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TWO

**RACE, IMMIGRATION REFORM, AND
HETEROPATRIARCHAL MASCULINITY:
REFRAMING THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY**

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Abstract

The discourse over the race, heteropatriarchal masculinity and immigration policy, like other “wedge” issues, evokes cultural, ethnic, racial, and policy disquietude. Race and immigration issues constitute centripetal forces in the American polity and recent presidential campaigns. Nevertheless, the presumed lack of agency for race in President Obama’s deliberations and recent antagonism against undocumented immigrants of color, especially Latinos, have pushed the conversation over race and immigration beyond the binary analysis between Blacks and Whites. In this paper, I argue that the macroscopic nature and complexity of the concept of heteropatriarchal masculinity, microaggression, racial and immigration issues put President Obama in a double bind for any attempt for reforms— situations that produces limited options and exposure to penalties no matter what approaches the President takes in dealing with racial issues, immigration reform, and his masculinity in the recent United States political quagmire. Furthermore, the racial and heteropatriarchal hegemonic masculinity which shapes the policy making process asphyxiates the President’s ability to effectively tackle racial and immigration issues and that tend to emasculate President Obama in his policy confrontations with lawmakers who are predominantly White heteropatriarchal hegemonic establishmentarians.

In the United States especially, race is a constitutive element of our common sense, and thus is a key component of our taken-for-granted valid reference schema, through which we get on in the world.

-A. Shultz and T. Luckman, *Cultural Theory*, 1974

“Respect” was what I heard over and over when talking with men..., especially black men. I interpret this this type of respect to be a crystallization of the masculine quests for recognition through public achievement, unfolding within a system of structured constraints due to class and race inequities.

-Michael Messner, *Politics of Masculinity*, 1979

I argue that identities are grounded in social locations, and I make use of resources from hermeneutics and phenomenology to explicate the epistemic, the metaphysical and politically relevant features of identities...in social theory and practice.

-Linda Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 2006

Immigration policy has long been controversial in the United States and has at times been used in openly racist ways. It has become even more controversial in the new century, as a plan proposed in Congress to both tighten border security and provide a path to citizenship for estimated 11-12 million undocumented aliens already present in the United States failed in 2007 amid opposition from both sides... Afterwards, for the first time, the United State began to construct a fence along with Mexico to keep people out its border.

-John E. Farley, *Minority-Majority Relations*, 2012

Introduction

Race, ethnicity and social identity are complex phenomena in the United States and the rest of the world. The discourse over race, heteropatriarchal masculinity and immigration policy, like other critical political issues makes racial analysis for the American presidency novel in the minds of many scholars. Yet, the lack of agency for race in President Obama's deliberations and immigration policy, tend to puzzle many socio-political observers. Recent antagonisms against undocumented immigrants of color, especially Latinos, have pushed the conversation over race and immigration beyond the Blacks/Whites paradigm. The euphoric prognosis about the Obama presidency, post-racialism, and the politics of change subsided in Obama's second year of office.

Even though many Americans were and are in denial, race was and still is a major conversation piece and the elephant in the room, when the President interacts with the United States Congress or engages in any public space. The issues of Obama's electability, reelection, respectability, masculinity, leadership style, policy-making and implementation and approval rating are all submerged in a convoluted discursive consciousness of the American people. The interlocutors of race, immigration narratives, and racial matrix of domination have reached a new level of contumacy, perhaps because of the President's racial identity and background. On January 27, 2010 after President Obama's State of the Union Address, Chris Matthews, MSNBC host, had this characterization of the President, "He is post-racial, by all appearances. I forgot he was black tonight for an hour" (Matthews 2010). Does this statement by interlocutors of race and racial issues in the United States such as Mathews mean anything to the racial narrative of the country? What has happened to racial categorization and group political consciousness of racial issues since Obama became president? Has White privilege, an unearned advantage for Whites because of their skin color and status, changed or have Blacks gained any privilege in recent times because of race? In order to answer these questions one has to interrogate racial history, racial group dynamics, identity politics, and group prejudice plus institutional power with reference

to policymaking and implementation. Even though the President intentionally avoided the race question for the first six years of his presidency and had episodically made statements involving race, in his interview with the *New Yorker* magazine he impugned:

There's no doubt that there's some folks who just really dislike me because they don't like the idea of a black president... Now, the flip side of it is there are some black folks and maybe some white folks who really like me and give me the benefit of the doubt precisely because I'm a black president. (Remnick, 2014, p. 7)

Hitherto, President Obama's race combined with his limited dependence on the agency of race and the presumed challenge to his masculinity in the policy sphere, have called to question his position on racial issues and immigration issues, i.e. African American and Latino unemployment rates, the Louis Gates debacle, the Trayvon Martin case, Michael Brown's killing by police officer Darren Wilson, Ferguson, Missouri; questions about the President's recent "My Brother's Keeper" initiative to save boys and young men of color; the police chokehold killing of Eric Garner and non-indictment decision by the grand jury, even with video recording evidence; and presidential immigration action through an executive instrument. In the advent of the recent immigration policy reform myopia, the states of Arizona and Alabama have created their own "show me your papers" laws that tend to target people of color and challenge the president's executive authority in immigration policymaking and implementation. The agency of race permeates or these issues and topics. Yet, race is the elephant in the American polity that most people like to avoid because of the country's historical contradictions surrounding race and immigration.

