

Obama and black politics

By [Edward Carson](#)

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[Roughly 94 percent](#) of black voters now vote for a candidate from the Democratic Party. This high number at the national level may be due in part to President Obama's racial identity. In 2008 Obama surpassed even the solidification of black votes for Lyndon Baines Johnson that occurred in 1964.

Has the United States moved closer to a post-racial society? In an age when #BlackLivesMatter responds to the realities of [Ferguson](#) and [Baltimore](#), the answer to this question is a resounding no. Although Americans in 2008 elected a person of color as president for the first time, Obama's election reveals hints of our country's race problem. Many Americans are still caught in the squabble regarding race and politics.

This racial conflict showcases both the divisiveness of racial politics in America and a lack of resolve among an alienated population, which includes young black Americans born after the 1960's civil rights movement and older black civil rights leaders holding on to their historical voice. After Obama secured the democratic nomination in 2008, Matt Bai captured the tensions among black voters in a *New York Times* article:

Tension between Obama and some older black leaders burst onto cable television last month, after an open microphone on Fox News picked up the Rev. [Jesse Jackson](#) crudely making the point that he wouldn't mind personally castrating his party's nominee. The reverend was angry because Obama, in a Father's Day speech on Chicago's South Side, chastised black fathers for shirking their responsibilities. To Jackson, this must have sounded a lot like a presidential candidate polishing his *bona fides* with white Americans at the expense of black ones—something he himself steadfastly refused to do even during his second presidential run in 1988, when he captured more votes than anyone thought possible.

The irony of this article's title—"[Is Obama the End of Black Politics?](#)"—represents a transformation in post-racial politics.

Obama has tended to evade the topic of race, both during his campaign and while in office. He recently criticized #BlackLivesMatter members for yelling their concerns and not being diplomatic on topics regarding black inequality and police brutality. Obama's disdain toward the demographic that voted for him illustrates what social critic Touré refers to as [post-blackness](#). Touré further notes that there are 40 million ways to be black, and Obama is expressing one of them. As president of the United States, he represents a voice for all Americans. However, his racial identity does not allow him to embrace fully a singular voice.

Some black Americans have been waiting for a black messiah—the savior of their race. Unfortunately for Obama, he is that messiah. However, because his first obligation is to the country, a number of black voters have grown frustrated with him. No other American president has had to deal with complex matters regarding a single racial group the way Obama has. Eight years later, many are still asking: is Obama the end of black politics?

In truth, he is just the prelude. Now that the American consciousness is aware of racial progress, however gradual, some people are willing to move beyond the traditional presidential narrative of white established Protestants who reign from a position of wealth.

The people of Jesus' day were anticipating a great savior, one who would unleash his wrath and end their suffering. However, because Jesus was not the political savior the people anticipated, some of them embraced other narratives. Similarly, some 21st-century black Americans have moved on to a new conversation about the arrival of a true black president, one who will establish on earth a kingdom free of racism and police brutality.

Many black Americans are frustrated with Obama. But their frustration is different from that of liberal white America, which celebrated his arrival as a sign of their own progressive views on race. Black Americans made the mistake of claiming Obama for themselves. Many assumed he would arrive and eradicate the injustices placed on them, using his [New Deal thinking](#) and his racial identity.

As Obama's term comes to an end, black Americans have realized he is not the hoped-for savior. Hence the tension: between the expectations of a historically

oppressed race and the ushering in of America as post racial.

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