

## COMMENTARY: *What President-elect Barack Obama means to me. . .*

November 10, 2008

45 years after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. eloquently declared his dream, *President-elect* Barack Obama has transformed both American history and politics.

Last week, 65 million Americans, of all backgrounds, religions and creeds, turned a liability into a global diplomatic asset, a symbol of the resurgence of America's ability to astonish and inspire.

Barack Obama is young, educated, focused, reassuring, and energetic. He is as accomplished a writer as he is a speaker. His campaign was a marvel of discipline, organization and prescience and was managed in such an extraordinary manner that its meaning will take many years to play out and even more to be understood. But there are already the feelings of the beginning of a new era.

But with this new era comes new issues...

One point, African-Americans have entered the "*no-excuse*" zone. The bar has been raised!!!

As president, he's unlikely to embrace the confrontational identity politics that have defined black activism for so long. He won't tolerate an African American brand of racism or a culture of violence. Nor is he likely to be patient with the long-standing narrative of victim hood that has defined black America to itself and to the mainstream for more than a century.



President-elect Obama is already constructing a new black political and cultural narrative -- gathering together the best of the past, including the coalition politics that characterized the early civil rights movement and an image of strong black males that doesn't involve bling-bling or hip-hop misogyny. He has decried the low-hanging pants fashion so popular with young black men, blasted rapper Ludacris for offensive song lyrics and called on fathers to take responsibility for their families.

Personally, it's about time we have a different meaning of what it means to be a black man and a black father. But it's not just the black male, it's the family. He's giving us the whole new image on a global platform. President-elect Obama has also helped to define the image of black manhood and masculinity. He has shown us that you can grow up without your father, in disadvantaged circumstances and still become somebody. He shows that you can love and respect your family. He has also shown that it's okay to show your emotions.



*tearing up after the  
lose of his  
grandmother*

So, are African Americans ready to accept all this and respond positively?

The answer isn't clear at this time. Just a few days after Obama's stunning win, black America is already divided over what this election means – debating about what it should expect from a "*black president.*"

The first group wants Obama to acknowledge that injustice still confronts black Americans. They want him to address the "*black agenda*" while creating an Afrocentric White House.

The second group says that there are more important universal issues that must take priority, such as the global financial crisis, relief for homeowners, healthcare, potential vacancies on the Supreme Court.

One thing is for sure, Barack Obama is a different kind of leader! He is the type of person that is savvy and sophisticated enough to sit in corporate boardrooms as well as on urban street corners, and still be comfortable. He understands and recognizes the nuances of race and racism, but refuses to carry these obstacles as a liability on his shoulders. For every shortcoming Barack Obama possesses, there is a converse truth that further engages me in hope.



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Obama's real contribution is allowing blacks to see ourselves as victors. That's more valuable to black advancement than any item on a pre-fabricated list of demands. Can I get an "Amen"?

And that's the point. If African Americans want to be taken seriously, we have to get with the program. Obama's election isn't just about a black president. It's about a new America.

To put it simply, Barack Obama represents a transformation of the American landscape.

Do I expect to see a metamorphosis overnight? Not at all, but America has to start somewhere so why not now? No man is an island. But I will admit that he is a life jacket to a drowning America... he is a beacon on a dark night... he is a pilot of a plane of change and EVERYONE – regardless of race, gender, party affiliation, social class and education CAN GET A TICKET!!! He is living proof of the unbiased result of a childhood strategy sanctioned by God himself!

Barack Obama once called himself “*a skinny kid with a funny name.*” But when you look at the meaning there isn't anything funny about his name. His first name is a Swahili meaning “*blessing*”; middle name is that not only of a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad but also has a sub-meaning of “*good*” or “*handsome one*”; and his last name is neither Greek nor Hebrew. It is a tribal last name based on the Luo region of Kenya (Africa).

Yet Barack Hussein Obama won, and won BIG!!! Only in America...

In closing, Barack Hussein Obama is the change we have been looking for...

So say it loud; say it proud: Barack Hussein Obama, Forty-fourth President of the United States of America!!!!!!



*Steven E. Fitch*