no matter where and no matter what. They have become too passive and,

for fear of creating controversy, avoid saying or doing much where they work or live. (This problem afflicted—or, perhaps, *facilitated*—the Obama campaign as those who participated were not encouraged to study the issues at hand deeply.) The not entirely self-imposed silence of the left has reduced the space for contestation in the public square. Although it is true that the “public square” in America is tilted to the center-right and that the media is not free as it is owned by corporations,¹⁴⁷ it is also true that progressives have retreated further reducing their already limited corner in the square.

Fourth, there is desperate need for critiques of President Obama from the left. On this, paraphrasing the lyrics of a song by Michael Jackson, “It don’t matter if [our president is] black or white.”¹⁴⁸ We must not stop debate, critique, and dissent because the president of the United States is black, white, Latino, or Asian. Only by organizing movements to oppose and challenge many of the policies President Obama is enacting, will we be able to change his political trajectory and the content of his policies. Unfortunately, far too many people in the American left have avoided any public engagement on Obama—whites, because they think that if they criticize him, they will be called “racist,” and many people of color, because even though Obama is not “all that,” they still think his victory has at least symbolic value.¹⁴⁹ Any true progressive, regardless of their race or gender, should never cease having a deep engagement in political matters. And if through this engagement one concludes a minority politician or a woman of any racial background does not represent the best interest of the people, one must say so loud and clear regardless of the consequences (do we remember the debate around the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings?).¹⁵⁰ Not engaging in critique is not only a sign of cowardice and accommodation but is also self-defeating. By not criticizing President Obama’s policies and actions now, we are digging our own graves as it will be even harder to do so in the future.

Finally, all I have suggested we should do to pressure the Obama administration to “do the right thing”¹⁵¹ can be done in *creative* ways. The progressive community has become somewhat ossified and not moved up with the times. I have preached the need to *think* and *act* beyond the traditional repertoire of politics and tactics of the left and the Civil Rights movement before and repeat my claims again (again, see my comments in the “postscript” to the second edition and on the Rowman & Littlefield website). We need new ways of *doing* politics, organizing, and working with people to help folks see what is truly going on in the world they live in. Some of the strategies of the past (marches, sit-ins, political rallies, etc.) may still be part of our tool kit, but progressives need to listen to folks in the younger generation who can help them reinvent their political praxis. Accordingly, *Yes we can* use humor, as Michael Moore and others have

showed, as an effective political weapon; *Yes we can* be postmodern in style and, on occasion, do truly “wacky” things (wouldn’t it be great to do an all-white post-racial rally lampooning Obama’s race views?); and *Yes we can* dare talk once again about the revolution and the significance of Malcolm X for racial and social change in *our* America (these are things and names that few dare mention these days). It is time the American left recovers from the political depression it has been in since Reagan was elected president in 1980.¹⁵² It is time it takes a strong political dosage of Prozac and ends its vote-for-whomever-the-Democrats-nominate-for-president political option it has exercised since 1980—voting for the proverbial “lesser of two evils” always keeps evil in power.

If we do these things, we can recover from this maddening moment where things seem upside down. But if we wait until the next election and limit our political engagement to electoral politics—which has become the political praxis of far too many progressives—history is likely to, as Marx wrote, repeat itself: “the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.”¹⁵³ The tragedy in this moment is that the first person of color elected to the highest office in the nation is a post-racial, accommodationist, so-called pragmatic and non-ideological man without connections to any social movement. The farce is that Obama may run in 2012 against Bobby Jindal—the ultra-conservative Asian Indian governor of Louisiana who has the backing of his party and even of Rush Limbaugh.¹⁵⁴ If this fateful match happens, whites and confused people of color will interpret it as the final proof of America’s color blindness. If the farce materializes, getting out of the rabbit-hole I call *Obammerica* will be extremely difficult and the exchange between Alice and the Cheshire Cat may become “real”:

“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.

“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”

“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.

“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”

Nevertheless, even if Jindal and Obama face off in 2012, it will not represent the “end of history.”¹⁵⁵ If this match happens, the struggle for racial equality will become much harder, but people can *always* alter the course of history through their actions. People can indeed “make their own history.”¹⁵⁶ We can make our president and his administration deliver the change he promised. “We the people” should do what Professor Cornel West suggested immediately after Obama was elected president:

Barack Obama is a symbol, but we’ve got to move from symbol to substance. We’ve got to move from what he represents in a broad sense . . . Can we

revitalize democratic possibilities on the ground with Barack in the White House? I think we can. We can put some serious pressure on him, and we can actually continue the democratic awakening among working people and poor people and push Barack in a progressive direction.¹⁵⁷

Accordingly, it is time we “put some serious pressure” on President Obama to make sure “the happy summer days”¹⁵⁸ so many Americans dreamt about when he became president do not become a continuation of our long racial nightmare.

NOTES

1. Throughout this chapter I will use *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* references. I do this because it fits the case quite well and because as a child this was one of my favorite books. All sections have titles partly derived from passages from the book.
2. This term entered our lexicon during this campaign and was in part produced by the reaction to Obama by the public, by the media, and by Obama’s campaign team who wisely realized that the rock star–like adulation Obama was receiving was good for his electoral chances. An early voice critical of this nonsense was Matt Gonzalez, who ran for vice-president under Ralph Nader’s ticket, in the article “The Obama Craze,” *Counterpunch*, February 29, 2008, at www.counterpunch.org/gonzalez02292008.html.
3. The term “progressive” in the United States has various tonalities and people who call themselves such do not agree a hundred percent on tactics (electoral versus social movement politics) and even on the end game (democratic socialism, mixed-economy, radical democracy, etc.). However, they all repudiate corporate rule and patriarchy, and want to see an end to racial exploitation. They also support a more meaningful democracy where citizens are not spectators, but are at the core of the political process. Examples of progressives who were critical of Obama are Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Naomi Klein, and Cornel West.
4. During the campaign, there was a minimal and skewed debate, but at least there was a debate. Now that the Republicans, neoconservatives, and right-wing ideologues (almost the entire cast of the Fox News division, Rush Limbaugh, and others) have raised the intensity and frequency of their attacks and organized anti-Obama rallies such as the April 15, 2009 “Tea Parties,” it is even harder for the views of progressives to receive any air time in the public square. In the spaces I debated the Obama phenomenon, the exchanges on all Obama-related matters has dwindled. Nowadays I just receive e-mails on what the right wing is saying about or doing to Obama.
5. Conservatives have created a mythology about academia: the idea that most intellectuals are left-wing oriented. In truth most people in academia are either Democrat or Republican and do not disagree with the *fundamental* components of this country, that is, they are all for the “free market,” endorse the American version of “democracy,” usually agree with American imperial ventures, and have

few qualms with the plutocracy that rules the nation. For propagators of this mythology, see David Horowitz, *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2006). For a reality check, see Henry A. Giroux, *The University in Chains* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

6. Regardless of my political leanings (and *all* scientists have them and they affect in multiple ways the work they do), it is possible for readers to judge the merits of my analysis as I do the best I can to back up every point I make and bring as much “data” as I can to bear whenever possible. In this sense, my commentary and analysis is indeed sociological.

7. From Bill Cosby to Bill Bennett; from John Lewis to Will Smith; from the Obamas (both) to far too many black and white pundits; the profoundly conservative, outdated, and empirically wrong claim of “now blacks have no more excuses” has reemerged. For a refutation, see Wormi L. Reed and Berin Louis, Jr., “No More Excuses: Problematic Responses to Barack Obama’s Election,” *Journal of African American Studies* 13, no. 1 (2009): 97–109.

8. The exact quote of the second president of the United States is “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” The quote can be found in the website of Law Professor Douglas Linder, Famous American Trials, “Boston Massacre Trials, 1770,” at <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/bostonmassacre/bostonmassacre.html>.

9. *Clear and Convincing Evidence: Measurement of Discrimination in America* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1993).

