Michelle Obama and the Black Female Diaspora: The Most Influential Black Woman in History?

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Abstract

This paper claims that just as President Barack Obama is the most known male member of the Black World in the 21st century, so also his wife First Lady Michelle Obama is the most known female member of this racial group. Also, just as President Obama is the most powerful Black leader in history, so also First Lady Obama is the most influential Black female in history. The paper argues that both President Obama and First Lady Obama are keeping their 2008 campaign promises to the youth who gave them a very high share of their votes both in the 2008 Presidential Primaries and Caucuses and the Presidential Election, including 17-year-olds leading the way in the 2008 Iowa Caucuses, where they earned their first big win. The paper argues that the Obamas have formed a positive bond with their young supporters and that the current domestic and foreign policies of the U.S. are directly benefiting these young Americans. Finally, the paper claims that through the current domestic and foreign policies of the U.S., both President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are contributing in uniting the people of the U.S. and also contributing in uniting the people of the U.S. and the people of the world.

Introduction

The Black World (people of Black African descent all over the world) is substantially increasing in numbers and is now estimated by this author to be up to 1.2 billion, with at least 200 million in the New World or the Americas. Barack Obama, President of the United States is the most known male member of this racial group in the 21st century, while his wife Michelle, First Lady of the United States is the most known female member of the Black World during this same period. Barack Obama is the most powerful Black man in history and the most powerful person today, while Michelle Obama is the most influential Black female in history and one of the most influential females and individuals in the world today. In a keynote address at a symposium at Binghamton University, State University of New York, on the relationship between the Barack Obama administration and the Muslim World held on October 16, 2009, Professor Ali A. Mazrui, the Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities at Binghamton University, State University of New York, points out that:

It is also not often realized that Barack Obama is not only the most powerful Black man in world politics today, but the most powerful man of colour in the history of civilization. As we have mentioned before, Barack Obama is more powerful than the Pharaoh who forced Moses out of Egypt, more powerful than the Ethiopian Emperor who defeated the Italians in 1896, more powerful than Shaka Zulu… When we say Barack Obama is more powerful than Shaka Zulu, Ramses II of Egypt, and Menelik II of Ethiopia, we do not mean Obama is greater than any of them. We do not know yet how great Barack Obama is likely to be. What we do know is that he is Commander in Chief of U.S. forces, which are greater than all the African armies in history added together. Currently it is estimated that the United States has one thousand (yes, 1000) military bases overseas…. In sheer power, there is therefore no doubt that Barack Obama is in a class by himself among Black leaders in the history of civilization (pp. 6-8).

One could also argue that Barack Obama is the most powerful U.S. president ever. The primary reason for this claim is that, while President Obama is in the position to know about all of the top national security secrets of the United States today and the past, former U.S. presidents alive today such as Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, George Bush senior and George Bush junior only know the top secrets during their time as president and the period before they were president. While powerful
military officials and cabinet members may not reveal certain top secrets to one another, they are all required by law to reveal such secrets to the current president of the country. As President of the United States, Barack Obama is also the biggest job giver in the world. He selects or appoints people to positions of immense power, authority or influence. For example, he selected a former colleague in the U.S. Senate, Joe Biden as his Vice Presidential candidate and he is now the Vice President of the United States. He has selected two women (Hispanic American, Sonia Sotomayor and Jewish American, Elena Kagan) to the U.S. Supreme Court. This is an enormous power for one person as Mazrui has noted. Since Michelle Obama is legally the wife of Barack Obama and therefore First Lady of the United States, has two children with him and they all live together under the same roof, she is in the position to have enormous influence not just in the United States, but also the entire world. That is the reason why the First Lady accompanies the President on important domestic or foreign trips or she is sent on important missions to represent the President personally or represent his administration as a whole. Barnes (2009) notes of the importance of: “the early visits of President Obama and Michelle Obama to various departments and agencies to thank federal employees for their contributions to the country. […] such visits] carry very significant implications for the attitudes that appointees might bring into their respective agencies - and the response they may get from their agencies when they seek to implement presidential policies” (p.589).

