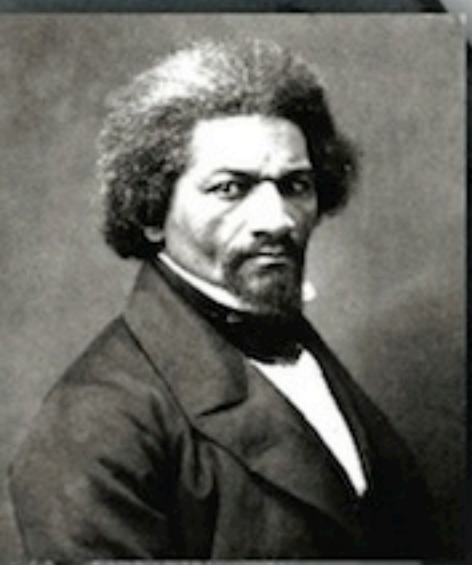




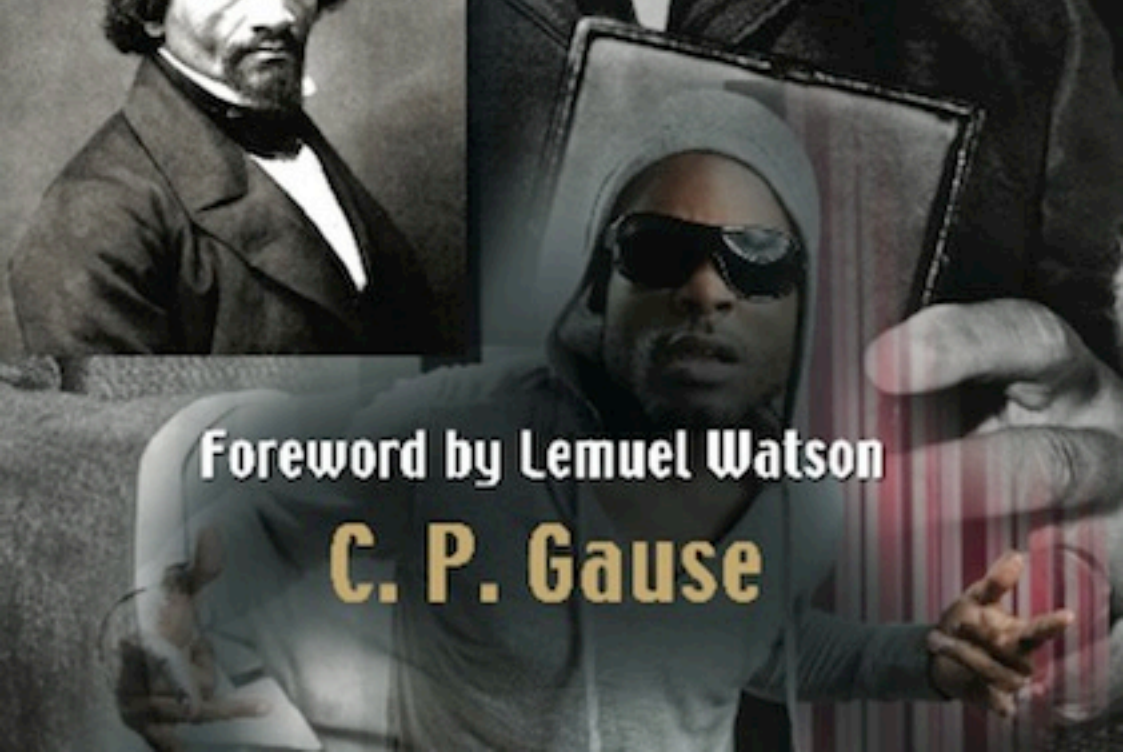
# Black Masculinity in America

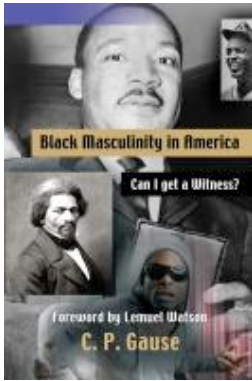
Can I get a Witness?



Foreword by Lemuel Watson

**C. P. Gause**





*This volume presents, for all to consider, issues Black males face in our ever-changing society. As the authors interweave issues off Hip Hop Culture, Obama, media depictions, health issues, self-expression and identity together, we come face-to-face with the conundrums black men in our society negotiate daily. Because we all have multiple identities we enact as black men, the contributing authors reminds us American society and the world can be a hostile place sometimes.*

# **Black Masculinity in America**

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**Black Masculinity in America  
Can I Get a Witness?**

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# Introduction

*C. P. Gause*

The election of Barack Hussein Obama as President of the United States in 2008 solidified the international face of the United States of America as African American and male. For the first time in the history of this country the image of a self-identified black man has taken place on the world stage and it has nothing to do with rap music, hip-hop culture, or professional sports. Or does it? This president listens to rap music, was elected by a large margin of the Hip-Hop generation, and plays basketball; however, these stereotypical tropes of black culture are not the only thing that defines him or his image. He is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School. He was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. His mother, Ann Dunham, was of English and German ancestry, in essence she was white. His father, Barack H. Obama, Sr., was of Kenyan descent and therefore African. The election of President Obama has been monumental and historical; however, it has not been without controversy.

The gridlock in Congress and the shutdown of the United States government in October of 2013 consistently served as a reminder to the American people that the intersections of race, class, and gender; as well as hegemony continues to impact how decisions are made in this republic. Politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties took the fight to the American people by holding various press conferences with the news media. Media and popular culture continue to have significant impact on our world locally and globally. Many careers have been launched and ruined via the use of popular culture and social media. The marketing of images and stories are central to advertising in the digital age and this has become a distinguishing feature of late-capitalist culture—the fusing of Americans desire for *the good, the bad, and the ugly*, with commercialization of culture and mass media. Too have a bad guy and someone to blame is more important than seeking solutions to solve problems. The Presidency of Barack Obama continues to be plagued by these very issues. Although

his black male image moves us away from the often (re)presented hyper-sexualized bestial aggressive black male image often presented by the media, he is still considered by many to be a menace to society. Is it because of his policies? Is it because of his style of leadership? Or, is it because he is a black man in America who happens to be the most powerful man in the free-world?

The authors in this book give witness to how black masculinity is (re)presented in hip-hop, film and popular culture—American culture. Much of their writings are situated within the historical narratives of African Americans. Under American apartheid the black male image was nearly absent in popular culture. Except for the occasional butler, field hand, or driver, black males were not the main characters in television or film. The past four decades have yielded an increase in black male images in popular culture, although many of these roles were nihilistic to say the least. With the explosion of Hip Hop as a global music genre and the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States a shift is occurring; however, the black male continues to be viewed as a menace to society.

The killing of Trayvon Martin, the impact of Michael Sam becoming the first openly gay football player to be drafted by the National Football League (NFL), the historical significance of Jason Collins becoming the first openly gay basketball player to play for the National Basketball Association (NBA), the stop and frisk policies of the New York City Police Department, and the ever-increasing school-to-prison pipeline for black males, causes these authors to take pause and question how the (re)presentations of the black male image is being constructed and (re)packaged for capitalistic consumption.

