

CHAPTER 5



RACE - AMERICA'S GREAT DIVIDE

Slavery is one of the most heinous crimes against humanity. It has been practiced for centuries and today is still done in some areas of the world. At the turn of the 19th century slaves and serfs made up approximately three-quarters of the world's population. It is reported that there are between 12 million to 27 million in servitude today. Most of these indentured humans are in South Asia under debt bondage that may last for generations. There also exists a wide trade of women and children forced into sex industries.

Slavery in the United States was firmly established as a legal institution in the 18th and 19th century. After the 1776 Declaration of Independence there was a gradual abolitionist movement in the North, while the South strongly supported slavery and even tried to expand it to the Western Territories. Thus the country was separated into Maryland as a slavery state and Pennsylvania as a free state; in fact the country was clearly divided along the Mason Dixon Line.

Abraham Lincoln the Republican President of The United States, led his country through the most turbulent times in history. His fight against slavery caused the American Civil War because as he said in his inaugural address: "Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the Nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came." After four years of brutal war, the Confederacy, which was led by many Democrats, collapsed and slavery was abolished.

It took many years before the emancipation of the descendants of the slaves was fully accepted in the United States. Racial discrimination persisted in many southern states until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This landmarked piece of legislation, which "outlawed major forms of discrimination against racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities, and women"¹ was started by John F. Kennedy, but his assassination left it to his successor Lyndon B.

Johnson to get it enacted. Despite being a Democrat, many members of his party, mostly from the South opposed the bill. Using his political capital the President, with the support of a majority of Republicans in both Houses, passed and signed both the Civil Rights Act (1964) and then the Voting Rights Act (1965).

Despite the passage of these two ground-breaking pieces of legislation the U.S. still had rampant racial discrimination and gave rise to the Civil Rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. who, until his assassination, used nonviolent civil disobedience to push for civil rights for the African American. But between 1964 and 1970 a number of inner city riots in black communities undermined the support from white Americans. The rise of the Black Panther Movement who challenged the black establishment because of their nonviolent approach and cooperative attitude did not help the situation; in fact caused dissension among those who believed in segregation and others who supported self-determination. This division still exists today among certain black leaders.

Over the years, often with much struggle, African Americans have made much progress. Thurgood Marshall was the first African American appointed to the U.S. Supreme court. He was part of the majority decision in favor of the right to abortion in the landmark 1973 case *Roe v. Wade*. Marshall consistently supported rulings upholding a strong protection of individual rights and liberal interpretations of controversial social issues. He is revered as one of the first civil rights crusaders of the last century. When he retired, he was replaced in 1991 by Justice Clarence Thomas. During the hearings Thomas was accused of sexual harassment by Anita Hill. The committee did not find sufficient evidence and appointed him in a narrow 52-48 margin. To this day Justice Thomas, considered a conservative, is vilified by some black leaders and the liberal left.

Justice Thomas, who rarely makes speeches outside of the Supreme Court, recently gave a speech at Palm Beach Atlantic University and he said:

*“The worst I have been treated was by northern liberal elites.
The absolute worst I have ever been treated.”²*

In fact as the 2014 mid-term and 2016 Presidential elections approaches, a new movie on the subject of his Senate appointment hearings will soon be aired for what can be inferred as purely political reasons

Unfortunately the treatment he refers to, is not only festered upon Justice Thomas, but increasingly it is used to attack any black conservative in America who dares to speak up against Obama's policies, and the NAACP disgracefully never defends black conservatives.

Today the fields of sports, entertainment, media and politics can count among the elites many super stars in all these fields. Among the most recent ones are Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell, athletes Tiger Woods, and Michael Jordan to name but a few. However many black leaders, rightly or wrongly, are not satisfied with what they see as the slow progress, and they are fixated on 'race' as a factor for every issue that they choose to fight for.

