

The Impact of the Obama Presidency

by Traci Blackmon

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I love the biblical story of the Exodus for both its literal and psychological representations of liberation. I am intrigued by God's choice of Moses as deliverer because, although Moses is raised and socialized among the privileged of Egypt, Moses is Hebrew. The fact that God chooses one of their own to lead the Israelites out of bondage represents not only a physical change in their existence, but a psychological shift in their perceived possibilities. The leadership of Moses shattered illusions of second class citizenship under God.

I am not suggesting that President Barack Obama is a modern day Moses. Nor am I suggesting that black people have received the systemic liberation needed for true equality in a nation infected with the toxicities of white supremacy and institutionalized racism. The presidency of Barack Obama has not eradicated any of the aforementioned toxic strongholds, but his presidency has shattered illusions of second class citizenship for people of color in a nation that still struggles with equality for all.

In the face of calculated political opposition, to both his proposed policies and his presidency, President Obama remains an untarnished contradiction to the deeply held convictions of this nation - that to be born black is to be born less than equal. Even as party leaders, fueled by racism, questioned his authority to lead, President Obama and his administration ignored the racist vitriol and served this nation with unbridled excellence. With strong and decisive leadership, he rescued this nation from the brink of economic disaster by signing The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. He offered a viable solution to a widening gap in health disparities with the Affordable Care Act. He affirmed the rights of everyone to legally marry whom they choose and the rights of women to make their own reproductive decisions.

I do not agree with every position taken by the Obama administration. I vehemently rebuke the use of drones as weapons of war, mass deportation, and policies that continue to provide resources for Israeli armament toward Palestinian oppression. There remains much work to do.

Throughout U.S. history there are leaders who have emerged to shatter illusions of white supremacy. President Obama is such a leader for me. He stands in the lineage of those who have helped to make this nation great and the dreams of every American possible.

Because of Barack Hussein Obama, we now have an entire generation of young people for whom a black President in the White House is all they have known. The wonderment of a young black boy touching the hair of the President and the pride I felt as the First Family moved in to the house built by slaves, whose descendants were never intended to live there, are reminders to me that those created in the image of God can never be lessened by the actions of humanity.

No matter the challenges we continue to face, when asked can we overcome, the answer will always be, "Yes, We Can!"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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