10. Rivera, Amaad, Jeannette Huezio, Christina Kasica, and Dedrick Muhammad. “State of the Dream 2009.” (Boston: United for a Fair Economy, 2009).

11. The report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics can be found at www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.nr0.htm.

12. Earl Graves, Jr., “State of Black America: Wealth for Life,” *Black Enterprise*, at www.blackenterprise.com/blogs/2009/04/08/state-of-black-america-wealth-for-life/.

13. Joe R. Feagin, “The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiracial Discrimination in Public Places,” *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 1 (1991): 101–16.

14. For a great review of the contemporary landscape of discrimination, see Devah Pager and Hannah Sheppard, “The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (2008): 181–209.

15. In the 1960s, sociologist Paul M. Siegel wrote a very influential paper titled “On the Cost of Being a Negro,” *Sociological Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (1965): 41–57, documenting the multiple and deleterious impact of racism on blacks. This idea was updated in the 1990s with the notion of “living while black,” “driving by blacks,” etc. In a recent paper, Shaun Gabbidon and Steven A. Peterson updated the evidence. See their paper, “LIVING WHILE BLACK: A State-Level Analysis of the Influence of Select Social Stressors on the Quality of Life Among Black Americans,” *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 1 (2008): 83–102. I added in the quote in the text “brown” as many scholars have performed similar analyses for Latinos and Asians and documented that racism affects them adversely, too.

16. Professor William A. Smith has worked tirelessly to demonstrate that racism produces the syndrome he calls “racial battle fatigue.” The constant thinking, preparing, expecting, and being concerned about the potential for racial discrimination creates an almost constant state of “fight or flight” in people of color with deleterious health consequences. See William A. Smith, Walter Allen, and Lynette Danley, “Assume the Position . . . You Fit the Description: Psychosocial Experiences and Racial Battle Fatigue among African American Male College Students,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 51, no. 4 (2007): 551–78.

17. Conservative race analysts, such as Hoover Institute Senior Fellow Paul Sniderman, have carried the academic torch for the white majority who insists that whites are mostly tolerant, that we still have a few bigots but few and far between, and that white views on crime, welfare, government intervention, and affirmative action are “principled” rather than race-based (see chapter 1). His latest book on race attitudes in the United States is *Black Pride and Black Prejudice* (Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

18. I must state for the record that survey data suggest that the peak of the anti-immigration feeling in the nation happened in the middle part of the 1990s (65 percent of Americans opposed immigration in 1995 versus 39 percent in 2008). Jeffrey Jones, “Fewer Americans Favor Cutting Back Immigration,” *Gallup.com*, June 10, 2008, at www.gallup.com/poll/108748/Fewer-Americans-Favor-Cutting-Back-Immigration.aspx. But one must be careful and not equate “survey results” with reality as on sensitive issues, as I have argued in this book, surveys may not measure in a precise manner people’s feelings and be good predictors of their behavior.

19. Lou Dobbs has a show on CNN and for years had a segment entitled “Broken Borders.” As the economy declined in 2008 and many immigrants from Mexico began returning to their country, Dobbs switched gears a bit and is now targeting the so-called war against drug dealers in Mexico and the “swine flu,” both presented to his audience as the product of cultural dislocations.

20. Cities across America have enacted all sorts of legislation against undocumented workers ranging from fining landlords who do not check the citizenship status of their prospective tenants, involving local police in monitoring undocumented workers, and expanding local prisons to detain undocumented workers (cities are paid by the federal government for this service). A recent article by Leslie Savan, “Anti-Mexican Media Hysteria Makes Life More Dangerous for Latinos in the U.S.,” *TheNation.com*, May 13, 2009, discussed the “media hysteria” since the outbreak of the swine flu and how it has deepened anti-Latino sentiment and stereotypes in the American population. You can find this article and many similar ones at www.alternet.org/tags/racism/.

21. For a discussion on the silliness of referring to the post-9/11 war as the “war on terror,” see Dov S. Zakheim, “What’s in a Name? Ending the ‘War on Terror,’” *The American Interest* at www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=420.

22. The text on the debate regarding racial profiling can be found at www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/election/2000debates/2nddebate3.html.

23. Eric Lichtblau, “Bush Issues Racial Profiling Ban But Exempts Security

Inquiries," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2003, at www.nytimes.com/2003/06/18/us/threats-responses-law-enforcement-bush-issues-racial-profiling-ban-but-exempts.

24. The best book documenting the ineffectiveness of racial profiling is David A. Harris, *Profiles in Injustice: Why Racial Profiling Cannot Work* (New York: New York Press, 2003).

25. The video of Father Pfleger's comments can be seen in John McCormick and Many A. Braecher, "Another Video from Obama's Church," *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 2008, at www.svamppolitics.com/news/politics/blog/2008/05/another-video-from-obamas-church.html.

26. Chris Matthews said on his show, *Hardball*, the following on February 12, 2008: "I have to tell you, you know, it's part of reporting this case, this election, the feeling most people get when they hear Barack Obama's speech. My, I felt this thrill going up my leg. I mean, I don't get that too often." You can see the video clip at www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/02/13/chris-matthews-i-felt-t_n_86449.html.

27. One student at a certain college in Nowhere, USA, sent me an e-mail letting me know she stopped reading my book after she saw I spelled America with a "k." I explained to her that as a college student, her attitude was reprehensible and silly: reprehensible, because the job of the scholar is to engage no matter what, and silly, because by not reading my book she guaranteed a low grade in her next exam. I also explained to her the meaning of the "k." America has gone a long way from the days of *Amerikkka* (the days of slavery), yet we still have a racial structure determining the life chances of all Americans and I signify that by including one "k" in the word "Amerika." Lastly, I told her that I will remove the "k" from Amerika, when Amerika removes racism from its midst!

28. Most liberal and progressive commentators bought Obama's arguments, ideas, and even style. Noteworthy examples were black public intellectuals such as bell hooks, Michael Eric Dyson, Manning Marable, and Cornel West (after some initial hesitation) who supported Obama almost uncritically. An example of the analysts who thought Obama unlikely, or very difficult, to be elected is Joe R. Feagin. See his comments, as well as those of five other analysts including me, in "The Social Significance of Race," at contexts.org/obama/.

29. Besides the articles and talks mentioned in the preface, I also made very specific predictions (including that Obama was likely to be elected by a decent margin) in an exchange sponsored by *Contexts*, a sociology journal. Please see Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Joe Feagin, Enid Logan, Jeff Manza, and Josh Pacewicz, "The Social Significance of Barack Obama: An Online Exchange," *Contexts*, 2008, at contexts.org/obama/.

30. Given the arguments I raised in this book, whites' reaction to Obama is problematic yet understandable. His election is, in their eyes, confirmation they were *right* about the lack of significance of race in the social, political, and economic affairs of the country. Blacks' reactions are a bit more complex and somewhat unexpected, yet ultimately, also understandable. The nationalist euphoria in black America makes sense given that blacks have not seen much *collective* progress in thirty years. Hence, for the black masses, Obama's election seems like

their shining moment in American history. All believe Obama will do right by them and great expectations abound. And, for "successful" blacks (the segment Marable (1981) labels as the "black elite"), Obama's election seems like a confirmation of their own "rags to (not quite) riches" story. For them, Obama is the embodiment and expression of their *class* possibilities. For them, the immense "success" of one of them suggests that they can finally become middle and upper-middle class without the baggage of race affecting their lives. They may remain culturally black, but blackness may no longer be an impediment to their trajectory.

31. In 1973, R&B performer extraordinaire Roberta Flack made immortal the song *Killing Me Softly with His Song*. The refrain of the song goes,

Strumming my pain with his fingers
Singing my life with his words
Killing me softly with his song
Killing me softly with his song
Telling my whole life with his words
Killing me softly with his song

I have used the verse "Killing Me Softly" in talks as a metaphor of how contemporary racism "kills" people of color. Young readers who probably have never listened Mrs. Flack can hear her at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Blwdau8uHU. For a very disturbingly *white* version of this song, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTynj_p3DaE. (For readers not ready for prime time, this latter version represents "love" as only white as all the pictures in the video are of white people and Mrs. Flack, a beautiful black woman, does not appear at all!)