On measuring Michelle Obama’s influence, there have been important publications that have ranked her very high among national and foreign leaders. For example, in the fall of 2010, Forbes Magazine released its rankings of the most powerful 100 women in the world. Michelle Obama is ranked number one on the list, ahead of other powerful or influential women such as Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany (#4), U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton (#5), and former U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (#11).

According to a July 22, 2010, Gallup Poll survey results: “First lady Michelle Obama’s favorability rating among Americans tops that of several major political players who have called or might someday seek to call the White House home -- including her husband and his two predecessors, former first lady Hillary Clinton, three vice presidents, and a number of potential Republican presidential hopefuls.”

An April 20-21, 2009, Gallup survey of Michelle Obama asked the following question: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way [ … ] is handling her job as first lady?” Almost four out of every five respondents
(79%) said they approved, 13% said No Opinion, and only 8% said they disapproved.iii Even before the 2008 Presidential Election it was apparent that Michelle Obama played a very crucial role in the campaign to elect her husband as president. For example, Frank Newport reported for the Gallup Poll on August 25, 2008, that: “Michelle Obama’s prime-time speech Monday night at the Democratic Convention in Denver could in theory have an effect on the election; over half of Americans say a presidential candidate’s spouse is an important factor in their vote.”iv

This paper examines the influence of United States First Lady Dr. (Juris Doctorate, Harvard University Law School; see Kaba 2011; Kaba and Ward, 2009; Kaba, 2008a) Michelle Obama through her partnership with her husband President Barack Obama as they implement important domestic and foreign policies. It now appears that through their policies, both Barack and Michelle Obama are succeeding in keeping their promises by turning over the United States to the youth who were among their biggest supporters and the future of the country. It is a bond or agreement that they had with the youth during the 2008 presidential campaign and they appear to be keeping their promises.

The paper starts with providing information as to how young people voted for the Obamas, starting with 17-year-olds in Iowa during the presidential primaries and caucuses, and how a number of current domestic and foreign U.S. policies are set up to benefit young Americans and young people all over the world. The paper then presents some historical comparisons as to how Michelle Obama shares important similarities with the late First Lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt, just as Barack Obama shares some important similarities and some important differences with Franklin D. Roosevelt. Finally, the paper argues that both Michelle and Barack Obama not only have the potential to contribute in uniting the people of the United States and also uniting the people of the U.S. and the people of the world, but they are actually already doing it. Let us now begin by examining how Michelle and Barack Obama are keeping their promises to their young voters.

The Obamas and their Young Voters: Keeping their Promises

Usually during the campaign to nominate the head of the ticket for both the Democratic and Republican Parties in the United State, experts and citizens tend to debate and attempt to identify the most important variable that would prove crucial for the winners. Among the most important variables at play during the 2008 Presidential Primaries and
Caucuses were military service, gender, long length of time in national politics, region, race, ethnicity and religion. However, while two of those variables (military service and long length of time in national politics) proved to be the main factors for the election of the Republican candidate, John McCain, a completely different variable proved to be the main factor for the election of the Democratic candidate Barack Obama. That variable was Age, specifically relatively young age compared with the other contenders. It appears that voters wanted a young and relatively new leader. In fact, military service had become such an important variable for the election of candidates for the presidency of the United States for such a long time that this author has investigated and finds that since the Franklin D. Roosevelt-Harry Truman administration in the 1940s up to the George W. Bush-Dick Cheney administration, either the president or the vice president or both of them have been either in the active military or the National Guard. This is the first time when neither the president nor the vice president was in the active military or the National Guard.