The race card has been played by the Democrats for years:

- Al Gore, in July 16 1998, speaking at an NAACP convention said: "They are in favor of affirmative action if you can dunk the basketball or sink a three point shot, but they are not in favor of it if you merely have the potential to be a leader in your community ... And bring people together and lift people up and make this a better country. Don't tell me we've got a color blind society"
- A Missouri Democratic Party Ad., in Nov.1998 read:
"When you don't vote you let another church explode. When you don't vote you allow another cross to burn. When you don't vote you let another assault wound a brother or a sister. When you don't vote you let the Republicans continue to cut school lunches and head start".
- Julian Bond Former NAACP Chair Feb 2006 said: "Their idea of equal rights is the American flag and the Confederate Swastika flying side by side"

This brings us to the election of Barack Hussein Obama as the first black President of the United States. According to the Central Intelligence Agency - World Factbook, the United States Demographic profile in a July 2007 estimate was as follows:

“White 79.96%, black 12.85%, Asian 4.43%, Amerindian and Alaska native 0.97%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander 0.18%, two or more races 1.61% ... a separate listing for Hispanic is not included but about 15.1% of the total US population is Hispanic”³

Race was certainly not a factor in the overall result, because his majority could not have been reached without a substantial percentage of the white vote.

Accountability does not exist without transparency. To obfuscate issues, hence discard transparency, is common in politics and more frequently the word ‘racism’ is being used to that effect. Having promised to be a conciliator and not a divider, President Obama’s has only succeeded in acerbating the divisions are along economic and still racial lines.

Certain political pundits and peddlers of racial divide have taken to the air waves to portray any opposition to the President’s policies as being of a racist nature. The ‘race card’ is being used by the Democrats to promote or defend their liberal policies, which under Obama continues to fail to address the real problems that affect America in general and the black community in specific. The African American community had high hopes when Obama was elected, but the race rhetoric has not stopped, so much so that Rep. Andre Carson (D-In) in an address to the black congress caucus on Aug 22, 2011, said: “We have seen change in congress, but the congress(*intelligible*) point the Tea Party is stopping that change, and this is beyond symbolic change, this is, this is the effort that we’re ...seeing of Jim Crow, some of these folks in congress right now would love to see us as second class citizens,. Some of them in congress right now with this Tea Party movement would love to see you and me, -I’m sorry (*unintelligible*) hanging on a tree, some of them right now in congress...are comfortable with where we were fifty and sixty years ago. But this is a new day with a black president and the congressional black caucus.”

Racism exists. It is not just blacks who suffer; there is anti-Hispanic, anti-Semitism, and even ageism.

In 2013, a trial that everybody watched on TV. CNN and the left-media introduce a new definition for Zimmerman, the accused in a shooting of a black youth in Florida – “white-Hispanic”. The law in Florida is ‘stand your ground’ which allows the use of a gun when threatened. An FBI investigation prior to the trial showed no evidence of racial bias.

When a lawyer for the Martin family said that she was a 'social engineer', it certainly changed the role of lawyers within the justice system. Should we interpret the law based on social circumstances? Modern democracy is to get politics out of the criminal cases.

The same justice system saw the acquittal of O.J. Simpson who allegedly murdered a white woman and a white man and was found not guilty. But finding Zimmerman not guilty was apparently a travesty of justice because the victim happened to be black.

The media turned the Zimmerman case into a frenzy, which as horrible as it may, was not an unusual case by American culture. The President finding an opportunity played the race card. In an unprecedented White house briefing on July 19, 2013, a week after the verdict, the president made some of the most interesting remarks when addressing the continued protests and marches in the U.S. Among the remarks he said that: "when I said that if I had a son, he would look like Trayvon (the victim in the case), what I meant was he could have been me 35 years ago...If a white boy were involved the outcome and aftermath might have been different." He also concluded that: "each successive generation is making progress in changing attitudes. Things are getting better – we are becoming a more perfect union."

During the 2012 elections, as the race for the White House got tighter, the word racism was used to portray an Obama decline in the polls as a result of racism. The question is which part of the President is racist – his mother's white side or his father's African side?

Obama could not have been elected in 2008 and 2012 if a substantial percentage of the white electorate had not voted for him. Those claiming racism for his decline in popularity should look at his failed policies rather than the colour of his skin.

After his re-election in 2012, as the President's failed policies continue to plague the economy and other areas of government, what can be called a 'race card industry' led by many in the African American community backed by the DNC and the mainstream media continue to poison the political arena. **Many black leaders have made a career in the civil rights movement. They have to perpetuate the status quo despite the fact that times have changed.** More frequently, the race excuse is used to portray legitimate criticisms of the President's policies.

