

Nine Reasons why so many Afrikans support Barack Obama

Introduction

As he prepares to take on John McCain for the US Presidency, Barack Obama continues to garner overwhelming support amongst Afrikans in the US, even amongst those Afrikans; who on the surface one would not expect to support his brand of politics. What has fascinated me is not his support from the Black Democratic faithful, for they are true believers in the Democratic Party and would happily vote for any candidate carrying their party's badge. No, it is the support from people who normally express deep cynicism about both of the US parties, but now feel that we (Afrikans) should support Obama for reasons that they normally express in the broadest of generalities which normally include words or phrase such as '*progress*' and '*inspire our young people*'.

This is even more surprising given that Obama has done everything in his power to distance himself from any sense of 'Black collectivism' or allegiance in order to appease oh so sensitive Caucasians who are happy for Hillary Clinton to talk openly about the (White) women's agenda but demand absolute rejection of Blackness from Obama – save the most trivial superficialities such as the fist touch with his wife, which White media chose to make into news.

As Glen Ford of the Black Agenda Report describes in a recent article:

“Having this weekend severed a 16-year relationship with Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ, Barack Obama might as well let the final shoe drop and resign once and for all from Black America, a polity he refuses to recognize or respect despite garnering 90 percent of Black electoral support. Never in African American history have Black people's collective affections been so callously rebuffed by an individual Black recipient. The fact that Black people's “love” for the Illinois Senator is wholly unrequited is obvious to everyone except wishful Obamites – a pitiful spectacle to behold.

If there is a tie that binds more tightly and unthinkingly than the romantic urges of adolescents, it is the pull of nationalism. African Americans have the misfortune to be self-shackled to Obama by deep historical yearnings to wield power through their own racial representatives, as other “nations” of people do. The problem is, Black Americans find themselves trapped in a threesome, in which the object of their Black nationalist aspirations is hopelessly enamored of someone else: the mythical white American nation.

..... Obama's life and message have nothing to do with Black liberation, of the theological or secular variety. Both Reverends Pflieger and Wright support in practice African American political self-determination and general Black nationalist aspirations – goals that are repugnant to Obama, who behaves as if on constant guard against perceived insults to white folks' (and America's) sacred honor. Of course, Obama constantly claims that most Black folks are as politically deracinated – rootless – as he is, but that's never been true. Black nationalism has always been pervasive in Black America, and Obama can no more wish it away than he can pretend white racism out of existence.

..... Black nationalism is everywhere that African Americans exist. It's the bond that makes perfectly sane people collectively embarrassed by the antics of Michael Jackson. In 2008, it causes millions of normally sober African Americans to binge on Obama'laide, to drink constantly to the political health of a man who gives not a damn about them, and who actually flees from their presence like a plague.

Black nationalism has scared Obama at least temporarily out of The Church!.....

In the end, Black people's one-sided love affair with Barack Obama can never be consummated. He recoils at every stage, answering love with unconcealed revulsion. One

day soon, we'll take the hint."

Glen Ford 04/06/08 [Black Agenda Report](#)

Glen Ford provides a pointed critique of the attraction of Afrikans in the US (and elsewhere) for Barack Obama. I shall go on to set out what I believe are the deep psychological reasons why those Afrikans who support very few of his policy positions still express support for his candidacy and believe an Obama victory will be an important step forward for Afrikans in the US. However before I do so I just wanted to point out some of the things we know about Barack Obama's 'new' politics. See how many of the following Obama positions you support:

- He states that there is no such thing as 'Black America'
- He has stated that he will increase the numbers of the US Armed Forces
- Pledged to continue the inexorable increase in expenditure on the US military. This is the single biggest reason the US government 'cannot afford' to fix its crumbling infrastructure and support its poorest citizens.
- Pledged absolute fealty and support for Israel. Search the internet and listen to his ankle grabbing speech to AIPAC (American Israeli Political Action Committee) the day after he won the Democratic nomination. He must have required some extra strong toothpaste after that butt kissing performance.
- Threatened to bomb Iran in support of the US' Zionist protectorate Israel.
- Put forward the idea of the US citizens (disproportionately Afrikan) who are suffering in the face of the credit crunch and spate of foreclosures being offered a measly few hundred dollars each as his suggested aid package to ease their suffering. Meanwhile banks and other corporate entities are receiving multi-billion dollar bailouts.
- He says he will reform the US health system – which is the most expensive and least efficient and effective system in the rich world – but his reform will keep the rapacious private health insurance companies at the heart of the system.
- Supports teaching homosexuality in public schools to children in Grade 2
- Supports the racist, Caucasian female driven US abortion industry which has seen 18 million Afrikan children aborted in the US since the 1960s. He received an award from Planned Parenthood which was created by the openly racist Margaret Sanger. Planned Parenthood seeks to reduce the Afrikan population in the US and was recently exposed as being happy to receive donations from Caucasian racists who specifically want to have Black babies aborted.
- Does not support reparations.
- Disingenuously claims that Afrikans in the US are 90% of the way there. Obama knows that by almost every significant, social and economic outcome measure, Afrikans are nowhere near 90% of the way 'there' – if Caucasian outcomes are the yardstick. About the only outcome where Afrikans achieve this 90% in the US is in terms of life expectancy. For example, Black median income in the 1890s was 57% of White median income. It peaked at 61% in the 1960s and had fallen back to below 60% by the 1980s. It is still around the 60% mark today. Don't worry though, at this rate of