It was young voters who caused age to become the most important variable during the 2008 Presidential Election and it began to show during the Presidential Primaries and Caucuses. For example, even though the voting age in the presidential election in the U.S. is 18 years and over, in Iowa, the voting age in that state’s caucuses in 2008 was 17 years and older, and it was those 17 year-olds and other young people from various racial and ethnic groups who started voting for Barack Obama in very large numbers and also encouraged their parents and relatives to vote for him too. Senator Barack Obama won the Iowa Caucuses with 38% of the total votes cast and according to entrance and exit polls, Iowan voters aged 17-24 accounted for 17% of all voters, and 57% of them voted for Barack Obama; and 6% of all Iowan voters were aged 25-29 and 57% of them voted for Barack Obama. During the 2008 Presidential Election, a very strong majority (68%) of young voters aged 18-29 voted for Barack Obama and 23 million of them voted in that election (“Young Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election,” 2008, December 19, pp.1 &4). The 23 million people aged 18-29 who voted in 2008 accounted for 17.6% of the 131 million total votes cast. It is also noted that:

One of the most striking characteristics of this [2008] election was young [18-29 years old] people’s united support for Barack Obama, which seemed to cross racial and partisan lines. For example, just thirty-three percent of young white voters self-identified as “Democrat,” yet 54% voted for the Democratic candidate. Similar trends were seen with
African-Americans [95%] and Latinos [76%]: a significant number of youth self-identified as Republicans yet voted for Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential candidate (“Young Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election,” 2008, December 19, pp.3-4).

It is now apparent that through their domestic and foreign policies in the first two years in office, both President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama are keeping their promises to those young voters who gave such relatively high proportion of their votes to them. Among the visible and very important examples available to substantiate this claim are: the new U.S. national health care law called “The Affordable Care Act”; increase in the national minimum wage; establishment of a new national student loan law; The Credit Card Act of 2009; a national financial reform law called “Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act”; and ending major combat operations or fighting in Iraq and ordering up to 100,000 or more U.S. soldiers in Iraq to come home. It is noted that public opinion polls just before the 2008 Presidential Election showed that:

“...12% of young voters said the War in Iraq was their top voting issue followed by health care and energy policy. Young people (ages 18-24) were much more strongly against the Iraq war than older Americans: 50% strongly disapproved, versus 42% of all voters (“Young Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election,” 2008, December 19, p.4).

The Affordable Care Act became law when President Barack Obama signed it on March 23, 2010. Two important provisions in that law that directly benefit young people are: (1) according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as of September 23, 2010:

The Affordable Care Act allows young adults to stay on their parents’ health care plan until age 26. Before the President signed this landmark Act into law, many health plans and issuers could and did in fact remove young adults from their parents’ policies because of their age, leaving many college graduates and others with no insurance….Young adults have the highest rate of uninsured of any age group. About 30% of young adults are uninsured…

And (2): according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as of September 23, 2010, “… children under 19 cannot be
denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition for policy years beginning on or after September 23, 2010.”

Young Americans have also benefited from the increase in the national minimum wage since they are more likely to be paid lower wages by employers. On her website, the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representative Nancy Pelosi (2007-2010) points out on July 24, 2009, that: “Today the minimum wage increases by 70 cents, from $6.55 per hour to $7.25 per hour — the final of three increases to take effect under legislation enacted by the Democratic Congress in 2007. The wage increase will help an estimated 4.5 million workers in 31 states provide for their families.” This law was passed by the Democratic led Congress in 2007 at the time President Obama was in the U.S. Senate. His support for it as Senator and then as president contributed to young people getting such needed wage increase.

In a June 2, 2009, article entitled “How the New Credit Card Bill Will Affect Young Spenders,” Matthew Bandyk reports that:

On May 22, President Obama signed into law the Credit CARD Act of 2009, a bill that restricts credit card issuers from raising interest rates without warning, penalizing customers who pay on time, and levying excessive fees. There's also a provision that specifically concerns young people: Under the new law, no one under age 21 can get a credit card unless a parent, guardian, or spouse is willing to cosign or unless the underage person has proof of sufficient income to cover the credit obligations. [a] study found that in 2004, 76 percent of undergrads had at least one credit card. Today, 84 percent do. The average amount students say they charged to their credit cards to pay for education expenses (such as school supplies) has increased from $942 in 2004 to $2,200 currently. What's more, 82 percent of undergrads with cards report that they do not pay off their full balances every month, and the median debt among this group is $1,645, compared with $946 in 2004.