## **AIMS OF THE BOOK**

Several commitments led to the development and conceptualization of this book. Black males continue to be marginalized, stigmatized, and disenfranchised in America. Mass media allows us to see and witness events almost instantaneous. First, I wanted to bring together a collective who question how black males are represented in popular culture—American culture. National

networks continue to televise black males being apprehended by law enforcement. The election of President Barack Obama created a false notion that we live in a *post-racial* society; however, based upon the national political climate, it is indeed about race.

Secondly, I wanted to compile a volume that would take into account the current socio-cultural and political climate, as well as the ever increasing amount of negative news coverage regarding black males in our society. There are several scholars engaged in researching men and masculinities; however, the amount of research regarding black males in our society from a critical and mediated discourse grows slowly. This book was not designed to be inclusive, but a first step into broadening the discourse. I hope these chapters will serve as a point of entry for dialogue and discussion. I believe these works not only fill some gaps in the literature, but they also serve as places to open the literature up to new ways of thinking and knowing.

Finally, I wanted to put together a book that would provide multiple discoursed and multiple-discipline-based analyses of issues and/or perspectives regarding black masculinities. The current construction/representation of the black male brings together the dominant institutions of (white) masculine power and identity—criminal justice system, the police, and the news media—to protect (white) Americans from harm. The heavily policed and illuminated image of the black male is the object of intrigue, fascination, and commodification. Drawing on deeply felt moral pains and the notion of celebrity, numerous black entertainers—namely rap artists and athletes—have rewritten the historic tropes of black masculinity from pusher, pimp, and hype man to protector and provider. This volume is designed for educators, policy-makers, and scholars, and media analysts to continue to question and interrogate those tropes in order to broaden our understanding of how black male images in popular culture contribute to the marginalization and disenfranchisement of black males in America.

The book begins with **C. P. Gause's** reflection on the impact of how the negative imagery of black male images impact the education of young black males. He asserts that scholars; particularly scholars of color must be mindful how black masculinity is utilize in the discourse

from a deficit standpoint. Gause interrogates transgressive black masculinities and how mass media is complicit in perpetuating dominant-culture-thinking with regards to black males. By doing so continues to “mark” black males as a target for elimination. He utilizes this space to critique and queer black masculinity and calls for a revolution in how black masculinity is (re) packaged and produced for consumption. In Chapter 2, **Kathy Hernandez**, focuses on understanding some of the factors affecting the achievement of Black males in school and society. She speaks to her growing frustration with how Black men are pathologized in academic and social discourse. The central motivation for her chapter is to highlight the importance of creating counter narratives to the dominant storyline—to tell the story of the other brother. In Chapter 3, **Roymeico Carter and Leila Villaverde**, interrogates how American cinema and popular media channels have elevated the trope of the “magical negro” to a status of invisible ubiquity. They argue the casting of the Black male role as slave and servant has changed, as all things tend to do; however, through this change Hollywood as not contextualized the black male image, but created a “magical negro.” In Chapter 4, **Eloise Tan**, presents what young black men mean when they say “I am hip hop” so we can understand how hip hop culture affects how they negotiate their identities as young adults. Throughout this chapter we see the contradictions within hip hop culture dealing with issues of race, masculinity and identity. In Chapter 5, **Anthony R. Keith, Jr.**, probes the critical spaces that shape Black masculinity. He asserts most scholarly work on the topic of Black masculinity often examine the Black male experience within larger social contexts like hip hop, media, politics, and education. This chapter takes it a step further. It explores the physical and emotional practices of authentic love for and amongst Black men. In Chapter 6, **Alfred Martin**, investigates the intersections of blackness and homosexuality via the television series *Noah’s Arc*. *Noah’s Arc* was the first time that a television series focused solely on gay black men dealing seriously with both friendships and sexual/romantic relationships. The constructions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the portrayal and representations of black gay males is also interrogated. In Chapter 7, **Crystal Leigh**



**Endsley**, explores how President Barack Obama's high profile mixed heritage has served to draw attention to the contradictory legacy of mixed race Americans that undeniably continues to pervade our society with discomfort. In this chapter the author presents the day-to-day struggles President Obama and other mixed race men face in America. In Chapter 8, **Pearlie Strother-Adams**, explores cinematic representations of black masculinity in buddy films, as well as interrogating the replacement of realistic representations of black masculinity with unrealistic puppet controlled images of black men that function to ease and please white movie goers. In Chapter 9, **Steven R. Cureton**, utilizes the Community Violence Exposure (CVE) framework to investigate how Black males negotiate manhood within the context of a deviant, criminal, and/or violent subculture. The implications of community violence exposure—knowledge of, witnessing, and/or being a victim of abuse and violence significantly contributes to engaging in risky behaviors (subsequent violence, drug usage and sexual conduct) that threaten the health status of adolescents. In Chapter 10, **Joshua K. Wright**, assesses the treatment of President Barack Obama by the conservative news media. The author focuses on the role of race in the media's coverage of President Obama and challenges readers to ask themselves: "Can a black man achieve power and survive in America?" Although much of this media coverage is politically motivated, the author suggests it is very difficult to ignore the racial undertones and coded language that often frame the critiques. In Chapter 11, **Bettina L. Love** and **Brandelyn Tosolt**, utilize Critical Race Theory as a lens to interpret African Americans' perspectives on the use of post-racial rhetoric in the month immediately following the election of President Barack Obama. While Obama was successful in drawing African Americans into his imagined community, African Americans maintained an awareness of what W. E. B. Du Bois called "double consciousness." The authors assert that "double consciousness" remains a necessary tool for African Americans to use in making sense of the racialized realities of twenty-first century America. In Chapter 12, **Naurice Frank Woods, Jr.**, traces the origins of the fictive character, Blade, and examines his various incarnations in the mass media. In addition, the author

interprets Blade as a tainted half-breed, “tragic mulatto” figure in search of his humanity and, ultimately, redemption and salvation. The author also explores Blade’s persona as an extension of the super macho, race-affirming types spawned by Blaxploitation films of the 1970s.

## Chapter 10

### **The War on Obama: The Conservative News Media's Portrayal of Barack Obama**

*Joshua K. Wright*

The purpose of this chapter is to assess the treatment of President Barack Obama by the conservative news media. This chapter focuses on the role of race in the media's coverage of the president. Ultimately, this chapter challenges readers to ask themselves: "Can a black man achieve power and survive in America?" Although much of this media coverage is politically motivated, it is hard to ignore the racial undertones and coded language that often frame the critiques. This chapter is not stereotyping all members of the conservative news media. It focuses on segments of that media which use race to frame their critiques. Certainly it is not expected for a president to be exempt from the criticism of past Democratic presidents in deference to his race or skin color. Conservatives labeled Franklin Roosevelt a communist, a fascist, and a socialist because of his radical New Deal programs. Bill Clinton's reputation was dragged through the mud during his impeachment trial. In the 1970s Jimmy Carter was portrayed as inept, weak, and out of touch by the conservative media.