32. For books with interview data on this period that show this change see Judith Caditz, *White Liberals in Transition* (New York: Spectrum Publications Inc., 1976) and Bob Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1989).

33. Two books on this broad subject are Jennifer L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) and Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

34. See Manning Marable, "Jackson and the Rise of the Rainbow Coalition," *New Left Review* 1/149 (1989): 3-44.

35. Political scientists have been exploring this trend for a while and called it "deracialization." See, for example, Georgia Persons, ed., *Dilemmas of Black Politics: Issues of Leadership and Strategy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

36. Still one of the best books on the "power structure" of America and how the system works is the classic yet magnificently updated book by William G. Domhoff, *Who Rules America Now?* William G. Domhoff, *Who Rules America? Power, Politics, & Social Change* (5th ed.) (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

37. John B. Judis, "Creation Myth," *The New Republic*, September 10, 2008, at www.nnr.com/politics/story.html?id=2e0a7836-b897-4155-864c-25e791ff0f50.

38. Judis, "Creation Myth."

39. One must be careful not to equate the work and politics of paid "activists" with the work and politics of grassroots organizers. Although both may be moti-

vated by similar principles, unpaid work produces a totally different kind of political experience and generates a deeper political experience.

40. Judis, "Creation Myth," my emphasis.

41. "The Curse of Community," *Village Voice*, January 16, 1996—reprinted in *Class Melts: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene* (New York: New Press, 2000), 13.

42. Christopher Drew and Mike McIntire, "After 2000 Loss, Obama Built Donor Network From Roots Up," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2007, at www.nytimes.com/2007/04/03/us/politics/03obama.html?_r=1.

43. Paul Street, *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), pp. xxii–xiii. See also Ken Silverstein, "Barack Obama, Inc.: The Birth of a Washington Machine," *Harper's*, November 2006, 44. On this matter, see Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot, *Social Security: The Plight Crisis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Paul Krugman, "Played for a Sucker," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2007, at www.nytimes.com/2007/11/16/opinion/16krugman.html?ex=1352955600&en=a87e0ffad19b7bc2&ci=5090?ner=rssuserland&emc=rss.

45. The TV spot, created and paid for by the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, also known as America's Power, uses a segment of a speech by Obama where he talked about clean coal energy and heralded it as a way to help us deal with our energy crisis as well as creating thousands of jobs. The spot can be seen at greenworldads.blogspot.com/2008/12/barack-obama-clean-coal-commercial-ad.html. And his support during the campaign has remained as he included in his stimulus package more than 3 billion dollars to continue the research on "clean coal technology." On clean coal Al Gore has accurately stated that "Clean coal is like healthy cigarettes, it does not exist." See by Brian Ross and Joseph Rhee, "REFK Jr. Blasts Obama as 'Indentured Servant' to Coal Industry," ABCNEWS.com at www.commondreams.org/headline/2009/04/21-8.

46. Arguably the weight of the historical evidence shows that *judicial/mutual* social change is the product of social protest. See Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

47. FISA, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, was originally enacted in 1978. This act became extremely problematic as President Bush reportedly used it in an abusive way in violation of the 4th Amendment. In 2008, the act was going to be amended to make sure that those who provided information to the government (telecommunication giants) in violation of privacy rights could not be prosecuted, but Republicans derailed this by adding amendments to a bill sponsored by Senators Dodd and Feingold which were supported by then-Senator Obama. For a blow-by-blow account, see Jake Tapper, "Obama's FISA Shift," *ABC News*, July 9, 2008, at blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2008/07/obamas-fisa-shi.html.

48. Michael Powell, "Obama Addresses Critics on 'Centrist' Moves," *The New York Times*, July 8, 2008, at theaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/07/08/obama-addresses-critics-on-centrist-moves/.

49. Taylor Marsh, "Barack Obama's Progressive Cannibalism," *The Huffington Post*, December 8, 2007, at www.huffingtonpost.com/taylor-marsh/barack-obamas-progressive_b_75933.html.

50. For examples of this view, see Risemay, "From apathy to action: Barack Obama's grassroots movement to mobilize and inspire the American public," *Mutator Community*, March 19, 2007, at matadortravel.com/travel-writing/unity-states/innovators/from-apaty-to-action-barack-obamas-grassroots-movement-to-m, and Amy Sullivan Sullivan, "A Leader of Obama's Grassroots Army," *Time.co.*, April 21, 2008, at www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1834670,00.html.

51. The literature on social movements is extensive and there are some definitional differences. Nevertheless, Stanley Aronowitz's definition in *False Promises* seems fitting:

Social movements consist of more than their immediate demands for the redress of grievances. The precondition of sustained protest and contestation is a congealed community with broadly shared perceptions and values upon which agreement to act may be reached. Participants may retain their individual views, may be in conflict about many aspects of the movements' goals and program, but what marks their unity is not only shared enemies, but a strongly held sense that they share the same worldview (1991: xvii–xix).

52. Claire Cain Miller, "How Obama's Internet Campaign Changed Politics," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2008, at bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/how-obamas-internet-campaign-changed-politics/.

53. I stated my views on how blacks and whites regarded Obama to *The Wall Street Journal* writer Jonathan Kaufman who wrote a piece entitled "Race on Campus: Beyond Obama, The Unity Stops." I suggested that few of my white students, like few whites across the nation, had meaningful relationships with blacks, even those who claimed to be for Obama. I also pointed out that the racial views of white Obama supporters were not as progressive as those of his minority supporters and a few other things that were not mentioned in the article. See Jonathan Kaufman, "Race on Campus: Beyond Obama, the Unity Stops: After Campaign Rallies, Black, White Students Go Their Separate Ways," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, May 3, 2008, at online.wsj.com/public/article/print/SB120977670689464343.html.

54. For research that shows that younger cohorts are not as racially "tolerant" as people believe, see Scott Blinder, "Dissonance Persists: Reproduction of Racial Attitudes among Post-Civil Rights Cohorts of White Americans," *American Politics Research* 35, no. 3 (2007): 299–335, and Tyrone A. Forman and Amanda E. Lewis, "Racial Apathy and Hurricane Katrina: The Social Anatomy of Prejudice in the Post-Civil Rights Era," *Du Bois Review* 3, no. 1 (2006): 175–202. We still need, however, systematic longitudinal studies on cohorts to assess how their attitudes vary throughout important milestones in the lifecycle.

55. Professors Vincent Hutchings and Tom Pettigrew delivered papers at the conference "Still Two Nations?" at Duke in March of 2009 on their survey work on Obama and the 2008 election. The highlights of their findings were the following:

1) Obama's victory was the result of the "perfect storm" of factors—Obama's lucky situation in Chicago politics which allowed him to become a senator

in 2006, the extraordinarily high levels of black and Latino support for Obama, an economy in shambles, and an ineffective Republican candidate.

- 2) Despite the hoopla, white support for Obama (45%) in this election was in line with white support for Democratic candidates over the last 40 years.
- 3) Obama white supporters were not “beyond race.” In answers to questions that have been used over the last thirty years to assess “racial attitudes,” Obama white voters were just slightly less “prejudiced” than other whites.
- 4) A similar proportion of whites agreed with typical stereotypes of blacks, but Obama voters were more likely to *hate* this fact (the survey used by Professor Hutchings included an experiment where the mode of administration was varied randomly—face to face or self-administered—which allowed the examination of whether respondents report their beliefs consistently).

56. Paul Street, whose book I cited above, claims he noticed the same kind of blind support for Obama while he canvassed for John Edwards in Iowa. He reports the difficulties he experienced when he tried to discuss and debate with Obama supporters as they seldom had a clue of Obama’s policy stands.

57. See AFP, “Michelle Obama Working Hard on New Image,” *The Times*, June 24, 2008, at www.thetimes.co.za/Entertainment/CelebZone/Article.aspx?id=789896.

