

Being President

Barack Hussein Obama

Black Politics After the Civil Rights Revolution

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Introduction

Thank you so much for the invitation to visit Jackson State University to deliver the Holden Lecture, named in honor of my long time friend and colleague, Matthew Holden.

It was a pleasure to have been invited by Mary Coleman, formerly Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, now Dean of Lesley College at Lesley University in Boston, Massachusetts. Thank you Dr. Alisa Mosley, Director of the Jackson State University Center for University Scholars, and especially Mrs. Louise Vaughn for providing me with guidance and helping to arrange my travel.

I'm delighted to be able to visit Jackson State University again. My previous visits were related to NCOBPS meetings, and my own research. This is also the home of a number of old – long term colleagues and friends: Leslie McLemore, President of the University; Curtina Moreland-Young, Chair of Public Policy and Administration; Ally Mack, Dean of the Division of International Studies, and D'Andra Orey, Chair of Political Science; and Michelle Deardorff, Head of the Fannie Lou Hamer National Institute on Citizenship and Democracy.

Jackson, Mississippi is also course the location of the important work of that marvelous couple, Myrlie and Medgar Evers. I've been using Myrlie Evers' work *For Us The Living* in my course in the past, and also this semester in my Freshman Seminar on "Black Politics After the Civil Rights Revolution" to help my students understand what life was like for African Americans Before the Civil Rights Revolution.

I decided to address frame my talk around the subject entitled

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I chose to use this address to allow me to draw on several components of my ongoing research: first the Presidency as an institution, second Barack Obama, the current President, but an intriguing and fascinating political personality and intellectual, and finally my work on Black Politics after the Civil Rights Revolution. I've been writing on the first and third of these topics for decades, literally since I began my career as a Political Scientist. I'm working on a collection of that work and this has helped me revisit some of that earlier writing and apply it to my reflections on the Obama Presidency. Obama is more recent for the reasons we all understand, his dizzyingly rapid ascent from community activist, to law student, to attorney and University of Chicago adjunct law professor, to Illinois State Senator, Senator and President. His role as President allows, requires me to talk about these other dimensions as well.

Now, I made a general decision to talk about the Obama Presidency in the early summer although I didn't nail down my title until early this fall. What I didn't focus on at that point was the conjunction of this address with the Midterm Elections this Tuesday, which forces me, whether I like it or not, to acknowledge the contextual element of the challenges to the Obama Presidency in the talk before knowing the electoral outcome. And although I didn't finish this address on the deadline required, I also could not wait until the elections to incorporate the results as we'll all still be absorbing and evaluating the outcomes for some time to come.

So let me turn to how I've organized my talk. First, I begin with a brief recognition of the development and outpouring of literature on President Obama, and the Obama Presidency from all directions. Then I shift to evaluations of the Obama Presidency including those of social policy scholars, the views of black scholars on Obama's campaign, and Presidency, debates on the responsiveness of his administration to the Black Agenda. I include my own efforts to understand how his administration approached these issues during its first year in work. Third, I offer comments on Barack Obama, the man who is President. He is a person of considerable gravitas, intellectual energy, and charisma, who generates a wide range of reactions among African Americans, whites, Latinos and Asians. *Why has he been able to overcome the conventional boundaries to national leadership, but 'failed' at stabilizing his Presidency.*

Finally I turn to an exploration of Black Politics after the Civil Rights Revolution and try to say a bit about all of this within the context of Tuesday's election results. This is political context within which Barack Obama was born and came to maturity as a young man and as political leader. We tend to focus on the Civil Rights era as a decisive one for African American politics, although I have no doubt that I will receive more than a few challenging questions about this during question and answer. I conclude my lecture by asking about the issues of Black Politics that came to the political agenda for African Americans during the era *After* the Civil Rights Revolution. How were they framed, and how or were they resolved? Are these issues that America can absorb?