But those presidents did not have the burden of being the nation's first black president. When Obama's policies are described as "gangster" one must ask how much of that criticism is solely political. When Obama is compared to a murderer because of his health care policies, one must ask how much of that criticism is partisan. The president often plays the role of the bad man in media coverage. When Fox News host Greta Van Susteren asked Rush Limbaugh in a 2011 interview if the president was a bad guy or just had a bad ideology, Limbaugh's response was "one in the same". Although it is expected

for the traditional black outlaw (the drug dealer, gangster, or pimp) to be treated with contempt, it is unexpected yet fascinating to find a black man who has achieved the highest level of power through legitimate means being viewed as a threat to mainstream America.

The main characteristic the traditional black bad man manifests is a belief that crime and dishonest behavior is his only means of escaping poverty, attaining wealth, and defining his manhood. Wealth and respect bring a level of power that society and institutional racism denied him. Historically the bad man has been a source of empowerment for many disenfranchised individuals within the black community. During slavery this figure was presented as a fictitious trickster in black folklore. At the turn of the twentieth century tales of real bad men such as Stagolee, were popularized in oral history and the blues. A lack of jobs and discrimination led many black men to define their masculinity and seek power through criminal means over the next one hundred years. While these outlaws were glamorized in black popular culture, they were demonized within mainstream America. Unfortunately these negative images of masculinity have become associated with black men, regardless of their social and academic backgrounds. The impact of this image is manifested in tragedies such as the Trayvon Martin murder in which a young black man is labeled an outlaw for wearing a hoodie. As a result a black politician, with no criminal ties, can easily be associated with the bad man because deviant behavior is thought, by many, to be an innate trait of black men.

### **A Bad Man in the White House**

The 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* captured the white supremacist's ultimate fear: black men gaining political power and becoming his equal. D.W. Griffith's groundbreaking film depicted the Reconstruction's impact on the South in the aftermath of the American Civil War. The late President Abraham Lincoln and radical northern congressmen had not only abolished slavery, they gave black men the right to seek political power. For the first time in the nation's history black men served in the federal, state, and local governments.

Griffith's film reflected the image that many whites had of these black politicians: Namely, they were dangerous, deceptive, untrustworthy, lazy, incompetent, power hungry, hypersexual, and violent. The epitome of this dangerous black politician was the film's fictional character Silas Lynch, a bi-racial protégé of a white northern carpetbagger.

The biggest fear of men like Lynch was that they would ruin the economy with their mental incompetence, corrupt society with their innate immoral behavior, and taint the white race by passing anti-miscegenation laws. In the film ex-Confederate soldiers form a vigilante group, the Ku Klux Klan, to defend white women from the sexual advances of black bad men. In the film's most disturbing scene a young white woman lunges from a cliff to her death to escape a black man trying to rape her. Ultimately the Klan would come to the rescue of southern whites and remove these black politicians from power. As the film concludes, the white supremacists of the Klan are given a parade and the narrator of this silent film leads viewers in the singing of the Star Spangled Banner. Although *The Birth of a Nation* was a piece of fiction, it forecast the future of the black politician, whose presence was a threat to white hegemony.

Black males had been excluded from the political system since the nation's founding. Enslaved males did not receive the vote until 1870; however, free blacks also experienced discrimination at the polls. Free black men were prohibited from voting in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa prior to the Civil War. In Connecticut a rule was passed stating that only men who were free and allowed to vote prior to 1818 could maintain voting rights. In 1821 New York ruled that men had to own property valued at \$250 and pay taxes in order to vote. This law kept nearly ten thousand black men from the polls. White male voters were only required to pay taxes or serve in the state militia.<sup>1</sup>

During the initial years of the Reconstruction President Andrew Johnson said the following of black political power:

“The peculiar qualities which should characterize any people who are fit to decide upon the management of public affairs for

a great state...it is the glory of white men to know that they have these qualities...Negroes have shown less capacity for government than any other race of people.”

Free black men saw the ballot as a form of empowerment that would make them equal to whites. They participated in their own state conventions in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin during the early to mid-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Reconstruction allowed black men to hold political power for the decade following the Civil War; however, over the course of one hundred years following the Reconstruction few black men held significant political positions of power. The few black politicians that did emerge, such as Harlem congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., continued to be vilified by rivals and the media.

The black politician was not the traditional bad man. He was not a gangster, pimp, drug dealer, numbers runner, or a member of the criminal underworld. The black politician was not the stereotypical disenfranchised ghetto dweller who relied on illegal behavior to escape poverty. Nevertheless, he was often viewed with the same contempt as the uneducated street hustler. An education and a business suit did not prevent him from being viewed as an outcast among the elite. An illustration featured in an 1898 edition of the Raleigh News & Observer depicted black political power as a large, grotesque monster with dark skin, big lips, an afro, and large claws reaching for fleeing white civilians. The monster had a tail and wings with the words “Negro Rule” written on them.

The black politician became a victim of the Jockey Syndrome. William Rhoden, a sportswriter for The New York Times, defined this syndrome as an organized effort by white horse jockeys, trainers, and owners to remove black jockeys from positions of power and tilting the playing field toward white hegemony at the end of the nineteenth century. Eventually the black race horse jockey became extinct. This same mechanism of exclusion was at play in the political sphere.<sup>3</sup> For centuries it was a shared belief among black families that a black man could never be president.

Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson appointed black men to prestigious positions within their administrations. The success of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960s opened the door for black men to gain political power in large numbers for the first time since the 1870s. Richard Hatcher, Maynard Jackson, Carl B. Stokes, Harold Washington, J.C. Watts, and Douglas Wilder were among the new generation of black politicians. In the summer of 2004 a young black politician named Barack Hussein Obama II delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. In January 2005 he was sworn in as a United States senator from Illinois. On January 20, 2009 Senator Obama became the first African-American to be sworn in as the president of the United States.

In the next four years Mr. Obama went from being a trailblazer to one of the worst bad men in history. No black gangster depicted in folklore, film, television, or hip-hop was as menacing as Obama according to his depiction by conservative media. He was treated as a contemporary, real life version of Silas Lynch, the dangerous bi-racial politician in *The Birth of a Nation*. A political cartoon published on conservative websites in July 2012 featured the president stabbing Uncle Sam in the back with four bloody knives. A few members of the media would go as far as to utter the names Hitler, Castro, Marx, and Hussein when referring to the nation's first black president. "Impeach Obama now before he kills this country...his uncle Fidel has a children's health care provision, so he wants a children's provision," said Michael Savage, a conservative talk show radio host.<sup>4</sup>

Rush Limbaugh is America's most popular and controversial conservative political talk radio host. *The Rush Limbaugh Show* is the nation's highest rated talk radio program. In June 2009 he accused Obama and the Democratic Party of moving the nation from capitalism towards socialism. On January 27, 2010 Obama delivered his first State of the Union address before the United States Congress. The following day the disgruntled Limbaugh had reached his tipping point and decided to let this president, whom he occasionally referred to as a "man-child", know what was on his mind. Limbaugh read his "Letter to President Obama" on the air:

“Let me be the father that you never had or never really knew. I think you need some guidance. It is time to man up. It’s time to grow up. That speech last night was an embarrassment....you lashed out in all directions. You refused to take responsibility. You were angry....Being president is a big responsibility. You wanted the position Barack...you told the public to trust you and they elected you. And you’re now president of the greatest country mankind has ever known and you act like this...Like you’re better than the people you were elected to serve.....you don’t get to impose your policies without our consent... You’ve made such a mess of things Barack....time to stop blaming others. You are delirious. It’s time to assume the responsibilities of president rather than pretending to be one.”<sup>5</sup>

Limbaugh’s letter to the president was reminiscent of a father scolding a petulant child. It also sparks memories of white patriarchs on southern plantations talking to their slaves in a condescending tone. Historians Kenneth Stampp and Eugene Genovese write about the use of paternalism by white patriarchs as a means to pacify slaves and trick them into obeying their orders. Limbaugh unintentionally plays the role of the patriarch as he offers fatherly guidance. Limbaugh’s address also accused Obama of exhibiting the stereotypical behavior of black politicians which was depicted in *The Birth of a Nation*: ‘You refused to take responsibility. You were angry.’

The commentary of the conservative media was reflected in the rhetoric of Republican contenders for the 2012 presidential nomination. Rick Santorum, the former United States senator from Pennsylvania, told an audience: “If we follow the lead of Obama we are heading down the road to the guillotine.”<sup>6</sup> In another speaking engagement Santorum said of Obama, “he wants to rule over you,” conjuring up images of an unqualified Obama sitting atop a throne that must be watched by its *rightful* owners. Newt Gingrich called Obama the most dangerous president in history. Willard “Mitt” Romney, the eventual Republican nominee, told an audience following a primary victory, “we must take back our America.”



Michelle Bachman was another early contender for the Republican Party's nomination. Bachmann rose to fame as a congresswoman from Minnesota and one of the leaders of the Tea Party Movement. At a Tea Party rally Bachmann referred to the Obama administration as a "gangster government." A year earlier Bachmann appeared on CBS's *Face the Nation* with Bob Siefert. During the interview she equated Obama's proposed health care plan with tyranny. Ten months later she referred to Obama's health care bill as the crown jewel of socialism during a congressional session. The suggestion of socialism caused millions of Americans to panic as they thought of Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Bachmann also claimed that Obama's health care plan or "Obamacare" would restrict women's reproductive rights by forcing them to have only one child due to the costs of health insurance.

The demagogic use of the term gangster and the claims that Obama was trampling women's rights is reminiscent of the stereotype of black male politicians posing a menacing threat to white women. The most egregious example of this came from Arizona's Republican governor Jan Brewer. In January 2012 an infamous photograph was taken of Brewer angrily pointing her finger in the face of the president on the tarmac at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. Brewer said she raised her finger because she felt "threatened" by the president.<sup>7</sup>

On October 23, 2012, two weeks prior to Obama's second Election Day, the conservative *Washington Times* newspaper featured a story titled: "Obama the Intimidator: President remains a Chicago-style politician". Under the title is large picture of the president with a menacing scowl, wearing a Fedora hat, with a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, and a machine gun in his hand. The article talks about the president's use of intimidation and coercion to get his way. The author says the president threatened to kick the ass of senator not willing to follow his wishes. The article's title and picture have several negative meanings. Chicago has a history of organized crime. The city was run by the nation's most notorious gangster, Al Capone, during the prohibition era. If you google the phrase "Fedora hats and Al Capone" you will find an image of Capone wearing a hat with a

cigar dangling from the corner of his mouth. It is obvious that the artist was comparing Obama to Capone. Obama's image is also reminiscent of black bad men such as Stagolee, Bumpy Johnson, and the fictional character Omar from *The Wire* television series.

The article also connects Obama to Chicago's history of political corruption. For years (white) Chicago politicians have been viewed as gangsters in suits. Mayor Richard J. Daley ran the city from 1955 until 1976. Daley was accused of a running corrupt political machine. Although many of his subordinates lost their positions and were incarcerated, Daley managed to avoid criminal charges. The current *Starz* cable television series *Boss* features Kelsey Grammar playing the fictional Chicago mayor Tom Kane. Kane maintains his corrupt political machine through intimidation, coercion, bribery, and scandal. He is even willing to resort to homicide for political gain. By referring to President Obama as a "Chicago-style politician", tells readers that this man is willing to do anything for power, is evil, and cannot be trusted.

President Obama's critics have also tried to question his nationality. Donald Trump, the billionaire real estate tycoon and star of the NBC reality series *The Apprentice* flirted with a run for the presidency in 2011. His primary issue was the Birther argument. The Birthers are a portion of the nation that believe President Obama is not a native born American citizen which would make him ineligible to be President based on the Constitution. The Birther argument also raises the notion that Obama is a Muslim and not a Christian. Muslims have been viewed as the enemy of America since Islamic extremists, led by Osama Bin Laden, attacked New York City and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

On March 23, 2011 Trump appeared on ABC's morning talk show, *The View*. Trump told the women that he could not find anyone from Obama's childhood in Hawaii who had a record of his existence. A week later he appeared on Fox News's *O'Reilly Factor* and told the host Bill O'Reilly that President Obama was hiding his birth certificate because he feared revealing that he was an African-born Muslim. On April 27<sup>th</sup> President Obama, annoyed with the slanderous accusations about his origin, agreed to make his birth certificate public. Trump

appeared on CNN's *John King Live* that evening to discuss the president's decision. Trump told King that *he* would have to inspect the certificate to make sure it was legitimate. Trump also said, "I have done a great service for the American people. We have a president that is incompetent. We have a president that is doing a terrible job."<sup>8</sup> Trump not only questioned Obama's nationality, he also questioned his intelligence and formal education. How could this man have been admitted to, let alone graduate from, the prestigious Harvard University Law School? Trump demanded to know and, in his misplaced zeal continued to marginalize the president's achievements by painting him as an unmitigated fraud.

Trump failed at his attempt to run for president, but he succeeded in making himself look like a racist. Trump painted Obama as the exotic other that does not belong in his beloved country. Trump truly displayed his ignorance and pomposity when he said that *he* must review the president's birth certificate to make sure it is not a fake. Who gave Trump the authority to handle such a task? This was another case of the wealthy white patriarch wanting to flex his muscles. During slavery newly freed black men were forced to carry around freedom papers stating that they were not runaway slaves. Any white man had the right to request that the black person show him his papers. If the white man did not think the papers were legitimate he could enslave that black man on the spot. What is the difference between this action and what Trump is attempting to do? This was also a case of the emasculated white male of the 1950s and 1960s feeling like his manhood was being threatened by outsiders (black men, women, gays, and immigrants) seeking power.

