

## **The Legacy of USA President: Barack Obama**

**Kizito Mary Nakizito**

Acting Dean of Arts and Sciences

Wilberforce University, Arts and Sciences Division

1055 N. Bickett Road P.O. Box 1001 | Wilberforce, Ohio 45384

United States of America

As an immigrant and a naturalized American citizen, what Obama's legacy means to me is priceless. I became a citizen during his time of office, got my wonderful job here, made a lot of friends in USA, and I am strongly convinced that his legacy will resound far and near and live on forever, from the land of my ancestors Africa, to all other immigrant nations who have been given an opportunity to live here, work here, and above all, have found liberty and happiness in the "land of the free." In this short essay, I will take an optimistic approach of the 44 American president's legacy and describe him as a man with a well- rounded and admired personality. President Obama was a determined and conscious leader, a celebrated politician, a beloved son of African descent, a great historical African American figure, and an excellent advocate of the American Constitution.

First of all, Obama's legacy will be marked by his eye catching physical features: he is a handsome man who stands tall, 6 feet and 1.5 inches with an authoritative, yet elegant walk. He is eloquent in speech and inspiring with his words. Nobody can deny or doubt his intellectual abilities. He is a Harvard alumna with a degree in law, an author and an entertainer. When I examine his emotional side, I judge him as a controlled individual in time of hardships, pleasure and leisure. In addition, he is careful to judge and does not act on impulse; for when there is need to defend, he acts accordingly. One historian has written: "He was as a 'normal' president, and he helped put the presidency back on a human scale." In his moral disposition, the world will see him as the most ethical and dignified president who lived in the White House with the most human affability. As president, he showed that effective governing requires careful deliberation, discipline, and the willingness to make hard decisions. He let the country watch him govern without scandals in the sacred abode of his residence. I judge that future historians will honor him for his self-discipline because when his policies were criticized or disapproved by Republicans, he kept calm; and they knew his acts were never rushed, careless or selfish.

Moreover, Obama is the an exceptional family man whose exemplary legacy as a caring father and husband will be remembered by parents and children who met or just watched him perform domestic affairs during his presidency. Most people comment: "he was a devoted and involved father, a loving husband, "a man who played with children, and had a workable balance with his family." He was "someone who made it clear that he did not regard himself omniscient." He loved his wife, Michelle, his 2 daughters, Sasha and Maria as well as his mother in-law, Marian Robinson, and their family pets, Bo and Sunny. The First Family has been characterized by one individual in social media as "intelligent, classy, trend setters, persistent, strong role models, cool, well dressed, and God fearing individuals. They will always be remembered as the President and First Lady of the United States of America to me" (*Flip gram*).

Furthermore, Obama's political legacy demands an elaborated discussion and reflection. He was a political giant because of his cautious, calculating, and energetic governing. I observed him as a thoughtful leader who made decisions without allowing emotions take over his responsibilities. As the head of the country, he discovered what potential his dignitaries possessed. He approached racism not by condemning the racists, but by showing all sides of what was right or wrong, with respect and diplomacy. He moderated the race card in 2008 until Rev. Jeremiah urged him to say that he had no racial favoritism as president. Once he said in the White House: "I can't pass laws that say I'm just helping black folks," "I'm the president of the United States." In fact, Obama summarized his ideas about race when he delivered what I call the most insightful and sensitive speech about race in "A More Perfect Union Speech" in 2008, before he was elected:

**I can no more disown [Rev. Jeremiah Wright] than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than my white grandmother—a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe. Those people are a part of me. And they are part of America, this country I love.**

Indeed, Obama's name and his presidency will be used for white and black races as an example of the first black unbiased president for all races for many years to come. Historians will pronounce his political legacy as unique and significant because here is a man who is African, White, and African American, yet he governed a nation together for eight years despite its past racial prejudices, controversies, and divisions.

As the Chief of Staff, he was aware of the USA's foreign needs because he presented his political policies with serenity of mind, body and soul. He forged military and economic alliances with China's neighbors even as he continued to engage the Chinese leadership, assuring them that USA supports China's "peaceful rise." Obama's announcement of China-US cooperation on global warming and restoration of diplomatic relations with Cuba will stand out as some of his foreign policy achievements and an indication of how Obama's quiet, clever "talking" diplomacy produced hopeful results. Above all, the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, on May 2, 2011, and the success in winding down two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, will again be recalled in the chronicles of his presidency. Thus, Obama was a chief executive who knew what he wanted and accepted no back off.