President Barack Obama and his Democratic led-Congress also passed a law in early 2010 that provided more financial help for college students. Peter Baker and David M. Herszenhorn reported in the New York Times on March 30, 2010, that:

President Obama signed legislation Tuesday to expand college access for millions of young Americans by revamping the federal student loan program in what he called “one of the most significant investments in higher education since the G.I. Bill.”... The new law will eliminate fees paid to private banks to act as intermediaries in providing loans to
college students and use much of the nearly $68 billion in savings over 11 years to expand Pell Grants and make it easier for students to repay outstanding loans after graduating. The law also invests $2 billion in community colleges over the next four years to provide education and career training programs to workers eligible for Trade Adjustment aid. The law will increase Pell Grant grants along with inflation in the next few years, which should raise the maximum grant to $5,975 from $5,550 by 2017, according to the White House, and it will also provide $20,000 more grants by 2020. Including money from last year’s stimulus program and regular budget increases, the White House said Mr. Obama has now doubled spending on Pell Grants. 

President Barack Obama has also kept his promise to stop the war in Iraq. In an August 9, 2010, speech at the University of Texas, Austin, President Obama said that “I said then that we’d end the Iraq war as swiftly and as responsibly as possible — and that is a promise that we are keeping. This month we will end combat operations in Iraq.” This decision to withdraw up to 100,000 or more U.S. soldiers and personnel from Iraq brings relief to young Americans of all ethnic and racial groups since they comprise the majority of those fighting in that war which began in early 2003. The deaths of U.S. soldiers in Iraq and the serious injuries to others in that war might have led to a decline in numbers of the Ready Reserve Military. For example, from March 19, 2003, through February 6, 2010, there were 4,365 hostile and non-hostile deaths of U.S. soldiers and personnel in Iraq. Of that total, Whites accounted for 3,261 (74.7%); Hispanics or Latinos (of any race) accounted for 463 (10.6%); Blacks, 420 (9.6%); Asian, 81 (1.9%); Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 50 (1.1%); Multiple races, pending, or unknown, 48 (1%); and American Indian or Alaska Native, 42 (0.96%) (Leland and Oborocanu, 2010, p.17).

From 2001 when the U.S. suffered the September 11 terrorist attacks, to 2008 when President Barack Obama was elected, the U.S. Ready Reserve military Personnel declined from 1,224,100 to 1,080,600, an 11.7% (143,500) decline. The number for Whites declined from 912,700 in 2001 to 815,200, a 10.7% (97,500) decline. Blacks declined from 198,400 to 153,400, a 22.7% (45,000) decline.xii

Michelle Obama and Eleanor Roosevelt and Barack Obama and Franklin D. Roosevelt

There appears to be some important similarities between First Lady Michelle Obama and the late First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, just as there
are important similarities between President Barack Obama and the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt. When Eleanor Roosevelt was First Lady in the 1930s and 1940s, she showed enormous courage as a White woman in that period by openly congregating and socializing with Black people, supporting issues important to them, and even immediately after the death of her husband on April 12, 1945, agreeing to represent the United States in the formation of the United Nations. For example, West (2009) writes of “… the sometimes difficult relationship Southern women had with Eleanor Roosevelt…. Because she socialized with African Americans and argued publicly for social change, Roosevelt put herself in opposition to many Southern women who supported the status quo” (p.263). According to Chujo (2005):

The most well-known episode concerning the racial attitude of the [Daughters of the American Revolution] DAR is the "Marian Anderson incident" in February 1939. That year, the famous African American contralto was denied the opportunity to give a benefit concert at Constitution Hall, owned by the DAR, because of her race. The news caused a stir of controversy nationwide, releasing floodgates of publicity, especially after Eleanor Roosevelt, a DAR lifetime member, resigned from the Society in protest of its segregationist action. Two months after the denial, Marian Anderson gave her performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in front of nearly seventy-five thousand people who gathered despite the cold weather of early spring in Washington (p.162).