Furthermore, the Obama Presidency and his policy initiatives are stifled because of the hegemony of heteropatriarchal masculinists in the American polity. Heteropatriarchal masculinity is a polity that is sustained and protected by the elite ruling class and predominantly middle and upper class males who define personal,

professional, socio-economic and political issues based on the normalization of superordination of (White) men and subordination of others by perpetuating the matrix of domination and interlocking systems of oppression (see Harris, 2000; Hoagland, 1998; Smith, 2008). Both critical race theory and feminist theory will inform our analysis that heteropatriarchal hegemony depends on paternalism, devaluing of women's skills and role in the polity, and using legal and moral theory to exclude lesbians, gay, bisexuals, transsexuals, queer, questioning, two-spirited, intersex, asexual and allies (LGBTQ2IA), and especially, Black males. The reawakening of heteropatriarchal masculinity under the Obama Administration and the intersectionality of heteropatriarchy, racism, classism and sexism produces a toxic condition for the politics of difference, thus affecting the Obama Presidency.

In the balance of this essay, I argue that the macroscopic nature and complexity of the concept of race, heteropatriarchal masculinity, microaggression, and immigration issues put President Obama in a double-bind for any attempt for decision making involving race and immigration policy reforms. Double-bind situations produce limited options and exposure to penalties no matter what approaches the President take in confronting racial issues, immigration reform, and a challenge to heteropatriarchal masculinity in the United States. Furthermore, racial and heteropatriarchal hegemonic masculinity, which shape the policymaking process asphyxiates the President for any attempt for decision-making and policy reforms. This asphyxiation tends to emasculate President Obama in his policy confrontations with lawmakers who are predominantly White heteropatriarchal hegemonic establishmentarians, whose interest in producing gridlocks and policy myopia is paramount.

To place this discussion in context, the usage of asphyxiation invokes a state of urgency in the United States, where especially, Black males, such as Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, can be put on chokehold by White police officers until they die without much legal repercussion. The last call for help Mr. Garner made was "I can't breathe." Nevertheless, it is not only ordinary Black males

that are suffocated to death, but the Commander-in-Chief of the United States who happens to be a Black man also suffers from political asphyxiation because of the systemic heteropatriarchal hegemonic political manipulation of predominantly White policy makers who have thwarted the President's policy initiatives. Asphyxiation is therefore an evocative and symbolic concept of the totality of the recent Black condition in the American polity (W. Casper (Photographer @CWS), <https://twitter.com/jimmybear2/status/541364733430235137>; retrieved: 05/22/2015).

This essay is intended to make some theoretical contributions to the study of the presidency and heteropatriarchy by interrogating the Obama presidency and how it could serve as a microcosm for examining identity politics, institutional policymaking, and the intersectionality of race, gender, masculinity, class and their impact on racial and immigration issues. Yet still, President Obama is viewed as occupying a failed heteropatriarchal masculinist position because of his personal experience, which embodies the Black experience and immigrant characteristics. (Arend Van Dam, 2014, <http://www.cagle.com/2014/12/i-cant-breathe-3/>)

Race and Racism Revisited

The literature on race and racism is impressive. Many Americans could write books about race and racism with little trouble because of the United States' history with these concepts. The concept and texts of race and racism are already grounded in the cognitive structures of most Americans and they elicit racial groups' moral character. Americans have been put into racial categories for convenience since recorded history. The first census in the 1790 developed a racial classification scheme and the following twenty-two censuses have not been any different. The statistical races and the social construct of race continue to dominate American lives. These categories of race have taken on forms of their own, shaping our precepts, norms, cultures, policy, and patterns of political

interactions. So, in the American polity, race matters. Race plays a critical role in individual endeavors and political ones. If the implications for race on the presidency and immigration policy remain unquestioned, the results could be overpowering and debilitating racial problems for the totality of the American populace.

To negate the adverse effects of race, one must understand the meaning of it as a social construct. Omi and Winant (2015) define race as a “concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 110). Though the human bodies referred to in this definition implore characteristics of humans associated with biological phenotypes, these organisms maintain sociohistorical and political properties as a result of their selection and operation in any society. For instance, in American history, under the Supreme Court ruling of *Dred Scott versus Sanford* (1857), Blacks were only considered as pieces of property, not quite human. The status of Blacks in the American polity has been defined by the society, and now Blacks are accepted as “somewhat coequal” of Whites. If the definition and selection of race depend on a political process, then race itself is an “unstable” concept, constantly changing with the political process and it is concomitant with groups’ competition to sustain their interests or resolve conflicts. Issues concerning racial categories, for the above mention reason, will continue to be sociopolitical. The racial categories and hierarchy propounded by the power holder at the inception of this country (USA) created a White ruling class that benefited from the structures of race and racial interactions. As Feagin (2014) alludes, “People do not experience ‘race’ in the abstract but in concrete reoccurring relationships with one another” (p. 13). Superordinate races therefore benefit from racial arrangements that place them on the apogee of the racial hierarchy, while subordinate groups and races are reduced to the status of the oppressed and the disenfranchised.