In his African ancestry as a Kenyan, he portrayed all qualities of a Great "War lord and an Elder." He was "a man of the people, and for the people." He culturally inherited some of the basic African values such as "because we are, therefore I am" whereby he practiced the "togetherness or community ideology" by recognizing the minority of the African and American society: the discouraged, the poor, the left behind, and drug addicts. From his novel, *Dreams From My Father*, he juxtaposes the poverty of the capital of Kenya, Nairobi to that of Chicago, writing: "worlds of plenty and worlds of want," "twists the lives of children on the streets of Jakarta or Nairobi in much the same way as it does the lives of the children on the South side of Chicago." During his presidency, he invited all types of people to the White House and joined groups of people during their "rites of passage" such as: births, marriages, deaths, and funerals, without venting from them. He mourned with mothers whose little ones were gunned in the spree shooting at Sandy hook elementary school in Newton, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012, consoled those killed in the Charleston church shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church during Bible study, on the evening of June 17, 2015. In reality, the most appreciated accomplishment of Obama's legacy is his Affordable Care Act because of its enduring impact on the average America's well-being, where 3 million poor people gained access to health care.

In addition, President Obama will be credited for his sense of justice and compassion in his policies. He assigned the Fair Sentencing Act, reducing prison time for convictions involving crack cocaine. Under Attorney General Eric Holder, sentencing guidelines were backdated, leading to the release of thousands. As the first African American President, he challenged the slavery obstacles to power, education, and gave hope to the old and young that no matter where one is born, the color of one's skin, the sex orientation, the economic status, one can reach one's potential if one believes in oneself. Obama's inspiring campaign motto; "Yes We Can" gave his followers, especially the youth, power to hope in a bright future to further their education and find their identity. As president, he reduced the student loans to encourage students to value academic success as an asset. To show all human beings are created equal, he gave equality to the same sex couples freedom which made them proud of whom they are. Women have been raised to a higher state as administrators where they serve their country with the highest honor. He created the White House Council on Women and Girls by appointing two women to the Supreme Council, and appointed the first African American woman: Loretta Lynch as Attorney General. He also employed a strong team of women leaders to his Cabinet and White House staff, thus Obama took steps to ensure that women's voices were heard. He expanded economic opportunities for women, fought for pay discrimination, and increased women's access to health care. He worked toward combating sexual assault on college campus and in the military; expanded services for victims of domestic violence and their children.

Basically, the legacy of President Obama was successfully reflected in the utmost fulfillment of the United States Constitution that the Founding Fathers declared as a Code of ethics that make America the most appreciated democratic and compassionate nation in the world. As a president, Obama did not limit peoples civil liberties such as the right to belong to any religion or not or speak up against anything. No one was identified by one's faith, gender, or political party. His government was there for the rich, poor, immigrant, gay or straight, physically or mentally challenged, regardless of color or skin. Obama's constitutional legacy will prevail because (ACLU), the nationwide organization that guards liberty in courts, legislatures, defense, and preserves the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States, guarantees to everyone in this country, supports Obama when it confirms: "so long as we have enough people in this country willing to fight for their rights, we will be called a democracy."

Therefore, Obama's legacy will impact many generations to come because of his model characteristic qualities. His physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and political qualities as discussed in this paper made him one of the best presidents who carried himself with dignity and succeeded well. He made the country look good in the world and was truly a "global phenomenon," said Brian Williams on *MSBN News* "The Legacy of President Obama." Another legendary Civil rights icon Representative, John Lewis declared on *CNN*: "History will be kind to [Obama] because he never gave up." Commenting on what his legacy will be after he leaves office and what he will do: Obama says: "It has been the honor of my life to serve, and will be there as a citizen, all the rest of my days." Yes, Obama's well balanced personality makes him a victorious president whose legacy will be echoed and be evoked by many generations to come!

### **Bibliography**

- Achebe Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. New York, Random House Inc; 1994. Print.
- Darman Jonathan. *Landslide: LBJ and Reagan at the Dawn of a New America*. 2016. Print.
- Kloppenber James. *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition*. Harvard University Press, 2011. Print.
- Lears. Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America 1877-1920*. Rutgers University Press, 2009. Print
- Mann James. *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*. 2012. Print.
- McWhorter John. *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*. Columbia University Press, 2000. Print.