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**"First Black President" Confronts Reality: Will Black Folks Follow Suit?
The Substance Of Truth
By Tolu Olorunda
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"I tell you this much, it's up to every one of you/

Learn from the past or the future will punish you/

Power flows to those who remember/"

- Hip-Hop artist and philosopher, *Canibus*, in his 2002 album, [Mic Club: The Curriculum](#).

Perhaps at this very moment, Grand-Author, Toni Morrison, is recanting her [1998 words](#), suggesting that Bill Clinton was the embodiment of the "first black president," because he displayed "almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas." For what good is it to be an esteemed culture critic, and have the memories of an ill-conceived statement lurking behind your every mention and declaration. But upon a moments' reflection, Ms. Morrison is merely a mirror-image of the heartfelt conviction of millions of Black folks who, having being mesmerized by the allure of a president who went the extra mile in rendering unfulfillable promises, had become emotionally overdosed and dwarfed by political immaturity. One thing is for certain however: 99% of the Black population which believed Bill "Bubba" Clinton to be the *first black president* holds no such sentiment anymore. With Barack Obama's emergence as the new *Messiah*, most of those Black voters have little need for the "counterfeit" Black president, when the possibility of a "real" Black president is more tangible than ever before.

Bill Clinton has, of recent, had to confront a reality most familiar to Black folks: A feeling of usage and exploitation. In Bill's mind, it was virtually unimaginable to be relegated to the sidelines – all in the name of the materialization of a long-sought dream: The fulfillment of a bonafide Black president. Much of this ongoing struggle to

acknowledge reality is playing out in dramatic fashion on the national political field. In recent appearances on both, *The View*, and *Late Show with David Letterman*, Bill Clinton has appeared to be, at the very least, uneasy about accommodating the prospect of Barack Obama attaining victory in November – by way of Obama’s skill, charisma, character and intellect. Clinton has cited numerous fanciful and coincidental rationales why Barack Obama will win; which included tribalism, political exasperation and sheer luck. No doubt President Clinton is still reeling from the painful, public rebuff he received from the Black Community – a community he considered to be a second home (albeit he never earned such credit). Chris Rock, the grand comedian, noticed this hardly hidden expression. In an [immediate appearance](#) following Clinton’s feature on *David Letterman*, Rock noted, “Is it me, or he didn’t want to say the name Barack Obama?” Whether Bill Clinton is capable of conceding the Baton to Barack Obama or not, one thing is for certain: The Black Community has *moved on*. But what does “moving on” delineate? Is the Black Community more politically knowledgeable and literate as a result of this encounter with the Clintons, or are we back to the same old childish games of embracing the lesser of two evil, which, to paraphrase Ralph Nader, would only yield us “evil” and “less.”

Sadly, the same high level of unconditional loyalty to corporate politicians – *a la* Obama – would only guarantee more and more disappointments – even if a Black face is accepted as fit for the highest place, come Nov. 4th. In the Clinton administration, many Blacks underwent economic ascendancy (up a ladder now shortening from the bite-wounds of George Bush’s termites), but issues of Black concerns accelerated to pandemic-like rates and statistics. A few of them include:

- The Mass Incarceration Of Black Men (Brought Courtesy of Sen. Obama’s running mate, Joe Biden, who authored the infamous, “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994” a/k/a the “[1994 Crime Bill](#),” which helped facilitate the establishment of 100,000 more cops on the streets, and the imprisonment of more Blacks than in any other administration).
- A “Welfare-Reform” legislation, which owed its supreme inspiration to Ronald Reagan and his vituperative usage of the acidic terminology, “Welfare Queen,” to characterize Black female welfare recipients. Not surprising, however, coming from a president whose [solemn vow](#) to “end welfare as we know it,” it seemed to be bubbling into fruition. In *Death Blossoms*, political prisoner and prophetic leader, Mumia Abu Jamal, described the “legislative obscenity” as a “chilling” plot, drafted to dash “the hopes of millions of the poor, all in order to protect his political ass.”
- The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). An “agreement” coming at the expense of 900,000 jobs – disproportionately, as one would expect, from within the Black Community.

The legendary civil rights activist and author, Kevin Alexander Gray, debunked Bill Clinton’s “symbolic” relationship with the Black Community as a cheap political stunt and a means to an end – whose last bus stop was in 2000. In a [2002 article](#) titled, “Clinton and Black Americans Soul Brother?” Gray exposed the silliness of Black celebrities who – through the culpability of naïve Black masses – had hopped on the bandwagon to celebrate President Clinton as an *honorary Black Man*. “... What makes Clinton’s race act so successful is that black America never asked him to do much to begin with... For 12 years before Clinton, Ronald Reagan and George Bush insulted and ignored black people. Consequently, when Clinton wooed African Americans, most were just happy someone was finally paying attention... The notion of Clinton as a great friend of the black community or defender of civil rights is... crazy.”

In 2008, if progressives would candidly admit, Barack Obama's unusual relationship with the Black Community is eerily reminiscent of that from which Bill Clinton benefited. In fact, as late as October 2007, Barack Obama still – [according to polls](#) – trailed Sen. Clinton by 13 points in the Black Community. Not until recently, was there the 90% percent phenomenal-like sustainment that helped deny Hillary Clinton the Democratic Presidential nomination. It was widely reported that Blacks had withheld support from Obama because they never perceived him as a **realistic** candidate. Let's explore that for a minute. Black folks pride themselves with the false-assertion that the only reason they withdrew their endorsement from Hillary, was as payback for Bill and Hill's racially inflamed and denigrating statements toward the [Black Community](#) and their [slain leaders](#). Nevertheless, many Black voters would readily admit that if not for the overwhelming amount of White voters in Iowa who poured out their support for Obama, Hillary Clinton would have, more than likely, clinched the Democratic Presidential Nomination. This clear insinuation that the exemption of White Iowan's validation of Sen. Obama's candidacy would have done very little to damage the relationship between the Black Community and the Clintons – Bill and Hill's acerbic remarks notwithstanding – is simply stunning!!!

With such a precedent, the future is at best bleak for a people who stubbornly refuse to develop the [political maturity](#) for which Malcolm X so strongly advocated. When choosing a running mate, Sen. Obama opted for a man whose portfolio on the Black Community – and [financially disempowered](#) folks of all color – reeks of [unmitigated indifference](#) and [static apathy](#).

Black folks of conscience must, at this moment, WAKE UP, and resist the satanic beast of acquiescence. Now is not the time to revel in the inept pleasure of seeing "one of our own," in the highest seat of the land. If we cannot lend credence to our conscience, and all we pursue is the felicity of an historical moment, we would have to explain to the next generation – and the one coming after them – why their livelihood was traded for the comfort of the historicalness of Obama's presidency. As far as I can tell, it's not just Black folks engaging in [quid pro quo](#).

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