Although many conservatives in the news media believed Trump's claims were baseless and little more than self-aggrandizing, some political commentators within the conservative media were vociferous in their support of Trump's claims and the Birther movement. On April 28, 2011, *Follow The Money with Eric Bolling* on Fox News held a lively panel discussion on the topic. Bolling and guest Pamela Gellar carefully dissected a blown up version of the birth certificate that the White House released. Gellar accused the White House of releasing a certification of live birth rather than an actual

birth certificate. Gellar questioned why it took the president three years to provide this information to the public. She said the White House provided a document that needed to be further examined by completing a digital forensic analysis. Bolling noted that portions of the document appeared to have been photo shopped. Gellar also stated that the American public deserved access to Obama's academic records, law school application, and proof of the articles that he published in graduate school. The underlying theme of this discussion, full of racially coded language, was that Obama was a trickster who falsified his identity to steal the presidency.

## **Introducing Barack Obama**

Barack Obama is the self-made man who worked his way up from obscurity to super stardom. He was born in Hawaii in 1961 to Barack Obama, Sr. and Stanley Anne Dunham. His father was a black man from Kenya and his mother a white woman from Kansas. Barack, Sr. was the son of a prominent farmer and medicine man. His outstanding grades earned him a scholarship to attend the University of Hawaii in 1959. Barack Sr. was the university's first African foreign student. He graduated at the top of his class within three years, earning a degree in economics. During his time in Hawaii he married the younger Stanley Anne Dunham who gave birth to Barack II.<sup>9</sup>

When Barack Sr. was accepted into a doctoral program at Harvard University in 1962, he left his family behind. Dunham filed for divorce in 1964. Barack, Sr.'s womanizing and alcoholism led to his dismissal from Harvard. He was deported back to Kenya in August where he remarried and fathered two more sons. Once again Barack Sr., accused of abusive behavior, struggled with marriage and divorced in 1973. He would lose both legs in a car accident resulting from drunk driving. He was fatally injured in another car accident in 1982. The younger Obama hardly knew his father and did not meet his paternal relatives until a trip to Kenya in 1982.<sup>10</sup>

Obama spent much of his childhood with his mother and her parents. His grandfather, nicknamed "Gramps," would take him to the pool halls, bars, and jook joints in Honolulu's red-light district to

expose him to his older black male friends. In spite of Gramps' efforts Obama felt like an outsider in those forced excursions.<sup>11</sup> As a teenager Obama, then nicknamed Barry, looked to popular culture and sports to shape his image as a black man in America.<sup>12</sup>

In 1979 Obama enrolled in Occidental College in California. While in college he read the works of famous black writers such as James Baldwin, W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Ellison, and Richard Wright. Two years later he transferred to Columbia University where he began to form an appreciation for the impact of race and class on local politics. He became a community organizer in Chicago's poor and mostly African-American South Side for the first three years after his graduation from Columbia.<sup>13</sup> He came to Chicago as the city welcomed its first black mayor, Harold Washington. Washington's election was viewed as the culmination of the Black Power Movement in Chicago.<sup>14</sup>

In 1988 Obama enrolled in Harvard University Law School. He became the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*. From 1992 to 2004 he taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School. In addition to his teaching career he entered politics, serving in the thirteenth district of the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004. In 2004 Obama was elected to the United States Senate. Four years later he accepted the Democratic nomination for president in front of a thirty-eight million televised audience and 80,000 attendees at Invesco Field in Denver, Colorado on the forty-fifth anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.<sup>15</sup>

During the campaign Democratic and Republican challengers argued that Obama's role as a community organizer and short term in the Senate did not qualify him to serve in the White House. Conservative critics accused the young senator of being little more than the liberal media's Messiah-like darling who used savvy oratorical skills and inspirational speeches full of (false) hope to charm the masses. Robert Greene's bestselling book, The 48 Laws of Power, teaches those seeking power to play on individuals' fantasies and desire for a Messiah-like figure or cause to believe in. Green says "It is the oppressiveness of reality that allows fantasy to take root and bloom. In sixteenth century Venice, the reality was one of decline and

loss of prestige. The corresponding fantasy described a sudden recovery of past glories. While the reality only got worse, the Venetians inhabited a happy dream world in which their city restored its wealth and power overnight. The person who can spin a fantasy out of an oppressive reality has access to untold power.”<sup>16</sup> Greene’s description of this devious individual fits into the criticism of Obama that portrayed him as a trickster and opportunist who was able to pimp a nation miring in despair due to a recession, war, and terrorism. His promises of hope and change were refreshing for a country tired of President George W. Bush and his Republican cohorts. Ironically, Greene says that those seeking power must promise change to the masses, while secretly doing their best to reform things as little as possible.<sup>17</sup> Critics of the president have accused him of failing to push for the change he promised as a candidate.

Obama’s groundbreaking defeats of Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain in the primary and general elections debunked the notion that a black man could never be President. It should be noted that Obama’s campaign team tried to run a race that was devoid of any significant discussion of his race or ethnicity. Toure, co-host of MSNBC’s *The Cycle* says “the more a Black person can learn to put the white around them at ease, and also to feel comfortable doing so, the more powerful they can become.”<sup>18</sup> But Obama was forced to address the issue when footage of his pastor’s sermons surfaced in March 2008. During his time as a community organizer, Obama began attending the Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s Trinity United Church of Christ in the Southwest side of Chicago. Wright preached what was called Black Liberation Theology. Black Liberation Theology grew out the black power protests with the 1969 landmark publication of James H. Cone’s Black Theology and Black Power. It highlights the belief that God upholds the black oppressed in their embattled quest for liberation and empowerment. God is vindicator of the oppressed. The theme of reconciliation has also featured prominently in this innovative genre of Christian thought.

The Fox News Channel and other media sources began running out of context clips from two of Wright’s past sermons, “The Day of Jerusalem’s Fall” and “Confusing God and Government” from 2001

and 2003 respectively. The controversy arose from the following comments by Wright:

When it came to treating her citizens of African descent fairly, America failed. She put them in chains, the government put them in slave quarters...put them in inferior schools, put them in substandard housing...put them in the lowest paying jobs, put them outside the protection of the law...The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America.' No, no, no, not God Bless America. Goddamn America.<sup>19</sup>

Obama responded to Wright's comments by delivering his most powerful address on race, "A More Perfect Union", at an engagement in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Obama did not deny America's ugly racial past, but he refused to support Wright's claims that America had not made a considerable amount of progress. He objected to Wright's harsh condemnation of America. Although he did not publicly reject his pastor Obama would eventually withdraw his membership from Trinity.<sup>20</sup>

As the 44<sup>th</sup> president, Barack Obama has had several groundbreaking moments despite being hampered by a historically bad economy nearly rivaling the Great Depression; poor job and housing markets; and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His first major piece of legislation was the Lilly Ledbetter Act guaranteeing equal pay for women. On February 17, 2009 President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law providing a \$787 billion economic stimulus to offset the effects of what economists call the nation's "Great Recession". On March 23, 2010 he signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This act was his biggest domestic success and did what no other presidential act had done before, provide universal health insurance.