58. Here is the exchange between President Obama and the journalist Ann Compton:

OBAMA: Ann Compton? Hey, Ann. You sound surprised.

QUESTION: I am surprised. Could I ask you about race?

OBAMA: You may.

QUESTION: Yours is a rather historic presidency. And I’m just wondering whether, in any of the policy debates that you’ve had within the White House, the issue of race has come up or whether it has in the way you feel you’ve been perceived by other leaders or by the American people? Or has the last 64 days before a relatively color-blind time?

OBAMA: I—I think that the last 64 days has been dominated by me trying to figure out how we’re going to fix the economy, and that affects black, brown and white.

And, you know, obviously, at the inauguration, I think that there was justifiable pride on the part of the country that we had taken a step to move us beyond some of the searing legacies of racial discrimination in this country, but that lasted about a day.

And—and, you know, right now, the American people are judging me exactly the way I should be judged. And that is: Are we taking the steps to improve liquidity in the financial markets, create jobs, get businesses to re-open, keep America safe? And that’s what I’ve been spending my time thinking about. OK. John Ward, Washington Times? Where’s John?

The transcript of the press conference can be found at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032403036.html.

59. You can find the transcript of the press conference in www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/29/obama-100-days-press-conf_n_193283.html.

60. History was made based on a snippet of a sermon (or perhaps, as I allude below, pasting snippets from several sermons) from a reverend, a church, a con-

gregation, and a religious tradition white America knew almost nothing about. Reverend Wright said about this in an interview with Bill Moyers the following:

They know nothing about the church. They know nothing about our prison ministry. They know nothing about our food ministry. They know nothing about our senior citizens home. They know nothing about all we try to do as a church, and have tried to do, and still continue to do as a church that believes what Martin Marty said, that the two worlds have to be together. And that the gospel of Jesus Christ has to speak to those worlds, not only in terms of the preached message on a Sunday morning, but in terms of the lived-out ministry throughout the week.

The interview was excerpted by Mark Thomas, “Rev. Jeremiah Wright Appears on PBS’ ‘Bill Moyers Journal,’” in *The Chicago Sun Times*, April 24, 2008, at www.suntimes.com/news/politics/obama/913847.wright042408.stng.

On March 21, CNN’s Anderson Cooper in his blog eulogized Reverend Wright from most of the charges. Cooper listened to the entire sermon and found that the “chickens coming home to roost” comment was a quote from Edward Peck, the former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and he did not find the “God damn America” statement in this sermon which suggests that someone did a job on this Reverend to hurt Obama’s presidential chances. See Anderson Cooper’s blog, “The full story behind Reverend Jeremiah Wright 9/11 sermon,” *AC360*, March 21, 2008, at AC360.blogs.cnn.com/2008/03/21/the-full-story-behind-rev-jeremiah-wrights-911-sermon/.

61. The full text of his race speech in Philadelphia titled “A More Perfect Union” can be found at www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/03/18/obama-race-speech-read-th_n_92077.html.

62. A truly wonderful book outlining the role of race from the moment this country was born through today is Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

63. Obama is cited in *Nervesweek*, after the Wright controversy and the “race speech,” saying the following:

Race is a central test of our belief that we’re our brother’s keeper, our sister’s keeper There’s a sense that if we are to get beyond our racial divides, that it should be neat and pretty, whereas part of my argument was that it’s going to be hard and messy—and that’s where faith comes in.

Obama has milked this notion of our “brother’s keeper” in many areas, but one cannot forget the religious, conceptual, and political implications of this statement as it pertains to how one addresses the racial problems of America. See Lisa Miller and Richard Wolfe, “Finding His Faith,” *Nervesweek*, July 12, 2008, at www.newsweek.com/id/145971/page/1.

64. A few weeks after this speech, Obama threw Reverend Wright “under the bus” (this expression became very popular in this campaign) and, later on, renounced his affiliation to the Trinity United Church of Christ. And a few weeks after these actions by Obama, a poll by The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press indicated that most Americans believed he had handled the contro-

versy well and 48 percent of whites agreed with this stand (although 45 percent disagreed). See people-press.org/report/?pageid=1277.

65. You can read Nopper's speech on this matter in bandung1955.wordpress.com/2008/10/16/obama%e2%80%99s-%e2%80%98race-speech%e2%80%99-as-noslave-narrative-2/.

66. Liz Halloran, "Obama's Race Speech Heralded as Historic: African-American Scholars and Leaders See This as the Presidential Candidate's Moment," *US News and World Report*, March 18, 2008, at www.usnews.com/articles/news/campaign-2008/2008/03/18/obamas-race-speech-heralded-as-historic.html.

Even the usually critical people at The Black Agenda Report—and perhaps because of their one-dimensional class analysis—missed the point and focused mostly on the fact that Obama did not address class inequities as central to America's troubling racial history. See their comments at www.blackcommentator.com/269/269-cover-obama-race-speech-analysis-ed-bd.html.

67. Fox News, "Opinion Dynamics Poll," *FoxNews.com*, March 2008, at www.foxnews.com/projects/pdf/032008_release_web.pdf.

68. See CBS News and *The New York Times*, "Race Relations and Politics," *CBSNews.com* at www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/Mar08c-Race.pdf. A year later, after Obama's first hundred days in office, CBS did another poll with even more optimistic results. In their press release, they stated the following:

For the first time in CBS News polling history, a majority of blacks are casting race relations in the United States in a positive light.

Fifty-nine percent of African-Americans—along with 65 percent of whites—now characterize the relationship between blacks and whites in America as "good," according to a new CBS News/New York Times survey.

Less than a year ago, just 29 percent of blacks said race relations were good. The percentage of blacks who say race relations are bad, meanwhile, has dropped from 59 percent last July to 30 percent today.

Sixty-one percent of blacks say there has been real progress in getting rid of racial discrimination since the 1960s. That's up from 37 percent in December 1996. Eighty-seven percent of whites say there has been real progress since the 1960s.

69. Collective behavior analysts define crazes as all-involving phenomena where participants seem fanatical and devoted to the craze whether it is in the religious, economic, aesthetic, or political realm. For a classic statement on this matter, see Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

70. Xuan Thai and Ted Barrett, "Biden's Description of Obama Draws Scrutiny," *CNN.com*, February 9, 2007, at www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama/.

71. Many of the arguments I stated early in the campaign were articulated by other commentators. See David Greenberg's article in *The Washington Post*, "Why Obama? Because He Runs as the Great White Hope," January 13, 2008, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/11/AR2008011101414.html.

72. I watched *Larry King Live* and still remember the show in 2006 with Oprah and her friends where Mr. King asked her thoughts about a guy who was organizing an Internet campaign of "Oprah for President." She answered:

WINFREY: You know what I would say to him. I would say, take your energy and put it in Barack Obama. That's what I would say.

L. KING: Is that your favorite?

WINFREY: That would be my favorite guy. I'm going to—I tried to call this guy, Mr. Mann, the other day.

See transcript of show in Lynn Sweet, "Oprah tells CNN's Larry King she wants Barack Obama to run for president," *Chicago Sun Times*, September 26, 2006, at blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2006/09/oprah-tells-cnns-larry-king-sh.html.

73. Gary Kamiya, a writer for liberal journal *Salon*, wrote in February of 2008 a provocative piece entitled "It's OK to vote for Obama because he's black," at www.salon.com/opinion/kamiya/2009/04/29/race/. After he stipulated that his support for Obama was not exclusively based on his race, he bluntly stated:

But if Obama were a white junior senator from Illinois with the same impressive personal and professional qualities—the same intelligence, empathy, speaking skills, legislative tenure and life story—there'd be no way he'd have the name recognition to mount a major campaign in the first place. And if he did manage to run, it's unlikely he would have inspired such a passionate and widespread following.

