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Barack Obama's Rhetoric of Hope for Racial Reconciliation: An Examination of American Mainstream Media's Framing of That Message

Zainul Abedin
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BARACK OBAMA'S RHETORIC OF HOPE FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION:
AN EXAMINATION OF AMERICAN MAINSTREAM
MEDIA'S FRAMING OF THAT MESSAGE

by

Zainul Abedin

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

BARACK OBAMA’S RHETORIC OF HOPE FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION: AN EXAMINATION OF AMERICAN MAINSTREAM MEDIA’S FRAMING OF THAT MESSAGE

by Zainul Abedin

May 2017

This study explored Barack Obama’s rhetorical message for racial reconciliation and the framing of that message by the American mainstream news media. The study investigated Obama’s messages in texts and sound-bites of the news media—*The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. The research included Obama’s speeches on three major occasions from 2008 to 2014—(1) “a more perfect union” speech on March 18, 2008, in Philadelphia; (2) Washington speech on August 28, 2013, on the 50th anniversary of MLK’s “I have a dream” speech; and (3) LBJ Library speech on April 10, 2014, on the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The main goal of this research was to uncover the frames and tones of the news media that might reflect change or no-change in critical race relations and socio-economic conditions of African-Americans in the “Age of Obama,” viewed as a post-racial era by the legacy media. The study used Critical Race Theory to analyze the idealistic and realistic issues of race relations. The media frames included three themes—(i) Obama’s relation with his pastor and friend Jeremiah Wright, (ii) the political tone, and (iii) the perception of civic and economic programs of Obama toward African-Americans.

All six media outlets framed Obama as being at fault for his relationship with Wright. In the tone frame, the conservative media outlets judged Obama as a “bargainer,” and as “scandalous.” The liberal outlets looked at Obama somewhat as a conciliator. For civic and economic improvements for African Americans, the conservative outlets put emphasis on cohesive conditions of partnership by Obama. Fox News asked African-Americans to gain “plentiful” skills to get jobs. The media reinforced the myth of the dawn of a “post-racial” era, a hypothetical period in which discrimination did not exist. The “Age of Obama” became the sign of racial reconciliation.”

The study helps expand a national dialogue between the public and the media about race. The researcher proposed a theoretical framework—Critical Race and Class Theory (CR&CT) in order to explain phenomena.

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DEDICATION

Bismillah! This dissertation is dedicated to the blessed souls of my loved parents, especially my mother, Sabura Khatun, who sacrificed so much of her life for the upbringing of her six children with proper education. She was the lived example of “Nobility of Sacrifices” by her name! It is unfortunate that I cannot share this news of my dream education, which I completed half a world away from the land in which I was born, with her. I pray to Almighty to take care of the souls of my parents with Mercy and Grace as they did for us in our childhood!

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Barack Obama, between primaries for the 2008 presidential election and into his second term as the President of the United States in 2014, made speeches on three separate occasions, among others, regarding “a more perfect union” and “racial reconciliation.” Media outlets responded to those speeches in different ways. Though the print texts and broadcast sound-bites on political rhetoric are highly communicative and symbolic, yet they are surprisingly under-explored in literature of mediated message and rhetorical studies.

This study explores Obama’s rhetorical message for racial reconciliation and framing of that message by the American mainstream media. It investigates how Obama’s messages were presented in texts and sound bites of selected news media outlets, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* as representatives of print media and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC for broadcast media. The Introduction chapter focuses on some background information, purpose of the study, significance of the study, implications, and contributions of the findings, and theoretical considerations that underpin the study.

The Introduction chapter focuses on some background information, purpose of the study, significance of the study, implications, and contributions of the findings, and theoretical considerations that underpin the study.

To achieve the aims of this study, it is necessary first to present background information regarding the exigency of dealing with racial reconciliation for Obama.

Background of the Study

Barack Obama dared to speak of hope. He had the “audacity” to rise to the presidency of United States of America. Barack Obama’s messages of “hope,” and “change,” took him to the presidency in 2008 and in 2012, as a “challenge of the heroic age” (Mercieca, 2012). During his climb to the presidency, Obama made another endeavor of hope for racial reconciliation on the basis of America’s much-cherished ideal of “a more perfect union” (Brendese, 2012; Darsey, 2009; Dilliplane, 2012; Perkinson, 2012) as proclaimed in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. Although his first goal of reaching the presidency was successful, his second effort for racial reconciliation was done under compulsion.

Obama declared his candidacy in the 2008 presidential election, and the national media flooded the airwaves with images and sound bites of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Obama’s pastor, and friend, who was perceived as a fiery critic of America’s race relations. His remarks, images and sound bites touched off a firestorm of criticism in the media and public. ABC News, joined by other news outlets, such as Fox News, started showing footage of a 2003 Wright sermon in which he condemned America. To quell the critics, Obama addressed the racial tensions, and on March 18, 2008, at the Philadelphia Constitution Center, declared, “I have already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend Wright that have caused such controversy and, in some cases, pain...Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely...” (Obama’s March 18, 2008, Speech Transcript, par 13). At the same time, Obama also built on common hopes by saying: “...we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction--toward a better

future for our children and our grandchildren” (Obama’s March 18, 2008 speech transcript, par 5).

As the imagery, the words, the sounds moved on through the media, together they resonated a sense of constant visuality among the rhetorical critics. Terming Obama’s style as a “jeremiad fashion” of restoring “positive vision” by “ideological consensus,” Willie J. Harrell Jr. (2010) states that Obama called “Americans to political repentance, an innovative kind of political system that builds on the communal understandings that will unite all Americans” (p. 164). John Murphy (2011) observed that Obama followed the course of the historical Joshua Generation of redemption through which he foresaw a transformation of American society as Obama himself said, “Yes, we can heal this nation” (p. 399). Dilliplane (2012) argued that the Obama’s speech carried a “Masonic” message, particularly on the “African American oratory, black churches, race relations, and American politics” (p. 129).

Statement of the Purpose

This study explores President Obama’s rhetorical message for racial reconciliation and how that message was framed by the American mainstream news media. With this purpose, the study investigates Obama’s messages presented in the texts and sound-bites of the news media, including both the print and televisual—the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. The main goal of this research was to uncover the frames and tones of the news media that might reflect change or no-change in critical race relations and socio-economic conditions of African-Americans in the “Age of Obama” viewed as a post-racial era by the legacy media. Post-racial is a hypothetical environment where racial

preference, prejudice, and discrimination no longer exists in a period or a society. These print and televisual performers represent American frame of minds— especially both the conservative and liberal audiences (Hays, 2013; Ladd, 2013; Leduff, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2014; Stroud & Muddiman, 2013).

How and how far is healing of racial discordance in America has come true? What legacy has Obama left for the next generation against the backdrop of ongoing “institutionalized” killings of several black teenagers, such as Trayvon Martin (2012) and Michael Brown (2014) that stirred a new debate all around? This research explores the claim of racial reconciliation in a supposedly “postracial America” (Campbell et al., 2012; McCann, 2014) as tacitly claimed by Obama himself and certain mass media outlets, as well as his critics, such as Cornel West (2011, 2014), Tim Wise (2008, 2009), and Cobb (2011). With this background in mind, the research attempts to systematically track Obama’s rhetorical messages for racial reconciliation presented in the media over the course of 2008 and thereafter.

Barack Obama is popularly known for his unique form of wit and wisdom with which he made his argument of competency for the American presidency. At a crucial moment of economic stagnancy and recession mainly because of the staggering cost of war, Obama came forward with arguments for “hope and change.” (Danisch, 2012, p. 164). Obama made his rhetoric heard using his wit to engage audience imagination, as he stated, “...not just about what I will do as president. It is also about what you, the people who love this country, the citizens of the United States of America, can do to change it... Now it falls to us. Together we cannot fail” (Mercieca, 2012). “Wit forms the crescendo and diminuendo of a scale of great imaginative power. The wit is not only

combined with but fused into, the imagination,” argues Edwin Black (1978, p. 54). Thus Obama’s “selectively constructed and carefully deployed [message] has allowed him to take a central role in the history of America’s future” (Lewis, 2011, p. 60). The media, however, toned and echoed those messages by their words and sounds.

Obama espoused the rhetoric of racial reconciliation for a fractured society; however, analyses of mediated discourse surrounding Obama’s presidency suggest that media outlets emphasized that we are living in a post-racial society. This framing then, in turn, makes Obama’s call for racial reconciliation contradictory and impossible, because “post-race” denies the existence of racism. Some scholars also share this view. P. J. Brendese (2012) called it a “premature celebration.” D. E. Young (2012) called the phenomenon a “post race posthaste.” If we are living in a post-racial society then calling for widespread redress makes no sense since widespread discrimination allegedly is a thing of the past.

Obama appealed to Americans to “choose our better history,” and “choose hope over fear, unity over division, change over the status quo,” meaning that American history has been “at stake” (McElya, 2011, p. 179). Why and how American history was at stake? Obama tried to explain this at the advent of his announcement of presidential candidacy and during the primaries. News media outlets broadcast, televised, published and analyzed Obama’s race-related speeches. Particularly, Obama’s speech for “a more perfect union” was scrutinized with special importance by characterizing or reframing the rhetoric, as claimed by many scholars, including Campbell et al. (2012), Christie (2012), Darsey (2009), Delgado and Stefancic (2001, 2012), Knowles et al. (2009), Mendible

(2012), Ostertag and Armaline (2011), Perkinson (2012), Rowland and Jones (2011), West (2011), and Wise (2009).

Eventually, Obama's speeches generated questions—Has Obama really addressed the race issue in his speeches? Rowland and Jones (2011, p. 141) asked how can Obama be optimistic that the union may be perfected and the “racial stalemate” broken? Mentioning other instances, such as Obama's “antiracial (not antiracist) responses to racist discourses” of the Tea Party's accusation of his own race-bias, Darrel Enck-Wanzer (2011) called the responses “Obama's detractors” (p. 23), which makes Obama's rhetoric of hope as well as progress in race reconciliation doubtful.

This study, therefore, attempts to investigate how the news media resolved Obama's plea for better race-relations, what are the doubts and questions raised by different scholars and the news media across the “colorline.” “Colorline” is a term being used by scholars, such as John Hatch (2003,) borrowed from American sociologist Du Bois. Also citing sociologist O. Patterson, Hatch states discussions about race in the United States. today resemble a “dialogue of the deaf” (p. 737).

Allegations of media bias were raised by both conservative and liberal political leaders at the advent of a new trend, that of making the politicians/presidents or politics “targets of humor from late-night-talk-show hosts” (Ladd, 2013, p. 24). Programs such as NBC's “Saturday Night Live” and the “Daily Show” of the Comedy Central cable channel has an anti-media tone, too. J.M. Ladd writes that “late-night comedians made 771 jokes lampooning then-Governor George W. Bush and 494 at the expense of Vice President Al Gore” (p. 24) on the occasion of 2000 presidential election. Obama's election bid also attracted the media, as Obama appealed to the media to convey his

message for national unity. Obama always emphasized, “moving the society forward” as “one people” (Rowland and Jones, 2011, p. 133).

Obama’s speech delivered at the Philadelphia National Constitution Center on March 18, 2008, is now famously known as the “race speech” (Darsey, 2009, p. 93). To ease the firestorm of criticism for his relationship with Jeremiah Wright, Obama in his speech told the audience that he severed relations with Wright and introduced his idea of moving the country to “a more perfect union.” Wright is a pastor emeritus of the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, from which he retired in early 2008 when segments of his sermons were publicized in connection with the presidential campaign of Barack Obama. Wright reportedly in one of his 2003 sermons criticized America for its acrimonious race relations (especially repressions on African-American) stating, “Not ‘God Bless America’; God damn America! That’s in the Bible, for killing innocent people. God damn America for treating her citizens as less than human. God damn America as long as she keeps trying to act like she is God and she is supreme!” (Graham, 2015).

