

RACE AS SUBTEXT IN OBAMA'S AMERICA

By Dennis C. Shaw, PhD
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The Great American Challenge!

- ▣ “We black folk, our history and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experiences of America. What we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America is. If we black folk perish, America will perish . . . The differences between black folk and white folk are not blood or color, and the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us. The common road of hope which we all traveled has brought us into a stronger kinship than any words, laws, or legal claims.”

• (Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices*, 1941)

The Anthropological Perspective

- ▣ *“Be it resolved, that the American Anthropological Association repudiates such racialism and adheres to the following statement:*
- ▣ *(1) Race involves the inheritance of similar physical variations by large groups of mankind, but its psychological and cultural connotations, if they exist, have not been ascertained by science.*
- ▣ *(2) The terms “Aryan” and “Semitic” have no racial significance whatsoever. They simply denote linguistic families*
- ▣ *(3) Anthropology provides no scientific basis for discrimination against any people on the ground of racial inferiority, religious affiliation, or linguistic heritage.*
 - *(Approved Resolution, 1939)*

Anthropology on Race

- ▣ 1. As a biological reality, race has no empirical foundation (An F_{st} with a value of .25 or greater is required to be a biological race; the average for all human alleles, including mtDNA, is .17).
- ▣ 2. Race is, like ethnicity, a social construct which defines the **perceived** commonality of a shared ancestry as the ground upon which to construct a social identity.
- ▣ 3. Implicit social conventions define racial membership and these differ from society to society.
- ▣ 4. As these socially constructed identities play a role in the social patterns of the society they assume a significance.
- ▣ Therefore, race is purely a figment of our social imagination.

The Illusion of Ontological Individualism!

- ▣ “Racism is simply an ugly form of collectivism, the mindset that views humans strictly as members of groups rather than individuals. Racists believe that all individuals who share superficial physical characteristics are alike: as collectivists, racists think only in terms of groups. By encouraging Americans to adopt a group mentality, the advocates of so-called "diversity" actually perpetuate racism. Their obsession with racial group identity is inherently racist.”
- ▣ (Presidential Candidate Ron Paul, 4/16/2007)

The Social Reality of Race!

▣ Poverty

▣ Whites (8.2%) Blacks (24.7%) Hispanics (21.9%)

▣ Uninsured Health Care

▣ Whites (11.3%) Blacks (19.7%) Hispanics (32.7%)

▣ Median Household Income

Whites (\$48,977) Blacks (\$30,134) Hispanics (\$34,241)

(U.S. Census Bureau News, 8/30/2005)

A Historical Legacy!

- ▣ “Understanding this reality requires a reminder of how we arrived at this point. As William Faulkner once wrote, “The past isn’t dead and buried. In fact, it isn’t even past.” We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.”

(Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union,” 3/18/2008)

“Barak The Magic Negro” (2007)

- ▣ Barack the Magic Negro lives in D.C.
The L.A. Times, they called him that
'Cause he's not authentic like me.
Yeah, the guy from the L.A. paper
Said he makes guilty whites feel good
They'll vote for him, and not for me
'Cause he's not from the hood.
See, real black men, like Snoop Dog,
Or me, or Farrakhan
Have talked the talk, and walked the walk.
Not come in late and won!

- ▣ Paul Shanklin



The Reverend Jerimah Wright Controversy



Senator Obama's Response

- ▣ “As such, Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems — two wars, a terrorist threat, a falling economy, a chronic health care crisis and potentially devastating climate change — problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all.”
- ▣ (Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union,” 3/18/2008)

America Elects the First African American President (November 5th 2008)



“The Perpetual Achievement of the Impossible”

- ▣ “For the sake of one’s children, in order to minimize the bill *they* must pay, one must be careful not to take refuge in any delusion. I know that what I am asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least that one can demand – and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible.”
- ▣ (James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 1963)

The Inauguration of President Barak Obama January 20th, 2009



Constructing the Illusion of Other!