It has also been noted that during the Great Depression Eleanor Roosevelt:

... pressured National Recovery administrator Donald Richberg to investigate the raced-based wage differentials implemented by southern industries and asked Navy secretary Claude Swanson why blacks were confined to mess hall assignments. ... Quality education became her top public priority. As she told the Conference on Negro Education, "wherever the standard of education is low, the standard of living is low" and urged states to address the inequities in public school funding. Her symbolic outreach generated a strong response from African Americans. The African American press and a strong communication network extolled her efforts. By January 1934, she received thousands of letters describing racial violence, poverty and homelessness exacerbated by racial discrimination, and pleading for some type of assistance. She
frequently forwarded some of these letters to Harry Hopkins and Aubrey Williams, to whom she had already sent a list of suggestions on ways to include African Americans more fully within Federal Emergency Relief Administration programs.\textsuperscript{iii}

According to Ritter (2009): “When the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) brought forth its recommendations for international approval in 1951, Eleanor Roosevelt spoke in support of formal rights for women. Roosevelt was particularly concerned with women’s political representation” (p.441-442; also see Black, 2008). According to Bynum (2005), in 1951, “Upon resigning, [her chairmanship of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Eleanor Roosevelt]... recommended to President Harry Truman that he replace her with an African American woman...” (p.156).

First Lady Michelle Obama has been showing similar characteristics as Eleanor Roosevelt. She is widely known in the United States and the world to hug young people or adults from all racial groups, spend considerable time to talk to young people and the vulnerable, and encourage and motivate them to aspire to be whatever they want to become. Mazrui (2009) notes of “… First Lady Michelle’s visits to black schools and to places which help to feed the poor and the homeless of Washington, D.C.” (p.2). In explaining her research findings pertaining to young people’s admiration for Michelle Obama, Tosolt (2010) points out that “… a female student wrote that “Michelle Obama is my role model and I look up to her. It makes me feel proud and better to be a young black woman” (quoted in “An Inspirational and Positive Figure” Section).

During an important official trip with her husband to India in November 2010, Michelle Obama is reported to have spent significant time with young Indian school girls to discuss issues important to them. According to a November 8, 2010, \textit{Associated Press} article by Katy Daigle:

Michelle Obama strolled with 15 schoolgirls and took turns holding each one’s hand during a field trip Monday through a museum of Indian craft work. She delivered a strong message to the girls, telling them to study hard and be educated. She also said she likes to exercise because “women have to stay strong.” After the tour, the group sat under a canopy of trees and shared mango juice while Mrs. Obama entertained their questions,…\textsuperscript{xiv}
And at a meeting with college students in India during that same visit, the First Lady said that:

I didn’t grow up with a lot of money. I mean, my parents -- I had two parents. I was lucky to have two parents, and they always had a job, but we didn’t have a lot of money. But it was because of working hard, and studying, and learning how to write and read, and then I got a chance to go to college, and then college opened up the world to me, I started seeing all these things that I could be or do, and I never even imagined being the First Lady of the United States. But because I had an education, when the time came to do this, I was ready.\(^{\text{iv}}\)

Foster and Mathews (2009) also present this account of Michele Obama speaking to young girls in London, England: “If you want to know the reason why I am standing here, it's because of education,” First Lady of the United States Michelle Obama told an audience of teenage girls at a school in London, England, on April 2, 2009. “I never cut class. I loved getting A’s, I liked being smart. . . . I thought being smart is cooler than anything in the world” (quoted in Foster and Matthews, 2009, p.31).