Obama's charisma, which is his unique political strength, is real, but it cannot be separated from the fact that he's black. When Obama speaks of change and hope and healing divisions, his words carry an electric charge because of who he is: He embodies his own message, the very definition of charisma. As a black man offering reconciliation, he is making a deeply personal connection with whites, not merely a rhetorical one.

74. See Lynn Duke, "How Big a Stretch? For Barack Obama, Winning the White House Would Mean Bridging the Biggest Gap of All," *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2007, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/06/AR2007050601255.html.

75. Duke, "How Big a Stretch?"

76. Duke, "How Big a Stretch?"

77. In speech in Selma, Alabama, he spoke of the Moses generation (the Civil Rights generation) and thanked them for bringing them 90 percent on the road to equality (this pleased some in the audience, even though it was factually wrong). There he laid claim to the mantle of the Joshua generation, who is charged with bringing his people to the Promised Land. Although he talked of generations, he clearly did not mind the implications of talking in singular about Joshua. The speech can be found at Lynn Sweet, "Obama's Selma speech. Text as delivered," *Chicago Sun Times*, March 5, 2007, at blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2007/03/obamas_selma_speech_text_as_del.html.

78. See the profile of Evelyn Glor Ashford, a 93-year-old woman, by Thomas C. Fox in his piece for the *National Catholic Reporter* on April 28, 2009. There Mrs. Ashford said, like so many older African Americans, that "'I'm just so glad I've lived to see this day. I've always had hope that blacks would be recognized for

their achievements and contributions. Now I see it's finally happening." The article can be read in nronline.org/news/people/100-days-obama-leadership-black-pride-runs-high.

79. See Diane Cardwell, "Daring to Believe, Blacks Savor Obama Victory," *The New York Times*, January 5, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/01/05/us/politics/05race.html.

80. The almost unanimous support Obama has now among the black masses was not so in 2007 and early 2008. See Kevin Merida, "Obama Wave Stuns Clinton's Black Supporters," *The Washington Post*, February 19, 2008, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/18/AR2008021802364.html>.

81. An interesting exception is Michael Eric Dyson who was one of the first, if not the first, of black public intellectuals to endorse Obama and became his surrogate during the campaign (he appeared often in TV shows such as *Larry King Live* debating Hillary Clinton's supporters and, later on, McCain's supporters). But in June of 2009, he began criticizing President Obama and said, among many other things, that Obama "is willing to sacrifice the interests of African Americans in deference to a conception of universalism because it won't offend white people." He also suggested we need to hold him "accountable" and demand he addresses issues of race. His first critical engagement can be seen at www.allhiphop.com/stories/multimedia_video/archive/2009/05/29/21623176.as.px.

82. In late July of 2009, Professor Gates, a world-renowned writer, scholar, and public figure was racially profiled in his own house. For details on this story, see Melissa Trujillo, "Henry Louis Gates Arrested, Police Accused of Racial Profiling," July 20, 2009, at www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/20/henry-louis-gates-jr-arre_n_241407.html.

83. In this article Professor Walters judged the first hundred days of Obama's presidency and gave him a B+ (and I think he was very generous). The article can be found at blackcommentator.com/322/322_aal_grading_obama_cover_pr_inter_friendly.html.

84. In the afterword to her book *Dreaming Blackness: Black Nationalism and African American Public Opinion* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2009), Melanye T. Prince makes the same point and argues, as I do here, that the more we wait to engage Obama critically, the harder it will be to criticize him at all.

85. See Jason Horowitz, "Barack Obama, D.L.C. Clintonite?" *The New York Observer*, March 3, 2008, at www.observer.com/2008/barack-obama-d-l-c-clintonite.

86. I discussed in endnote 47 the matter of FISA. The comment on religion refers to Obama's support for keeping President Bush's controversial faith-based initiative in place and the comment on "personal responsibility" and "workfare" refer to statements he made during the campaign (although he had made similar statements before and had included them in his *The Audacity of Hope*) chastising what he regarded as behavioral practices of poor blacks.

87. The Center for Responsive Politics, a non-partisan watchdog organization following campaign money based on reports to the National Election Commission, states in their website that Obama raised thirty-eight million compared to

McCain's twenty-eight from the "Finance, Insurance, and Real State" sector. In fact, McCain defeated Obama in the money primary meaningfully only in the "Energy and Natural Resources" and "Transportation" sectors while Obama defeated him handsomely in "Lawyers and Lobbyists," "Miscellaneous Business," and even in the "Health" sector. See the data at www.opensecrets.org/pres08/sectorall.php?cycle=2008.

88. On this point, Adolph Reed mockingly commented in an article the following:

A friend of mine characterizes this as the "we'll come back for you" politics, the claim that they can't champion anything you want because they have to conciliate your enemies right now to get elected, but that, once they win, they'll be able to attend to the progressive agenda they have to reject now in order to win. This worked out so well with the Clinton presidency, didn't it? Remember his argument that he had to sign the hideous 1996 welfare reform bill to be able to come back and "fix" it later? Or NAFTA? Or two repressive and racist crime bills that flooded the prisons? Or the privatizing of Sallie Mae, which set the stage for the student debt crisis? Or ending the federal government's commitment to direct provision of housing for the poor?

Adolph Reed, "Sitting This One Out," *The Progressive*, November 2007, at www.progressive.org/mag_reed1107.

89. See Hayward Derrick Horton and Lori Latrice Sykes, "Toward a Critical Demography of Neo-Mulattoes: Structural," in *Skin Deep: How Race and Complexion Matter in the "Color-Blind" Era*, edited by Cedric Herring, Verna Keith, and Hayward Derrick Horton, pp. 159-73 (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2004).

90. Michelle Obama has made some statements as First Lady that I believe will be used against people of color.

91. During the campaign, MSNBC commentators Chris Matthews and Joe Scarborough, the first a Democrat and the second a Republican, pontificated in their shows about how irrelevant race had become in America. Matthews said many times that although he never attended school with blacks, his kids were color blind and had friends from all backgrounds. Scarborough, who is about twenty years younger than Matthews, mentioned often how people of his generation have no race issues and mingle with people from all racial backgrounds without hesitation. Interestingly, his TV and radio show are fundamentally "white shows."

92. Since his 2004 speech at the Democratic Convention, Obama has used this line often and it became ubiquitous in his campaign speeches.

93. Dylan Rodríguez, "Inaugurating Multiculturalist White Supremacy," *ILLINOIS VOX: Blog of Anarchist People Of Color*, November 14, 2008, at illvox.org/2008/11/14/inaugurating-multiculturalist-white-supremacy/.

94. More time needs to elapse before anyone can judge if my two big predictions held. But on the first one there is already increasing evidence that being critical of Obama is equated with sympathizing with or supporting the right wing. Juan Cole, for example, a distinguished liberal commentator and professor of political science at Michigan, was called all sorts of names by Taylor Marsh (a Democratic Party supporter and writer) because of a column he wrote in *Political*

criticizing President Obama's decision of bombing Pakistan. In his popular blog he wrote the following about this state of affairs:

The notion that we should not say something critical of the policy of a Democratic president because it might give aid and comfort to the rightwing enemy is completely unacceptable. It is a form of regimentation, and equivalent to making dissent a sort of treason. We had enough of that the last 8 years (it used to be from different quarters that I was accused of traitorously succoring the enemy).

His post was on January 27, 2009, and can be found at www.juancole.com/2009/01/cole-marsh-debate-on-obamas-bombing-of.html.

95. CNN, "Defense Secretary to Add Up to 22,000 troops to U.S. Army," July 20, 2009, at www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/07/20/us.military.increase/index.html.

96. For in-depth analysis and reporting on the Iraq invasion and its aftermath, see the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting at pulitzercenter.typepad.com/death-of-a-nation/. For critiques of the strategy of arming certain tribes in Iraq to fight "the enemy," see Sumedha Senanayake, "Iraq: Plan to Arm Additional Sunni Groups Poses Risks," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, June 22, 2007 at www.rferl.org/content/article/1077279.html.