- ▣ “Since the beginning of the nation, white Americans have suffered from a deep inner uncertainty as to who they really are. One of the ways that has been used to simplify the answer has been to seize upon the presence of black Americans and use them as a marker, a symbol of limits, a metaphor for the ‘outsider.’ Many whites could look at the social position of blacks and feel that color formed an easy and reliable gauge for determining to what extent one was or was not American.”
- ▣ (Ralph Ellison, “What America Would Be Like without Blacks”, 1970)

“Tricky Magic”

- ▣ “Perhaps that is why one of the first epithets that many European immigrants learned when they got off the boat was the term “nigger” – it made them feel instantly American. But this is tricky magic. Despite his racial difference and social status, something indisputably American about Negroes not only raised doubts about the white man’s value system but aroused the troubling suspicion that whatever else the true American is, he is also somehow black.”
- ▣ (Ralph Ellison, “What America Would Be Like without Blacks”, 1970)

The Birther Movement



CERTIFICATION OF LIVE BIRTH

STATE OF HAWAII
HONOLULU



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HAWAII U.S.A.

CERTIFICATE NO. [REDACTED]

CHILD'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II

DATE OF BIRTH
August 4, 1961

CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

MOTHER'S MAREN NAME
STANLEY ANN DUNHAM

MOTHER'S RACE
CAUCASIAN

FATHER'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA

FATHER'S RACE
AFRICAN

DATE FILED BY REGISTRAR
August 9, 1961

DATE OF BIRTH
August 4, 1961

HOUR OF BIRTH
7:24 PM

ISLAND OF BIRTH
HAUAI

SEX
MALE

COUNTY OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

OHM 11 - Rev. 1/10/10 This copy serves as prima facie evidence of the fact of birth in any court proceedings. DHS 516-1261, 516-181

ANY ALTERATIONS INVALIDATE THIS CERTIFICATE

New York Post (February 18th, 2009)



Response to Cartoon

- "The cartoon in today's New York Post is troubling at best given the historic racist attacks of African-Americans as being synonymous with monkeys. One has to question whether the cartoonist is making a less than casual reference to this when in the cartoon they have police saying after shooting a chimpanzee that "Now they will have to find someone else to write the stimulus bill."
"Being that the stimulus bill has been the first legislative victory of President Barack Obama (the first African American president) and has become synonymous with him it is not a reach to wonder are they inferring that a monkey wrote the last bill?" (Reverend Al Sharpton)
- "The cartoon is a clear parody of a current news event, to wit the shooting of a violent chimpanzee in Connecticut. It broadly mocks Washington's efforts to revive the economy. Again, Al Sharpton reveals himself as nothing more than a publicity opportunist."
- (Col Allan, editor-in-chief of the New York Post)

"No Easter Egg hunt this year."

(Email from Dean Grose, Mayor of Los Almitos, CA, February 24th, 2009)



The Nomination of Justice Sonya Sotomayor

(May 26th, 2009)



The Wise Latina Women Controversy

- ▣ "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."
- ▣ (Judge Sotomayor, 2001)
- ▣ "Imagine if a judicial nominee said 'my experience as a white man makes me better than a Latina woman.' Wouldn't they have to withdraw? New racism is no better than old racism."
- ▣ (Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich Web Site, 2009)

The Beer Summit (July 30th, 2009)



“Elective Affinity”

- ▣ “Even so, I rebel at the notion that I can’t be part of other groups, that I can’t construct identities through elective affinity, that race must be the most important thing about me. Is that what I want on my gravestone: Here lies an African American? So I’m divided. I want to be black, to know black, to luxuriate in whatever I might be calling blackness at any particular time – but to do so in order to come out the other side, to experience a humanity that is neither colorless nor reducible to color.”
- ▣ (Henry Louis Gates, *Colored People: A Memoir*, 1994)

Obama's Response to Henry Louis Gates' Arrest

- ▣ “Now, I don't know, not having been there and not seeing all the facts what role race played in that, but I think it's fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry. Number two, that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home and, number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there is a long history in this country of African-Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. And that's just a fact.”