Michelle Obama is also dedicating a significant portion of her time to fight obesity, especially childhood obesity (Benac, 2010; Isaacs and Swartz, 2010) and her efforts have influenced the U.S. Federal Government to invest funds on the issue (Holzman, 2010). According to Holzman (2010): “The Obama administration announced in February a $400 million initiative it hopes will lure retailers of healthy foods into the so called food deserts of America” (p.A156). In a White House document explaining the obesity issue, the First Lady is quoted as saying that: “The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake,...This isn’t the kind of problem that can be solved overnight, but with everyone working together, it can be solved.”\(^{\text{v}}\)

Esposito and Finley (2009) attempt to explain the impact that the Obamas have on young people: “Think of what it means to have the most admired household in America be African-American, to have White children fantasize they were Sasha or Malia Obama, to have White women seeing Michelle Obama as a role model, to have White teenagers rallying around a Black president as a political and cultural icon” (quoted in Esposito and Finley, 2009, p.166).

First Lady Michelle Obama has also dedicated her efforts to support U.S. military personnel and their families. As Goldgeier (2010) notes “Michelle Obama promised that as first lady she would focus on the
plight of military families” (p.125). During a surprised visit to a U.S. military base in Germany in November 2010, Melissa Eddy reported for the Associated Press on November 11, 2010, of the exciting encounter between the First Lady and U.S. military personnel and their families when she:

...surprised a group of U.S. servicemen and women based in Germany... jumping in to serve them steaks at a special Veterans Day meal. "Oh, my God! Where's my camera," gasped Lavondee Stallings, a preschool teacher whose husband serves in the military, as Obama entered the banquet room at Ramstein Air Base’s Officers Club.... “... it is a thrill to be here with you guys, because we are so grateful to all of you,” she said. "Not just our servicemen and women, but their kids, wives, husbands and parents.”... After serving, Obama went through the room doing out hugs, handshakes and warm thanks to troops and their families. She also chatted with their children, asking how they were doing in school and if they worked hard. Ten-year-old Malaysia Chevere got a special shout-out when she told the first lady about her grades. "She's a straight-A student!” Obama told the room, as the fifth-grader and her mother beamed. "It made me feel real proud," said Malaysia's mother, Sgt. Calvernette Chevere of Williamsburg, Virginia. "She (the first lady) made everyone here feel real special." Before the stop at Ramstein, Obama met with wounded troops recovering at the nearby Landstuhl Regional Medical Center — the largest U.S. military hospital outside the United States. There, Obama sought to cheer soldiers recovering from injuries sustained in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pvt. Eric Griego, 22, received a hug and a special presidential medallion, known as a commander’s coin, from the first lady. Griego’s mother, Brenda, said her son "perked up" after the private meeting and that it made him feel important, Landstuhl spokesman Charles Roberts said.xvii

Like their First Ladies, both Presidents Barack Obama and Franklin D. Roosevelt share important similarities and some important differences when they took office. Immediately after he was sworn into office in March 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt inherited the Great Depression, while Barack Obama inherited the ‘Great Recession’ when he took office in late January 2009. Both of them immediately went to work to restore confidence in the country and stabilized the economy. On March 3, 2009, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at 6,726, but by March 3, 2011, it closed at 12,258.20, a 5,532.2 (45.1%) increase. However, there are some major differences between the 1930s and the present time. For example, while one could do more with less in the 1930s, today one could barely do less with more. The unemployment rate during the Great Depression
was estimated at up to 25 percent (an estimated 13 million people unemployed in March 1933). As of October 2010, the unemployment rate was 9.6 percent (estimated 15 million people without work). Although there is up to 15 percentage points difference between the two unemployment figures, one must realize that the total population of the U.S. today (311 million as of March 22, 2011) is more than double (185.4 million more) that in 1933 (125.6 million as of July 1933). This means that there are actually more people in absolute numbers out of jobs today than during the Great Depression as the numbers above illustrate. Let us now examine how the Obamas are uniting the United States and the world.

The Obamas: Uniting the United States and Uniting the World

One can make the argument that Both First Lady Michelle Obama and her husband President Barack Obama are (1) contributing to unite the people of the United States, and (2) contributing to unite the people of the United States and the people of the world. Let me explain. In an article entitled: “Kenya-U.S. Relations: The Urgent Need to Manage Kenya’s Migrant and HIV/AIDS Brain Drain”, Kaba (2006) points out that:

Within a community, one sure way of being loved or liked is by warmly opening your home to the children and grandchildren of residents of that community. In the international community, it appears as if that is what the United States has done by allowing a disproportionate number of young Kenyans to travel and study in its colleges and universities (p.80).

