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**Race Matters MORE in the 'Age of Obama'
The Substance of Truth
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"Though not apposite to my present purpose, it is but justice to the fruitfulness of that period, to mention two other important events - the Lutheran Reformation in 1517, and, still earlier, the invention of negroes, or, of the present mode of using them, in 1434."

-Abraham Lincoln, "[*Discoveries and Inventions*](#)," February 11, 1859

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be misled. Race still matters, even in the age of a bi-racial president. In fact, I submit that Race matters more at this transitional period in our multi-cultural society. The presidential campaign of President-Elect Obama sought to vehemently sweep Race-consciousness under the rug, but little did they know, that this stubborn, inextricable faction of our existence would not surrender without a fight. Each time David Axelrod (Obama 2008 chief strategist) felt his campaign had just dodged another Race bullet, the Race assassins would reload for another battle. President-Elect Obama endeared millions of white votes through his desire to run a "race-neutral" campaign, nevertheless, his naïveté only provided comic relief for Black progressives who, unlike Obama, fully understand the intricacy of Race in our society.

Without Obama's permission, Race resurrected itself early on in the 2008 presidential campaign. It began when White journalists first took it upon themselves to question Obama's blackness; then followed the - [Clinton campaign-sponsored](#) - expose on the [possibility](#) of a madrassa-schooled Obama. Subsequently, Obama was painted as a [secret Muslim](#) smoker, whose sexism proved uncontainable. In a foreseeable move, Obama's "outspoken," "independent" wife would be used as a [stumbling block](#) to her

husband's progress. The unpatriotic Michelle "Jezebel" Obama became the goose that laid a thousand eggs for the Obama team's effort to run a campaign devoid of controversy. In order to assuage the damage wrought by a strong Black Woman's presence, Sister Michelle would have to undergo a [cannibalistic process](#) of image-reorientation, to fit into the mold of an acceptable First Lady. Shortly after, the "gotcha media" would find some legitimate dirt that could reduce Obama to a sheer spectacle. Unbeknownst to 60% of Black folks, they had, all their lives, committed a crime worthy of the death penalty: attended a Black church which advocated self-love, self-control, self-respect, and self-help.

Obama's attendance at the Black-supremacist, racist, segregationist Trinity United Church of Christ would be the final hurrah of his "Raceless" campaign. With a rare cooperation between ABC News and FOX News in effect, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright would soon become the "old uncle" who says things Obama doesn't "always agree with." The silliness of the fraudulent Rev. Jeremiah Wright controversy would gain more steam as the respected theologian sought, hopelessly, to vindicate himself from the fascistic, right-wing media's attacks on his credibility and integrity. Before long, Obama would feed the food-starved swine, and "denounce" the man who helped mold him from an unsettled bi-racial youth, to a self-confident Black man. Luckily for Obama, John McCain and Sarah Palin had one last surprise for the "[disrespectful,](#)" [terrorist-enabler](#).

Some would argue that despite the very nature of the acidic attacks on Obama's dignity, millions of white voters turned down the offer, and instead, proved willing to accept the moral leadership of a Black man from Hawaii. Some even [contend the legacy](#) of the Bradley effect, and its significance in today's society. Others have unequivocally [declared Racism](#) a "myth." A few have taken it upon themselves to [announce the dawn](#) of a "post-racial" society, where everyone has a seat at the table of opportunity and success.

"Desperate times call for desperate measures," an adage says. It is clear that most White journalists lack the sophistication to address the issue of Race in our society, but possess an egocentric appeal, which relentlessly stifles any accommodation of dissenting voices to their myopic analysis of Race in the 21st century.

Few White pundits are aware that Race is not always a tangible and physical element, per se. It, at times, plays dead, and operates in stealth mode. To combat the sleeping giant (Race), one does not avoid any engagement with it, or initiate a "conversation" – with the hopes that words can mend a 400-year, broken bond. The most effective mode of warfare is an all-out attack, and confrontation, with the most explosive component of society – Race. Princeton Professor and Author of [Race Matters](#), Dr. Cornel West has often decimated the illusions of Race-conversations, as concrete substitutes for embracing reality. In a 1997 Harvard-sponsored [Du Bois Institute forum](#), titled "A Conversation on Race," Dr. West made plain what few journalists are willing to accept:

"Malcolm X used to say you don't stab a man in the back nine inches and pull it out six inches and say let's have a conversation. You start off with dilapidated housing, you start with decrepit school systems, you start with inadequate health care, you start with jobs that don't pay a living wage...

There is a sense of urgency... when you have... 52% of black children not just living in material poverty but psychic emptiness... This doesn't solicit a conversation... [Imagine] Europe having a conversation about Nazism; they didn't [have] no damn conversation. We needed to fight."

Dr. West is hardly alone in his insistence that substantive acts of courage must be mustered if our society is to mature – Race wise. W.E.B. Du Bois, one of Black America's most celebrated scholars, though known as a staunch advocate of integration, grew tired of the little progress made in the quest to assimilate both cultures, and bridge a gap of unity. Du Bois, just as our present reality begs, was wrestling with the small-mindedness of "illiterate nitwits," whom he felt perceived the world through a dual-nature prism. Du Bois confronted the question of integration, vis-à-vis education, and how much improvement was being made in the struggle for a collective brotherhood/sisterhood. Richard Wormser's [*The Rise & Fall of Jim Crow: The African-American Struggle Against Discrimination, 1865-1954 \(Social Studies, History of the United States Series\)*](#), shows a frustrated Dubois who, in 1934 – whilst still editor of *The Crisis* – suggested a temporary alternative to the desegregated school system for Black children,

"A separate Negro school, where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be black, is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to by ignorant social climbers whose sole claim to superiority is the ability to kick niggers when they are down."