Glen Beck's Response



“this president has exposed himself, I think, as a guy, over and over and over again, who has a deep-seated hatred for white people, or white culture.”

Tea Party Protesters



Tea Party Protesters



Protest Images of President Obama

OBAMA AS HITLER



OBAMA AS STALIN



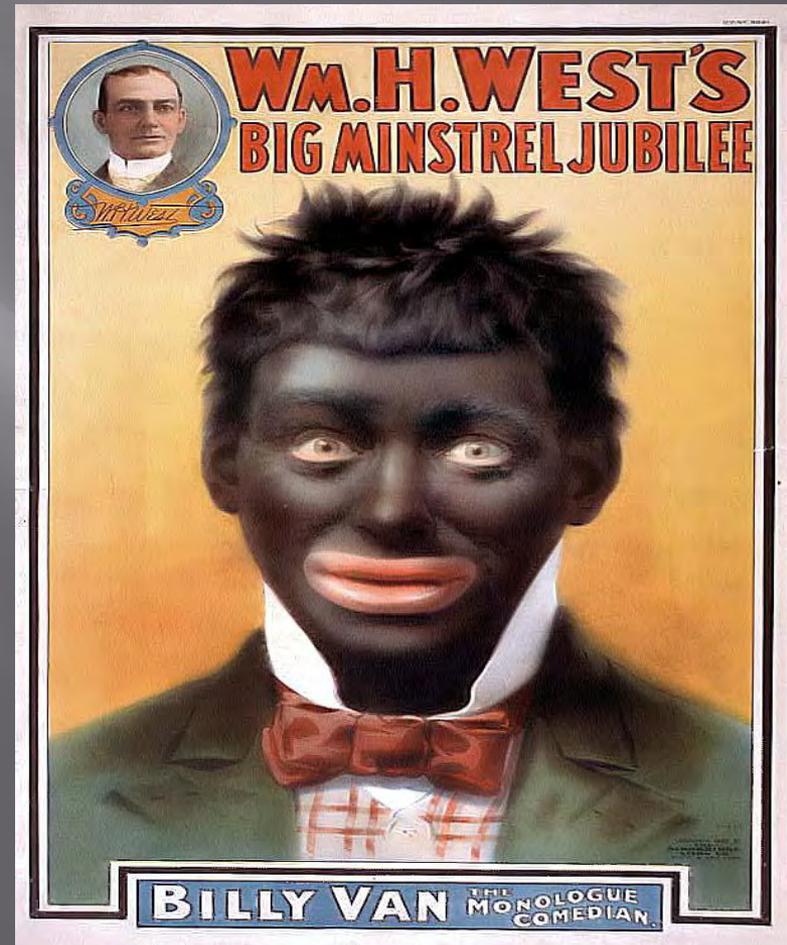
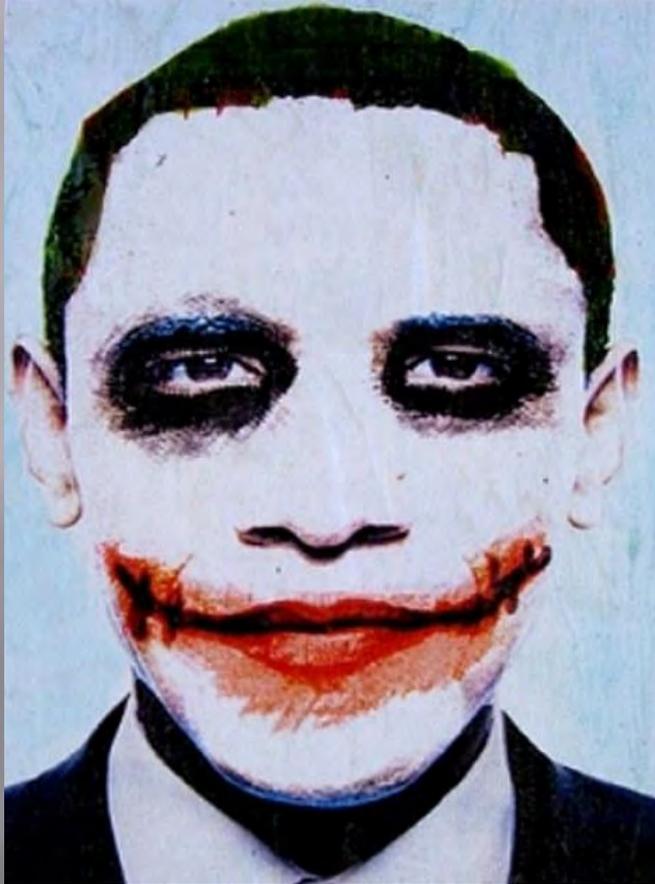
President Obama as Joker