Many scholars, such as Hermon George, Jr. (2013) and Kasie M. Roberson and Stacey L. Connaughton (2010) argued that Obama’s “perfect union” speech was apologetic, especially for his relations with his former mentor-pastor, Wright. Obama had to do this because he had fallen into the dilemma of a “double-bind” (Enck-Wanzer, 2011, p. 28). Enck-Wanzer meant that the failure to acknowledge race left Obama open to critiques of African Americans, on the one hand, and acknowledging race or racism risked marking himself “different” in the eyes of White Americans, which in turn, would have jeopardized his election, on the other. Obama managed the situation craftily that

induced many to designate him with a charismatic quality (Trent et al., 2011, p. 88), though George Edwards III (2012) argues that it was Obama's ability to frame issues in ways that would favor his preferred policy options. Regardless, Obama has some unique qualities of wits and wisdom that helped him seize national attention.

Obama steered through two poles of a dilemma. Was he Black enough? He envisioned the contingency of identity as it was enacted in covenant renewals and breathed fresh air into the ideological field, which would be "a more perfect union" stated in the Constitution. Further explaining Obama's oratory, Murphy (2011) stated that Obama made a march for a more just, more equal, freer, more caring, and more prosperous America. In short, Obama's campaign sought to realize in practice the promise of an always-incipient covenant.

To the contrary, some scholars observed that this acquiescent belief actually signified the effectiveness and extensions of racism's color-blind and enlightened ideology in the drapes of a few examples of meritocracy (Ostertag & Armaline, 2011; Wise, 2009). These scholars raise the question--What could have been more predictable for a racist system, evolving toward the invisible shadows, than the election of a "safe" (Ostertag & Armaline, 2011, p. 269) African-American leader who in action would do little to threaten the power status quo, and in simple existence would seemingly prove the end of racism itself? Tamari Kitossa (2011) implicitly called Obama's craft a "deception," (p. 1) as part of "a racial manicheanism," an ancient doctrine that pleads for good against evil), which may deepen "white racism" further (p. 46).

The critical views move on with arguments that, some images of diversity in the powerful circles, virtually took shifts in actual policy and practice, also cast doubt on the

ultimate effect of Obama's "a more perfect union" rhetoric that received catchy attraction from the news media, which made it a "nightly spectacle" in 2008 (Perkinson, 2012, p. 98). Cornel West (2011) said the worst thing Barack Obama did was to "dangle a category of hope that came out of the Black freedom movement" (p. 367). West said it was like playing some little sentimental orchestra. This was not hope. With the backdrop of Tim Wise's teasing "Uh, Obama" (2008), Martell Teasley and David Ikard (2010) hold that there is "the myth of ostracism in America" (p. 411) and it is a "fallacy" (Cobb, 2011, p. 418) of hope in racial reconciliation. Dissecting the notion of "Yes, we did" progress of racial reconciliation, some scholars say, "Maybe not" (Campbell et al., 2012, p. 4), while many critics dare to say, "No. We Can't!" (Cobb, 2011).

The debate seems to make an obtrusive ideological hiatus between the expectation and achievement of a "racially biased" society mediated through the media. This researcher attempts to reveal what are the latent drawbacks of the blanket assertion in "post-racial" thinking, particularly for the most economically vulnerable African American populations. The investigation concentrates how the American media present perpetual challenges of racial reconciliation at the sequel of race-centric "repression," even under an Obama administration that made an epitome of post-race thinking and so-called "the era of colorblindness" (Holling et al., 2014, p. 262). It is necessary to delimit the research through some questions.

Research Questions

To fulfill its aims, this study asks four questions.

1. How did the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC frame Obama's race-relations speeches and what are the prominent frames?
2. How did mainstream media mediate Obama's "a more perfect union" speech that especially addressed his relations with his former mentor-pastor, Jeremiah Wright?
3. What were the signs of political tones and racially biased inputs in the coverage of the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and sound bites of Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC?
4. How did mainstream media present Obama administration's messages/programs relative to socioeconomic gaps among racial groups in America?

Scholars such as Campbell et al. (2012) and Druckman et al. (2010) say a media frame is an interpretation or evaluation of an issue, event, or person that emphasizes certain of its features or consequences. A tone tells readers about the overall nature of a story—whether the story is complimentary, neutral or against the issue in question.

Following the research questions, this research tries to ascertain the features in the the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC articles and opinion pieces.

In the study, the researcher explored and analyzed some of the representative broadcast narratives and articles which covered issues, such as "perfect union," "race," "Black," "White," "equality," "rhetoric," "politics," and "economy," Obama, elections of

2008 and 2012 and aftereffects. This followed the patterns of issues to discuss and explain those in relation to theoretical and practical implications in the past and present day contexts of American life. This research, therefore, also looks at the scholarly works to consider the viewpoints of other research. Are they similar or different with regard to the viewpoints of the press—the *Journal*, the *Post*, the *Times* and TV outlets—Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC?

Scholars of Critical Race Theory and critical cultural views have addressed these issues, such as colorblindness, enlightened racism, and neoliberalism and relative phenomena that fortify the dominant ideology of racism and interests of the ruling class, as the section on theoretical considerations discusses.

Theoretical Considerations

This research attempts to mediate between the gaps of claims and counterclaims and the role of the media in respect to racial reconciliation progress in the United States on the basis of critical race theory, spearheaded by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012), Wise and their predecessors. As it analyzes the media artifacts, this research considers views of the scholars about the ideological polarization of the media and the audiences.

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) have distinguished five basic tenets of CRT: (i) racism is ordinary, not aberrational, (and) as society does business normally; (ii) color-equation— both physical and material—implicates that any white is superior to blacks; (iii) race (stereotype) is a product of social construction and the meanings related to race-relations change over time; (iv) no minority group has a single identity or is essential for sure all the time, while they are used by the whites according to necessity; and (v)

however, racial minority groups can cooperate among themselves to make unique voice(s) that the majority whites do not understand (pp. 7-10). CRT is assumed as a tool of competence to countervail prevailing social (individual and institutional) racism—from school systems to health care—to some extent. Derrell Enck-Wanzer (2012) argued for an alternative set of public sensibilities—different modes and ideals of stranger relationality—by rearticulating “the people” (p. 15) to enact a material rhetorical challenge to the dominant modern social imaginary.

Critical race theory not only questions conservative ideologies, it even takes on “the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012, p. 3).

Significance of the Study

Though the print texts and broadcast-bites on political rhetoric are highly communicative and symbolic, they are surprisingly under-explored in the literature of mediated messages and rhetorical studies. Obama’s persuasive approach usually intersects the controversial and emotional issues of race, class, gender, politics, and economy, which can make it an “oddity” (Rowland & Jones, 2011, p. 125). According to them, “Both media commentary and scholarly analysis have failed to explain adequately how he did it” (p.126). This makes it urgent to further demystify complexities of race relations and how honestly Obama reached out to people of all races. Knowles et al. (2009) argue, “...while the historic nature of Mr. Obama’s election provides a powerful symbol of change, we suggest that those interested in substantive change still have work to do” (p. 968).

This study is significant because it is one of the first to examine critically the effectiveness of the particular story types implicating the America's "genealogy of race" relations (McCann, 2014, p. 481), which has long been perceived as acrimonious.

Against the backdrop of the alleged "race-biased killings"—Martin, Brown, and many more—the study is also significant. It is also important because of the new Supreme Court decision rescinding a provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that required prior permission of the federal government to change state voting laws (Drehle, 2013). More so, another Supreme Court decision to uphold a ban on affirmative action in college admissions in Michigan might open the door for lawmakers or voters in other states to establish bans of their own (Paulson, 2014). In a latest development, the Trump Administration rescinded opposition to a key part of a Texas voter ID law that Texas' Republican-controlled Legislature passed with the alleged intention to disenfranchise poor and minority voters, as reported by ABC News citing the Associated Press (Rauf, February 27, 2017).

In cognizance of the critical views, this researcher has taken CRT as a theme to challenge the mediated notion that the election of Obama signifies racism's decline, end, or reversal. Racism is very complex and multi-faceted, and cannot be understood by just a single term or a few terms. Racism is intentional, unintentional, structural, institutional, subconscious, unconscious, and so on. Signifiers are inter-textual too. The critical views about Obama's hope for racial reconciliation have been discussed from different point of views by different scholars, but not much from the viewpoints of the critical race theory (CRT).

The goal of this study, however, is not empirically to determine the amount or cause of the media “that has a racial context” (Campbell et al., 2012, p. x). As Campbell et al., also believe a dialogue about race and media (“news” in their term) is “too uncommon;” this study can enhance a discussion to generate useful insights into the intricate ways that the media help focus on the racial relations.

Contributions

As the purpose of the study is to explore how the American media present perpetual challenges of racial reconciliation in their “post-race” thinking, this study might contribute to the scholarship of academic debate by scanning the frames and tones of the news media that usually reflect the public agenda. This research would expand the examination of the “insidious, damaging, and harmful” (Holling et al., 2014, p. 270) effects of news reports, which used the Jeremiah Wright controversy to influence audience attitudes and their evaluations of candidates, politicians, and colorlines.

Empirical studies further suggested that the voting patterns and final outcomes of the elections of the U.S. presidential elections still make effect on the basis of the candidate’s race and the media analysis of the performance in the presidential debates (Abedin & Rahman, 2016; Columb & Plant, 2011; Fridkin et al., 2007; Kaiser et al., 2009; Kay & Mayer, 2010; Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2011; Schmidt & Nosek, 2009).

In an environment of conflicting premises of the race-related issue, Barack Obama—avoiding or addressing—made an extraordinary and articulated approach from the position of a bi-racial man that helped him ascend to a historic White House. He represented and led the world’s richest and most powerful nation for two terms (2008-2016). Now, President Barack Obama made his adieu to the nation’s highest position

amid much praise and criticism from friends and foes, without any allegation of scandal. However, recently, the sitting president, Donald Trump, demanded that Congress, which is already investigating alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, also examine whether former President Barack Obama abused his executive powers in connection with that campaign. The rise of Donald Trump in the American context has not only widened the chasm in race-relations but also created a great wave of paranoid hatred that seems inescapable in our close-knit world. The Trump Administration has already declared many steps that would upend many steps taken by Obama Administration—which include immigration and healthcare issues. Additionally, House Republicans unveiled a Bill to repeal Obamacare (Cohn & Young, March 6, 2017).

Some scholars, politicians, and activists call the situation as the phenomena of the “age of anger” (Mishra, 2017). Some call it rise of vengeful nationalism, new racism, xenophobia, and misogyny. Carlos Lozada of the *Washington Post* (February 16, 2017) writes of “...the anger that gave us Trump—and that will long outlast him.” Another media personality, Van Jones, calls it “whitelash” (December 9, 2016). In an interview with CNN, Jones said, this was a whitelash against a changing country and against a Black president in part. Right or wrong, good or bad, Americans, especially African-Americans, would have to live with the Obama legacy, probably with more impact than many other presidents of recent times, because of his race.

With the past and extant realities of racial tensions in the American experience, this study would contribute to start an engaging dialogue on racial reconciliation and rethinking of mediating news on the relative problems and possibilities that is still infrequent in America.

The study will also help revisit means of realizing racial reconciliation and knit together the divided American citizens. It could help to further different approaches to the importance of reconciliation. American race relations have always been acrimonious. That issue needs to be addressed to realize a cohesive citizenship. Additionally, this study also considers a greater coalition among underprivileged classes, irrespective of color or race, which Barack Obama, as well as CRT scholars, emphasized.

In sum, the study explored Barack Obama's rhetorical message for racial reconciliation and framing of that message by the American mainstream news media. The study investigated Obama's messages as presented in texts and sound-bites of the news media, which included both the print and televisual—The *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC, respectively. The research included three major occasions of Obama's speeches—from 2008 to 2014—(1) “A More Perfect Union” speech (2008), (2) Washington March speech—50th anniversary (2013), and (3) LBJ Library—50th anniversary, Civil Rights Act of 1964 (2014). The study is significant because textual examination of stories and soundbites implicating America's race relations is rare. There is continuous police killings of unarmed black youths, the U.S. Supreme Court's rescinding a provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and questions about the necessity of Affirmative Action. The study would contribute to expand in-depth academic and public debate and expand examination of the “insidious, damaging, and harmful” effects of news reports across color-lines.

Chapter I (Introduction) covered the background of the issues, the purpose, theoretical considerations, significance and contributions of the study, as well as the

research questions related to the selected media outlets' framing and tones of Barack Obama's "a more perfect union" and "racial reconciliation" speeches.