The Obama Literature.ⁱ

There has been a tremendous outpouring of literature on Barack Obama, as person, as President, as leader of a new administration. I do not claim that my relatively short list is comprehensive, but it suggests the range of work that has been published and is on the way.

Outpouring of research on the Obama Presidency

- i. Andra Gillespie, Editor. *Whose Black Politics? Cases in Post-Racial Black Leadership*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- ii. Dewey Clayton. *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy*. Routledge, 2010.
- iii. Kate Kenski, Bruce W. Hardy, Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *The Obama Victory How Media, Money and Message Shaped the 2008 Election*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- iv. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Editors. *Who Should Be First? Feminists Speak Out on the 2008 Presidential Campaign*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.
- v. James T. Kloppenberg. *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hopes and the American Liberal Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- vi. *Reaching for a New Deal: President Obama's Agenda and the Dynamics of U.S. Politics*. The Russell Sage Foundation, Working papers and Forthcoming book (2011) <http://www.russellsage.org/research/working-group-obamas-policy-agenda>

- vii. Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol. *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- viii. Bob Woodward. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.
- ix. Jonathan Alter, *The Promise President Obama: Year One*. Simon & Schuster, 2010.
- x. Peniel Joseph. *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*. Basic Civitas Books, 2010.
- xi. Larry Sabato. *The Year of Obama: How Obama Won the White House*. Longman, 2009.
- xii. Ted McClelland. *Young Mr. Obama: Black Chicago and the Making of a Black President*. Bloomsbury Press, 2010.
- xiii. Gwen Ifill. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*. Anchor Press, 2009.
- xiv. Jabari Asim. *What Obama Means..For Our Culture, Our Politics, Our Future*. New York: William Morrow, 2009.

The breadth, complexity and depth of this work is certainly worth noting. It suggests to me, both that literature which is straightforward, clearly positive, clearly negative, academic, policy oriented, popular of varied sorts suggests a new era, a new phenomenon, that people of all sorts want to understand.

I've only listed the academic, political activist and policy analysis books. I've set aside President Obama's three books published on his way to the US Senate and White House, (he has a children's book due out in 10 days *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters* – perfect for Christmas) not included the Obama speeches, Obama in the White House published by all the major media outlets: *Time, Life, Essence, the New York Times*. I've not tried to include the coloring books, paper doll books, or the critics that seem somewhat extreme. But the list goes on and on, and more are on the way, including by Political Scientists who've not typically rushed to get work in print on black politicians or work with implications for Black politics.

Evaluations of Obama's Presidency

I turn next to an evaluation of Obama's Presidency, and summarize a variety of perspectives. I draw on the forthcoming work of scholars of social policy literature, who have a strong interest in the history and evolution of American social policy.

- Evaluations of Obama's Presidency on Social Policy
xv. Skocpol and Jacob *Reaching for a New Deal*
1. Outline of issues
FORTHCOMING

Reflections on the American Presidency: The End of Reagan and 20 Years Before Obama

I turn to my own views of the Presidency, written for the National Urban League's 1988 *State of Black America*, at the end of the Reagan era, and twenty years before Barack Obama was actually elected. In that piece, "Civil Rights and the Future of the American Presidency I argued that changes in the electorate made it *advantageous* for President to cultivate a black constituency. I return to that argument.

I think therefore that it is time to move the focus of analysis to another level by evaluating the benefits and costs of presidents as independent actors altering their behavior relative to civil rights policy formulation.ⁱⁱ If presidential candidates or sitting presidents assume there are severe penalties for taking strong reform positions on civil rights, then it is altruistic rather than politically advantageous for them to do so. I propose the following hypothesis for examining presidential leadership in civil rights policy.

Hypothesis: Presidents have more to gain than to lose by exercising strong reformist leadership in the area of civil rights.