The origins of America’s rejection of other peoples (races) could be traced from European racial reasoning, what Cornell West (1994) describes as “a division of deceptive consensual racial

position based on the history of domination and subjugation of one race over another...” (p. 8). When Carolus Linnaeus (1735), the Swedish botanist and European father of taxonomy, wrote his essay titled “Systema Naturae,” he created a racial position for Whites in his hierarchy of human classification with the White race at the apogee of that pyramid and Blacks at the bottom (pp. 5-60). Count Arthur De Gobineau (1854), the French diplomat and scholar, maintained a similar sociopolitical position on the concept of race when he published his work, “Essay on the Inequality of Race.” He was providing a synopsis and amplifying the ideas of the then Euro-American perception on race (pp. 2-15).

Reginald Horsman (1995) correctly recapitulates:

In the first half of the nineteenth century many in the United States were anxious to justify the enslavement of the blacks and the expulsion and possible extermination of the Indian. The American intellectual community did not merely absorb European ideas; it also fed European racial appetites with scientific theories stemming from the supposed knowledge and observation of blacks and Indians. (p. 3)

Yet, the science Horsman talks about was nothing more than pseudoscience to justify White hegemonic thinking and attitude. Dewey (1940) writes about Thomas Jefferson, one of the authors of the declaration of American independence from Great Britain who asserted, “In memory they are equal to whites, in reason much inferior... I advance therefore... that the blacks, whether originally a different race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites” (p. 52). Such pseudoscientific characterization of race even by an American president was easily transformed into socioeconomic and political privilege for Whites. Racial formations are therefore not natural. They are constructed by societies to affirm racial positions for public policy agendas. Race is currently understood as a sociohistorical and political concept.

Many students of race tend to confuse the concept of race with that of ethnicity. The English word “ethnic” is derived from the Greek *ethnikos*, the adjectival form of *ethos*, meaning “a nation.” Later, the meaning of *ethnos* evolved to become paradigmatic for conceptualizing groups of different humans in the 1920s and 1930s (Asumah and Anumonwo, 2002). Ethnicity emerged as a conceptual challenge to the prevailing biological approach to race which made people of the Black race inferior. Ethnicity has been used as a tool for ethno-nationalism and ethnic-cleansing in recent times. Ironically, in America, many Whites refuse to associate themselves with the term “ethnicity.” For some obscure reason, Whites on most college campuses do not associate with the term “ethnic group.” Whenever one hears the term “ethnic students,” it is easy to associate it with Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans or some groups other than White. The statistical races constructed conveniently by the United States government are White, Black, American Indians, Asians and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, all based on the color scheme of 18th Century thinking of natural scientists and the color choices of white, black, brown, yellow, and red (Prewitt, 2013, p. 6).

What then is Ethnicity? Ethnicity is an affiliation or classification of a self-conscious group of people who share similar racial, kinship, cultural and linguistic values (Barndt, 1991, p. 5). Ethnicity is a sociocultural phenomenon. Ethnic stratifications occur in multiethnic societies where a hierarchical arrangement of ethnic groups could emerge as one group establishes itself as a superordinate group, with power to shape the nature of ethnic relation. Within both Black and White races there are different ethnic groups. The politics of difference and racial categorization present their own ambiguities in defining what is race and what is not. Latinos, for instance, are not considered a race in this connection. Latinos are ethnic groups within the Black and White races. Yet, one must not confuse Latinos as exclusively mixed race people.

Racism and all other “isms” operate on a common premise. Most “isms,” including racism, have a control group that exercises power and privilege, and a target group that is dominated,

subjugated, and marginalized in resource and power distributions. Racism does not only rest on individual action and ignorance. Institutional powers make racism viable. From Main Street to Wall Street, Whites control the institutional structures of power. From the village council to the national government, the same group has the marginal propensity to make most policies in America. The recent (2014) grand juries in Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island, New York that made the decisions not to indict White police officers who killed Black men in both cases were predominantly White. Given these premises, and by making reference to racism as group prejudice plus institutional power, Whites in America control and maintain the dominant structures of power to impose their will upon other groups and therefore benefit from racism. Certainly, not all Whites are racists, but every White person implicitly or explicitly participates and benefits from the system that racism fosters. Furthermore, White supremacy harbors the most toxic forms of racism such as the Rodney King beating, the Jasper, Texas killing of Mr. Byrd, the killing of Michal Brown and the chokehold killing of Eric Garner in 2014.

Peggy McIntosh (1988) informs her readers about the historical “White Privilege” that White America has over the rest of the general populace. McIntosh is particularly clear about this “unearned” privilege for Whites in America (p. 2). With these privilege and power, Whites are in a better position to solve America’s racial problems by developing a positive White identity. This is not a crusade to push undue responsibility on White Americans and their image development. However, it is a truism that White Americans constantly fail to acknowledge their race as a group phenomenon, and that Whites, as a group, maintain an “unearned privilege” to tackle America’s racial problems. Once Whites, including the heteropatriarchal hegemony, have developed a unified, positive group identity, they can effectively shape public policy regarding racial issues.

American presidents who have confronted issues and problems concerning race and racism intentionally, as a policy agenda, have usually transcended the universality of whiteness and

spearheaded civil rights and human rights initiatives. Yet, the American presidency is an institution that has historically been submerged in racism. Most of the Founders were racist and political scientists have developed models for categorizing the intensity, scope and a president's racial reasoning, actions and policy goals to determine whether a president is a racist or not. Content analysis of what presidents have said in private about race and their policy agendas on race could help one determine whether the president was/is a white supremacist, racist, racially neutral, racially ambivalent, and antiracist (Smith, 2010). Presidents who fit the White supremacist model believed or believe that Black people are innately inferior to Whites. American presidents from 1789-1869 (Washington, Jefferson, Madison, including Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865), who appeared as both a White supremacist and anti-racist after his policy on slavery, had maintained a racist, heteropatriarchal polity. President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) and Richard Nixon (1969-1974) were both Whites Supremacist and racists according to this model.