After reviewing the pertinent literature in Chapter II, the focus of Chapter III will discuss the research design and methodology used to undertake the study.

Chapter IV covers an analysis of how selected media outlets framed the Jeremiah Wright "firestorm" as part of Barack Obama's attempt to address his relations with Pastor Wright.

Chapter V will focus on the political tones mediated in the selected media outlets' messages.

Chapter VI will cover civil and economic issues included in Barack Obama's speeches, as well as his actions, spanning 2008 through 2014, primarily impacting African Americans.

Chapter VII concludes the discussions about media frames and tones and includes Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This research cannot unpack the full complexity of the media coverage of Obama’s rhetoric for improving race relations in America. The media and scholars, in many cases, assume something that is as complex as the race issue. Each research can identify “partial” cause and effect of any conflicting issue and event and shed light on some particular factors, not the whole gamut of features within that. This research, thus, attempts to shed added light to larger discussions on racial relations, Obama’s approach on that, and the mass media’s role. There may be room for complexities, as many media scholars, though talented, face the same challenges addressing the role of media in race relations. The scope is too large, the media too complex, and journalists too prone to differences of thought about society, in the case of race relations. Campbell, LeDuff, Jenkins, and Brown (2012), argued that journalism routinely overlooked the impact of race and racism and had contributed to the notion that “we are actually living in a post-racial world” (p. x).

The construction and interpretation of race-relations in America has been a contentious issue for centuries, starting with White settlements in the 16th century’s Native America. A host of educators, scholars, and social thinkers who teach and work mostly in the fields of communication, intercultural communication, media, education and cultural studies have been discussing the issue almost for that long. In the domestic context, discussions usually dominate superiority and hegemony of “whiteness” over “others,” that constitute minorities such as Native Americans and African-Americans. Scholars and sociopolitical activists also explore the possibilities of deflating the ideology of white superiority that subjugated “others.”

African-Americans experienced the severity of slavery and lynching, instead of being imprisoned in the reservations, like the Native Americans. Also, they probably dared the most to unseat White supremacy by gaining political power. Finally, Barack Obama successfully rose to the highest position—the American presidency—attracting highly contended discussions as the media limelight. This study reviews the available scholarly works to see what convergence and what divergence they have in their views about Obama’s hope for racial reconciliation. Seemingly, scholars studied Obama’s speeches more than how much the media covered those.

In their book, *Race and News: Critical Perspectives*, Campbell, LeDuff, Jenkins, and Brown (2012) state the election of Barack Obama created the sense of a post-racial phase of American culture promising equal opportunity for all. The authors are “baffled by the discussions of American society” as post-racial and conclude “there is little evidence to support that belief” (p. x). According to them, journalism routinely overlooks the impact of race and racism and has contributed to the notion that “we are actually living in a post-racial world” (p. x). The authors identify a subtle yet pervasive form of racism affecting the attitudes and the public policies of American society.

Through the analysis of news coverage such as Hurricane Katrina, and the election of the first African-American president, the authors expose the ways in which news organizations use stereotypes to develop their stories. The examined cases show how not only what is said, but also what is omitted in the news stories, work to reinforce false social constructions about non-White Americans. In this regard, Felicitas Baruch (2014) says, “The notions of an unbiased American society are reinforced by news organizations relying on stereotypes and outdated journalistic values when covering

culture, race, and ethnicity” (p. 478). So, to understand “an anomaly of old racism that is simply carrying over into the post-racial moment” (Holling et al., 2014, p. 261), this researcher first offers a succinct discussion of the viewpoint of critical race theory (CRT) that highlights the socioeconomic, political and ideological agendas of race and racism.

Scholars such as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012), Mark Gooden (2012), Pierre Orelus (2013) and Tim Wise (2008, 2009) have given special emphasis on CRT to understand the news media’s role in dealing with race relations, especially in the United States. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an academic discipline focused upon the application of critical theory, a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power. Originated in the legal field, CRT has been used in many disciplines, such as media, education, and ethnic studies, among others, to examine the effects of the social construction of race on people of color. Almost all scholars derive their reference from Du Bois’ theory of “colorline,” Derrick Bell’s (1980, 2004) legal casebooks (as he taught law), and lately Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic’s (2012) *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.

In their overall views about CRT, Gooden (2012) and Orelus (2013) state that for the last three decades or more, scholars of CRT have critically and thoroughly examined the political and ideological agenda informing social construction of race and the institutionalization of racism, and their long-standing negative effects on people of color.

Orelus (2013) states that critical race theorists have looked at the manner in which race as a social construct has been utilized to limit the life chances of people of color through institutionalized discriminatory practices preventing many from having access to well-resourced schools with highly trained and culturally and racially sensitive teachers;

well-paid jobs; quality health care; and decent housing, to name a few. Orelus further maintains that CRT also examines the “microaggression,” a form of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Orelus, 2013, p. 576) of which “People of Color have been targeted because of the socio-historical misrepresentation of their race” (p. 576). An example of microaggression could include having a disagreement with a White colleague or a woman of color receiving “an insulting email from this colleague saying that she is at the deanship position because she is Black” (p. 576). These microaggressions perform “double duty”—conscious or unconscious, overt or covert, perceived as “positive” and negative— “ultimately re-solidify white understandings of racial dynamics and peoples while ignoring the materiality of race” (Holling et al., 2014, p. 266).

Referring to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), Gooden (2012) states that “a hallmark theme of CRT is that racism is ordinary instead of aberrational and deeply ingrained in U.S. society” (p. 68). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue that the system of White supremacy serves important purposes, both psychic and material. CRT builds on the insights of two previous movements, critical legal studies, and radical feminism, to both of which are owed a large debt. It also draws from certain European philosophers and theorists, such as Antonio Gramsci and Jacques Derrida, as well as from the American radical tradition exemplified by such figures as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Power and Chicano movements of the Sixties and early Seventies.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), critical race theory sprang up with the initiative of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado at the advent of the realization in 1970s that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled

and, in many respects, were being rolled back. As they “put their minds to the task... they were soon joined by others” (p. 2). According to them, there are five strands in CRT: (i) that racism is ordinary, not aberrational, (and) as society does business normally; (ii) that the white over color-ascendancy— both physical and material— implicates that any white is superior to blacks (High-school-grader vs. Ph.D. holder); (iii) that race (stereotypes) is a product of social construction and the meanings and depictions of race relations change over time; (iv) that racial identities are differential over time as necessary, meaning that no minority group has single identity or essential for sure all the time, while they are used by the whites according to necessity; and (v) however, racial minority groups, sometimes, can coexist and cooperate among themselves to make unique voice(s) that the majority whites do not understand. This is assumed as their competence to countervail prevailing social (individual and institutional) racism— from school system to healthcare— to some extent.

The CRT hallmark themes have sprung up in two main strands between the idealists and realists who are generally known as crits (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 27). Idealists are concerned with words, attitudes, intelligence, etc., from biological view, and the realists look at societal privileges and statuses from economic determinism. Material gain plays an important role through two hallmarks of socio-economic (class/cultural) status (SEC) that determines societal relations—money and education. John Fiske (2009) depicts the present socioeconomic class/cultural (SEC) system, from the viewpoint of monetary system, which still looks like,

The rich man in the castle
The poor man at the gate

God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.

Deliberating even the role of education, Fiske (2009) says the other main pillar in the capitalistic discourse is education, success in which is rewarding and immediate, not deferred. Education validates the accumulation of economic capital. A few meritocrats of the “other” social groups become able to use the relationship of the discourses of education and economics to make sense of their social experience and validate that with others of the upper ladder in the elite society.

The White elites accept the changes in civil rights if that suits their interest. A useful example is the U.S. Supreme Court’s verdict to desegregate school systems in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and its acceptance by the elites as they found that change advantageous for them. That was done in the backdrop of WWII, the Cold War and U.S. interest in the Third World to which the U.S. wanted to show a racial justice by the “guardian of democracy,” which was a weapon to encounter influences of Communism in the Third World.

Nevertheless, racism is very complex and multi-faceted, and cannot be understood by just a single term. For example, racism is intentional, unintentional, structural, institutional, subconscious, unconscious, and so on. CRT looks for solutions to the problems associated with racism—along education, jobs, housing, healthcare, food etc. Problems are rampant. It is very tough to fight stereotypes and representations in the media. However, as changes come slowly, interactions are needed among countervailing forces across different races as an alternative on the basis of common perspectives of their life.

In his “Speaking Treason Fluently Anti-Racist Reflections From An Angry White Male,” Tim Wise (2008), an American anti-racism activist and writer, covers the issues of apparent post-racial phenomena in the United States, especially, on the backdrop of individualistic achievements by a few African-Americans, such as Obama and Oprah Winfrey whom he calls “meritocrats.” Using an aphorism “Uh-Obama,” Wise states that Obama has earned his success by exempting his blackness, which means that he convinced the White voters (even the racists) that he is “not-so-Black” and he made them feel good and happy. He transcended his bi-racial identity in such a way that the white people won’t need to deal with the race issue as to how the white politicians never had have to deal with transcending their race. Obama made his triumph by sacrificing and bypassing the issue of the old and encompassing discriminations and hostilities of the white toward people of color, although Obama was forced to address the race issue during his presidential campaigns. Obama was able to reinforce a notion that racism is a matter of the past and he has no baggage of civil rights movement with him for which the whites rewarded him with presidency.

Furthering his views, Wise (2008) argues, Obama’s success proves that Obama’s “transcending race” as different from others is blatantly dangerous and offensive, and non-transcending of blackness remains a problem; it thus serves to reinforce negative feelings about blacks in general. Whites prove that they are powerful and creative in maintaining racial inequality. This deserves to move the political culture that limits change in inequality in a different direction beyond placement of a “deceptive” brown face on a seat historically reserved for Whites. On the other hand, whites deny their supremacy on the people of color.

Moreover, Wise (2008) draws attention to different surveys and the media projections that disseminate all facets of denials of racism and discriminations by the whites on the people of color. Many studies, including an Implicit Association Test (p.39), support cognitive internalization of the automatic idea of the white racial superiority and “betterness” vis-à-vis African-Americans. On one hand, white folks are on the denial that they are racists, but they will argue that most blacks are criminals, on the other. One survey by national Opinion Research Center in early 1990s found that about 60% of whites believed that blacks were generally lazier than other groups, 56% said they were prone to violence, and above 50% said they were less intelligent (p. 39). An Anti-Defamation League survey found three out of four whites conceiving at least one stereotype associated with African-Americans (p. 40). In another research, white respondents envisioned 95% blacks as drug users, whereas only 13% of them were drug users and about 70% were white, according to Center for Disease Control (p. 42). Even then, the whites claim that they have no anti-black biases. Over the course of mass communication research and journalism studies, scholars in the discipline have focused on the effects and functions of the mass media and their impact on the public.

In sum, many politicians and scholars justify their color-blindness as being liberal, while they remain silent in cases of discriminatory treatment of the people of color. The larger systemic and institutional realities of life in America suggest the ongoing salience of a deep-seated cultural malady—racism—that has neither been eradicated nor even substantially diminished by Obama’s victory (Wise, 2009). CRT scholars, however, find liberalism as inadequate for dealing with America’s racial problems because many liberals believe in colorblindness and neutral principles of

constitutional law. Rephrasing from Bonilla-Silva (2010, 2012) and Gallagher (2007), Orelus (2013) argues that despite the ideological complexity of race and especially the harmful effects it has had on the well-being of many racial groups, “many people are extremely polite using silence as a coping mechanism or the color-blind discourse to deny the socioeconomic, educational, and political implications of race” (p. 579). CRT scholars, therefore, “posit that concepts of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy must be challenged” (Gooden, 2012, p. 68).

Color-line Through the Critical Cultural Theory

Terming Obama’s reiteration of Martin Luther King’s “A More Perfect Union” as a case of “Unity and Duality,” Robert E. Terrill (2009, p. 363) said Obama began by portraying himself as an embodiment of double consciousness, but then invited his audience to share his doubled perspective, and finally modeled a doubled mode of speaking and acting that was captioned by the well-known maxim, the Golden Rule. Obama’s speech text thus contributed discursive resources required for the productive doubling necessary for the successful negotiation of contemporary public culture.