The assumptions about political consequences shift if presidents presume they will not be harmed by taking strong action on civil rights, or that they will be harmed by *not* taking action, rather than that they *will* be harmed. The possibilities of presidents taking stronger positions on civil rights increase, the areas of public policy in which the extension of rights is supported will expand, and eventually, the possibility of creating a political environment in which presidential candidates from both parties will compete for black votes also increases.

This involves two assumptions. The first requires the creation of support for the political inclusion of the entire population and/or opposition to the political exclusion of any portion of the population. The inability or unwillingness of presidents otherwise seen as liberal, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, or seen as fair—Eisenhower, to state their positions in this area was related to the character of the electorate before 1965 and its representation in the Congress.

The second requires a discussion of the meaning of strong leadership, including the kind of actions which are involved. There is a large volume of political science literature on the concept of power as it is exercised by presidents: command and control, power through institutional advantage and persuasion, power through effective bargaining, and exceptionally high expectations of presidential power. Whatever the definition, presidents have rarely exercised strong reformist leadership in the area of civil rights. Truman's decision to desegregate the Army, Lyndon Johnson's role in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights and 1965 Voting Rights Acts, and Nixon's creation of affirmative action are notable exceptions (Barnett and Williams, 1986).

Placing the prestige of the presidency on the line in public view involves using a variety of actions available to the president.ⁱⁱⁱ They range from low to high status and involve private and public actions. When a president commits to a policy, he uses prestigious occasions to communicate a message about that policy to his relevant publics—the Congress, the media, interest groups, executive agencies, and the courts. The president will also make every action on the topic as visible as possible, thereby making his commitment public. And he will take the initiative in attempting to create an interest in the policy in Congress by making his commitment to the subject known in a direct personal way to the congressional leadership.

Many specific examples exist of ways in which these actions might be accomplished. The president may indicate his interest in civil rights by *direct contact* with representatives of black or other minority groups. President Theodore Roosevelt, who met with Booker T. Washington over breakfast, found that even individual contact in the White House was viewed as highly controversial at the time (Holden, 1986:11). *Public appointments* of blacks are comparable to the previous type of presidential action. They can be viewed as highly controversial or far too radical; as a sign of a president's position on policy, or as a substitute for policy. On the other

hand, a strong commitment to liberal civil rights reform, even in private, combined with numerous political appointments can be an effective strategy for broadening the base for policy change. John F. Kennedy is an example of the latter; he was not willing to take highly prestigious action, or to make that action public. He appointed a number of blacks to public office at levels which had not been typical (Garrett, 1982). Eisenhower was credited with appointing the first black to the White House staff, but E. Frederic Morrow faced a difficult time just “recruiting an office staff” (Morrow, 1963:17; Burk, 1984). If direct contacts and public appointments are part of the process of executive agency leadership, or of the effort to generate public support for a legislative campaign, then they are meaningful, but not if they are used outside of any larger plan.

Issue formulation is developed and presented in three main areas: public statements, legislative contact, and executive agency leadership. The President conveys concerns through *public statements*, communication with the people through the mass media. Any number of ways exist for a president to indicate support for reform or opposition to racial violence, for example, But a high-prestige event, which by definition also has maximum publicity and visibility associated with it, much more effectively communicates one’s interests than a low-key statement on a subject. After numerous incidents of mob violence against blacks the NAACP asked President Woodrow Wilson to make public his opposition to racist violence, specifically to lynching. After many requests Wilson “issued a strong denunciation” of mob violence, without using the word “lynching” (Garrett, 1982:236; St. James, 1980:164–165; Kellogg, 1967:227–228). The NAACP itself reproduced and disseminated 50,000 copies of the message (Holden, 1986:19–20).

This strategy suggests only a press release and contrasts dramatically with Lyndon Johnson’s decision to use an extremely prestigious occasion—a special address before both houses of Congress—to convey his support for civil rights legislation which became the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Cronin, 1975: 144; Miller, 1980:338–339). Placing civil rights in highly public occasions to indicate consistent support for reform, including speeches to major organizations, news conferences, State of the Union addresses, and budget messages to Congress significantly increases its importance, and makes the opposition, especially by members of the President’s own party, considerably more difficult and costly.