What Du Bois understood, which many fail to grasp today, is that Race happens to be one of the most underrated influences in society – then, and today. Though 20 years before the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling, Du Bois's prophetic words were able to travel through time and investigate the future. Lo and behold, civil right leaders would discover, later on, that even after the ruling to desegregate public schools, it would take more than legislations to correct the horror motivated by decades of separate and unequal schooling. Thus, Du Bois' proposal of a schooling paradigm, in which qualified and concerned Black educators imparted the gift of life unto their pupils, was most apt for a generation taught to hate themselves, and psychologically abused in classrooms where Eurocentric standards of education were considered infallible.

In 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would pick up where Du Bois left off, and give one of his most prophetically-structured, spiritually-furnished, but least-talked-about speeches of his lifetime. King, at this point, was an agitated, frustrated, irritated, scared, courageous, and disturbed King. Unlike the King often celebrated during the month of February, or the third Monday in January, this King had just been hit with a dose of reality. Suffering betrayal from certain comrades and lieutenants (who shall remain nameless), Dr. King was more convinced, at this point, that all that glitters is certainly not gold. Ten days after his most crucial speech, "Beyond Vietnam," Dr. King, [stepped up](#) to the lectern at Stanford University to lay down the gauntlet on what the civil rights movement must represent, if our society is ever to develop beyond the illimitable constraints of Race.

In his speech, Dr. King repudiated the silliness of those who would rather evade the

elephant in the room, than engage in a "genuine" fight for equality for all:

"I came to see that so many people who supported morally and even financially what we were doing in Birmingham and Selma, were really outraged against the extremist behavior of Bull Connor and Jim Clark toward Negroes, rather than believing in genuine equality for Negroes."

King also dispelled the notion that "racial progress" is only calculable by the measures white brothers and sisters take to accept certain elements of Black leadership. Hence, Obama's triumph over John McCain cannot accurately illustrate the "racial progress" made, if Black folks have voted for White candidates, overwhelmingly, since being granted the right to vote, without any special investigation into their ability to "transcend-race":

"Racism is... the false and tragic notion that one particular group, one particular race is responsible for all of the progress, all of the insights in the total flow of history."

As though speaking with a megaphone of the future, Dr. King would address our present reality, with a stern warning against deceptive claims that time can truly solve the problems of racial injustice. King warned against the digestion of the White media's assertions that the success of President-Elect Obama delineates a "new era," as time has washed away the old, messy, horrible days of racism:

"I'm sure you've heard this idea. It is the notion almost that there is something in the very flow of time that will miraculously cure all evils. And I've heard this over and over again. There are those, and they are often sincere people, who say to Negroes and their allies in the white community, that we should slow up and just be nice and patient and continue to pray, and in a hundred or two hundred years the problem will work itself out because only time can solve the problem. I think there is an answer to that myth. And it is that time is neutral."

In his speech, Dr. King made sure to tackle the cynicism of those who believe legislations are mere paperwork, and devoid of any enforceable power to correct the ills of a racialized society. However, like Malcolm X, Dr. King also understood the degree to which such claims arouse credibility, with numerous occurrences of lynchings, even after the passage of the Civil Rights Bill and Voting Rights Act:

"It's the notion that legislation can't solve the problem; it can't do anything in this area. And those who project this argument contend that you've got to change the heart and that you can't change the heart through legislation. Now I would be the first one to say that there is real need for a lot of heart-changing in our country. And I believe in changing the heart. I preach about it. I believe in the need for conversion in many instances, and regeneration, to use theological terms... But after saying this, let me say another thing which gives the other side, and that is that although it may be true that morality cannot be legislated, behavior can be regulated. Even though it may be true that the law cannot change the heart, it can restrain the heartless. Even though it may be true that the law cannot make a man

love me, it can restrain him from lynching me.”

Dr. King, who described the plight of Black folks as synonymous to “impoverished aliens,” made sure to draw a blueprint of true integration, before departing from this imperfect, and often, maddening realm of existence:

“We must come to see now that integration is not merely a romantic or aesthetic something where you merely add color to a still predominantly white power structure. Integration must be seen also in political terms where there is shared power, where black men and white men share power together to build a new and a great nation.”

If President-Elect Obama’s [obsession](#) with a man who saw no distinction between Black folks (or Negroes) and properties of iron, or transportation vehicles, is of any significance, it simply suggests that the future of Race matters is one of an imperishable existence. Race cannot be eliminated from a society which was born with it. Dr. Condoleezza Rice, [earlier this year](#), described Race as a “birth defect” of our society. Whether corporate-minded, white pundits highlight this reality or not, it is the duty of Black progressives to make plain, for the masses of our people, the past, present, and future of Race Matters. Long live RACE, but down with racism.

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BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Tolu Olorunda, is an 18-year-old local activist/writer and a Nigerian immigrant. Click [here](#) to reach Mr. Olorunda.

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