The Joker?



The Joker?



“You Lie!”

(September 10th, 2009)

Representative Joe Wilson (R. South Carolina)



President Jimmy Carter (September 15th, 2009)



- ▣ "I think an overwhelming portion of the intensely demonstrated animosity toward President Barack Obama is based on the fact that he is a black man, that he's African American.
- ▣ I live in the South, and I've seen the South come a long way and I've seen the rest of the country that shared the South's attitude toward minority groups at that time ... and I think it's bubbled up to the surface because of a belief among many white people, not just in the South but around the country, that African-Americans are not qualified to lead this great country."

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R. Georgia)

- ▣ "I think it's very destructive for America to suggest that we can't criticize a president without it being a racial act."



The Harry Reid Controversy

- ▣ Barak Obama “could become the first African-American president because he was “light-skinned” and because he did not speak with a “Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one.”
- ▣ (Senator Harry Reid, 2007, reported in *Game Change*, 2010)
- ▣ “I want to say this about my state: When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We’re proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn’t have had all these problems over all these years, either.” (Senator Trent Lott, 2002)

Senator Harry Reid's Response



- ▣ "I deeply regret using such a poor choice of words. I sincerely apologize for offending any and all Americans, especially African-Americans for my improper comments." (Senator Harry Reid, January 9th, 2010)

Critique of Administration's Swift Response to Haitian Crisis

- ▣ “[The Obama administration will] use this to burnish their, shall we say, credibility with the black community, in the ... the both light-skinned and dark-skinned black community in this country. It's made to order for them.”
(January 13th, 2010)



Reaction to Limbaugh's Remarks

- ▣ "They are deeply insensitive. The president speaks for the whole country when he says we're going in there. You want your whole nation, and it's very positive. And I think Rush's comments were cynical." (Pat Buchanan)
- ▣ "We appreciate President Obama's immediate response to this catastrophic tragedy, and stand ready to assist in any way. In this pressing time of need, I know that the good faith and generosity of our citizens will no doubt help. Our Government and the American people are prepared to do all that we can to provide assistance, comfort and resources to the people of Haiti and their families." (House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.))

A Candid Appraisal

- ▣ “You know, on the heels of that victory over a year ago, there were some who suggested that somehow we had entered into a post-racial America. There were those who argued that because I had spoke of a need for unity in this country, that our nation was somehow entering into a period of post-partisanship.”
- ▣ “That didn’t work out so well.”
- ▣ (President Obama’s address to Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, January 17th, 2010)

A Final Note of Optimism

▣ Judged by Character not Color?

▣ African Americans	Jan. 2010	Jan. 2008
▣ Agree	40%	29%
▣ Disagree	58%	71%

▣ (Disagree)

▣ Somewhat Disagree	26%	21%
▣ Strongly Disagree	32%	50%
▣ +/- 3.1%		

▣

▣ State of Race Relations in US

▣ African Americans	Jan. 2010	Oct. 1995
▣ Good	66%	31%
▣ Bad	28%	65%

▣ +/- 3.1%

▣ (MSNBC/Wall Street Journal Poll, January 18th, 2010)