In the second area, *legislative contact*, the president can affect policy by issuing executive orders, which do not require confrontation with his legislative opponents. Several presidents used this strategy when there was great opposition to change within the Congress: The Fair Employment Practices Commission created by Franklin Roosevelt through executive order 8802, the desegregation of the Army by Truman through order 9981, of armed forces housing and other actions by the Kennedy administration, and the creation of an affirmative action program in the Johnson administration (Holden, 1986). These actions have the force of law, but did not necessarily generate the same political support of legislation passed by the Congress. On the other hand, they *were enacted*, which would not have happened had they been brought before the House or Senate (Morgan, 1970; Garfinkel, 1969; Binkin and Eitelberg, 1982; DeFranco, 1987).

Presidents use other strategies when they wish to draft legislation but seek broader institutional support, making the impact of the action more significant. The State of the Union address is the president's annual opportunity to convey to the Congress those priorities he feels are most important for it to know as it begins another year. The President's budget message is another such opportunity which has the added weight of prestige, visibility, and some indication of how the chief executive is willing to translate verbal commitments of support into financial expenditures, whether for new programs, for expanded support for existing programs (in both the authorization and appropriation phases of congressional action), or for implementation of policy.

Of course these events concentrate on the start-up phases of legislation. Proposals in which the president is directly interested also require carefully monitoring the specific topic through his own contacts and on a day-to-day basis through the interaction of his congressional liaison office.

Executive agency leadership is realized in a variety of ways, beginning with appointments; the person selected is important, but the mandate passed on to him or her has equal priority. Personal reinforcement of commitment to policy is important, whether the president is interested in maintaining existing programs, initiating new ones, or carefully monitoring responsibility for administration.

Action on civil rights issues was viewed as a highly risky enterprise by many, including Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. According to Harold Fleming, Eisenhower was unwilling to undertake aggressive public action as president to attack racial segregation:

“Throughout his eight years as chief executive, Dwight D. Eisenhower reiterated his essentially laissez-faire views on civil rights. He held that this was an issue to be resolved at the local level and at an evolutionary pace, that laws in this field were of dubious value, that alteration of ‘the hearts and minds of men’ was a precondition of change, that local intervention by the federal government was to be assiduously avoided” (Fleming, 1965, 924).

For most of his administration, Kennedy’s posture on civil rights was low-profile and limited to executive rather than to legislative action; that was to be exercised only where federal authority was most dominant, as his own presidential prestige would not be risked. In short, he avoided conflict until the end of his administration. In contrast Lyndon Johnson—despite his southern origins and his long-term membership in and leadership of the Senate (an institution decisively shaped by the power of southern/racial conservatives), strongly supported passage of the civil rights legislation introduced by President Kennedy at the end of his administration. He said in his first address to Congress:

“No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy’s memory than the earliest possible passage of the [1964] civil rights bill... I urge you...to enact a civil rights law so that we can move forward to eliminate from this nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based upon race or color” (Miller, 1980:339).

When Johnson announced his support to the nation for a Voting Rights Bill in a special joint session of Congress the next year, he framed his support for it using the language and the passion of the Civil Rights movement, “We Shall Overcome,” so that no one would misunderstand the depth of his commitment or the significance of his language.

In the future, presidents will have a strong core of support from the Democratic electorate and from within the Congress, but also from the business community. As demographic shifts in the racial and ethnic balance of the American population significantly increase the proportions of blacks, Hispanics, and Asians entering the work force, the political consequences of support for affirmative action policy will fall.