Obama's most striking successes came in foreign policy. On May 2, 2011 the Navy SEALs and CIA operatives shot and killed Osama Bin Laden. The Obama administration also played a role in the 2012 "Arab Spring" revolutions taking place in several Middle Eastern

countries and pulled American troops out of Iraq. In the summer of 2012 Obama was nominated by the Democratic Party to run for a second term in office.

## **Obama Versus the Sly Fox**

During his first term in office the majority of President Obama's sharpest criticism came from the Fox News Channel, a twenty-four hour cable news network. The network was the creation of Australian born billionaire and media mogul Rupert Murdoch. Fox News was launched on October 7, 1996 and by 2010 it was the leading cable news network among viewers between the ages of twenty-five and fifty-four.<sup>21</sup> Fox News has been accused of reporting stories with an extremely conservative slant in comparison to rival networks CNN and MSNBC. Critics have even said the network falsifies information to support the Republican Party's agenda. An October 2009 Pew Research poll found that Fox was believed to be the most ideological channel on television.<sup>22</sup> A 2010 study revealed that Fox News was more favorable towards the Bush administration's handling of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq than any of the other national news outlets such as the NBC Nightly News.<sup>23</sup>

President Obama and Fox News have had a contentious relationship since the days of his campaign. The channel played up controversies such as the Rev. Jeremiah Wright fiasco or Obama's relationship with the radical William Ayers. The channel also criticized candidate Obama for his lack of political experience and leadership; identifying him as a community organizer who was in over his head. On September 20, 2009 Obama "dissed" Fox by providing interviews to all of the major news networks except Fox. Anita Dunn, the White House communications director explained the president's decision in this manner: "Fox News often operates as the communications arm of the Republican Party."<sup>24</sup> President Obama added, "If media is operating basically as a talk radio format, then that's one thing, and if it's operating as a news outlet, then that's another."<sup>25</sup>



Fox's talent roster has included Bill O'Reilly, Geraldo Rivera, Greta Van Susteren, Mike Huckabee, Brit Hume, and Juan Williams. Three of the channel's most notable personalities over the past seven years are Sean Hannity, Sarah Palin, and Glenn Beck. Sean Hannity hosts a primetime talk show called *Hannity*. He also hosts *The Sean Hannity Show*, a nationally syndicated talk radio show and is the author of three books including the 2010 number one best seller, Conservative Victory: Defeating Obama's Radical Agenda, edited by David Limbaugh, the younger brother of Rush Limbaugh.

Hannity's criticism of Obama dates back to his days in the Senate. On March 1, 2007 Hannity accused candidate Obama of being a racist after the Jeremiah Wright tapes were published. In 2009 it was announced that President Obama would be awarded a Noble Peace Prize. Hannity and his guest Morgan Brittany, an actress from the 1980s hit television series *Dallas*, expressed their displeasure with the selection. Brittany went on to suggest that Obama should decline the award and present it to the American soldiers at war. Hannity told her Obama, whom he called "the anointed one" (Messiah), would never do that because the honor was too important to his overblown ego.<sup>26</sup>

In the spring of 2011 Hannity pointed to a poetry event at the White House, organized by Mrs. Michelle Obama, as evidence of the president's radical behavior and underlying intentions to ruin the country. On May 11, 2011 Chicago Rapper Common was a presenter at a special White House poetry reading. Common is often lauded for favoring socially conscious and uplifting song lyrics over rap's typical misogynistic and derogatory content. Nevertheless, Hannity and others at Fox were highly offended by Common's participation.

In 2000 Common released a song called "A Song for Assatta" which spoke in support of Assatta Shakur. In 1977 Shukur, a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army, was convicted for the first-degree murder of Werner Foerster, a white New Jersey state trooper, and seven other felonies. Common was viewed as a threat for supporting an individual perceived to be a domestic terrorist. He was also criticized for disparaging remarks he made about President George W. Bush and law enforcement in a 2007 poem, "A Letter to the Law," Common said the following:

Tell the law my Uzi weighs a ton...On the streets they try to beat us like a drum. In Cincinnati, another brother hung. I got the black strap to make the cops run...why they messing with Saddam? Burn a Bush, cause for peace he no push no button. Killing over oil and grease, no weapons of destruction. How can we follow leader when this a corrupt one? I hold up a peace sign, but I carry a gun.<sup>27</sup>

Hannity nearly turned Common into a domestic terrorist while excusing remarks made by his friend Ted Nugent, a white rock & roll singer who told Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton to suck the tip of his machine gun during a live performance. On another Fox series, *On the Record w/ Greta Van Susteren*, guest host Martha Maccallum interviewed Keli Goff, a black female writer for THELOOP21.com and the Huffington Post, about the Common controversy. Maccallum, who did not share Goff's positive opinion of Common, criticized the Obamas unceasingly. She worried about the violent and anti-government message the Obamas were sending the impressionable American children by endorsing such vile rhetoric. The Common incident was not the first or the last time that Fox News attacked Obama for his ties to the hip-hop community.

Jay-Z campaigned for Obama by encouraging his fans to vote for him during his concerts. Jay-Z (Shawn Carter), a former crack cocaine dealer, is one of the wealthiest businessmen in America, with a net worth of \$460 million. The union of potentially the first African-American president and this hip-hop mogul was a powerful statement within the black community. Jay-Z proudly described his relationship with Obama in his 2010 autobiography Decoded:

Jay-Z: "I could see he wasn't going to be one of those who burned hip-hop in effigy to get a few votes...And he was black. This was big. This was a chance to go from centuries of invisibility to the most visible position in the world. He could, through sheer symbolism, regardless of any of his actual policies, change the lives of millions of black kids who saw something different to aspire."<sup>28</sup>

Fox News correspondents did not share Jay-Z's enthusiasm and used it to fuel the fire against him. What sort of president and respectable adult would associate with such a low brow art form and former gangsters promoting "un-American" values and deviance, his critics asked? When the president celebrated his fiftieth birthday at the White House in August 2011, Fox News dubbed it "Obama's hip-hop BBQ." Ironically the invited guest performers were sixty-two year old rhythm and blues legend Stevie Wonder and seventy-two year old jazz great Herbie Hancock.

Ann Coulter, a frequent guest on *Hannity*; shares his disgust for President Obama, the Democratic Party, and liberalism. At a dinner for the Young America's Foundation on November 29, 2007 Coulter joked with the audience by saying candidate Obama was "the least dangerous person named Hussein" and that his biggest accomplishment so far was being born "half black."<sup>29</sup> At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) on February 13, 2012 she compared the president to Flavor Flav, the animated hype man for Public Enemy, a popular hip-hop group in the late eighties and early nineties. Over the past decade Flavor has become more infamous for his minstrel-like behavior on reality shows and his run-ins with the law for domestic violence, failing to pay child support, and substance abuse. In 2008 Coulter referred to Obama as a "dime store Hitler" and compared his autobiography, Dreams from My Father, to Adolf Hitler's 1925 autobiography, Mein Kampf.<sup>30</sup> Coulter is not alone in her comparison of the president to a mass murderer. Sarah Palin, the 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate and Fox News contributor, added a new chapter to the war against Obama the following year.