Rephrasing Du Bois’ century-old cultural view of “double consciousness” as he explained in *The Souls of Black Folk*, Terrill (2009) thought Obama shifted the burden of double consciousness from himself to his audience, and provided an especially powerful rhetorical resource that strained against the monoscopic and mono vocal norms that currently cripple democratic life. It was possible for Obama to invite “his audience to share the doubled perspective that is afforded by his own bifurcated body, making clear that racial reconciliation cannot be had by proxy” (p. 365). On the other hand, Terrill (2009), explaining the Obama tone from the point of Danielle Allen’s (2004) view, said

the tone had a recurrent trope of “oneness” of American culture, which should be entirely homogenous, that our experiences are interchangeable. “Analyses of Obama’s rhetoric, in general, and of this speech in particular, have focused on the importance of contextualizing his public address within existing traditions or patterns” (p. 365).

In earlier studies about America’s race problems, John Hatch(2003, 2006)reflecting on Du Bois’ view of “the problem of the colorline,” stated that although many members of society wish it away or deny its continued relevance, racial inequality and antagonism are alive, as attested by recent lawsuits seeking reparations for slaves’ descendants. Accusations of white racism or black “reverse racism” fly freely in the Land of the Free, where Affirmative Action for equal opportunity generates heated debates in this nation dedicated to the proposition that “all men are created equal.” Citing sociologist O. Patterson, Hatch stated that discussions about race in the United States today resemble a “dialogue of the deaf” (Hatch, 2003). So, there are questions such as “Has Obama tried to initiate that “deaf dialogue”?”

Peter Kuryla (2011) maps out a metaphorical American island of the “color blind” in law, public rhetoric and culture, in the process locating the first black president of the United States on it, evaluating the claim that his presidency represents a colorblind or post-racial politics. Barack Obama rejects color blindness as a fact in the present yet gestures to its Bbetter history” (his modern transposing of Lincoln’s “better angels”) while refusing any theoretical resolution of the idea. Obama, in public pronouncements and by sheer fact of his being and his biography, reveals the epistemic irony of the colorblind idea, its persistence amid the conditions of its impossibility. The epistemology

of color-blindness has taken another subtle turn through transcendence or passing that has been pointed out by different scholars.

Change and “Passing”: “Class” as a Code Word for “Race”

According to Myra Mendible (2012), the fact that Americans elected a mixed-race president presumably means that we have “moved beyond” race and its discontents. Any mention of systemic inequalities or lingering hostilities can now be easily discounted by pointing to the fact that the son of an American white woman and a Kenyan Muslim was elected president of the United States. Post-race discourse here serves to bolster the claims of capitalist meritocracy: the only barrier to individual wealth and success is a poor work ethic or some other character flaw. Mendible (2012) analyzed three developments in the wake of Obama’s election: the emergence of “whiteness” as an endangered identity, the prevalence of “class” as a code word for “race,” and the reconfiguration of “passing” and miscegenation tropes in political discourse.

Dwelling on anti-Obama racist coded propaganda, including that of a Hillary Clinton strategist who said, “I cannot imagine America electing a president during a time of war who is not at his center fundamentally American in his thinking and in his values,” Mendible (2012, p. 3) said whites still use fear-mongering tactics, but these strategic invocations of difference rarely mention “race” outright. Rather, they found an excuse to defer reference to the longstanding duologue of White and Black. The discourse of “Americanness” in the age of Obama invokes “patriotic” themes associated with historically Anglo-American myths of cultural belonging. This discourse repeatedly longs for a return to so-called “traditional American values” and for a time when America ruled the world proudly and “without apology.” It invokes an imagined community united by

religious (Judeo-Christian) and economic (capitalist/free market) kinship. This Mendible termed as “passing” for “blacks” as white, the only way that a light-skinned African-American man or woman could gain access to the privileges, citizenship, and freedoms granted to whites (2012, p. 13). Mendible considers the ways that these rhetorical sleights-of-hand exploit post-racial discourse in order to dismantle decades of progressive civil rights legislation in the United States. Meta Carstarphen (2009) found that “although race exploded as a key issue in the 2008 political season, reporters had a longstanding recognition, even unstated, that politics and race were intertwined subjects” (p. 412).

The concept of reconfiguration for change and “passing” through has also been expressed by Nakayama and Martin (1999) in their book, *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*. They state, “We find ourselves at a unique moment in intercultural communication and cultural studies and the reconfiguration of racial relations in the United States (p. viii).” As Alcoff and Mendieta’s book, *Identities* (2003) emphasized the postmodern approach on the human identities vis-à-vis “essentialist” tendencies, Dill and Zambrana’s book, *Emerging Intersections* (2009) also discussed postmodernism as a challenge to that tendency to “more complex and nuanced notions of the meaning, nature, and construction of both individual and group identities (p. 278). Ivie and Giner (2009) looked at Obama’s effort as an American exceptionalism in a democratic idiom and transacting the mythos of change in the 2008 presidential campaign.

Michael Silverstein (2011) looked at the messages of the 2008 presidential elections and found many negative and stereotypical messages, some of which saw the reemergence of McCarthyite tactics. So the “message” was revealed to come back in the 2008 electoral cycle as a negative “message”—in fact, most visibly in the very same

negative “messages” of the primary campaigns. The Republican side even made some McCarthyite tactical additions from a bygone era in its last, increasingly desperate phase of “robo-calls” and anonymous mailbox and windshield flyers. But what should be learned is that “message” is sustained in the completely semiotically saturated communicative milieu, of which political campaigns are made, via mediatization, to address those at the peripheries of this highly professional milieu, its addressees or targets among the electorate. “Message” can seem, from time to time, to recede into the background when its unimpeachable “truthiness” (Stephen Colbert of Comedy Central) projects into and sustains a kind of genuineness or at least plausibility; when these conditions are strained, even technologically sophisticated “message” machinery becomes embarrassingly visible – and less effective, as the case-study of 2008 shows. The media messages usually feel right to all characteristics—from racial-stereotype to tactical silence—depicted in the CRT. The next part of this chapter explores how the media plays critical role in influencing public opinion, especially race-relations.

Role of the Media

H. D. Clarke et al. (2011) looked at Obama’s rhetoric and oratory that gave him an advantage over his opponents. According to them, Obama received very favorable coverage from much of the major print and electronic media, e.g., *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, CNN, MSNBC, NBC (p.456). Even conservative media, such as Fox News, picked up issues to cover. Many commentators waxed rapturous about Obama’s oratorical skills rivaling Ronald Reagan’s and perhaps not even since FDR had America heard so articulate, intelligent, thoughtful, and compelling a speaker. His widely covered campaign stops drew overflow crowds in the thousands, and

his major addresses, such as his Philadelphia speech on race and his moving victory speeches at the beginning and end of his campaigns in Iowa and North Carolina, respectively, were widely praised.

Media Framing of Rhetoric and Race

In the world of the mass media, a frame is generally a determinant to tell the readers/audiences about the nature of attribution of issues in a news story. Scholars, such as Campbell et al. (2012) observe that the news media, because of their position at the intersection of various social, political, and economic environments, becomes a crucial forum in which interested actors compete to establish the ideas and opinions to be accorded serious weight. Framing is related to object salience of a news item or event—how that is presented to the audience—in effect telling to determine how the public think about item(s) in the news (Bedingfield & Anshari, 2014; Denham, 2014; Shen et al., 2014). This is a manner of presentation that communicators exploit to pass along information in a way of highlighting issue(s) that echoes with existing, fundamental perspectives among their audiences, or even beyond that. Rephrasing views of other scholars, such as D’Angelo and Kuypers (2010), and Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), Daniela Dimitrova and Petia Kostadinova (2013) say that framing is based on the underlying assumption that the news media construct reality for the public, which includes citizens, policy makers, and journalists themselves.

From the rhetorical point of view, frames can be found at two levels of analysis: at the level of media texts and also at the level of audience cognitions and interpretations. Using a metaphoric phrase for the media content “just like windows on houses,” Brian Bowe, Tsuyoshi Oshita, Carol Terracina-Hartman, and Wen-Chi Chao (2014, p. 158)

observe that news content is contained within a frame and the construction of the frame itself alters what people are able to see and, ultimately, how they make sense of it. This means narratives of a (news) story have “rhetorical structures or stylistic devices that allow newsmakers to effectively communicate the frames” (Shen et al., 2014, p. 100), such as human-interest frame, episodic frame.

Scholars also hold that the news media cover mundane activities, especially “politics with gusto” (Hays, 2013, p. 206). While the public speech is a powerful etching tool of moments, the “nation’s mass media love rhetorical moments above all other moments and, in representing them to us, make these moments doubly rhetorical” (Hart, 1987, p. 6). R. P. Hart and Suzanne Daughton (2005) synthesizing works of scholars on the rhetoric and media, said that the media “might urge us to catalogue the pictures contained in the political advertisement alongside its words and then gauge how these different forces complement one another,” by which the authors meant “the verbal frames the visual in policy-relevant ways” (p. 180). By blending views of the “iconologists,” they further said that basic visual elements, which are called “memes” and missing photographic elements, which are called “elisions” deal with the “visual grammars” (p. 180). By both, they mean that there are both inclusions and exclusions of others in the media coverage that affect how people perceive film or television, which many view as “a reactive medium” (Billings et al., 2014, p. 53). Reaction may be done by overall mentions—overplaying, or underplaying, or by no mention, and also by time clock.

Visual Images

About the concept visual images, scholars, such as Karen Hoffman (2011), Wendy Atkins-Sayre (2010) say that the visual element, that fast mode of manipulating identity, strengthens the identity argument because the visual is often perceived as a more powerful form of evidence than written argument. Hoffman speaks of the imagery, especially in the U.S. presidential elections, that it is dominated by images and personality-based arguments. Atkins-Sayre argues, one of the characteristics of the visual image that makes it particularly effective as a means of proof is the “window on the world” way that we view photographs. Furthering the argument Atkins-Sayre says, “Although we recognize that there are ways to manipulate photographs, there is still some power to seeing a seemingly authentic visual representation of a concept” (p. 315). The text and the image are rarely separated in rhetoric, even in the press. While, in developing an argument through writing, one needs to walk the reader step by step through an argument, the visual can provide clearer worldview and faster proof of the claim, making “our ethics, and our sense of the rational” (Ivie, 2005, p. 89).

In offering a method of reading visual images, Sonja Foss (2005) argues that visual criticism might account for the nature, function, and/or evaluation of imagery. Foss further says that the critic must look at both the presented elements (the physical features of the image) and the suggested elements (the concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from the presented elements). The function of the image, according to Foss, is the “action the image communicates” (p. 147). Although Foss does not comment on discursive elements of the message, it is reasonable to assume that any accompanying words will affect a reading of the visuals, adding to the rhetorical act.

Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan, and Diane Hope (2008) argue that to study visual rhetoric, researchers should not study “images or artifacts in isolation from larger textual or performative contexts in which an audience might encounter them, but rather in precise relation to those contexts that give them shape and meaning” (p. 2). Hoffman (2011) and Sayre (2010) suggest the critics must account for both the visual and the discursive elements of messages.

K. J. Vaughan (2014) states authors frame their stories to make implications for their audiences and society. “They decide how the narrative is told, where the emphasis is placed, and place a story into context for a reader” (p.11). Analyzing the functions of frameworks and their relation to society from Erving Goffman’s (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization*, Vaughan (2014) explains that when an individual recognizes a particular event, he/she tends to imply that in his/her response and employ one or more frameworks as effect. A frame is a vehicle to interpret the world around us. The frame “allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21, cited in Vaughan, 2014, p. 11) because a frame focuses a receiver’s attention on a specific area of concentration that enables us to build their worldviews.

How can media framing can influence a reader’s views of the world? Paul D'Angelo and Jim Kuypers (2010) explain that news frames work through a compilation of other authors’ work. Kuypers (2010) states, “The power of frames subtly induces us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways; they make some aspects of our reality more noticeable than other aspects” (p. 300, cited in Paul D'Angelo and Jim Kuypers, 2010). If frames make one idea stand out among the rest, they have the ability

to alter worldviews. Kuyper argues, "frames act to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies" (p. 301). If a frame engages in any of these acts, it has the ability to persuade an audience and result in real-world effects.