The presidency was seriously constrained by the exclusion of black voters from the electorate from the 1890s through the 1960s. Presidents rarely took aggressive reform postures on civil rights; but when President Johnson helped reform the southern electorate, the institution was strengthened by opening up pathways in the Congress for racial and social change. Once opened, presidents who do not also offer policies consistent with this new constituency face constraints on their leadership.^{iv} The national government including the president had to acquire enormous political power in order to incorporate blacks into the polity for the first time, in the nineteenth century. For that incorporation to occur again after nearly three-quarters of a century of national nonintervention into the affairs of the South, the national government including the president had to acquire these powers a second time.

Strong presidential leadership and strong federal and executive authority have been required for blacks to attain their current political status; that is, to be considered full citizens of these United States. Strong presidential leadership in preservation of these rights will be required for blacks to retain their political status and to acquire equal economic status.

The Obama Presidency - Appointments.^v Obama's early moves as President during his First 100 Days suggest he has a firm and full grasp of his range of power and authority. Appointments are a powerful resource, and include 16 cabinet departments and agencies, six units within the Executive Office of the President, 10 regulatory agencies, 44 independent agencies and the White House Staff. Of 486 Senate positions requiring Senate confirmation, 89 had been confirmed, 62 nominated and 23 were announced by the 100 day mark. Descriptive characteristics showed 118 men and 56 women among these; by race there were 108 whites, 22 blacks, 13 Latinos, 9 Asians and 22 were unknown.^{vi} By July 4, the 6 month mark, the numbers were: 174 confirmed, 65 nominated and 14 announced. 241 positions were open and 109 positions were unavailable, because of unexpired terms. Descriptive counts showed 173 men and 80 women; of these 157 were white, 34 black, 23 Latino, 11 Asian and 28 were unknown. There are 39 total White House staff, the data showed, with 23 men and 16 women, 25 Whites, 7 Blacks, 3 Hispanics, 3 Asians and 1 Other/Unknown. After one year, 342 positions had been confirmed, 64 nominated and 3 announced. 111 positions were open and 98 were unavailable.

Thus about 77.9% had been confirmed or announced. Descriptive counts showed 275 men and 134 women, with 248 white, 53 Black, 38 Latino, 15 Asian, and 55 Other or unknown appointed.^{vii}

The announced category still included e.g. Jacqueline Berrien, former Associate Counsel for the NAACP/DF who was formally nominated for the position of Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on July 16, 2009 (in both the *Washington Post* Head Count and the White House Nominations website as of April 11, 2010). Berrien's nomination had moved through the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Hearings and was placed on the Senate Executive Calendar on December 10, 2009 by remained in limbo well into March.^{viii} But on April 7, 2010 Berrien was sworn in as Chair of EEOC after having been appointed by President Obama on March 27, 2010 via recess appointment.^{ix} Two other Commissioners were also appointed via recess appointment.

The Supreme Court. In spring of 2009 and spring 2010 Justices Souter and Stevens announced their resignation from the Supreme Court. The President nominated and the Senate confirmed Judge Sonya Sotomayor of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit from 1998-2009 to succeed Justice Souter.^x Sotomayor joined the Court on August 8, 2009. The Stevens resignation was just announced on April 9, 2010. President Obama nominated former Harvard Law School Dean, US Solicitor General Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court. President Obama indicated that he expected the next Justice to take Stevens' seat before the start of the Fall 2010 term of the Court. She was confirmed and took her seat in time for the start of the start of the Court's session the first Tuesday in October.

Legislation. President Obama has been challenged for his failures by some of his constituents and was attacked by others for his successes. In 2009 the President moved Stimulus legislation through the Congress, which is referred to routinely by Republicans as the "failed stimulus" bill even though it is credited with having sustained General Motors and limited the decline of employment in many other sectors. In 2010 President Obama won passage of a number of important pieces of legislation. In March 2010, the President signed Health Care Legislation by working through intense opposition among Republicans and some Democrats. In

July 2010 the President's Financial Services Regulation legislation reform was passed.^{xi} These are dramatic reforms, as important as those passed during the Roosevelt era, but they have generated profound conflict and criticism from both Democrats and Republicans as the previous section has described.