The President promised many things, but where he has failed the most is that the black population who supported him overwhelmingly has not seen many benefits. In fact unemployment is rampant among the black youth of the nation. Race relations continue to suffer. Statistics paint a very grim portrait of his failures where the black community is concerned.

How are race relations in the United States?:

	<i>July 2013</i>	<i>Jan 2010</i>
<i>Very or fairly good</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>72%</i>
<i>Fairly or very bad</i>	<i>44%</i>	<i>23%</i>

:Source NBC News WSJ Poll of 1,000 adults

The collapse of family values is a major cause of problems in the black community. Outdoor drug trade is a bigger problem for blacks. Drug gangs in Chicago South side are the reason for higher blacks killing blacks. There seems to be a disconnect between the black community and black leaders. They refuse to believe that some responsibility lies with the community as they ignore some startling facts from the (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1976-2005):“While the black community makes up 13% of the population, African Americans committed more than half of all murders, and 93% of black murder victims were killed by other blacks.”

The media is dedicated in believing that the whites continue to hold blacks back. Many media outlets, it seems, are invested in the problem to gain readership. In the world of cable news, MSNBC has taken a prominent role in perpetuating the race divide. Many of the opinion hosts on the channel’s programs make some of the most outrageous statements, either to gain notoriety or to build a shield for Obama’s failed policies.

On the MSNBC *Melissa Harris-Perry*, June 15, 2013 show, Salamisha Tillet of the University of Pennsylvania made the following comment:

“Well, I think, the Census just released data, so part of it is the changing racial demographics in the United States. For the first time in American history, children born under the age of five are racial; the majority of them are racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S.

So I think that there's a kind of moral panic, a fear of the end of whiteness that we've been seeing a long time in that I think, you know, Obama's ascension as President kind of symbolizes to a certain degree. And so I think this is one response to that sense that there's a decreasing white majority in the country and that women's bodies and white women's bodies in particular are obviously a crucial way of reproducing whiteness, white supremacy, white privilege. And so I think it's just a kind of clamping down on women's bodies, in particular white women's bodies, even though women of color are really caught in the fray.”⁴

When the media encourages this type of comments, it is no wonder that the fringe can make their statements even more vitriolic. On a broadcast by “black Power Radio” Michelle Williams New Black Panther Party Chief of Staff made the following comment:

*“The Republicans hate black people, and for all the black people that are republicans I ask you on this day. This 12th day of August 2012. I ask you this day when did you lose your dignity and lay down for these damn crackers who mean this black community no good. They have shown this, their history has shown this so if white people are mad because I continue to call them crackers on the day that you stop referring to me as a n***... and treating my black community as a n*** I let (inaudible) my damned pinkie toe let up off your honky asses. But other than that you'd better believe my foot on your god damn mother f***necks”⁵*

This type of comment is not only reserved for fringe activists, but even respected elected officials are emboldened to make outrageous comments about race in America. On the John Fredericks Show of July 20, 2012, Louise Lucas Virginia State Senator (D-Portsmouth) said:

“Let's be really clear about Mitt Romney is speaking to a group of people out there who don't like folks like president Barack Obama in any elected or leadership position... he is speaking to the fringe out there who do not want to see anybody other than

*a white person in a leadership position... I absolutely believe it's all about race and for the first time in my life I've been able to convince my children finally that racism is alive and well."*⁶

As the President's signature policy The Affordable Care Act continues to face increasing problems, many Democrats are jumping on the 'race card' issue to explain the failures. Senator Reid on a KNPR Radio show

*"My counterpart, Mitch McConnell, said at the beginning of the presidency of Barack Obama that he had one goal, and that is to defeat Obama and make sure he wasn't re-elected and that's how they legislate in the Senate. It was really bad, and we've been now seven months into the second term of the President's and they haven't changed much. It's been obvious that they're doing everything they can to make him fail. And I hope. I hope, and say this seriously, I hope that it's based on substance; not the fact that he's an African American."*⁷

Oprah Winfrey, a model of success, who has made millions of dollars, mostly from a huge support base of white women went to England to promote her movie 'The Butler' and gave an interview to BBC's Will Gompertz and said:

*"There's a level of disrespect for the office that occurs in some cases and maybe even many cases because he's African American," ... There's no question about that. And it's the kind of thing no one ever says, but everybody's thinking it."*⁸

And she followed the above comment with:

*"There are still generations of people, older people, who were born and bred and marinated in it, in that prejudice and racism, and they just have to die,"*⁹

The President, while at first not openly playing the race game, has started to do so to revive his failing popularity. As we approach the 2014 elections, the tone is getting more

acerbic. In fact he is beginning to sound like his presidency is no longer viable as his policies fall by the way side. His comments seem to be more pessimistic than his renowned 'hope and change' campaign statements. In an interview with David Remnick of The New Yorker he said:

“There’s no doubt that there’s some folks who just really dislike me because they don’t like the idea of a black President,” ... Now, the flip side of it is there are some black folks and maybe some white folks who really like me and give me the benefit of the doubt precisely because I’m a black President.”¹⁰

We should not be surprised about this turn of events, in fact maybe we should have been forewarned when former President Jimmy Carter on “Nightly News” (NBC Sept 16 2009) said “I think an overwhelming portion of the intensely demonstrated animosity towards President Barack Obama is based on the fact that he is a black man, That he is African American.”

There was so much hope when Obama was elected. People of different ethnic background expected so much from him. However he brought criticisms upon himself by making grandiose promises during his campaign. Now even the black community is beginning to question whether he has done enough. Marcia Fudge (D-OH) CBC Chair on March 11 2013 in a letter to Obama wrote: “ You have publicly expressed your commitment to retaining diversity within your cabinet, however, the people you have chosen to appoint in this new term have hardly been reflective of this country’s diversity.”

Unfortunately, for some members of the black community in America, not enough has been done. It is true that it is extremely difficult to erase the abominations of the past, and the indignities of slavery cannot be glossed over. However, much change has happened over the years. Many African Americans have risen to the challenges and have been successful in many aspects of life. To continuously play the race card to justify bad policies is not the right road to reconciliation.

Too many black leaders see race as an opportunity to make themselves seen and heard. They quote Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, but they ignore the fact that these two great leaders professed reconciliation during their fight for freedom and human rights. Instead

of perpetuating the great American divide, perhaps they should heed the words of Nelson Mandela's inauguration speech as South African president in Pretoria, May 10, 1994.

"We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world. Let freedom reign."¹¹

Unfortunately racism will continue long after Obama leaves office, because in some U.S. academic circles it is seen, by definition, as a white only problem: "A racist is one who is both privileged and socialized on the basis of race by a white supremacist (racist) system. The term applies to all white people (i.e., people of European descent) living in the United States, regardless of class, gender, religion, culture or sexuality. By this definition, people of color cannot be racists, because as peoples within the U.S. system, they do not have the power to back up their prejudices, hostilities, or acts of discrimination. (This does not deny the existence of such prejudices, hostilities, acts of rage or discrimination.)"¹²

The disapproval of President Obama is not about skin color, but rather about his failed policies. Once in office he could not fulfill his promises, or if he did he used a dictatorial approach to do so. Those who believe that he has not done enough will continue to play the race card, and his original aspirations of "hope and change" could quickly place him in a position to replace Jimmy Carter as the 'worst president of the United States'. Then he will be accused of being the wrong president for the African American community. It is too bad that buyers' remorse has already set in, as famed actor Morgan Freeman informed his host Michel Martin's on the NPR show, "Tell Me More",

"Contrary to the prevailing wisdom, Barack Hussein Obama is not America's first black president... He is the country's "first mixed-race president." The first black president, Freeman continued, has not as yet "arisen."¹³

As race, instead of achievements, was made by some to be the predominant issue of his presidency, Obama's performance which has been so dismal in many instances could result in an environment when it may well be a long time before the world sees another African American President of the United States.



Racism cuts both ways. There are both white and black racists. It is unfortunate that this belief and resulting actions still exists today. The actions and statements of the very few like Cliven Bundy, Donald Sterling the L.A Clippers owner, and Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS), who called Justice Thomas an 'uncle Tom', should be condemned by both the right and the left. In this diverse world there is no place left for this disgusting and shameful behaviour.

In the United States there is a paradox where racism is concerned. Democrats generally benefit from a greater proportion of the African American vote. But too often, history is ignored. For example, Abraham Lincoln , the Republicans who helped President Johnson pass the Civil Rights Act and Richard Nixon who desegregated Southern schools - all Republicans who did not take or receive credit for what they have done for the African American community. Is it conservative humility or stupidity?

