

Obama's Presidency: A Disaster for African Americans. Can Black Politics Be Revived?

By [Glen Ford](#)

Global Research, May 28, 2013

[Black Agenda Report](#) 22 May 2013

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

Obama's presidency has been disastrous for African Americans, who have been economically crushed and disconnected from their historical roots in social struggle. Political fantasists now urge us to put our faith in demographics, claiming that change will inevitably flow from the darkening of America's population. But, that's a trap which leads to a descent into South Africa-like conditions.

The Age of Obama, now in its second and final quadrennial, has largely succeeded in divorcing African American politics from the historical Black consensus on social justice, self-determination and peace. What remains is play-acting and role-modeling, an Ebony magazine caricature of politics that leaves the great bulk of Black people with, literally, no avenues of resistance to the savage depredations of capitalism in decline. Shamefully, through reflexive support for President Obama's relentless assaults on international order, the Black America polity has rendered itself useless to the struggle for a just and sustainable world.

None of this is written in stone, of course. The quickening cascade of crises that define our times – the prelude to collapse – will each provide opportunities to alter Black America's political course. As Obama's exit approaches, the African American delirium begins to palpably break, like a spent fever. Black politicians rush to revise the histories of their own post-2007 behavior, inventing examples of their "constructive criticism" of the First Black President and their alleged misgivings and anxieties about the corporate, militarist direction of his policies – in order to position themselves for the post-Obama era.

But the crisis in Black politics was building long before Wall Street selected the talented young actor from Chicago to implement its austerity and global war agenda. The Black Misleadership Class, representing political tendencies indigenous to Black America, is the problem. Having no vision of the future beyond populating it with more Black faces in high places, they will inevitably imbibe other Black-flavored corporate potions in hopes of reviving some version of the Obama euphoria.

Other, slicker operatives promote the dangerous notion that progressive political aims will be achieved by virtue of rapid demographic change in the United States. Rather than defend Obama's indefensible record in office, Bill Fletcher and Carl Davidson described the 2012 election as a contest that pits "the changing demographics of the U.S." against the forces of "far right irrationalism" that are trying to turn back the "demographic and political clock." In this construct, the substance of politics is totally removed, replaced by faith in the innate political inclinations of younger whites and the growing non-white population. Obama's

expanded theaters of war, his disregard of international law, his servility to Wall Street and contempt for the historical Black political consensus – none of this matters to Fletcher and Davidson, whose [article](#) was titled, “The 2012 Elections Have Little To Do With Obama’s Record ... Which Is Why We Are Voting For Him.”

It is becoming a common theme: that the darkening of America will somehow lead inexorably to profound changes in power structures. Just sit back and wait for the demographic revolution. Such thinking is appropriate to Madison Avenue, which plots demographic changes like the wolf anticipates the migratory patterns of the caribou. Demographics are important, but are not magic. All that can be safely predicted based on U.S. demographic trends is that there will be more Black and brown (especially brown) faces in positions of authority, elected and appointed, and that the presence of these darker faces may actually make Wall Street’s rule more palatable. Four years of Obama has already provided us with that lesson.

For those who are looking for an easy route to the Promised Land, one without struggle, in which the course of the revolution can be numerically charted just as McDonald’s displays its billions of hamburgers sold, 2042 is the magic number. That’s when U.S. Census demographers project that persons now classified as non-white will outnumber white Anglos. But, who will actually occupy the pinnacles of power in this non-white majority nation, and wield whatever influence the U.S. retains in the world? Based on current trends, according to a 2012 report by Boston-based United for a Fair Economy, “the overwhelming share of the nation’s income and wealth will remain solidly in White hands.” Tim Sullivan, co-author of the report on “[The Emerging Majority](#),” says the numbers paint a picture that looks very much like South Africa, with the white minority on top, requiring a vast police presence to keep the non-white majority in check.

Such an outcome is not written in stone, either, but is likely in the absence of a sustained movement to topple corporate power and disassemble the structures of U.S. imperialism. However, such a movement will never coalesce under the guidance of the Fletchers and Davidsons, who counsel folks to go with the demographic flow. And, we have already experienced the disaster of corporate rule via dark proxy.

2042 will only be a good year if people fight to make it so. Majorities hold no magic, and never have.

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” – Frederick Douglass.

BAR executive editor Glen Ford can be contacted at Glen.Ford@BlackAgendaReport.com.

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