Matthew Nisbet (2010) states, "frames simplify complex issues by lending greater importance or weight to certain considerations and arguments over others" (p. 47). A media frame assembles an understanding for an audience. This frame constructs a reality "by connecting the mental dots for the public" (Nisbet, p. 47). By bringing all the pieces together, a frame presents a specific view of an event. Nisbet refers to sociologist William Gamson and his colleagues who conceptualize that "a frame organizes central ideas on an issue" (Nisbet, p. 47). By organizing a central idea, there is subjectivity at play because one decides what the central idea is and how to organize it for their audience.

These frames have the ability to enter the public sphere and change an audience's worldviews. Arguing on the framing of politics as strategy and game, Aalberg, Strömbäck, and de Vreese (2012) stated that news media have a strong tendency to frame politics as a strategic game rather than to focus on political issues. According to them, the framing of politics as a strategic game (known as horse race also) is characterized by a focus on questions related to who is winning and losing, the performances of politicians and parties, and on campaign strategies and tactics. In this way, the press makes "strategy schema" where "journalists focus on who wins and how, and candidates are seen as performers" (p. 166) like in a game or in a war. In this case, the dominant framing is identified according to the amount of time, frequency and order of appearance of the various elements. Media contents signify those frames, tones, or overtones etc. of the

rhetoricians or the reformed rhetoric of their own. In short, media as a reproducer may have selective and biased languages, and views of the social reality.

Role of the Citizens/Rhetors and Vice-Versa

Although the reporters do their jobs by their judgment, the citizens accept or reject that from their own “frame of mind,” in most cases. However, a dominant frame can play a big role in people’s decision-making process (Klar et al., 2013, pp. 174-175). Supporting this view, Travis Ridout (2013) says, “Many news organizations nowadays provide a point of view, something that many news consumers applaud” (p. 1). The news media guide people to think about, in one hand, and tune to people’s choice, on the other. Though the media acquired a lot of distrust in the last 40 years among the public (Ladd, 2013), the media still make “frames in communication” of politics or events by “words, images, phrases, and presentation style a speaker uses to relay information” (Klar et al., 2013, p. 174). The media uses or reframes the speaker’s points of reference reflecting some tones that also conveys consequences.

Information-processing research also suggests that media cues about certain issues or events play a large part in what we consider to be important. Johanna Dunaway, Regina Branton and Marisa Abrajano (2010) in their study on content analyses of newspaper coverage of immigration and Gallup public opinion data over a 12-month period (January–December 2006) found that the media set the agenda for public attention on the weight the public gives to certain issues. Druckman et al., (2010) say a media frame is an interpretation or evaluation of an issue, event, or person that emphasizes certain of its features or consequences. A tone tells reader about the overall nature of a

story—whether the story is complimentary, neutral or against the issue in question— a question that sets public agenda too.

As a media affect tool, framing theory is closely related to the agenda-setting function of the media. Framing is the second stage of agenda setting. Inherent in the theories of functions and effects of the mass media, agenda-setting theory posits that the news media set the agenda for public opinion (decision-making process) by highlighting certain issues in both form and content. McCombs and Shaw (1972), who developed the theory of agenda-setting theory, assert that the mass media have a strong influence on what audiences consider the important issue of the day. In this way, the media not only provide information for the people to consider some events as the most important issues but also promote certain issues or demote some relative to their policies and purposes.

Agenda setting describes the process by which the news media shows the public what is important by giving more salience to certain events and issues over others, what is known as framing. Mark Harmon and Robert Muenchen (2009) framing is “a unifying thread, a link between methods of understanding content and techniques of measuring [media] effects” (p. 13). About the media agenda, McQuail (2010) argues that there may be occasions when either the event organizers or the media themselves are in a position to influence the way news is reported by fulfilling their own wishes or expectations.

According to Robert Entman (2010), the media do not only tell the public what to think but also tell what to think about. In many cases, the media prefer tactical stories to more in-depth policy coverage. The media also focus on certain aspect of an event, what is known as priming. According to Dunaway et al. (2010), when an event or issue is not a daily or immediate concern “constant media attention primes issue awareness by making

it more accessible in the mind or by increasing the issue's perceived importance" (p. 361). Even if journalists quest for "impartiality" (Bedingfield & Anshari, 2014, p. 81), the news coverage may favor one over another, being influenced by sociocultural experience and notions.

Media Frames in Race and Culture

About media frames that are embedded in culture, Baldwin Van Gorp (2007) argues that journalists know the "values, narratives and archetypes" (p. 85) that defines our society, thus making frames easy to use to influence an audience. Because these culturally embedded frames are readily at the authors' fingertips, they sometimes unknowingly use the frames in the news. By using these loaded tools, journalists have the ability to persuade their audience, even in a strictly news report.

Renita Coleman's (2009) study with journalism students in two southern colleges finds ethical reasoning as one of the most pressing problems in journalism. One new component this research adds to moral development theory is race—the race of the people making ethical decisions, as well as the race of the people they are making decisions about. If journalists' ethical reasoning about some ethnic groups is of lower quality than others, then negative media portrayals will persist. Coleman's present study finds that race did not influence black students' thinking the way it did white journalism students in an earlier study using the same instrument. Coleman finds that "Today's media stereotypes are even more sinister than the overt racism of the past by virtue of their subtlety" (p. 347). Such portrayals reinforce racial stereotypes in all of society and make the elimination of racism in favor of tolerance, open-mindedness, equality, and universal justice—all of which describe the principled stages of ethical reasoning—an

increasingly elusive goal. In many cases, elusiveness ensue through the discursive structures of selectivity that Hoerl (2012) called “selective amnesia”.

A recent experimental study by Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson (2014) revealed that White Americans, in the context of racial demographic shift, preferred interactions with their own racial group over minority racial groups, expressed more automatic pro-White/antiminority bias, and more “negative attitudes toward Latinos, Blacks, and Asian Americans” (p. 9). The economic benefit or share of power for the minority groups, especially the blacks, most probably will remain ‘trickling down’ in terms of “Keynesian neoliberalism,” not in terms of West’s (or Chomsky’s, or Wise’s) “an insurrectionary and revolutionary concept” (p. 367). The future may take a further bend to “selective amnesia,” by which Kristen Hoerl (2012) meant “discursive structures which routinely negate and silence those who have challenged systemic racial injustice in recent US history” (p.180). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue that since racial identities are differential over time, minority groups will be (and are being) used by Whites according to necessity in the competitive marketplace.

Rhetoric of the Persona and Rhetoric of the Media

Scholars observe that the news media, because of their position at the intersection of various social, political, and economic environments, become a crucial forum to establish the ideas and opinions. Sperry and Sperry (2007) state that the media have played a central role throughout the history of American elections by “crafting our meaning making and shaping our decision making” (p. 366) from the election campaign messages by the candidates and their parties, though sometimes candidates themselves craft the “impression” in the media. In this regard, they showed an example of the 1800

Providential Detection cartoon, in which the American Eagle saved the Constitution from Jefferson, who was blamed to be overly inspired by French revolutionary values. Domke (2000), paraphrasing views of Altschull (1984), stated that the “conception of the social order” suggested by media content as a result of varied interactions had substantial implications, particularly in a domain, such as race relations.

Kristen Hoerl (2012) maintains that the mainstream press frequently characterized the election of President Barack Obama the first African-American U.S. President as the realization of Martin Luther King’s dream, thus crafting a postracial narrative of national transcendence. Hoerl further argues that this routine characterization of Obama’s election functions to reinforce hegemonic narratives of national progress and unity. Terming those views as “reductionist narratives” Hoerl (2012) further says, “News media demonstrate how popular and political discourses overlapped and reinforced one another to give meaning to the election as the culmination of the civil rights struggle” (p. 185), whereas, the Martin Luther King Center objected to this type of characterization. An earlier study of Charlton McIlwain (2007) stated, “The role leadership plays in news reporting during the 2008 presidential campaign cycle will likely be compounded by the likely framing of Obama’s candidacy in racial terms” (p. 70), and thus making both race and leadership salient factors of the media and public rhetoric.

According to Fee-Alexandra Hasse (2008), the concept of rhetoric has negative connotations and the prevailing dominance of logic and rational approaches are opposed to rhetoric. However, the linguistic setting of meanings of rhetoric (even of the speakers) establishes a homogeneous image as a part of politics in the mass media. The texts of the rhetoric denote (also connote) a specific meaning by double decoding (first by the

speaker, then by the writer). The writer/journalist is usually selective and favors “news in nuce” (Hasse, 2008, p. 9).

Christian Kock (2006) argued that rhetoric has the functions of performing works and attaining goals with words in different properties as a means of persuasion (an Aristotelian view). Even rhetoric is used by the practitioners in the public sphere, by the people for their gratification, with a functionalist eye according to their goals and purposes. Kock also refers to Foucault’s views of public discourse that is used to maintain a hegemony that is to preserve and extend power structures, usually by the representatives of the modern capitalism. So, mere rhetoric [in our case of Obama’s] cannot remove the uneven power hegemony.

Color Continues to Matter

A longitudinal study by Kaiser et al., (2009) showed that there is a notion that Obama’s victory may represent a setback for remedying racial injustice. After Obama’s election, the study participants concluded that racism was less of a problem and that anyone can achieve success through effort and perseverance. Of importance, after the election, participants perceived that there was less to be done in the service of achieving racial equality and they expressed less support for policies that address injustice such as affirmative action, school desegregation, and diversity policies. Rephrasing studies of Curry et al. (2006), the Pew Research Center (2008), and Williams and Jackson (2005), Kaiser et al., (2009) said their findings have similarities to previous findings that were disconcerting given that there are pervasive racial disparities in virtually all aspects of American society. For example, Black men over the age of 18 are seven times as likely to be incarcerated as White men of the same age range, Black families are nearly three times

as likely to live below the poverty line as White families, and, compared to Whites, Blacks are 30 percent more likely to die from both heart disease and cancer. “If Americans assume that racism is less of a problem now that they have elected a Black president, their misperception could make it difficult to garner resources and support for efforts that are so desperately needed to address these racial disparities” (Kaiser et al., 2009, p. 558).

Ward Kay and Jeremy Mayer (2010) in their study based on a telephone survey of registered voters in Virginia two weeks before the 2008 general election found that race-based cultural issues remain despite an economic crisis. The survey was conducted at the Center for Social Science Research at George Mason University. According to Kay and Mayer (2010), research suggests that an issue in a presidential campaign can remain influential even when the media and campaigns are not discussing or addressing the issue, even when the candidates or parties do not differ greatly on the issue, such as immigration attitudes.

Abedin and Rahman (2016) explored the media framing of the race issues, especially in the Deep South, since Obama failed to win votes in the region in both the 2008 and 2012 elections. The study, based on the 2012 presidential election, found that there were symptoms that the present generation is destined to pass on the problems of race to another generation. Tahsin Shams (2015) found in her study that “while the race debate is becoming increasingly polarized, hidden backlashes against the civil rights achievements are ongoing in law, housing, education, and so on” (p. 290). The author argued that proponents of the decline of race argument misconceptualized race and applied methodologies that failed to measure the hidden ways in which structural racism

still operated against African Americans today. The recent resurgence of “white nationalism” in the U.S., as Jack Jenkins and Dylan Petrohilos (2016) indicated on the basis of a Southern Poverty Law Center study, was incredible to many. William J. Barber (March 12, 2016) thought that it was not mere Trumpism; it is inherent in the historic polemics of segregation with the special texture of the South, pitting us-against-them politics with a perverse idea of morality. Some scholars, researchers, activists called it Trumpism, while media personality Van Jones called it “whitelash” (December 9, 2016).

On Racial Egalitarianism

Eric Knowles, Brian Lowery, and Rebecca Schaumberg (2009) said, “Without doubt, Mr. Obama drew support from individuals who hoped his victory would symbolize, and even facilitate, the dissolution of White-over-Black dominance in the United States” (p. 965). But in a longitudinal study before the presidential election in 2008 on different racial views surveyed online, they found evidence that Americans’ willingness to vote for a Black candidate for the President of the United States is not necessarily evidence of their racial egalitarianism. Participants were recruited from a database, maintained by the Stanford Graduate School of Business, of individuals interested in completing online studies. Thus, there is reason to question whether Mr. Obama’s election even signals the beginning of a postracial era, in which racial disparities will simply wither away. While the historic nature of Mr. Obama’s election provides a powerful symbol of change, “we suggest that those interested in substantive change still have work to do” (p. 968).