On August 7, 2009 Palin wrote the following statement on her Facebook page: "The America I know and love is not one in which my parents or my baby with down syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama's death panel so his bureaucrats can decide based on their level of productivity if they are worthy of health care. Such a system is downright evil."<sup>31</sup> Palin was accusing Obama's health care plan of having a provision which would force senior citizens and those with terminal illnesses to get end of life counseling every few years. Such a

plan sounded like euthanasia and reminded critics of the Nazis forced extermination of the sick, weak, and elderly during Hitler's reign.

Palin's death panel claims were supported by others at Fox News such as Glenn Beck, who said of her comments, "I believe it to be true."<sup>32</sup> Beck, who ended his relationship with Fox in June 2011, hosted the popular *Glenn Beck* television show from 2009 to 2011. On the August 12, 2009 episode of *Glenn Beck*, Beck supported Palin's accusations and raised the idea that the Obama administration would institute forced euthanasia and eugenic experiments to cut health insurance costs and reduce the national debt. Beck's nineteen minute speech compared the Obama administration to the Nazis' devaluation of human life for the sake of creating a master race in the 1930s. Beck held up a Nazi poster that showed a physically deformed man with a crippled hand sentenced to death because the German government withheld health care. Beck nearly broke down in tears because he said the man in the picture reminded him of his daughter who suffered from cerebral palsy. He insinuated that his daughter could be a victim of the president's death panel.<sup>33</sup> The Obama administration vehemently denied the death panel accusations.

### **The Roots of Obama's Rage**

The bad man is believed to possess an innate rage which causes him to commit evil. In his 2010 book, *The Roots of Obama's Rage*, Dinesh D'Souza attempts to explain the causes of Obama's behavior. D'Souza is the president of King's College in New York and the writer and director of the 2012 documentary film, *2016 Obama's America*. He provides examples from others who share his uneasiness about this president's character. In a March 2009 article in *The New York Times*, Maureen Dowd said Obama's peculiar temperament reminded her of the fictional alien, Dr. Spock, from the 1960s television series *Star Trek*.<sup>34</sup> The alien comparison makes one think of the president as an exotic other on foreign soil. Evan Thomas called Obama "slightly creepy" and "deeply manipulative" during an interview with Charlie Rose.<sup>35</sup> D'Souza believes Obama adopted a calm, professorial façade to keep himself from looking like the stereotypical angry black man.

The roots of Obama's rage, according to D'Souza, are found in his father's Kenyan roots. In the 1880s European nations carved up Africa and colonized the continent. In the twentieth century anti-colonial African resistance armies fought their white oppressors from the West. A hatred for the West and the white man was embedded in Obama's father and grandparents, who passed this on to the junior Barack.<sup>36</sup> In his film, *2016*, D'Souza interviews a psychologist who argues that children of absentee fathers tend to reject their fathers. However, in Obama's case his mother and grandparents held the dad in high regard leading the young Barack to view him with admiration and curiosity rather than contempt.

D'Souza believes that Obama associated with men who shared his father's anti-west sentiments. As a teenager Obama was befriended by an older black writer and political activist named Frank Marshall Davis, a friend of his grandfather. Marshall, who expressed interest in the Communist Party, was placed under FBI surveillance. It should be noted that Martin Luther King Jr. was also accused of being a communist and labeled a threat by the FBI's commissioner, J. Edgar Hoover. In 1995 Bill Ayers held a fundraiser in his apartment for Obama who was running for a seat in the Illinois State Senate. Ayers became infamous in the seventies due to his association with the Weathermen Underground who bombed several federal buildings. Obama and Ayers also served on the board of an education foundation and worked together on a grant program, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. Obama's relationship with Rev. Jeremiah Wright has already been discussed. D'Souza points to these relationships as examples of Obama joining forces with like-minded individuals out to destroy the traditional American power structure.<sup>37</sup>

Michael Reagan, son of former president and father of the modern American conservative revolution Ronald Reagan, writes in his book [The New Reagan Revolution: How Ronald Reagan's Principles Can Restore America's Greatness](#) that Frank Marshall Davis introduced a young Obama to his circle of radical, leftist friends in Chicago. Obama would be introduced to the teachings of Saul Alinsky, author of [Rules for Radicals](#). Reagan says "Alinsky's [Rules for Radicals](#) set forth an agenda for organizing masses of people to impose radical change on

society...In other words, the community organizer's job is to seduce and impregnate American society, to get America knocked up with hope and change. Alinsky draws his radical inspiration from the devil himself...Thanks to Alinsky's diabolical rules, we are all caught in the devil's bargain."<sup>38</sup>

Although Obama's financial bailout appeared to be an attempt to rescue the American economy and restore the nation to greatness, it was really a small part of his larger plan according to D'Souza. He says the bailouts gave the president control of the nation's banks and big three automotive manufacturers. The bailouts prevented the banking system and the automobile industry from collapsing, but they also placed the country's debt in the trillions. Economists Stephen Cohen and Bradford Long's book The End of Influence argues that America's debt will cause its global influence to decline and hurt its position as a superpower. Limbaugh, Hannity, Beck, and other conservative media have gone on record confessing their belief that Obama is anti-American and committing irreversible damage to the American economy.

D'Souza points to American indebtedness to China and oil rich Muslim countries in the Middle East as consequences of Obama's rule. America's financial problems have also hurt the economies of its allies throughout Europe. A conspiracy theorist can easily use this information to support ideas of Obama being a Muslim or secret agent of America's anti-Western rivals. One could also argue that Obama's plan is to empower black and brown skinned people around the globe at the expense of white males. Following such logic it is easy to compare Obama to the corrupt black politicians portrayed in *Birth of a Nation*. He can even be compared to Tommy Gibbs, the fictional black gangster in the 1973 blaxploitation film *Black Caesar*. Gibbs, fashioned in the image of the black anti-hero Stagolee, is the baddest man in town. He hates white people because they have oppressed his people for years. He hates the Italian Mafia for funneling drugs into the black community and colonizing black neighborhoods. After Tommy tricks a local mobster into trusting him, Tommy and his crew kill all of the white mobsters and takeover.

Comparing Obama to a fictional gangster from a lousy film is as weak as some of the conspiracy theories that emerge from D'Souza's writing. Obama is not trying to empower blacks and minorities at the expense of the white power structure. If this were the case he would not continue to receive so much criticism from Blacks and Latinos who feel abandoned by his administration. He did not know his biological father, nor did he grow up in Africa. He was reared by his white American family in Hawaii. His first visit to Africa came after he became an adult. He admitted in his autobiography to feeling uncomfortable with his black friends, like his high school buddy Ray, who often complained about "the white man." Even though the economy has been slow to improve and the national debt has risen from Obama's stimulus, the fact that he was tasked with fixing the worst economy since the Great Depression should not be forgotten. The Wall Street investment bankers that supported the president's first campaign and the financial advisors that he initially surrounded himself with, like Timothy Geitner and Lawrence Summers, do not shout out anti-capitalism.