In the case of the positive bond between the Obamas and young people in the United States, It was the young people who initiated this positive relationship beginning with 17-year-olds in the state of Iowa where the first votes for the nomination of the 2008 Presidential Election were cast. When such young people began identifying the Obamas as their role models in a state with just 2.8% Black population out of 3 million in 2009 and 93.9% White population, it became apparent that there was a unity force emerging in the country. Young Americans also convinced their parents, grandparents and other relatives to vote for Barack Obama. For example, former President Jimmy Carter publicly claimed that his grand children were influencing him to vote or support Barack Obama. So now by implementing policies that are already beginning to benefit their children and grand children, most Americans
are going to realize that the Obamas seek good for their families and communities. Also, by appointing or selecting so many different individuals from various ethnic and racial groups to positions of power, authority or influence, including the Vice Presidency, the family members of those individuals and the communities where they come from will forever remember that a Black man elevated their relatives to such high profile position. This is another way of uniting the country. By ending major combat operations in Iraq, which leads to the reduction in the deaths of young Americans from all racial groups, President Obama contributes in uniting the country.

Internationally, it has been noted that President Obama has the potential to unite the people of the U.S. and the people of the world. In explaining how President Obama can win over the 500 million young Africans in Africa currently under the age of 20, Kaba (2009a) points out that: “President Obama has the potential and the influence to win over these almost half a billion of very young Africans in Africa in a positive way just as he has done with the youth of the United States, who are among his most loyal and active supporters” (p.110). Also, Kaba (2008b, June) points out that: “… the new positive friendship or partnership between the people of Africa and the people of the United States in the first decade of the 21st century is a contributing factor to the Barack Obama phenomenon…. Barack Obama has the potential to help in uniting: (1) the United States; (2) Africa and the United States; (3) a Federal African Union; and (4) East-West regions of the three Old World continents (Africa, Asia and Europe)” (p.12).

Since they inherited (Kaba, 2010) the White House, both Michelle Obama and President Obama contributed in the reduction of hatred of Americans across the world. Most people around the world have more favorable opinions of the United States after the Obamas entered the White House than the period just before he was elected president. Ending major fighting in Iraq is a contributing factor because people around the world recognize that the Obamas promote and believe in peace. This is a big part of the reason why President Obama won the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize and then his family donated all of the $1.4 million that comes with the prize to ten charities.

Conclusion

This paper has presented arguments claiming that President Barack Obama is the most powerful Black man in history just as his wife, First
Lady Michelle Obama is the most influential Black woman in history and one of the most influential human beings in the world today. It is interesting that both the most powerful Black man in history and the most influential Black woman in history were not born in Africa. This is a phenomenon that is becoming prevalent every day. For example, in an article examining why West Africa is underdeveloped when compared with other regions of Africa and the world, Kaba (2007) claims that: “...among the most influential individuals in the world such as scientists of all kinds, professional entertainers, athletes, politicians, businessmen and women, etc. are people of West African descent who are not in West Africa” (p.77). While President Barack Obama and his two daughters can trace their Black African ancestry to Kenya, East Africa, there is a high probability that Michelle Obama and her two daughters could trace their ancestry to West Africa. This is because it is pointed out that at least 60% of African Americans can trace their DNA to West Africa (Kaba, 2009b, p.155).

The Obamas occupying the White House also sends a powerful positive message to the Black World especially young people who could actually see that they can do anything if they work hard and discipline themselves. As President Obama himself points out: “There is an entire generation that will grow up taking for granted that the higher office in the land is filled by an African American ... I mean, that's a radical thing. It changes how Black children look at themselves. It also changes how White children look at Black children. And I wouldn't underestimate the force of that” (quoted in Esposito and Finley, 2009, p.168).

References


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Notes