Racially neutral presidents had/have no concrete position on race and racism. President William McKinley (1897-1901) and William Taft (1909-1913) could be categorized as racially neutral. Interestingly, President Obama (2008-2016) at the inception of his presidency could be considered a racially neutral president. Racially ambivalent presidents vary from racially neutral to antiracist. President Ford (1974-1977), Reagan (1981-1989), Bush (1993-2000) Bush (2000-2008), and Obama (2008-2016) are examples of presidents who did/could not take a clear position on race and racism. Anti-racist presidents exhibit behavior and actions that are aimed at dismantling racism and racial subordination. Included in this category are president Lincoln (who appears twice in the chart because of changes in his utterance and actions), Grant, Truman, Kennedy, Nixon and Clinton. The Obama presidency might change by the end of his term in office (2016) but the time is not right to perform a premature autopsy on his racial policies.

A typology of the American President: Samples of Presidents and Categories for Racial Attitude/Behavior and Policy Action (Modified version of Smith's (2010) typology).

White Supremacist	Racist	Racially Neutral	Racially Ambivalent	Anti-Racist
George Washington (1789-1797)	George Washington (1789-1797)			
Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809)	Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809)			Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865)
Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865)		William Taft (1909-1913)	Ronald Reagan (1981-1989)	
			George W. Bush (2000-2008)	William Jefferson Clinton (1993-2000)
		Barack Hussein Obama (2008-2016)	Barack Hussein Obama (2008-2016)	Barack Hussein Obama (2008-2016)

Identity Politics, President Obama, and Heteropatriarchy

The 1790 first United States census developed a racial classification scheme which differentiated race and ethnicity, and promoted the idea of colorism. Racial groups were color-coded; White and Black, and yet brown, yellow and red are colors that have been associated with Latinos, Asians and Native Americans in American history. In the 2010 United States Census, Obama's racial identity and racial reasoning were tested. President Obama, even though a mixed race person, identified with Black because the President contended he was socialized as Black even when he resided with his White mother and grandparents when his Black father left the United States to Kenya. To the over seven million mixed race families in the United States, the President's failure to acknowledge his mixed race identity

was a blow to their own group political consciousness. The important question here is whether Obama's particular attachment to his Black identity inhibits his leadership capabilities and coalition politics. Do issues concerning individual identity captured in terms of identity-based movements and identity politics change in presidential politics? The answers to these questions are indubitably affirmative in most racialized societies. Capitalism by its composition, nature, and dynamics at its inception, sustained social ordering based on racial and gender categories, identity markers, supported by resource and role distributions. Capitalism therefore strengthens identity politics and heteropatriarchy.

Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan (1963) argue that strong ethnic identities and identity politics emerge because of the politics of exclusion. When groups are excluded and remain invisible to the superordinate culture, they come together to strengthen their affinity. Feminist theory informs our knowledge on gender identity formation, which is usually a byproduct and condition of oppression (Alcoff, 2006). Nevertheless, Schlesinger (1991), Hollinger, (1997) and Fraser (1998) argue against social identity and how these social identities may create political liability, cause separatism and reification, and contribute to group think, which limits the individual's ability to be creative. However, in a racialized society where Whiteness possesses the privilege of defining others, should identity politics matter to those who think particularism subverts the universal?

Some interlocutors of identity politics, such as Schlesinger (1991) and Fraser (1998) maintain that identity group formation disunites a nation state and that the politics of identity are a plot by intellectuals to mystify the dynamics of race relations and dislodge the unculturalists agenda of patriotism. Both of these scholars believe that a strong social identity may have political liability. Would that be a reason for President Obama to distant himself from identity politics? Could there be a reverse social liability if one avoids identity politics but he/she could be identified by groups and institutions with a particular identity which that person attempts to avoid? This discussion is somewhat submerged in binary analysis—

Black and White America, even though other minority groups such as Latinos are becoming the majority of the minority groups. What does that do to the traditional Black-White model of racial analysis?

The Black/White Paradigm and Race Relations under Obama

The discourse over social justice and race has been dominated by the Black/White binary model. Some interlocutors of race and racism advocate examining racism beyond the Black /White paradigm. One can easily say that the Black/White model contains what Elizabeth Martinez calls “the devils of dualism”—the irreducible oppositional elements of good and evil, mind and body, civilized and savage (Martinez, 2010, p. 98). However, the model accurately describes the American psyche in race relations. Scholars, including Elizabeth Martinez (2010), Linda Alcoff, (2006), Frank Wu (2002), Richard Delgado (1996), Elaine Kim (1993), maintain the position that race and ethnic issues must stand scrutiny beyond the historical Black/White model because the United States is much more diverse and discourses over race become color-restrictive if continue to utilize the Black/White model.