97. For reports on covert bombings in Pakistan and their impact, see "President Obama Orders Pakistan Drone Attacks," *TIMESONLINE*, January 23, 2009, at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5575883.ece. See also, Sarah Baxter, "Obama Airstrikes Kill 22 in Pakistan," *TIMESONLINE*, January 25, 2009, at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5581084.ece.

It is noteworthy that David Kilcullen, an army officer who served under General David Petraeus and a strong advocate of the "upsurge" in Iraq, in testimony before Congress objected to the missile attacks in Afghanistan. His objection was neither moral nor legal, but practical. In his words, "Since 2006, we've killed 14 senior Al Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same time period, we've killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. The drone strikes are highly unpopular. They are deeply aggravating to the population. And they've given rise to a feeling of anger that coalesces the population around the extremists and leads to spikes of extremism. . . . The current path that we are on is leading us to loss of Pakistani government control over its own population." See the article by Doyle McManus, "U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan 'backfiring,' Congress told," in *The Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2009, at www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oc-mcmanus-2009may03_07133284.columnn.

98. "Drones kill dozens in Pakistan," *BBC News*, July 8, 2009, at news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8139739.stm.

99. See Arundhati Roy, *Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan: Causes, Consequences and India's Response* (New York: Stosious Book, 1987).

100. The list is larger and growing and includes other center-right oriented people such as Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, and Susan E. Rice, Obama's appointee as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

101. Dan Baiz, "Bill Clinton South Carolina's Ties," *The Washington Post*, January 22, 2008, at voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/01/22/bill-clintons_south-carolina_t.html.

102. For an interesting exposé of Larry Summers' economic views and how they fit the current economic policies of the Obama administration, see Bill Moyers and Michael Winship, "The Intoxication of Larry Summers: Changing the Rules of the Blame Game," *CommonGroundCommonsense.org*, April 9, 2008, at www.commongroundcommonsense.org/forums/1ofiversion/index.php/1107705.html.

103. Labaton, Stephen, "Congress Passes Wide Ranging Law Repealing Bank Laws," *The New York Times*, November 9, 1999, at www.nytimes.com/1999/11/09/business/congress-passes-wide-ranging-bill-easing-bank-laws.html.

104. Lawrence H. Summers, "Remarks at NBER Conference on Diversifying the Science and Engineering Work Force," can be found at www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/summers_2005/nber.php. The American Sociological Association, among many other organizations, issued a statement stating that there are virtually no differences between men and women in "measures of verbal, mathematical, and spatial abilities" and that women, like men, "flourish in science, mathematics and occupational pursuits, when they are given the opportunity and a supportive environment." Thus, the observed differences in employment patterns and compensations, which have been declining over time, are explained by social factors such as discrimination, socialization, social gender expectations, and the like. The statement titled "Statement of the American Sociological Association Council on the Causes of Gender Differences in Science and Math Career Achievement: *Harvard's Lawrence Summers and the Existing Public Debate*" can be found at www2.asanet.org/public/summers.html.

105. On the West controversy and Summers' lack of support for affirmative action, see Robin Wilson and Scott Smallwood, "Battle of the Wills," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 18, 2002, at chronicle.com/free/v48/i19/19a00801.htm. On the matter of how few women were hired or promoted during Larry Summers' tenure as president of Harvard, Marcela Bombardieri in her 2005 article in *The Boston Globe*, "Harvard Women's Group Rifts at Summers," wrote that "Each academic year since Summers became president in 2001, the percentage of women offered tenured jobs has declined. In the last academic year, only four of 32 such offers were extended to women." The article is located at www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2005/01/19/harvard_womens_group_rips_summers/.

106. Patrick Martin, "Who is Paul Volcker? Obama Appoints a Longtime Enemy of the Working Class," November 29, 2008, at www.wsws.org/articles/2008/nov2008/volc-n29.shtml.

107. See *The Wall Street Journal's* piece "Who is Timothy Geithner?" November 28, 2008, at blogs.wsj.com/economics/2008/11/21/who-is-timothy-geithner/.

108. The article can be found at www.newsweek.com/id/192328. See also Tim Rich's piece, "Stumdogs Unite!" in *The New York Times*, February 7, 2009, criticizing Geithner and Obama's economic team at www.nytimes.com/2009/02/08/opinion/08rich.html?_r=1&ref=opinion.

109. David Sirota's "Obama's Team of Zombies," February 6, 2009, can be found at www.creators.com/opinion/david-sirota/a-team-of-zombies.html.

110. It will be interesting to watch how long this Attorney General lasts and if he remains strong in his views. After a speech at the celebration of Black History Month at the Department of Justice in which he said that "Though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot, in things racial we have always been and continue to be, in too many ways, essentially a nation of cowards," President Obama rebuked him publicly. The test of his independence and progressiveness will be what he decides to do regarding the reports that the CIA lied to Congress about plans for various covert operations from 2001 to 2008 given that President Obama has all but said he does not want to prosecute anyone and prefers to "move forward." Obama's interview and Holder's speech can be accessed through Steven Rounds, "Obama Criticizes Holder's 'Nation of Cowards' Speech," March 7, 2009, at www.mainjustice.com/2009/03/07/nation-of-cowards-statement-receives-criticism-from-obama.

111. Jared Allen, "Black lawmakers irked by Obama's diverse cabinet," *The Hill*, December 22, 2008, at thehill.com/leading-the-news/black-lawmakers-irked-by-obamas-diverse-cabinet-2008-12-22.html.

112. Currently most economists believe the economy might see signs of recovery in late 2010. But given that they expect the unemployment rate to be hovering about 10.5 percent, classifying that as "recovery" is pie in the sky. In an article that appeared July 21, 2009, in *The Wall Street Journal* Ben Bernanke, Chair of the Federal Reserve, seems aware of this reality. He wrote that "accommodative policies [by the Fed] will likely be warranted for an extended period." This means that even though a few things are doing well, the economy is still unstable and fragile and thus the Fed has decided not to tighten monetary policy (raise interest rates) until the economy stabilizes. The article can be read at online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203946904574300050657897992.html.

113. Obama taught law at Chicago and was influenced by the "Chicago School." Read Naomi Klein's incisive column in *The Nation*, entitled "Obama's Chicago Boys," June 12, 2008, where she documents the influence of the conservative, Milton Friedman-inspired Chicago School of economics on Obama. The article can be found at www.thenation.com/doc/2008/06/30/klein. See also David Leonhardt, "Obamanomics," *The New York Times*, August 20, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/08/24/magazine/24Obamanomics-t.html.

114. The group Physicians for a National Health Program define single-payer as follows: "Single-payer national health insurance is a system in which a single public or quasi-public agency organizes health financing, but delivery of care remains largely private." See their website at www.pnhp.org/facts/single-payer-resources.php.

115. See Paul Krugman's piece "Clinton, Obama, Insurance," *The New York Times*, February 4, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/02/04/opinion/04krugman.html.

116. As I write this chapter, the debate is raging and it is not clear if Obama will move to the right to get some Republican support or listen to (or be pushed by) those in his party who have insisted for years on the necessity of a single-payer

system. One positive element is that Obama's team and Senate majority leader Harry Reid included a reconciliation process in the health care debate, which means that (1) the bill can pass with just fifty-one votes and (2) the measure has a deadline of October 15, 2009. See Jonathan Cohn's piece, "Reconciliation now has date: October 15," *The New Republic*, April 24, 2009, at blogs.tnr.com/tnr/blogs/date-the-treatment/archive/2009/04/24/reconciliation-now-has-a-date-october-15.aspx.