Finally, on September 30, the President signed "H.R. 3562, which designates a federally occupied building as the **James Chaney**, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and Roy K. Moore Federal Building" in Jackson, Mississippi.^{xii}

Black Agendas or Presidential Agendas?^{xiii}

However long the President's national policy agenda, the *particular* policy interests of African Americans and other groups, are also important. Economic issues, employment, housing, wealth, individually or together has tremendous importance and is being addressed as matters of first priority in the new Obama era. Most of our national problems and crises also affect the African American and Latino/a communities, but more intensely. To the extent that the administration attacks the problems facing the American economy, that effort will improve the economic status of African Americans, or at least halt its decline. The sharp drop in confidence in the economic status of banks, the auto industry, and the high cost of energy (in mid 2008) have been especially important for African Americans, because of their concentration in the automobile sector.

Placing such issues on a national agenda, making severe unemployment, subprime mortgages, healthcare reform, a priority, might be what President Obama's racial constituencies would expect in his administration. But the challenges of moving the economic and civil rights interests of racially specific constituencies ahead of the rest of the nation whose economic standing has declined to the level of African American and Latino/a unemployment of a year ago, are not likely to be legislatively and politically tenable. While some might expect that the President is responsible for shaping a racial and ethnic agenda, the national policy agenda, is created through complex interaction with a range of interest groups, legislative representatives,

and economic interests with the Congress, administrative agencies, the Courts and the Presidency.

Racial policy is part of this exchange, but in the past it has been seen as an effort to *get on* the agenda, through a series of strategic efforts and exceptional mobilization, such as happened during the 1950s and 1960s. With a President who is African American, one can hypothesize that the structure of policymaking has changed. The traditional racial and ethnic interests that created the organizational infrastructure resulting in passage of and implementation of civil and voting rights legislation, and increased descriptive representation of public life, form the core foundation on which Barack Obama's Presidency stands.

The patterns of influence the NAACP, the National Urban League, the Congressional Black Caucus, and post World War II interest groups have created, were based on cooperation with, challenges and demands offered, and opposition to previous Presidential leadership. While not all agree, by March 2010 a number of Black activists including Tavis Smiley and Cornel West questioned the President's failure to or lack of willingness to address a "Black Agenda". Smiley, West, the late Ron Walters, Angela Glover Blackwell and others gathered in Chicago for a Town Hall Meeting the weekend before the Congress and President completed the final round of complicated negotiations that resulted in passage of Health Care Legislation.^{xiv} The critique of the Administration by Smiley, West and others was challenged by Blackwell the next day in a statement on the *Huffington Post* in which she offered some interesting challenges to the 'Black Agenda frame':

"Putting aside the nearly \$1 trillion in stimulus spending (including hundreds of billions in social, safety-net spending like food stamps and unemployment benefits), the historic health care legislation alone will dramatically improve the lives of the 7 million African-Americans without health insurance. But also in that health care bill are little-noticed provisions to restructure the college loan system to push \$36 billion into the Pell Grant program (one out of every six Pell Grant recipients is black) and invest \$2.55 billion directly into historically black colleges and universities.

"Far beyond that single bill, though, it's clear President Obama has laid the groundwork for an extraordinary growth in economic and social opportunity for millions of African Americans. The facts are there for anyone to see. So far, the president has invested or proposed:

- \$5 billion for home weatherization, targeting energy efficiency and jobs to low-income communities
- \$250 million for Choice Neighborhoods, so people can live in a community connected to true opportunity
- \$400 million to open new supermarkets and farmers markets in underserved communities
- \$600 million for summer youth jobs
- \$210 million for Promise Neighborhoods, to spread the powerful message of the Harlem Children's Zone
- \$8.1 billion for nutrition support programs--a400 million boost from last year
- \$9.4 billion to help preserve more than 1 million rental units nationwide
- \$4 billion for Race to the Top education grants
- \$10.2 billion for early childhood education
- \$144 million for prisoner re-entry programs
- \$4 billion for Community Development Block Grants--plus another150 million in competitive grants to spark economic development innovation
- \$4 billion in job-training programs for youth, displaced workers and the unemployed
- An 11 percent funding increase in the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division”