Kathleen Schmidt and Brian A. Nosek (2010) found implicit (and explicit) racial attitudes barely changed during Barack Obama’s presidential campaign and early

presidency. Their study, with a very large, heterogeneous sample collected daily for 2.5 years prior to, during and after the 2008 election season (N = 479,405), observed very little evidence of systematic change in implicit and explicit racial attitudes overall, within subgroups, or for particular notable dates. According to them, “Malleability of racial attitudes – implicit or explicit – may be conditional on more features than the mere presence of high-status counter-stereotypic exemplars,” (p. 308) such as Obama. They further state, “The seeming absence of his influence challenges claims that a single high-status Black exemplar can decrease or eliminate implicit preferences for Whites over Blacks” (p. 314).

Revising the Obama effect, Corey Columb and E. Ashby Plant (2011) found in an experimental study with non-Black psychology students that participants who were only primed with negative Black exemplars showed more implicit negativity toward Black people compared to the control group. Participants exposed to the same negative Black exemplars and then to Obama showed a decrease in implicit racial bias levels compared to those in the negative exemplar-only condition, providing experimental evidence that exposure to Obama can decrease implicit racial bias levels. These findings indicate that even subtle exposure to a positive, counter-stereotypic exemplar can reduce implicit prejudice.

Astonishingly, a study of Tetsuya Matsubayashi and Michiko Ueda (2011) based on analyses of precinct- and individual-level data of some states conducted by shows that White voters who are likely to be informed about candidates vote less often for the Democratic party when the candidate is Black, whereas vote choices of White voters who are unlikely to be informed about candidates are unaffected by a candidate’s race. Herbert

Weisberg and Christopher Devine (2010) found that voting in the 2008 election became historic when the majority of voters cast their ballot for an African American candidate. However historic the election results, it does not mean that race was irrelevant to voting. Racial attitudes had important effects on voting, which is not surprising given the history of race in America. Their study found that “Indeed, racial attitudes had more direct effects on voting in 2008 than in comparable elections when any effect they had worked through party identification and attitudes toward the candidates” (p. 578). The result was found by analyzing the 2008 American National Election Studies traditional September–October pre-election survey and November–December post-election survey. George W. Bush’s mishandling of economy had played an important role in Obama’s rhetoric of change and improvement for which newly energized African Americans and Hispanics voted him to power. They minimized “McCain’s advantages on party identification, leadership, and integrity, among white voters” (Weisberg and Devine, 2010, p. 579).

Socio-Economic Implications of Race and Class

M. C. Bligh and J. C. Kohles (2009) considered that Obama’s ascendance was rooted in charismatic leadership that might help him capitalize on his early compelling appeal, as well as avoid the pitfalls of charisma that have plagued some of his predecessors. They identified four charismatic leadership qualities in Obama: (i) the role of charismatic content and delivery style (soothing and to the level of common people); (ii) the role of crisis and uncertainty during Bush reign (he has left the country in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression); (iii) the role of “follower readiness” for charisma (anxious followers socially construct and project qualities on a person to help allay their fears and Obama was able to give the followers that assurance); (iv) and

looking forward by followers: Obama can succeed (followers have yearned for a charismatic “larger than life” leader in a crisis, e.g., FDR and Churchill during WWII, and Obama followers found in him a second Roosevelt. Following Bligh et al. (2009), Lewis-Beck and Nadeau (2011) think that three economic dimensions – valence, position, and patrimony – appear to have contributed considerably to the likelihood of an Obama vote. It has been said that Obama won the election because of the economy (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2009b). These results suggest the fuller meaning of that conclusion, revealing the multiple and independent facets of economic vote calculation. Michelitch et al., (2012) also found that most respondents conditioned their prospective economic evaluations on 2008 presidential elections outcomes.

Thomas Scotto, Harold Clarke, Allan Kornberg, Jason Reifler, David Sanders, Marianne Stewart, and Paul Whiteley (2010) in their study (data from a six-wave national panel survey of the American electorate) found that the worsening economic condition under President George W. Bush was the dominant issue in the 2008 presidential election that Obama won. Although the massively negative public reaction to increasingly perilous economic conditions was not the only factor at work in 2008, dynamic multivariate analyses show that mounting worries about the economy played an important role in fueling Barack Obama’s successful run for the presidency. In a separate analysis, Thomas J. Scotto (2012) states that “Electoralates tend to punish parties who happen to be leading their nations when times are bad, and, from time to time, they reward parties for economic success” (p. 529) that has also happened across Europe, including Turkey in recent years. In the same way, voters in the U.S. took their way of

making a political choice to reward Democratic Party nominee Barack Obama to elect a president in 2008 who promised change (improvement) of the worsening economy.

Bryan Dettrey and Harvey Palmer (2013), R.P. Fuller and R.E. Rice (2014) however, in their studies found that partisanship of the voters play a stronger role than the economic uncertainty. Dettrey and Palmer's (2013) study based on the survey of American National Election Study's retrospective economic evaluations says that voters with higher levels of political sophistication will engage in more information acquisition and be better equipped to sort through the milieu of economic information. According to them, "The wide range of economic signals and the mixed messages conveyed by the mass media and candidates running for office introduces a level of complexity that can create uncertainty in the economic perceptions of voters" (p. 4). Even then, individual-level heterogeneity in the strength of the economic voting relationship is largely due to stronger partisans voting more consistently with their national economic evaluation than to more sophisticated voters being more policy-oriented by holding the incumbent party more electorally accountable for macroeconomic performance.

To the contrary, an earlier study by Kristin Michelitch, Marco Morales, Andrew Owen and Joshua Tucker (2012) found that economic issues do not matter much in the voters' decision-making choice in the presidential elections. They found the results by analyzing the 2008 U.S. presidential election and through a replication in the 2008 Ghanaian Presidential Election, which they took as a diverse setup. They used data from the 2008 American National Election Studies According to them, despite the economic turmoil of the time, a typical study of vote choice in the 2008 U.S. presidential election would (falsely) find little evidence that voters' opinions about the future state of the

economy affected their vote choice. Michelitch et al., (2012) argue that “this misleading conclusion results from serious measurement error in the standard prospective economic evaluations survey question” (838). However, even a previous study by Cindy D. Kam (2009), who analyzed U.S. voting patterns from 1980 through 2004, found that “men and women alike vote sociotropically—and to essentially the same degree” (p. 615). Even if economic conditions have not impacted the voter choice in the Obama’s White House success, worse economic situation has long been prevailing among the people of color in the United States. So, the voters finally considered a change and elected Obama.

The next part looks at why Obama took an apologetic approach in his election campaign as mentioned by many scholars, such as Hermon George, Jr. (2013), Kasie Roberson and Stacey Connaughton (2010).

Obama’s “Apologia”

Many scholars, such as Hermon George, Jr. (2013) and Kasie M. Roberson and Stacey L. Connaughton, (2010) held that Obama’s “perfect union” speech was a form of apologia, especially for his relationship with his former mentor-pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Obama had to do this because he was fallen into the dilemma of a “double-bind” (Enck-Wanzer, 2011, p. 28). Darrel Enck-Wanzer meant that failure to acknowledge race left Obama open to critiques of African-Americans, in one hand, and acknowledging race or racism risked marking himself “different” in the eyes of White Americans, which in turn, would have jeopardized his election. Obama managed the situation craftily, and that induced many to designate him with a charismatic quality (Trent et al., 2011, p. 88). George Edwards III (2012) does not agree with the concept of charisma and contends that

it was Obama's ability to frame issues in ways that would favor his preferred policy options.

Examining Obama's race equality rhetoric, especially the "perfect union" address, arguing on both sides of colorline, John Murphy (2011) stated that Obama articulated not a people in bondage, but a nation on the move, a march toward a goal, a moral progress, and a transformation of American society as a Biblical Joshua generation. Rowland and Jones (2011) found Obama's speech as "the most powerful sacred-secular narrative in American society, the American Dream" (p.127).

Studying transcripts of media interviews, press conferences, and released statements from January–April 2008, as well as a speech given by Senator Obama on March 18, 2008, covered by different media outlets such as CNN and CBC, Kasie M. Roberson and Stacey Connaughton (2010), found apologetic forms in the statements and speeches. Roberson and Connaughton (2010) stated that during the 2008 presidential primary campaign, the supporters of Senators Clinton, McCain, and Obama made a number of controversial public statements. According to them, after these remarks became public and a focus of media attention, the candidates and their surrogates "engaged in what we term apologia of association" (p. 181). By "apologia of association," the authors meant that a candidate does not campaign alone. Each candidate is attached to a robust campaign organization and to a series of supporters all of whom are rhetors. "All have the potential to create exigencies that prompt candidates to engage in apologia and these individuals, as representatives of the campaign, may engage in apologia themselves" (p.183), say Roberson and Connaughton.

Roberson and Connaughton (2010) explain, for Barack Obama, the “apologia of association” came from Obama himself and his surrogates, such as Samantha Power, a foreign policy advisor to Senator Obama, who referred to Senator Hillary Clinton as a “monster,” for her “racially-loaded” criticism of Obama. Power later apologized for her actions and resigned from the Obama campaign team “to differentiate her actions as atypical for herself and explained that her candidate did not share her same views” (p.182). The researchers further stated, “Obama and his campaign engaged in apologia, defending his association with his long-term pastor Reverend Jeremiah Wright, following the circulation of excerpts of several controversial sermons Wright had given” (p.182).

Conducting a critical study of Barack Obama’s first campaign for, and election to, the U.S. presidency covered by multimedia, Hermon George, Jr. (2013) characterized the Obama apologia a “[race-neutral] tactical playbook,” a variant of deracialization, and colorblind racism as a package of neoliberalism (p. 240). By referring to Obama critics from both the left and right wings, such as Adolph Reed, Jr. (2008), Frederick C. Harris (2012), Paul Street (2010), Tariq Ali (2010), Fox News anchors, and the Rush Limbaugh Show, George, Jr. (2013) found that to all of them Obama was apologetic for both his policy options at home and abroad. The approach of Obama’s “race-neutrality” has been observed especially by his left-wing critics as a “rupture with [W.E.B.] Du Bois and the progressive wing of black intellectuals” (p. 264).

In this apologetic context, George, Jr (2013) gave an example from Professor Anthony Monteiro (2010), who “even likens Washington’s 1895 Atlanta Compromise speech to Obama’s 2008 Philadelphia race speech” (p. 264). Reiterating his criticism, Monteiro (2013) explained Booker T. Washington delivered his racial compromise

speech to White conservatives, and Obama did the Philadelphia speech to pacify the critical White voters in 2008, which was a deviation from the racial radicalism of Dr. Du Bois. The Obama approach also “sidesteps potentially thorny causal questions about the foundation of racially asymmetrical distribution of costs and benefits in contemporary American capitalism’s logic of systemic reproduction,” as Reed and Chowkwanyun put it (2012, cited in George, Jr., 2013, p. 266). This exposes weaknesses of the “racial disparities framework” (George, Jr., 2013, p. 266).

But the sphere of apology, in the literal meaning of regret, sometimes takes a twisting turn of refusal or “(non)apology,” (Burgess 2013, p. 355). Sarah Burgess researching the campaign trails of 2012 presidential candidates--Obama and Romney--found the occasion when the candidate Romney camp demanded an apology from Obama whose camp characterized Romney as “a businessman whose business was not good for America” (p. 351). Romney claimed that Obama does not understand freedom and that he simple blue screens [on YouTube] that read, “Mitt Romney. He sure asks for a lot of apologies. When he’s not busy launching attacks.” Here, the demand for apology did not “operate as a *kategoria*—an accusation made in a court of law that calls for a defense” (p. 357), rather Romney’s set out for a general audience, “the demand invokes no one in particular even as it invites everyone to witness the attacks that are the apparent cause of his injury” (p. 358). Thus this demand for apology “can bring about anything but stasis” (p.354). As a spectacle, this demand offers the audience a view of the power and place afforded by a different time. As an act that structures the scene of address, though, the demand chokes speech, weakening the voices that speak within and to it. In the place of speech, we are left only with a type of chatter that falls miserably short of speaking truth

to power, polluting the very grounds of political life. Henceforth, Burgess (2013) calls the situation an “obscene demand.”