'progress' in 1500 years we will have 'made it' income wise in the US. Since Obama knows all this, as well as the respective Black/White imprisonment rates, child poverty rates, divorce rates, female headed household rates, educational attainment levels etc. we know that he is lying when he makes this statement. Lying to appease the Caucasians whose votes he desperately seeks, lying to demonstrate that Blacks don't need any assistance or recompense for the ongoing four hundred year assault by White America.

Right, here is the list of reasons why so many Afrikans support Obama:

1. Rugged Individualism and the American Dream. Many US citizens of all hues believe in 'The American Dream'. This dream suggests that in the US, like no other place on Earth, it is possible to achieve one's dreams (almost always financial) and achieve untold wealth. It is the classic rags to riches story embodied by individuals such as Oprah Winfrey. It suggests that with hard work and talent all things are possible. Now of course there are many instances of people achieving this type of success however the wider social narrative is based upon a half-truth which is particularly condemning of groups such as Afrikan-Americans. Since success is purely bound up with individual worth, it naturally follows that groups such as Afrikans in the US who 'underachieve' educationally, economically etc. must be deficient in some way (culturally or genetically). This explanatory paradigm diminishes the importance of social and structural factors such as race, class, gender, disability etc. And locates the blame in the 'failing' individual or group. Despite this and the reality that social mobility is in fact lower in the US than in many other rich countries a large number of Afrikans in the US are strongly attracted to these ideas which they feel are embodied by Barack Obama.

2. An obsession with messianic leadership. Many Afrikans have a strong attraction for messianic leadership and there has been steady supply of such leaders to satisfy the collective appetite. Messianic leaders are usually highly charismatic individuals who have the ability to inspire and motivate large numbers of people. Their fatal flaw is the idea they promote that they have a hotline to the Creator, that they are divinely inspired and hence their utterances and ideas are not theirs but rather the truths of God. In this world the messianic leader becomes a transmission vehicle for imparting divine wisdom and hence becomes beyond criticism, both internally and externally. Indeed the leader's followers will often respond with extreme hostility, sometimes even violence to anyone who dares to question their leader. Since all people have flaws and make mistakes the group can develop no further than the leader's abilities. Of course all subsequent leaders are then forced to embrace prophetic status lest they discredit the group's founder. Now, Barack Obama does not fit the aforementioned mould or scenario except that he is highly charismatic, rather he is the object of many Afrikan's desire for a saviour type figure to singlehandedly lift the group out of its bondage. Hence he is clad in metaphorical heroic garbs and even the mildest evidence based criticism of Obama brings a sharp rebuke from his supporters.

3. An inability to distinguish between the symbolism of change and the substance of change. As Glen Ford of Black Agenda Report identifies in his above quoted article, Obama has done everything in his power to distance himself from 'Blackness' in order to reassure Whites. It is therefore ironic that the more he runs away the harder many Afrikans chase him down. Too many Afrikans have short memories. There were at least three Afrikan emperors of the Roman Empire; however the nature of the Roman Empire remained unchanged. Similarly, Afrikan,

woman, disabled or all three one individual does not fundamentally change the institution. The best example of this is Margaret elected as Prime Minister of Britain in 1979. Thatcher was no different to any of the White men who preceded or followed her and paid no particular attention to the needs of women and in particular poor women in the UK. She was elected despite being a woman not because she was a woman. Just as if Obama is elected it will be in spite of being Black and not because of being Black. To sum up this point, melanin is necessary but not sufficient to lead Black transformation.

4. A misunderstanding of how government in the US works in practice. James Petras (2007) describes the commonly held view and the alternative reality. "The high school text book version of American politics is that the major political parties and candidates present ideas to the American people on public policy, and the people choose which ideas will rule the country. In this textbook version of things, the politicians take interest groups into account in formulating their ideas. These interest groups include business, labor, religious, civic and other organisations. No one of them is dominant. This is the 'pluralist' view of American politics.

In actuality, something very different happens. The people in key positions in financial, corporate and other business institutions establish the parameters within which the politicians, parties and media discuss ideas. These people constitute a ruling class. Their composition changes according to which sector of these business institutions is dominant at a given point in history.....Rules change with shifts in power within the ruling class. (Petras 2007: 15) Therefore Obamaites are deluding themselves if they think he can bring about any significant transformation in the workings of the US government. He was selected and allowed to come this far because the ruling class – what George Bush referred to as "my base" – have been reassured that he knows how to play by their rules.