However, the big issue to look out for will be whether the *public* component of the measure—a Medicare-like system to guarantee access and affordability to every American regardless of income—remains in the final iteration of the bill. Obama will have to contend not only with Republicans, but with conservative Democratic senators such as Arlen Specter (PA), Max Baucus (MT), and Ben Nelson (NE). Baucus, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, is in a powerful position to mold the final version of the plan and has already said in public that he does not support a single-payer system. And Baucus, according to data from the Federal Election Commission, is the third-largest recipient of money from the health care and pharmaceutical industry. See Dan Eggen, "Health industry has donated millions to lawmakers," in *The Washington Post*, March 8, 2009, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/07/AR2009030701748.html. On May 7, 2009, Baucus held a meeting of the Finance Committee on health care reform and excluded all advocates of the single-payer system. This event was not reported widely, but Ed Schultz, in his *The Ed Show* on MSNBC aired a great segment on it on May 8, 2009. The segment can be seen at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30031533/. Four days later, President Obama had a meeting with representatives of, among other groups, the American Medical Association, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, the American Hospital Association, America's Health Insurance Plans, and the Service Employees International Union where all agreed to support health care reform and enact measures to cut costs. Yet, the emerging consensus of the reform in the making is that it will not be a single-payer system. See Michael A. Fletcher and Ceci Connolly, "Health Groups Vow Cost Controls," *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2009, at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/10/AR2009051002222.html?pid=topnews.

As I finish this draft, several groups are organizing marches and are lobbying hard to make sure that the single-payer option is debated. However, based on the political landscape, Baucus' centrality to this process, and the president's pragmatic proclivities, I believe the health care reform that will be enacted will be very weak and may not even include a decent and large public option. For those interested in data and analysis on health care reform see the website of *American Health Care Reform* at <http://americanhealthcarereform.org/>.

117. Michael Vitez, "At Jefferson, Conyers Backs Obama Health Stand," *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, March 7, 2009, at www.philly.com/philly/news/breaking/40898352.html.

118. Like sociologist William Julius Wilson, who articulated this position in his books *The Declining Significance of Race* and *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Obama believes that a class-based or "universal" approach will help blacks and Latinos

as a good economy “will lift all boats.” The problem with this policy is that it has not worked because even poor whites have racial advantages compared to poor blacks and Latinos and, accordingly, universal programs tend to benefit disproportionately not blacks but *whites*. It is noteworthy that Wilson changed his stand somewhat and now advocates for universal programs that are sensitive to race (see his shift in position in his 1996 book *When Work Disappears* and in his recent *More Than Just Race*). I cite below the work of John Powell on this matter and I urge interested parties to read the work of Princeton sociologist Marta Tienda on the limits of universal social policies. For a short statement on her findings, see Marta Tienda, “Diversifying the College Campus,” *Contexts*, 2008, at contexts.org/articles/fall-2008/diversifying-the-college-campus/.

119. For a great discussion about how race affected how funds were dispersed in the New Deal, see Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York and London: WW Norton, 2005).

120. Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, *Preliminary Report of the Impact of the Economic Stimulus Plan on Communities of Color*, February 25, 2009, at 4909e99d35cada63c7f757471b7243bc73c53c14-gripelements.com/publications/preliminary-report-on-stimulus-impacts feb2009.pdf; John Powell, “Post-Racialism or Targeted Universalism?” February 4, 2009, at 4909e99d35cada63c7f757471b7243bc73c53c14-gripelements.com/publications/post-racialism-or-targeted-universalism-powell feb2009.pdf.

121. Peter Canellos, “On Affirmative Action, Obama Intriguing but Vague,” *Boston.com*, April 29, 2008, at www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2008/04/29/on-affirmative-action-obama-intriguing-but-vague/.

122. See Sam Stein, “Obama Team Tells Jewish Leaders: UN Durban Text Crosses ‘Red Line,’” *The Huffington Post*, April 15, 2009, at www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/4/14/obama-team-tells-jewish-1-n-186874.html

123. On Obama’s problematic comments in Ghana and the real imperial interests behind his visit and statements, see Maulana Karenga, “Obama in Africa: Rethinking Reality and Responsibility,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Outline*, July 20, 2009, at h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/1ogbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Afro-Am&month=0907&week=c&msg=p528pOCTcv3J2XTvdjhoA&user=&pw=.

124. In a investigative report piece in *Harper’s* magazine, titled “Sick in the Head: Why America Won’t Get the Health-care System It Needs,” Luke Mitchell documents that the HMOs, represented by an organization in Washington called America’s Health Insurance Plans, support universal health care. What they do not support is, however, the enlargement of government-led programs such as Medicaid and Medicaid or similar ones, that is, they want universal coverage but through market-based organizations. Such an approach is unlikely to do much to address the high costs of health care in America. The article appeared in vol. 318, no. 1905, in February 2009.

125. In many presentations on the Obama phenomenon, I was accused of being a “cynic” or a “pessimist.” Nothing further from the truth; I tried to explain as best as I could and with the information I had at hand what I thought was happening in the country. And, as an analyst of color, my hopes and dreams are like those of Dr. King, to “one day live in a nation where [no one] will . . . be judged

by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” But the dream he had and that I share cannot happen unless, as he also said, we “make real the promises of democracy.” Without letting true freedom ring, ineffective and timid reform will parade for real change and we may be as a nation not much better than before Obama was elected president. (Dr. King’s “I have a dream” speech can be found at www.usconstitution.net/dream.html).

126. Jonathan Martin and Carol E. Lee, “Obama: ‘I am a New Democrat,’” *Political*, March 11, 2009, at www.politico.com/news/stories/0309/19862.html. New Democrats, a label used by people affiliated with the DLC, describe their views as follows on their website:

New Democrats support policies to expand economic growth and ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to benefit from that growth; a fiscally responsible and efficient government; a secure homeland; and a robust foreign policy that includes trade, constructive U.S. leadership throughout the world, and a modern and strong military.

See www.house.gov/tauscher/ndc/about_ndc.shtml.

127. Nationalism is a peculiar social force. It can bond a “nation” (even when all nations are “imagined communities” [Anderson 1991]), it can help people in their struggles for liberation from the yolk of colonialism (but even here, what begins as progressive can—and often does—deteriorate into chauvinism), and it can be used to justify the most horrific atrocities, such as the cases of Nazi Germany, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia show. Thus, nationalism is like a sea urchin: it is delicate, but it is spiny and dangerous.

128. As I write this chapter some Democratic leaders of the Senate such as Virginia Senator Jim Webb are suggesting the need to keep the prison open until they process all the detainees. And in late May, with the support of most Democrats in the Senate, a bill passed *not* funding the closing of Guantánamo.

129. Unfortunately, Obama’s “pragmatism” has affected even this positive development as he is already backtracking, for instance, on his promise of releasing pictures of prisoners who were tortured. See Jennifer Loven, “Obama seeks to block release of abuse photos,” *AP White House Correspondent*, at news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090513/ap_on_go_pr_wh/us_pentagon_abuse_photos. He also reversed himself on the “military tribunals” and has reinstated this Bush-era atrocity. See Lara Jakes, “Obama to revive military tribunals for GITMO detainees, with more rights,” *The Huffington Post*, at www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/14/obama-to-revive-military-n-203783.html.

130. It is commonplace to refer to Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Nicaragua (with Daniel Ortega as its President), Bolivia, and other nations as our “rivals.” But this assumes that the United States has a common “national interest” which these nations have presumably threatened. But if we see the United States as a nation divided along lines of class, gender, and race, then one must ponder whose interests are being defended when our leaders talk tough about these nations. For readers intrigued by this comment, I urge them to take a good introductory course to sociology where the idea of “national interest” is deconstructed.