In sum, the literature review chapter covered diverse scholarly views and theoretical frameworks about the media’s role in coverage of racial, sociopolitical and economic issues that sets an agenda to influence decision-making of audiences and readers. Scholars conclude that the notions of an unbiased American society are reinforced by the news media as they rely on stereotypes and overbearing journalistic values in the course of covering cultural and racial domains. Besides discussion on the viewpoint of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this chapter included theoretical and practical issues relative to the “role of the media” involving Media Framing of Rhetoric and Race, Visual Images, Role of the Citizens/Rhetors and Vice-Versa, Media Frames in Race and Culture, and Rhetoric of the Persona and Rhetoric of the Media. The review also included issues such as “Color-line Through the Critical Cultural Theory,” “Change and “Passing” that talked on how “Class” as a Code Word for “Race” is transcended. More so, discussions were on how and why Color Continues to Matter and is there Racial Egalitarianism. What were the views of scholars about Socio-Economic Implications of Race and Class, and what were the views about Obama’s “Apologia” for his relations with Jeremiah Wright, a critic of race-relations?

Following the review of the relevant literature in this chapter, Chapter III focuses on the research design and methodology used for the study.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

This study examines how selected U.S. news media covered Barack Obama's rhetorical messages for racial reconciliation and the media frames and tones over race issues that included socioeconomic conditions. Obama spoke about reconciliation and race on three major occasions between 2008 to 2014: (1) March 18, 2008, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in response to controversial remarks made by his former pastor Jeremiah Wright; (2) August 28, 2013, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech; and (3) April 10, 2014, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Obama's Philadelphia speech, "A More Perfect Union," is known as the famous racial reconciliation speech. The other two speeches are also important in the context of demands for racial equality and ultimate constitutional steps taken toward recognition of those demands. These phases of American experience in race relations presented by the media are yet to be researched by piecing together. This researcher hopes to perform with the help of the research questions proposed in Chapter I.

Data Collection and Textual Analyses

As this study aims to analyze media artifacts critically from selected outlets, the researcher looked for news stories, opinion articles, news commentaries, editorials and op-ed pieces from the available sources. The selected outlets were the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* from the print media Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC from the broadcast media. The artifacts include coverage, for example, in the "Special Report," "360 Degrees" and "Hardball" by Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC, respectively, as they broadcast and critique main news through these

programs in the evening. The print media items—news, op-eds, editorials—were selected from the coverage usually within a week of the speeches, and in some cases beyond as some items or references were tied together. News and commentaries of the broadcast media followed the same pattern. ProQuest Newsstand database and the online archives (such as archive.org, a resource for the broadcast media) of the media outlets were the sources for the texts and sound bites. In the course of data collection, some references mentioned some news items, op-eds or editorials that led to snowballing method for getting those, thus expanding the time-span. In some cases, the researcher took verbatim of the anchors/reporters' statements as printed texts were not available.

Keywords to search the materials were: Race, Reconciliation, Rhetoric, Obama, Jeremiah, Martin Luther King Jr., Lyndon B. Johnson, Perfect Union, Black, White, Equality, Economy, Politics, Civil Rights, U.S. presidential elections (2008, 2012), Media, and Message. These are the wide variety of wording more or less echoed in the extant literature.

Rationale for the Media Selection

Media outlets are in abundance in America—national, regional, local—having a variety of readership and viewership. While journalists are prone to diversity of thoughts and the media outlets have many complex issues to follow, primarily guided by their ideological and commercial goals. The *Journal*, the *Post*, the *Times*, Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC were selected because these news outlets are generally considered traditional or legacy news media and popular sources of news with national records of high readership and audiences (Nielsen Ratings, 2015; Pew Research Center [cited in Mitchell et al., 2014]; Denham, 2014, pp. 18-19, 22; Rottinghaus and Lang, 2013, p.

166). These news outlets are also guided by, more or less, political ideologies—right and left (conservative and liberal), while some are in the “mixed” category.

MSNBC is known as one of the most liberal broadcast outlets (Meirick, 2013, p. 42; Mitchell et al., 2014) as opposed to Fox News, which is “an unabashedly a conservative cable news network” (Ridout, 2013, p. 1), meaning that both are very partisan (Franz, 2013, p. 127, Hays, 2013, p. 198). CNN is considered moderate or mixed (Mitchell et al., 2014). While *The New York Times* is known as a liberal and elite national newspaper (Fuller and Rice, 2014, p. 331); *The Washington Post* is moderate, but the *Wall Street Journal* is moderately conservative (Mitchell et al., 2014). McCombs (2005), Golan (2006), Denham (2014), and Ratliff and Hall (2014) state that the *Times* and the *Post* are often agenda-setters for other newspapers and the news media, while all the media outlets influence American politics. Powell (2011) states that “this age is dominated by the twenty-four-hour news cycle” of televisual “mini-theatres”; and “this age is dominated by the spectacle” (pp. 69-70) of the media.

About audiences Stroud and Muddiman (2013) state that America’s “polarized, less tolerant electorate” (p. 11) leads the Republicans to watch Fox News and the Democrats and Independents watch to CNN or MSNBC (Ladd, 2013, p. 34). This revolving-effect in journalism occur in an environment of engaging audiences by journalists as they put “Meanings, judgments interpretation, motives, intentions, reasons, explanations, logics— this is the staff of journalism; these are the forces that make readers turn the page, or change the channel” (Hart, 2013, p. 213). In addition, journalists also “tend to take an episodic rather than a thematic perspective towards the events they cover” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 23) to influence audience mindset.

An opinion story provides a historical narrative and offers readers more in-depth information on the issue under discussion and usually interpret and analyze news stories. News analysis (opinion) follows a cultural and cognitive schema (mental frame) of the journalists who direct “one’s attention to what and why certain things are important” (Ratliff & Hall, 2014, p. 273). Fridkin et al., (2007) also viewed that “the impacts of the candidates’ arguments were altered by the media analysis, though it was not identical for all citizens” (p. 783). Campbell et al. (2012) in their textual analysis of some mainstream news media outlets found the hegemonic and racialized messages in the texts. Social contexts play a role too.

John Fiske (2009) argues socioeconomic status plays an important role in the making of the media texts, while a few of the subcultural groups can seldom manage to achieve drawing media attention. Material acquisition is managed to placate negative evaluations of the central discourse by structural relationship with the other discourses of the text. One such relationship is that of the educational discourse to the economic achievement that a few of the subcultural groups can manage to achieve drawing media attention. This study, therefore, examines the artifacts (news stories and opinion items) to discover mainly three themes that made frames across racial relations, political tones, and socioeconomic aspects.

To accomplish the study, the study followed a critical analysis of the multimedia artifacts (texts, sound-bites) on racial reconciliation as covered by the *Journal*, the *Post*, and *the Times* from the print media and as well as Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC from the broadcast media. According to Fee-Alexandra Hasse (2008), textual analysis helps understand the attitude or perspective of a writer towards the expression of the speaker.

Media texts are fantastic to impart values of rhetoric “through the use of form ... to an audience in unexpected ways” (Brummett, 2013, p. 61). A value, Brummett defines, “is an enduring tendency that people have to think of types of actions, objects, and events as good or bad, sacred or profane, prosocial or antisocial, and so forth” (p. 62).

Examination of textual fragments helps reconstruct the varied, complex, and conflicting ways in which individuals and groups invent community, embedded with racism and discriminatory views and ideologies. Bernadette M. Calafell and Fernando Delgado (2004) argue that piecing together wide swaths of cultural expressions of identity “makes visible power relations among subjects by exploring the textual fragments of a culture” (p. 6). Almost evenly, cultural study scholars are also “especially interested in how media texts reflect hegemonic racial ideologies, concentrating on the ways these texts invite consumers to accept whiteness as the norm in relation to issues of race” (Ott & Mack, 2014, p. 150).

The researcher explored and analyzed available inter-textual artifacts and sound bites, according to their patterns—homologous and or divergent—across different kinds of texts, experiences, actions, objects, and events. The researcher attempted to analyze those from the context of Critical Race Theory by using Stuart Hall’s (2009) “encoding/decoding” analytical model to invent collective or discursive identity. However, the study did not directly follow Hall’s “encoding/decoding” analytical model (preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings), but took essence from those to align analyses from the viewpoints of five strands of CRT: (i) that racism is ordinary and normal, not aberrational; (ii) that Whites are superior to Blacks; (iii) that race stereotype is a product of social construction; (iv) that racial identities are not static and

differential—change over time; however (v) minority groups, sometimes, can coexist and cooperate among themselves to make unique voice(s).

Social differentiation as a form of power hegemony and people's resistance are usually reflected through the fragmented media ideographs that help reinforce dominant ideology and the myth. Campbell et al., (2012) view that “news organizations create a mythical world in which racial harmony is the norm when seen in the broader contexts of newscasts that routinely include images of people of color as suspects in stories related to violent crime” (p. 6). Citing the pattern of the media coverage of Martin Luther King, Jr Day that coincided with the inauguration of President Obama, they said the media “continued to mythologize the end of racism and the successful assimilation of African Americans into American society” (p. 8).

The researcher applied objectivity and discretion to analyze patterns and themes of the media artifacts, acclimatizing two hallmarks—idealistic and realistic approaches—of CRT. Realistic explanations, however, have more importance over idealistic ones, because idealistic views (of racism) conflates into the warrant of access to the resources (realistic). The researcher organized the patterns of issues to discuss and explain the contexts of the mass media coverage in the backdrop of American politics. Patterns are usually exposed as frames and tones. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2012) says “transcripts” expose a “pattern” of the “racial grammar” (p. 177), which may have “rhetorical homologies” (Brummett, 2013, p. 63)—formal resemblance—or differences, across many kinds of texts, experiences, actions, objects, and events. An attempt was made to explore how culture, race etc. reflect in the fragmented texts that can invent collective or discursive identity (McGee, 1980, Enck-Wanzer, 2012).

The study emphasized the importance of active interpretation within relevant codes relative to life. Interpretation and categorization of experiences are influenced by (1) past experience and preferences of individuals (inherited in preexisting schema), (2) the contextual situation within which the interaction occurs, and (3) the symbolic qualities of experience (Ratliff and Hall, 2014, p. 272). Usually, culture, cognition, and emotions influence interactive patterns at collective action events.

Units of Analysis

This textual analysis looked at the crafting of the words, phrases, views, quotations, headlines, sentences, symbols that exposed frames, tones, and in-depth meaning. Diction and detail express feeling and emotion—tone or attitude of the writer or rhetor—showing fear, anger, sympathy, love that may move audience. Sound also helps perceive tone and echo, with exceptions. “We cannot expect an echo to reproduce its source with absolute fidelity, but we do expect that the tone and duration of echo will be determined by the initial sound” (Black, 1978, p. 92). Likewise, Silverstein (2011) found in the dominant media “message” completely semiotically saturated via mediatization.

This chapter looked at the design and the methodology used for the study. In sum, the chapter included processes of Data Collection and Textual Analyses, Rationale for the Media Selection, and Analytical Framework including Units of Analysis. The analyses were based on Critical Race Theory (CRT) spearheaded by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012). CRT has two hallmarks—idealistic and realistic approaches. CRT not only questions conservative ideologies, it even takes on “the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.

The following chapter, Chapter IV, will focus on how selected media outlets framed Barack Obama's "a more perfect union" and racial reconciliation messages in the light of Jeremiah Wright "firestorm." However, it is necessary to make broad-based arguments how the media artifacts are analyzed critically.

Overall Arguments for Critical Reading of the Media Artifacts

The literature review and the media artifacts revealed that the news media again interpreted meaning and shaped Obama's "a more perfect union" speech as they did throughout the history of American elections. However, this time, it was far different from others. H. S. Alim and G. Smitherman (2012) observed that the nation, the media "searched for some kind of interpretative frame with which to understand this incredibly successful Black politician-professor" (p. 33). It was a wonder how Obama searched for a "new discourse of race" that "insightfully analyzed his Black and White audiences and selected a familiar cultural touchstone, the jeremiad, and core, shared values ...[of] the American Dream" (p. 86). They called it a "remix" of "White and Black jeremiadic traditions," (p. 87) though the mediated process, in many cases, adopted "the racially coded meanings of articulate" as a function of "enlightened exceptionalism" (p. 32).