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Now these groups will have to create new patterns of policymaking that will support, challenge, and set agendas for a President with distinctively sympathetic and overlapping interests. With some degree of descriptive representation already in place, with important symbolic proclamations recognizing the cultural interests of constituencies of color, President Obama has certainly framed an administration capable of responding at some level to those interests. However, the economic crisis that contributed to the election results, also provides important difficulties in setting priorities for a nation that is in a ‘recession’ that has opened the country to the most important economic reforms since the Roosevelt administration. Senator Obama ran a national campaign for office, appealing across racial and ethnic lines. Putting race on the national agenda, making race part of national policymaking, and sustaining those interests, and while being President of “the United *States* of America” as he emphasized so often in his campaign, will offer a continuing challenge for President Obama, and for racial and ethnic constituencies.

Barack Hussein Obama – Who is the Man Who is President?

Glauberman and Burris's *The Dream Begins: How Hawai'i Shaped Barack Obama*, offers some insight into Obama's management of race in the primary and general election campaigns.^{xvi} Their book, a careful and fascinating cultural biography of Obama's life, explores the complex racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds of both sides of his family, as well as the differing multiracial, multicultural and religious contexts in which he was raised in Hawaii, Indonesia and Chicago. Glauberman and Burris argue that as he entered puberty, Obama **chose** to be Black, in contrast to Hawaiians, of two, three, four or more ancestries, who often and without self-consciousness, called themselves *chop-suey* or *poi-dog* (Glauberman and Burris, 21), meaning mixed or mutt:

"Sensitive and self-conscious Barry did not want to be seen as someone of mixed race. He did not want to be half a loaf of something. He chose to identify himself as black, choosing not, as he put it, "to advertise my mother's race." In Dreams, he said he took this course because he did not want to be a tragic mulatto figure and did not want to forever ingratiate himself to whites." (Glauberman and Burris, 67)

Obama's choice, was made against the complex, and nonhierarchical, or at least non hostile background of multiracial, multicultural Hawaii. He was in other words, used to racial complexity, comfortable with multiple dimensions of race and ethnicity, and had had frequent opportunities to see the differing patterns available in Hawaii, Indonesia, and the geographic regions of the US Mainland. He had lived with his white Kansan grandparents, and his mother, who was eager for distinctive racial and ethnic experiences that led to her marriages with a Kenyan and an Indonesian.

Obama is a politician who was born into and grew up in a series of nonhierarchical, multiracial political environments. The American polity, with its less varied, and more hierarchic racial spaces, is one that Obama reads and to which he adapts with ease. His cultural socialization probably facilitates his ability to speak to a wide variety of American communities, and now that he is President, to the varied nations which he has already visited, with relative success. He has not been able to eliminate the importance of race, but he has certainly managed it more successfully than many predicted at the start of the Presidential campaign.^{xvii}

Issues of Black Politics after the Civil Rights Revolution: Forthcoming

- How do you integrate
- Deracialization
- Leadership issues
- Changing Definitions of Race in multiracial America

Post Mid-Term Election Comments: Forthcoming

Quote from Michael Sawyer (Mark Sawyer's Facebook Page)

"we all were to naive to ask the real question in 2008;it wasn't whether 'America' would elect a black president, it was whether it would be governed by one. The answer is no."