Countering the camp that would like to move away from the Black/White binary model are Mary Frances Berry (1980) and John Hope Franklin (1992), who contend that the Black /White paradigm is meaningful, pragmatic and historical. African American exceptionalism, cross-over experiences, unfinished civil rights issues, and the fact that the Black/White paradigm cannot be blamed for Asian and Latino immigrant problems is paramount for using the model for analysis. It is important to note the fight over this paradigm is championed by that Latino and Asian American scholars on one side and Black/African Americans on the other. One may think these scholars are competing in oppression Olympics to determine who is more oppressed. Yet, this author finds a new twist to the Black/White model. More recently, the model has shifted from Black/ White to Black, White and Blue, as police (blue) brutality has taken on its own institutional framework in dealing with Blacks and especially Black men, i.e. Amadou Diallo, Patrick Dorismond, Ousmane Zongo, Timothy Stansbury, Jr., Sean Bell,

Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray have all suffered from the lethal force of police brutality (M. Wuerker (Cartoonist), 2015, “The-Color-of-Justice” <http://www.awesomelyluvvie.com/2014/12/stages-injustice-against-black-people.html>; Retrieved: 05/22/2015).

President Obama has responded differently to each of these racially tragic issues in the United States. When Harvard University professor, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., was arrested by a White police officer, James Crowley, for attempting to break into his own home and for disorderly conduct, the President mentioned on national television that the White police office has “acted stupidly” and racism is “deeply rooted” in the American society (CNN.COM, 2009). A “Beer Summit” brought President Obama, Professor Gates and Sergeant Crowley together to discuss one of the major problems in the United States—racism. Most interlocutors of race were not appreciative about a “Beer Summit” and the photo opportunity. The President himself tried to dispel the characterization of the meeting over racial issues as a “Beer Summit.” Unfortunately, the imagery was worse—The President toasted the two adversaries, Professor Gates and Sergeant Crowley, with a chilled mug and Bud Light. Professor Gates enjoyed the occasion with Sam Adams Light and Officer Crowley had his day on the White House lawn with Blue Moon beer (Feller, 2009). Many observers believed that the President made light of a serious issue such as racism by conducting a “Beer Summit” with a “light” beer. The imagery and symbolism read into the “summit” were somewhat disturbing for race scholars and those who have suffered racial prejudice and discrimination in the United States (P. Souza , 2009 (Photo by Chief Official White House Photographer), <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/post-beer-summit-advocates-hope-president-obama-begins-real-discussion-racial-profiling-article-1.396509>. Retrieved: 05/22/2015).

In the cases of the killing of Trayvon Martin, Lennon Lacy, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the analytical framework has moved beyond the Black-White model and it has developed a newer

dimension of “blue” for the police, so far as justice is concerned. As Commander-in-Chief of the United States and the Chief Executive Officer of the country, who happens to be a Black man, should he stand aside and watch while many Black men are being killed for things that are not worth dying for? What happens to law-governing multicultural nations and the oppressed when White police officers are not charged with a crime by a grand jury for killing a Black man and the two top government officials in the country to deal with the brutality against Black men are also Black men—President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder (before he resigned from the position)? Even though some observers think race should not become a factor in the cases above and it should be all about justice, it is indubitable that race motivated the White police officer to profile and kill Black men. Race motivated the grand jury not to indict and race demotivated both President Obama and ex-attorney general Eric Holder to be somewhat silent over the critical issues of the killing of Black boys by White police officer and predominantly White grand jurors voting not to indict the officers.

In all these brutal killings, the President’s position and his race tend to asphyxiate him from acting. In commenting about the brutal killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, President Obama and Eric Holder’s inaction, Luke Visconti of *DiversityInc.* asserts, “In essence, you ‘re asking two Black men to urge calm amongst the mainly Black constituency, after that constituency was subjected to extreme, persistent, and racially biased law enforcement. ... I don’t think it’s fair to ask President Obama or Attorney General Holder to cover for all the nonsense in Missouri” (Visconti, 11/25/2014, p. 1). Yet, in the Eric Garner police choking-death case of another Black man by White police officers in Staten Island, New York, which was recorded by a number of by-standers, President Obama said, “My tradition is not to remark on cases where there may still be an investigation” (CNN.COM, 2014). Nevertheless, what is confusing is that the President has been commenting on cases without concrete administrative action. He commented on the skip Gates issue, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and even on the Eric Garner case. In order to continue his

carefully calculated politics of race, as he maintains that he is not the President of Black America, even though deep down, he would like to do something about race and politics, he elects to do what is prudent for a Black president of majority White America. For some Black communities, President Obama is a disappointment to the Black community so far as race, class and justice are concerned. Michael Eric Dyson, MSNBC network contributor and a professor at Georgetown University asserts, “President Obama’s refusal to wade into the Ferguson situation is a ‘low point’ for his presidency... Obama ‘failed’ black people and the nation for trying to come up with an excuse to ‘not speak about race’” (Dyson, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, President Obama’s rhetoric about Black life after devoting \$200 million public-private partnership project, “My Brother’s Keeper” to short-circuit the school-to-prison industrial complex pipeline, the Black community did not favor his lecture about the fact that:

[t]here are young black men that commit crime. And—and—we want to argue about why that happens because of the poverty they were born into or the lack of opportunity or the school systems that failed them or what have you, but if they commit a crime, then they need to be prosecuted because every community has an interest in public safety. (Henderson, 2014)

After the Ferguson, Missouri uprising against the jury’s verdict of not to indict the White police officer, Obama’s racial rhetoric changed to good community policing. However, a reductionist approach of confronting racial problems as just one of the many America’s problems without a concrete position or solution keeps President Obama in a racial quagmire.