## **Obama and Lessons of Black Male Empowerment**

Roland Martin and Melissa Harris-Perry, two prominent African-American liberal political media figures, were interviewed for this research. Both of them said they believed the criticism of the president to be politically motivated. They think a white democratic president would be treated with the same level of contempt. Harris-Perry said the danger in blaming race for everything makes it harder for future minorities seeking the presidency. Will their policies be challenged solely because of race? Probably not, however, Harris-Perry did say that the while the conservative media's goals are solely political, the framing of their criticism has been racially motivated. Harris-Perry observed:

The best contemporary example is Bill Clinton. He was not just threatened with impeachment but he was impeached by the House of Representatives. And that impeachment had

everything to do, not so much his bad actions, but with the overreaching of the Republican controlled congress. So Hillary Clinton or John Edwards, the 2008 candidates, would be subjected to the same treatment as Obama. Now the pushback is about politics, but the framing of the pushback is about race. To go back to Bill Clinton what they wanted was to stop his social, economic, and political achievements. The thing they could use against him was his bad habits and philandering. So, the goal was political, but the strategy was about the politics of sex. In the case of President Obama that isn't where the weakness lies. The weakness lies in his very identity as an African-American. When you think of the president the image that comes to mind is not one of a skinny black guy with a Kenyan father. There is no way that for the vast majority of white Americans this does not create some anxiety. Similarly, for African-Americans this creates such enthusiasm. Not because....oh, any black guy will do...but by watching this black man live in the White and take on the title of most powerful man in the world, even to the extent that that does not mean all black people are empowered as a result, there is still something symbolically powerful about that role....there is no way that such symbolic power occurs on one side without generating symbolic anxiety on the other side.<sup>39</sup>

The treatment of President Barack Obama by the conservative media provides a fascinating case study on race and power in America. Peniel Joseph, a noted American historian was also interviewed for this research. In contrast to Martin and Harris-Perry, Joseph sees race as the driving force behind the conservative media's criticism. Perhaps the loquacious Chicago rapper Kanye West provides the best explanation for Obama's treatment. The music video for Kanye's 2010 song "Power" can be viewed as analogy for black male empowerment in America. In the video, full of Ancient Greek symbolism, Kanye sits beneath the Sword of Damocles. According to legend, Damocles was a courtier in the court of the fourth century tyrant Dionysius II of Syracuse, Italy. Dionysius offers to switch places with Damocles, so



that he could experience what it was like to be rich and powerful. Damocles accepts this offer and sits on the ruler's throne. He initially enjoys the luxury of power, but he soon learns that the evil tyrant has placed a huge sword above his head that is held by a single horse hair. Damocles, fearing his life will be taken if he continues to sit on the throne, chooses to relinquish his power.

Yes, Barack Obama is Damocles. The powers that be may relinquish that power to him for a season, but they will ensure that he knows his place and remind him that his power is not permanent. The conservative media is the mouthpiece for the powers that be. Obama's plight has been the same for most black politician since Reconstruction. The earliest black politicians dealt with the KKK and blatant racism rather than the media's coded language. *Birth of a Nation* and the racist writings of historians like William A. Dunning added to the black politician's plight. In recent years black politicians have continued to be portrayed negatively in television series like *The Wire* and *Boss*.

Certainly there have been black politicians who have manifested the negative stereotypes about black men in power. Who can forget Washington, DC mayor Marion Barry being videotaped in a hotel room smoking crack cocaine and soliciting a woman, who was not his wife, for sex in 1990? "Bitch set me up" said Barry as FBI officers raided the room.<sup>40</sup> And then there was Kwame Kilpatrick, the former mayor of Detroit, Michigan. Kilpatrick charged with ten felony counts, including perjury and obstruction of justice, and sentenced to a maximum of five years imprisonment in 2010. Kilpatrick, who was married with children, was caught having an affair with his chief of staff Christine Beatty, who was also married.<sup>41</sup> In addition to this, Kilpatrick had been caught having a party involving several female strippers in 2002. Reports claimed that the mayor's wife assaulted a stripper named Strawberry. Months later Strawberry was shot eighteen times and killed while sitting in her SUV. The gun that was found was the same model and caliber firearm used by the Detroit Police Department, causing the media to suspect foul play within the city government.<sup>42</sup>

But for every Marion Barry and Kwame Kilpatrick there are positive examples of black politicians like Corey Booker, mayor of Newark, New Jersey and Deval Patrick, the governor of Massachusetts. Barack Obama is the most famous black politician in American history. On November 7, 2012 he was reelected for a second term. In spite of a decisive victory in the Electoral College the popular vote was nearly evenly split between Obama and the challenger, Mitt Romney. The president won just thirty-nine percent of the white vote and received a small number of votes from white men. The day after Obama's victory four hundred white students at the University of Mississippi staged a protest of the reelection. Many of the students were shouting out racial epithets. Rush Limbaugh responded to Obama's reelection saying: "I went to bed last night thinking, 'we're outnumbered. I went to bed last night thinking we'd lost the country...'this is utter BS, and if it isn't, then we've lost the country."<sup>43</sup> Only time will tell how the president is treated by the conservative media and the public during his second term. Ultimately, irrespective of treatment, Barack Obama's legacy will leave a significant mark on the way black men with power are viewed in America.

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<sup>30</sup> Ann Coulter refers to President Barak Obama as a "dime store Hitler" on Fox News's Hannity. April 4, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> The statement from Sarah Palin's Facebook page was provided by <http://theyoungturks.com>

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<sup>37</sup> D' Souza, 172-173.

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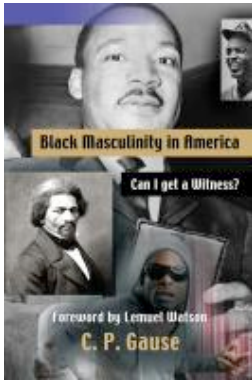
<sup>39</sup> Joshua K. Wright conducted an interview with Melissa Harris-Perry on August 23, 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Sharon LaFraniere, "Barry Arrested on Cocaine Charges in Undercover FBI, Police Operation." Washington Post. January 19, 1990. A1.

<sup>41</sup> Nick Bunkley, "Prison Term for Ex-Mayor of Detroit." The New York Times. May 25, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> David Ashenfelter, "Mystery of who killed stripper thickens. Ex-cop's affidavit in suit says officer shot her; city's lawyer calls that absurd." The Detroit Free Press. March 4, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> [www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/rush-limbaugh-obama-reelection-n-2088760.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/07/rush-limbaugh-obama-reelection-n-2088760.html)



*This volume presents, for all to consider, issues Black males face in our ever-changing society. As the authors interweave issues off Hip Hop Culture, Obama, media depictions, health issues, self-expression and identity together, we come face-to-face with the conundrums black men in our society negotiate daily. Because we all have multiple identities we enact as black men, the contributing authors reminds us American society and the world can be a hostile place sometimes.*

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