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Andra Gillespie, Editor. *Whose Black Politics? Cases in Post-Racial Black Leadership*. New York: Routledge, 2010. Dewey Clayton. *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy*. Routledge, 2010. Kate Kenski, Bruce W. Hardy, Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *The Obama Victory How Media, Money and Message Shaped the 2008 Election*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Editors. *Who Should Be First? Feminists Speak Out on the 2008 Presidential Campaign*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010. James T. Kloppenberg. *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hopes and the American Liberal Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. *Reaching for a New Deal: President Obama's Agenda and the Dynamics of U.S. Politics*. The Russell Sage Foundation, Working papers and Forthcoming book (2011) <http://www.russellsage.org/research/working-group-obamas-policy-agenda>. Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol. *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Bob Woodward. *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. Jonathan Alter, *The Promise President Obama: Year One*. Simon & Schuster, 2010. Peniel Joseph. *Dark Days, Bright Nights: From Black Power to Barack Obama*. Basic Civitas Books, 2010. Larry Sabato. *The Year of Obama: How Obama Won the White House*. Longman, 2009. Ted McClelland. *Young Mr. Obama: Black Chicago and the Making of a Black President*. Bloomsbury Press, 2010. Gwen Ifill. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*. Anchor Press, 2009. Jabari Asim. *What Obama Means..For Our Culture, Our Politics, Our Future*. New York: William Morrow, 2009.

ⁱⁱ This section is based on P. 5 “Civil Rights and the Future of the American Presidency”, *The State of Black America 1988*, National Urban League.

ⁱⁱⁱ This section is based on Pinderhughes 1988, 14-17.

^{iv} Presidential scholar Bert Rockman notes that “much of the literature on the American presidency unavoidably focuses on the dilemmas of generating leadership in a system not designed to endure much of it” (Rockman, 1984, xv).

^v This section is based on Pinderhughes, “Race, The Presidency and Obama’s First Year”, Edited by Charles P. Henry book, University of Illinois Press, forthcoming.

^{vi} This is based on the *WashingtonPost.com* HeadCount website: <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2009/federal-appointments/blue-obamas-chicago-circle/> Based on July 7, 2009 data.

^{vii} *Ibid.* Based on April 11, 2010 data.

^{viii} Thomas website reporting on Nominations: <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/thomas>. Accessed April 11, 2010.

^{ix} “Jacqueline A. Berrien Becomes Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,” April 7, 2010. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Website. <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/4-7-10.cfm>. Accessed April 11, 2010.

^x “Biography of Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor”. Cornell University Law School Legal Institute Website, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/justices/sotomayor.bio.html> Accessed April 11, 2010.

^{xi} Wayne, Alex and Edward Epstein. "Obama Seals Legislative Legacy With Health Insurance Overhaul." *CQ Weekly Online* (March 29, 2010): 748-753. <http://library.cqpress.com.proxy.library.nd.edu/cqweekly/weeklyreport111-000003634205> (accessed November 1, 2010). “Health Care Overhaul at a Glance.” *CQ Weekly – Weekly Report Health*. March 29, 2010 – Page 750; Doug Clendenin, “Provisions: Financial Services Overhaul”, *Congressional Quarterly Weekly* Sept. 6, 2010 – Page 2032 .

^{xii} “Statement by the Press Secretary, 9/30/10. Source: White House.Gov: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/30/statement-press-secretary-93010>

^{xiii} This section is drawn from Pinderhughes, forthcoming, Henry volume, p. 21-23.

^{xiv} Don Terry. “A Delicate Balancing Act for the Black Agenda.” *New York Times*. March 18, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/19/us/19cncagenda.html?scp=1&sq=tavis%20smiley&st=cse>
The full Town Hall Meeting can be seen on the C-Span archives: “Tavis Smiley Black Agenda Forum”, March 20, 2010. <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/292635-7>

^{xv} Angela Glover Blackwell. “Obama’s Black Agenda in Action” Huffington Post, March 30, 2010.

^{xvi} This section is based on Pinderhughes, “Race, The Presidency and Obama’s First Year” forthcoming, Henry volume, p.5-6.

^{xvii} We’ll learn something about the President when he makes a decision about the location of his Presidential Library.