Obama himself has suffered from White racial imagery and many contemporary racist actions. It is evident from the above discussions that there has been more racial tension since Obama started his presidency for obvious reasons. There have been several racialized attacks on the president and some of these attacks come

from elected officials such as Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, who stated that President Obama's legislative "intent is to create dependency because it works for him...As an African American Male [who received] tremendous advantage from a lot of these programs" (Krehbiel, 2011). Racist images of the president as a chimpanzee are widespread on the internet and many of this racist slurs have been extended in poor taste against First Lady Michelle Obama. For instance, in Nashville, Tennessee, a hospitality organization depicted the First Lady as someone being married to Cheetah, the chimpanzee, from the racist Tarzan movie (Garrigan, 2011). Heteropatriarchy does not spare even the First Lady of the United States, since the dynamics of heteropatriarchy includes the institution of marriage. Senator David Vitter of Louisiana, appearing on a show on Glenn Beck Radio, disrespectfully admonishes President Obama for doing worse for Black people than his slave-owner ancestors. Obama has played into the hands of the heteropatriarchal hegemony by siding with capital and removing himself from the horrible conditions Blacks face under his command.

Racial Formation, Obama, and Immigration

In the American polity, race has an agency in almost every sector, including presidential politics and immigration policy making. Race matters in a heterogeneous, patriarchal society such as the United States of America. Race has been used as an instrument for acquiring different forms of results, whether positive or negative. Race will continue to secure a permanent domain in both our individual and institutional patterns of interaction. Consequently, denial of racial elements and race as an irrepressible agency in immigration policy making process could only lead to grave public policy paralysis or policy myopia, with implications not only for recent immigrants, but also for the native-born Americans. President Obama campaigned to gain the Latino vote in his run for the presidency and reelection by challenging restrictionist sentiments to propound a fair immigration policy. Yet, under his administration, more undocumented immigrants have been deported than his

predecessors. Furthermore, in his second term, there has been nothing concrete about immigration reform.

However, the discourse over the U.S. immigration policy in recent years like other “wedge” issues such as unemployment, racism, sexism, classism and crime evoke cultural, racial and socio-economic disquietudes. Immigration issues of late have been made even more contentious with quasi-political parties and social movements like the Tea Party, and by state legislatures such as Alabama, Arizona, California and New Mexico. Moreover, since the election of U.S. President Barack Obama, the stakes have been raised even higher, with his calls for “level-headedness” and “fairness” in any discussions regarding immigration. However, the 2012 Republican Party presidential primaries debates were submerged in name-calling over US immigration policy as Mitt Romney accused Newt Gingrich for labeling him as anti-immigrant and Gingrich, former Speaker of the House, lashed back at Romney, former Massachusetts governor, about running an advertisement in which Gingrich calls Spanish “the language of the ghetto” (Fox News Latino, 2012). Issues involving undocumented Latino have topped the chart in these debates, yet a number of the Republican presidential candidates, including Newt Gingrich, have been too busy talking about voluntary deportation or what to do with eleven million undocumented grandmothers who may have lived in the United States all their lives—an important but not the most serious issue and perhaps, politicking with the topic by circumventing the most critical issues about US immigration policy. Thus, immigration issues have gained a centripetal position in policy debates because the number of foreign-born, non-European persons has reached the highest level in the United States’ history. Furthermore, the characterization of black and brown people from Latin America, Africa and Asia as depriving United States citizens of jobs, and tainting the American national ethos, culture, and norms is at best unfounded and at worst restrictionists’ agenda against new sojourners and racial categories in the United States. The discourse over race, racial identities, and immigration policy implicitly or explicitly, runs through every public policy agenda, whether it is on

the national or local levels.

Blacks and Brown People, “Deporter in Chief” and the American Dream

Early in the history of the United States of America, Thomas Jefferson and other political leaders of the country recognized the benefit of large-scale immigration. This form of immigration provided cheap labor to build the nation, technology for reconstruction, and trade that provided fuel for the economy at that time. U.S. immigration policy followed an open door approach, where immigrants were not restricted from entering into this country. “From 1875, the United States Congress instituted measures for excluding certain categories of people. Among these people were prostitutes, criminals, the handicap [people with disabilities], and people who had the chance of becoming a public charge” (Mitchell, 1992, p. 11). Many of these immigrant categories still remain on the books today as part of U.S. immigration law.

Many attempts at creating a comprehensive immigration reform have failed and the 2007 major attempt is not an exception. The 2007 policy would have included five major essential areas; 1) security increase through the funding and hiring of 20,000 border patrol officers, new fences, and vehicle barriers at high crossing areas of U.S. borders; 2) creating procedures to expedite the process of permanent residency and citizenship for undocumented aliens through a new “Z-visa” system with a waiting period of eight years before obtaining a “green card.” Yet these undocumented must return to the countries of origin and pay a fine of between \$2000-\$5000 for beating the system and remaining in the United States illegally; 3) A guest-worker program under a new “Y-visa” would have been created to enable immigrants who would like to work and stay in the country for two years to do so legally; 4) The law would have eliminated dependent family members of U.S. citizens, except for spouses and children; 5) The policy would have integrated the DREAM Act, which would have allowed undocumented immigrant children to complete college or render their services to the United States Department of Defense (Farley, 2012, p. 500).