5. A misunderstanding of how racial/ethnic groups compete with each other. In my book 'Why Willie Lynch Must Die' I wrote extensively about inter-ethnic competition and the basis for group success. Too many Afrikans believe that success is a 'me' game whereas it is in fact a 'me' and 'we' game. Groups need to co-operate internally and compete externally. Obamaites seem to believe that having your most talented individuals working on behalf of your oppressor and competitor is the route to group success. They seem to believe that these individuals will be able to force Caucasians to repent and make a space for us and we can all live happily ever after. The fact that there is no evidence to support this proposition seems of little importance. Claude Anderson identified *Identity, Trust, Co-operation* and *Accountability* as critical in building sound communities. Identity is founded in culture and it culture that is the springboard for group success not talented individuals (who are located in all ethnic groups).

6. A deep-seated, often unspoken, need for Caucasian approval. Many Afrikans across a range of ideological positions and beliefs crave the approval of Caucasians. This is made clear when one observes how much energy Afrikans use to protest about some racial insult or slur from any Caucasian as well as the amount of time Afrikans will expend arguing with Caucasian racists about whether we are inferior (culturally, genetically or both) or not. People secure in their identity and peoplehood don't engage in such futile non-productive activity. If they are unhappy about something they take action that hits their enemies where it hurts e.g. economic boycotts. However because so many of our people are deeply insecure

about our collective – as opposed to individual – merit, any crumb of approval offered by the dominant group e.g. an Oscar for Halle Berry for selling us out in the film ‘Monsters Ball’ is seized upon with glee as a sign of group progress. Principles and integrity go out of the window in the desperate fight for Marsa’s approval and hence even war criminals such as Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice become pin ups for Black ‘progress’. Obama as President becomes the ultimate symbol of White approval and hence the idea touches many Afrikans at the core of their being.

7. The lesser of two evils justification

This is normally the final justification when all other arguments are exhausted. He is not as bad as ‘Hillary’ or McCain we are told. Well that is setting the bar just about as low as is possible! The lesser of two evils still leaves you supporting evil.

8. The ‘undercover brotha’ hope

This is perhaps the most desperate and least plausible of reasons for voting for Obama. In the classic film ‘The Spook who sat by the door’ the lead character joins the CIA as a seemingly obedient integrationist Negro and then later on returns to the hood to use his training to transform gang members into guerrilla fighters. In this vein I have heard it suggested that once Obama becomes President he will reveal his true Black self. We’ll see!

9. An obsession with ‘Black Firsts’. The Negro version of the history of Afrikans in the US is obsessed with ‘Black Firsts’ and individual ‘successes’. This is strongly linked to the need for Caucasian approval and each Black First is greeted joyously as taking us that bit nearer to the Promised Land. However when one examines the group’s functionality one sees that Black Police Chief have not reduced the murder of Afrikan young men by Police Officers, Afrikan Directors of Social Services have not halted the disintegration of the Afrikan family and Afrikan politicians (certainly on a national or state level) have delivered precious little to Afrikan communities. ‘Black Firsts’ are little more than putting sticking plaster over a cut jugular.

Claude Anderson suggests that building our group is like building a five storey building. You have to build the first level before you can build the second and so on. In his metaphor the five stories of the building are Economics, Politics, the Criminal Justice System, Media and Education in that order. Whilst I might quibble with some of the ordering of the other floors I certainly agree that economics provides the ground floor. If you do not build your ground floor i.e. a strong economic base, it will be impossible to build the other floors on thin air. This is what Afrikans in the US – and other places continue to do – ask for what they want and beg for what they need. If you are a minority you have to have strong economic leverage and be able to deliver a bloc vote in order to influence national politics. Since Afrikans in the US do not have the former and 90% of those who do vote; vote Democrat, without the promise of anything in return, Obama; like all the rest of the senior national US politicians will continue to ignore us as a weak and irrelevant group. Its quid pro quo and if you don’t have any quids there is no pro. That is the inconvenient truth.

The only sensible reason to support Barack Obama is if you support his policy positions. The idea of voting for someone because he has an Afrikan parent and looks like people you know is frankly daft. Clarence Thomas (the Supreme Court Justice) has two Afrikan parents and supports the torture of prisoners to gain information by the US army and

police. You could not find a more egregious Uncle Tom if you tried. Are we really so defeated that all we can cling to for hope and solace is the meagre, melanated representationalism that Obama represents? Do 40 million people have to live vicariously through one man who does not even recognise them as a group worthy of attention? I would rather a Caucasian of principle than an Afrikan of rhetoric in the White House any day.

The strangest twist to the whole Obama saga is that many – but by no means all - people like me who are sometimes accused of being obsessed with ‘race’ don’t support Obama, whilst many of those Afrikans who profess colour-blind liberalism have jumped on the ‘race’ horse and are riding it with gusto. Politics makes strange bedfellows indeed!

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Independent Afrikan writers need the support of independent minded Afrikans!

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