131. Sam Stein, “Obama’s Remarks On Employee Free Choice Act Make Labor

- “Very Pleased,” *The Huffington Post*, February 12, 2009, at www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/12/obamas-remarks-on-employe_n_166345.html.
132. Mike Allen and Eamon Javers, “Obama announces new fuel standards,” *Politico*, May 19, 2009, at www.politico.com/news/stories/05/09/22650.html.
133. Sudeep Reddy, “Obama pushes for legislation,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 11, 2009, at online.wsj.com/article/SB124186580127503661.html.
134. Ali Gharib, International Press Service, “Obama Clear Winner in World Opinion” at www.commondreams.org/headline/2008/09/12-2. But see also why a crucial segment of the world, the Muslim world, is not likely to be too impressed with Obama in Ala Al Aswany’s piece, “Why the Muslim World Can’t Hear Obama,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2009, at www.nytimes.com/2009/02/08/opinion/08aswany.html.
135. Rudy Texeira, “World Publics Optimistic about Obama Presidency,” *Center for American Progress* at www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/02/opinion/020909.html.
136. Since early on, some black commentators who supported Obama expressed their concerns about how whites were framing this situation. Professor Roderrick J. Harrison, a demographer from Howard University, stated that, “Historic as this moment is, it does not signify a major victory in the ongoing, daily battle.” See Rachel L. Swarns, “Blacks Debate Civil Rights Risk in Obama’s Rise,” *The New York Times*, August 24, 2008, at www.nytimes.com/2008/08/25/us/politics/25race.html.
137. I must state for the benefit of younger readers that the selection process that produces our candidates for the presidency guarantees that the interests of dominant groups in society (capitalists, men, and whites) will be safeguarded and represented (Domhoff 2006). However, I also want to stress that political power, as expressed in state politics, is not equivalent with having absolute political power. Why? Because although dominant groups exert economic and ideological power and through them shape the terrain and content of politics, the subaltern (working class, women, and racial minorities) always have the potential to raise hell and effect change. Otherwise change would be impossible.
138. Colin Powell fits many of the elements of the new type of post-Civil Rights minority politician. However, I must point out that on racial matters, Powell has maintained a decent record. Even during duress, he remained firm in his support for affirmative action and did not buy completely into the romantic view of America the post-racial nation. See Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995).
139. Martin Plissner, “Ready for Obama Already,” *The New York Times*, February 7, 2007, at www.nytimes.com/2007/02/07/opinion/07plissner.html? r = 1.
140. In his books, speeches, and interviews, Obama has insisted on these three matters: the need for bipartisanship, the limits of ideologically driven politics, and the desire for a pragmatic view on policies concerned with outcomes. For an early assessment on Obama’s pragmatism, see David Ignatius’s article in *The Washington Post*, “The Pragmatic Obama: He’s Shaping the Debate on Foreign Policy,” at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/22/AR2007082202400.html.

141. Leonhardt wrote this piece, which can be found at www.nytimes.com/2008/08/22/business/worldbusiness/22iht-WBobama23.1.15544413.html, in August of 2008 and has since written two more long pieces based on interviews with now President Obama. His last piece, “After the Great Recession,” can be found at www.nytimes.com/2009/05/03/magazine/03Obama-t.html?pagewanted=6.
142. Leonhardt, “Obamanomics.”
143. Ninety-four percent of black voters and sixty-seven percent of Latinos supported Obama. The latter vote was more crucial as almost all past Democratic candidates in the last elections received upwards of eighty-eight percent support (e.g., John Kerry received ninety percent of the black vote in 2004). Furthermore, the Latino vote was decisive in the all-important battleground states such as Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Nevada. For superb data on the elections, see the report by conservative analyst Joseph Gimpel, “Latino Voting in the 2008 Election: Part of a Broader Electoral Movement” for the anti-immigrant *Center For Immigration Studies* which can be located at www.cis.org/latino/voting (sometimes the data talks more loudly than the ideology of those who produce it).
144. Adolph Reed, “Sitting This One Out.”
145. Political scientists have wasted a lot of time and paper in discussing the contours of democracy as they mostly focus on the *formal* (voting, replacing leaders, free speech, etc.) rather than the *substantive* components of democracy. For an exception, see Joshua Cohen, “Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy,” in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, edited by James Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), 407–38.
146. Although I am a “successful” professor of sociology at a “major” university, my political roots go back to my work with pro-independence groups, with groups defending the rights of squatters, and with the student movement that led a major strike in the University of Puerto Rico in 1981. Later on, while a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, I participated in campaigns against the American intervention in Central America and for divestment in South Africa and, later on, was active in the creation and development of a group called The Minority Coalition which demanded diversity at Wisconsin and produced some reforms in the late 1980s. And even though I am no longer a flaming radical activist, I remain committed to the cause of social justice and “fight the power” in my academic domain (let’s not forget that twenty-five percent of Americans have college degrees, therefore, we must do organizational work in colleges and universities, too).
147. Since the publication in 1998 of Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon), many books have appeared documenting corporate control of the media and its implications. Two exemplars are Ben Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004) and the book edited by Elliot D. Cohen, *News Incorporated: Corporate Media Ownership and Its Threat to Democracy* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005).
148. Michael Jackson’s song, “Black or White,” appeared on his 1991 album *Dangerous*. I cited this point in speeches in 2008 before Jackson’s tragic death in June 2009.
149. During the campaign I addressed this claim about the symbolic value of his election in two ways. First, I argued that the symbolic value of Obama for people

of color was different than that for whites. Whereas for people of color he is their Joshua, for whites he is a symbol of the post-racial America. Second, for those who kept saying how now "little kids" will be able to believe they can be anything they want to be, I pointed out that (1) minority children exhibit higher levels of self-esteem than white children and (2) having the symbol without the "opportunity structure" could create all sorts of dislocations in minority children as they can now be blamed if they do not achieve all they presumably can. On black children and their self-esteem, see the work of Professors Bernadette Gray-Little and Adam F. Hafdahl from UNC-Chapel Hill highlighted in a university press release at www.unc.edu/news/archives/jan00/graylit012400.htm.

150. The NAACP, the largest civil rights group in the nation, deliberated for too long on this case and when it issued its opposition to the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, it was too late to make an impact. Although Thomas' record was clearly that of a conservative man who opposed almost all legislation and jurisprudence of interest to the Association, the group hesitated because of only one reason: Thomas was a black man and many members thought this fact alone would make him see the light once on the court. Almost twenty years later the folly of this thinking is crystal clear as Thomas has been one of the most conservative members of the court and has voted against all issues of interest to the NAACP.

151. This was the title of one of Spike Lee's best movies ever. I urge young readers of this book to check out this wonderful movie which challenges us all to examine the political question of what tactics we should use to challenge racial injustice in America.

152. In truth, this was part of the world-systemic economic and political restructuring brought by the rise of the neoliberal project. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

153. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," *Karl Marx, Selected Readings*, David McLellan, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 300.

154. After a disastrous response to President Obama's first address to a joint session of Congress, arch-conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh came to Jindal's rescue and likened him to Ronald Reagan. Associated Press, "Critics rip Governor Jindal's response," at www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2009/02/26/critics_rip_governor_jindal_s_response/.

155. Francis Fukuyama made popular this term in the late 1980s and early 1990s through essays and his 1992 book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press). The thesis of Fukuyama is that the long struggles of humanity over ideology have ended and that liberal democracy was in fact the end of history. But this argument has a long hand as it is articulated by liberal theoreticians almost once every generation. Before Fukuyama, sociologist Daniel Bell wrote a similar tome entitled *The End of Ideology* in 1960. Interestingly, history continues forcing these authors to proclaim later on like religious leaders that "the end of time is coming soon."

156. Karl Marx, *Selected Readings*, 300.

157. This comes from the transcript of the interview Professor West did with Amy Goodman for her show, *Democracy Now*, which can be found at www.democracynow.org/2008/11/19/cornel_west_on_the_election_of_obama.

period of reticence, particularly after Obama decided not to attend an event celebrating the 40th anniversary of MLK's assassination in Memphis, missed Tavis Smiley's "State of the Black Union" in New Orleans, and failed to mention MLK in his nomination acceptance speech, Professor West decided to support Obama critically. However, during the campaign and now that Obama is president, Professor West has continuously criticized Obama for his soft stand on race matters, for his continuation of America's imperial policies, and for his mild approach to class matters. For an early statement of his views, see the transcript of his June 28, 2007, interview in *Democracy Now* at www.democracynow.org/2007/6/28/renowned_princeton_professor_cornel_west_assesses.

158. This is the last phrase of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. The entire book is online at www.sabian.org/alice.htm.