The Conservatives were the majority of law makers and heteropatriarchs who killed the bill because they argued that the new policy would have granted amnesty to too many illegal immigrants and that would have been a bad signal for those who are attempting to enter the country illegally. Nevertheless, those who favored the bill argued that it was designed to temporarily repatriate undocumented immigrants and pay a fine before their readmission to the United States. All in all, most United States citizens did not support the bill because they did not believe it would curb immigration and the state of U.S. economy, and the new waves of xenophobia and Islamophobia did not serve the bill favorably. Immigrants, both documented and undocumented continue to make their way to the United States nevertheless. Yet as Belson and Capuzzo (2007) correctly note, the failure of the United States Congress to reach an agreement on a new immigration reform act has given incentives to especially anti-immigrant border states within the Union to generate their own policies which are generally xenophobic in nature.

The Politics of Racial Exclusion, Building Fences and Obama's Executive Instrument

The Obama Administration has supported the US immigration policy (that started before President Obama took office) to create a physical barrier between the United States and Mexico with a 670 miles concrete wall has generated another philosophical and diversity debate. The Secure Fence Act of 2006, which has been revised a couple of times does a couple of things; it separates the two nation states, divides United States public opinion about illegal immigration, and creates a philosophical debate about United States perception towards our neighbors to the south. As interlocutors of the border policy continue their debate, proponents of the policy have called the project a "fence" while opponents have labeled it a "wall." Whether it is a fence or a wall, the facts remain that the United States has built a structure that divides the US and Mexico. The Associated Press opinion poll conducted in March 2008 indicated that Americans are split right in the middle about the

fourteen-foot high border fence; 49% of those who were polled were in favor and 48% were against it. Nevertheless, 55% of respondents maintain that the wall will not make a difference in deterring illegal immigrants.

The states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California are sharing the 670 mile-fence with nearly half of it in the state of Arizona. About 370 miles of the immigration wall is aimed at stopping Mexicans who attempt to walk or sneak through the border and other 300 miles is deter unauthorized vehicles from crossing the US-Mexican border at the fence-states mentioned above (Chertoff, 2008). Proponents of the fence maintain that it is not only deterrence to illegal immigrants, but it will also prevent terrorist from entering the United States through Mexico. Yet, James Carafano, a senior defense and counterterrorism analyst, points out that the augment about the wall/fence stopping terrorist from entering the United States through Mexico is farfetched and unfounded. Carafano asserts, "Fixating, myopically on the wall is just bad public policy... Looking for terrorists by standing watch on the border is stupid. It's looking for a needle in a haystack" (*Congressional Quarterly*, 2011, p. 184). It is indubitable that the wall's primary goal is to deter undocumented Mexicans in particular and illegal immigrants in general from entering the United States. Opponents continue to argue that the terrorism argument is just a smoke screen in the politics of exclusion. Nevertheless, wall or no wall, the magnetic attraction of the United States to Mexicans will not stop until the quality of life in Mexico and especially the border towns has improved substantially. When people are desperate to improve their quality of life, they will do anything to make it happen. As most Mexican dwellers of the border towns will say, "show me a 12-foot wall and I will show you a 16-foot ladder."

An interesting but troubling observation is that national statistics reveal that the difference in the pre-fence and post-fence apprehensions at border remain roughly the same, 1.2 million people in both 1992 and 2004. (Kariam, , 2011, p. 185). This means we have to do more about immigration policy that would encourage our neighbors across the border to stay home instead of risking their live

and coming to the United States to be excluded and exploited. Furthermore, with the cost estimate of \$47 billion to maintain the fence for the next twenty-five years (Kariam, 2012, p. 200), it makes sense to jointly develop a program for guest-workers and attractive job avenues with the billions mentioned above, which could yield revenue from investment in jobs instead of being mean neighbors with a fence that psychological screams at the rest of the world, “Keep Out!”

U.S. states, such as Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, have challenged President Obama’s executive authority and his masculinity by writing their own immigration laws, which creates a conflict in the principles of federalism. The state governments are challenging the federal government in its own legislative and executive spheres. The immigration system is broken and the President has to take action with or without the Republicans (the opposition party). So, in 2014 the President circumvented the U.S. Congress and created an immigration reform via an executive instrument to allow illegals who have been in this country for more than five years to file the right immigration papers. The President also included streamlining legal immigration to promote a stronger U.S. economy through work authorization for those who have already applied for a green card. Yet, most Latinos, especially those whose reside in the border states believe President Obama to be the “Deporter-in-Chief” instead of maintaining the role of the president as a Commander-in-Chief. The Congressional Black Caucus and the Progressive Caucus introduced immigration bills in previous years but the heteropatriarchal hegemons killed these bills. However, President Obama has not demonstrated leadership in immigration policy-making to counteract the maneuvers of the opposition. Is Obama’s lack of leadership in immigration a function of his relationship to capital and heteropatriarchy in the business sector? Congressional/Executive relations have become more acrimonious since the Republican Party gained majority of the seats in the midterm elections of 2014.

Moreover, heteropatriarchal Congressional hegemons have threatened lawsuits against the president for taking immigration

reform action via executive order, even though many presidents since George Washington have issued executive orders on different policies. As Spitzer notes: “This raises the political context of Obama actions on immigration...Obama’s action a) alters policy without going to Congress; b) telegraphs to the Latino community his support, and that of his party; c) spurs Congress to act...” (Spitzer, 2014). Nevertheless, it is not just a political question Obama’s action raise; in addition, it raises a racial question since the majority of those affected by the executive orders would be Latinos and Black folks.

Heteropatriarchal Masculinity and the Obama Presidency

Obama’s presidency has been confronted by actions from heteropatriarchal masculinists, who think that the President is soft on many issues ranging from leaving Afghanistan, ending the war in Iraq, failing to lead his party to capture seats in the US Senate and the House of Representative in the 2014 midterm elections, failing to be a unifier for the country as he promised during his campaign, failing the Black community as Black unemployment is twice that of White unemployment (11.4 versus 5.3), and the list continues (Chapman, 2014). How does one associate the emasculation of a president to failed policy or policy myopia? Heteropatriarchal masculinity invokes a system where the rule of male, heterosexual and elitist biases is prevalent in the nation state. One can easily recognize a system where masculinities are essential components of the prevailing male projects in democratic capitalism (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). In this perspective, White men are usually the power holder and the primary actors in the political economy of the state. Furthermore, the political hegemony are not just any White men, but business tycoons, financiers, and political movers and shakers. These are men whose locations in the racialized and gendered socio-political institutions are often reconfigured by their ability to utilize their masculinity. Heteropatriarchal masculinity remains a disputed phenomenon in that some scholars think it should be pluralized because they are several ways of being a man and it is beyond the implication of a binary analysis of contrasting masculinity with

femininity (Acker, 2006). Furthermore, as I have argued earlier, the institution of marriage supports the hegemony of heteropatriarchy. The institution of marriage is a normative structure for the American presidency and heteropatriarchy. Out of the forty-four presidents of the United States, only one was not married—James Buchanan (1857-1861). Of course, he was engaged to be married but his fiancée died before Buchanan became president.

President Obama does not fit the description or characterization of the typical heteropatriarchal masculinist president as his predecessors and that makes it difficult for him to navigate his way through the turbulent policy making waters in American politics. Race and gender are attributes to the sustenance of a system dominated by heteropatriarchal masculinists. The politics of social programing are devalued in a system that favors the main game of strong capitalist men. Obama's policy of health care, immigration and race issues become a contest for those who have the traditional socialization to become heteropatriarchal masculinist in the policy arena. He becomes an outsider to many Republicans who fit the norms and descriptors for heteropatriarchal masculinists. In the 2015 State of the Union Address, President Obama became the first president to ever use the terms lesbians, gays and bisexuals in such an address. This was historically an unprecedented and unheteropatriarchal statement. The absence of such conversation in the American presidency is supported by institutions of socialization such as churches, workplaces, legislatures, and executive branches spearheaded by heteropatriarchal hegemons and President Obama broke with tradition to make reference to LGBTQ2IA in the State of Union Address. His comments about helping the middle class, minimum wage, paid sick leave, free community college attendance and equal wages would all be seen as programs that are not attractive to Republican heteropatriarchal hegemons and are signs of weakness for President Obama. While some chanted after the speech that "Obama is back," some still believe race, immigration and soft social programs have tainted Obama's legacy.

Conclusion

Barack Hussein Obama's presumed failed heteropatriarchal masculinity as President of the United States (POTUS) faces several analytical trajectories. These vectors and indicators include the function of his blackness, immigrant characteristics, friend of capital, deviation from the normative structural arrangements of the American presidency, the paradigm of justice based on a new model of black, white and blue, and whether Obama has the qualities to become the first Black heteropatriarch president. Nonetheless, since his presidency, the racial microaggression against him has continued among lawmakers and segments of the American general populace because of his race. I am not ready to perform a premature autopsy on the legacy of President Obama. However, in presidential politics, we are made aware that the racialization of Spanish as a language of the ghetto could be different and at the same time similar to the racialization of the President of the United States (POTUS) family as chimpanzees or Michelle Obama as a naked slave woman, supporting the hetero-normative arrangement of the institution of marriage and invoking a new slavocracy. The level of disrespect for the first president of color in American is unprecedented. Sue et al. (2008) assert, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" can be characterized as microaggression (p. 273). President Obama has suffered microaggression throughout his presidency because of his race and the policy goals he has selected for his legacy. In a system where whiteness and masculinities are prevailing racial and male projects in democratic capitalism, Obama lacks the essential quality to maintain the historical connection to heteropatriarchal hegemony and the traditional office of POTUS. Even though he holds presidential power, his race tends to devalue that power and the heteropatriarchal establishmentarians continue to maintain their position in a structure in which gender and race are built into the hegemony of democratic capitalism and the class process through

the long historical socialization process that makes the job of a Black president unattractive and toxic in the United States. Using the American presidency as a microcosm for evaluating race, gender, heteropatriarchy and the dynamics of immigration policy, the following questions may open avenues for further research or another essay: Is the microaggression suffered by Obama concomitant with the inability of Black people to breathe anywhere on the planet and has that ever moved any presidential or executive authority who is part of the heteropatriarchal hegemony or not? Would it change the racial narrative if President Obama has the qualities to be characterized as a Black heteropatriarchal masculinist, or would it change the equation if the President has been successful in dealing with racial and immigration policy reform?

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