Obama's speeches, particularly those that addressed "racial reconciliation," were not only mediated by the legacy media outlets but also questioned by many such as the *Wall Street Journal* columnist Shelby Steele ((March 18, 2008), an African-American scholar. His questions about Obama's presidential candidacy were: Will Obama's victory mean America's redemption from its racist past? Will his defeat show an America morally unevolved? Is his campaign a story of Black overcoming, an echo of the civil rights movement? Or, is it a passing-of-the-torch story, of one generation displacing

another? These types of issues raised in Steele's questions were more or less reflected, or explained, in different columns (op-eds), news stories and editorials of different media outlets.

Many media outlets and commentators critically looked at Obama's "a more perfect union" speech, while others praised it. A *Washington Post* editorial called the speech "an extraordinary moment of truth-telling" (2008, March 19). On the other hand, Charles Krauthammer wrote an article in the *Washington Post* headlined, "The Speech: A Brilliant Fraud" (March 21, 2008). Micahel Gerson (of the *Post*) called the speech "excellent on race in America" but [it] "fell short" to address concerns about Obama's relationship with Jeremiah Wright (March 19, 2008). The *New York Times*' columnist Maureen Dowd (March 19, 2008) phrased it sarcastically, "Black, White, and Gray."

The study discerned some patterns of media frames and tones in the Obama's hope for racial reconciliation speeches. The study primarily considered preferred (dominant) features of frames and tones from the write-ups and sound bites of both the print (the *Journal*, the *Post*, and the *Times*), as well as broadcast media (Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC) in both convergent and divergent constructs.

According to the research questions, frames were pieced together despite a lot of overlapping in three themes—Jeremiah Wright, politico-persona tones, and civic, socioeconomic and judicial system. Following three chapters present the media frames as discerned from the analyses of selected media outlets.

CHAPTER IV – JEREMIAH WRIGHT “FIRESTORM

When Senator Obama declared his candidacy in the 2008 presidential election, the national media flooded the airwaves with images and sound bites of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Obama’s pastor and friend, who has been perceived as a fiery critic of America’s race relations. Wright’s remarks, images and sound bites touched off a firestorm of criticism in the media and public. ABC News, joined by other news outlets, started showing footage of Wright’s 2001 and 2003 sermons in which he condemned America. As a presidential candidate, Obama came under attack for having a relationship with Wright. To quell the critics, Obama addressed the racial tensions, and on March 18, 2008, at the Philadelphia Constitution Center declared that he had condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend Wright that caused the storm of controversy.”

Both the print and broadcast media dominantly mentioned Obama’s long-time relationship with Wright, a pastor who had been vocal against white supremacy and domination of Blacks. That relationship could have been a deterrent to Obama’s getting the party nomination and being elected to the White House. Almost all the media outlets highlighted the controversial issues, such as Wright’s “assertion” from the pulpit that the U.S. government invented HIV “as a means of genocide against people of color.” Questions were also raised on Wright’s claim that “America was morally responsible” for the September 11 terrorist attack, and “chickens [were] coming home to roost” because of crimes such as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

Print Media

The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal, covering the Obama's "a more perfect union" speech at the Philadelphia Constitution Center (March 18, 2008), headlined its news story, "Obama Aims to Quell Pastor Controversy" and said, "Mr. Wright was involved in the senator's presidential campaign as an unpaid adviser." The story further said Obama's condemnation of Mr. Wright's statements had done little to take the edge off a shrill debate on the race issue. The story also referred to Republican candidate Sen. John McCain's situation as he accepted the endorsement of televangelist James Hagee, who was under attack over anti-Catholic remarks.

Journal's follow-up story on March 19, 2008, was titled, "Obama Puts Race Closer to Center of Campaign." The story by staff writers Jackie Calmes and Nick Timiraos could be summarized as,

The speech went over some of the complexities, condemning Mr. Wright's remarks but saying they reflect how many African-Americans feel given the history of racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. Sen. Obama also showed understanding for whites who feel victimized by affirmative action (np).

This analytical news item included comments by different experts from both the Democratic and Republican Parties, besides academic scholars. *Journal* columnists Calmes and Timiraos (March 19, 2008) said that Obama cast himself as a representative of a post-civil-rights generation, less angry than older generation of African Americans personified by Jeremiah Wright and Jesse Jackson, for example.

In an earlier dispatch, “Obama Under Fire As Personal Ties Stir Controversy” (March 17, 2008), reporters Christopher Cooper and Nick Timiraossaid, “Sen. Barack Obama is entering a new phase of scrutiny as he grapples with the fallout from statements by his longtime spiritual adviser and the indictment of a former political patron.” The *Journal’s* scrutiny, as in other news outlets, followed up by columnists and contributors among whom was Shelby Steele who called Obama a “bargainer” (March 18, 2008).

In a later news analysis, “Obama Denounces Ex-Pastor For 'Rants,’” Nick Timiraos and Jackie Calmes (April 30, 2008) said, “Sen. Barack Obama angrily broke with his former pastor Tuesday and, more broadly, with the minister's discordant views of race in America, as the persistent controversy threatened to derail his bid to become the nation's first black president.” According to The *Journal*, Jeremiah Wright’s “racially incendiary comments have roiled the Obama campaign.” The story also referred to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, whom Wright had called “one of the most important voices in the 20th and 21st century,” but did not explain the implications of mention of Farrakhan.

A *Journal* editorial on March 19, 2008, entitled, “Discovering Obama,” called the Obama-Jeremiah debate “a chiefly political crisis.” According to The *Journal*, “Mr. Obama's fault, rather, was to maintain a two-decade entanglement with Mr. Wright without ever seeming to harbor qualms about the causes espoused by his mentor and spiritual guide.” Further, a short editorial titled, “Obama Aims to Quell Pastor Controversy,” (March 18, 2008) said, “Sen. Obama's condemnation of Mr. Wright's statements have done little to take the edge off a shrill debate.”

The Washington Post

Covering Obama's Philadelphia speech, *The Washington Post* (March 19, 2008) headlined its story as "Obama Urges U.S.: 'Move beyond Our Old Racial Wounds.'" Its staff writers (Shailagh Murray, and Dan Balz) wrote,

Obama developed a response to the storm of criticism that erupted over angry and racially charged sermons that included denunciations of the United States delivered by the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., Obama's spiritual mentor and until recently a pastor at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago (np).

They said Obama had declared that he distanced himself "from the specifics of Wright's sermons ...saying they offered 'a profoundly distorted view of this country.'" Obama also used the controversy to speak directly to the grievances and resentments on both sides of the racial divide and to urge all Americans to "move beyond our old racial wounds."

The story further observed,

Obama's comments came after two weeks in which racial issues had again come to forefront of the Democratic presidential race. His loss to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.) in the Ohio primary two weeks ago and the voting patterns among some whites raised questions about whether racial factors had contributed to her victory (np).

Murray and Balz further wrote that Obama had told an audience of local ministers and community leaders assembled at the National Constitution Center, "We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America—to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality."

The *Post*'s staff writer Dan Balz's separate analytical story (March 20, 2008) headlined, "Will the Answer Outlive Questions? Obama's Speech Driven by Necessity" said,

The speech was one of the best ever given on the topic of race in America...but the controversy over Wright will dog Obama in a general election campaign and could hurt him in the nomination battle, depending on how super delegates react to it and weigh whether Obama or Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.) would be the stronger nominee against Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) (p. A-4).

David S. Broder of the *Post* (March 23, 2008) said in "The Real Value Of Obama's Speech," that the Black church and the reaction in that largely middle-class congregation in Chicago should alerted us that, "Wright is hardly outside the mainstream of his community; he still seems a world away from the calm and considerate image that Obama himself presents." However, he said, "Despite the praise for Obama's Philadelphia speech, the carnage that Wright started is likely to continue or recur, because many others are deeply offended by his preacher shouting 'God damn America!'"

Michael Gerson, another *Post* columnist, in the article, "A Speech That Fell Short," (March 19, 2008), told readers that Obama's speech "fell short in significant ways." "Extremist" Wright's views are "shocking to many Americans who wonder how any presidential candidate could be so closely associated with an adviser who refers to the "U.S. of KKK-A' and urges God to 'damn' our country." Also, he found Obama's paralleling Wright's remarks on the stereotyping of Black men by Obama's grandmother was wrong "because this is not a matter of the foibles of family."

In a more critical voice, another *Post* op-ed by column by Charles Krauthammer headlined Obama's Philadelphia speech as "A Brilliant Fraud" (March 21, 2008). In Krauthammer's view, "Obama's 5,000-word speech fawned over as a great meditation on race, is little more than an elegantly crafted, brilliantly sophistic justification of that scandalous dereliction." To point out the dereliction, he raised the question as to why Obama had not left that church when his pastor who thundered not once but many times from the pulpit "God damn America?" He also posed several questions for Obama. "If Wright is a man of the past, why would you expose your children to his vitriolic divisiveness"? Why had Obama donated to a church run by a man of the past who infects the younger generation with precisely the racial attitudes and animus? How was it a matter of transcendence?

Robert D. Novak (2008, March 24) labeled the situation as "Democrats' Obama Dilemma." Novak's observed that

Barack Obama's speech last week, hastily prepared to extinguish the firestorm over the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, won critical praise for style and substance but failed politically. By elevating the question of race in America, the front-running Democratic presidential candidate has deepened the dilemma created by his campaign's success against the party establishment's anointed choice, Hillary Clinton (np).

Novak further said that in rejecting the racist views of his longtime spiritual mentor but not disowning him, "Obama has unwittingly enhanced his image as the African American candidate—as opposed to being just a remarkable candidate who happens to be black."

Post columnist Richard Cohen in his column, “Obama’s Pastor Problem,” (March 18, 2008) raised several questions,

Why did Barack Obama take so long to “reject outright” the harshly critical statements about America made by his minister, Jeremiah Wright, not to mention the praise the same minister lavished on Louis Farrakhan just last November? How is it possible that Obama did not know about these remarks, when he is a member of Wright’s congregation and so close to the man that he likens him to ‘an old uncle’? (p. A-19).

Cohen guessed that

One possible answer to these questions is that Obama has learned to rely on a sycophantic media that hears any criticism of him as either (1) racist, (2) vaguely racist or (3) doing the bidding of Hillary and Bill Clinton. You only have to turn your attention to the interview Obama granted *MSNBC*'s fawning Keith Olbermann for an example. Obama was asked whether he had known that Wright had suggested substituting the phrase “God damn America” for “God bless America” (p. a-19).

The *Post*, in its March 19, 2008, editorial, called the Philadelphia speech “Moment of Truth; Prompted by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright.” The editorial said Barack Obama squarely addressed the issue of race. It also added, “We don’t agree with the way Mr. Obama described some of those [race-related] problems yesterday or with some of his solutions for them. But he was right to condemn the Rev. Wright's words...”

In a previous editorial (March 18, 2008) titled, “The Wright Question; Sen. Barack Obama's teachable moment,” the *Post* candidly mentioned Jeremiah Wright’s

version of “God damn America.” The editorial held, “The cadence is strident. The words are harsh. And the anger with which they are delivered no doubt is disturbing to many.”

The New York Times

The *New York Times*’ staff writer Jeff Zeleny (March 19, 2008) covering Obama’s “a more perfect union” speech said that Obama had again condemned the more incendiary remarks of the pastor Jeremiah Wright. Obama tried to explain to White voters the anger and frustration behind Mr. Wright’s words. He also urged Blacks to understand the sources of the racial fears and resentment among Whites. The story entitled, “Obama Urges U.S. to Grapple With Race Issue” discussed how Obama approached the audience on the Jeremiah Wright controversy, especially of his criticism of America’s race [by Wright] and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we’ve never really worked through—a part of our Union that we have yet to perfect.”

When Obama was preparing for the Philadelphia speech, *the Times* ran a front-page story (March 18, 2008) headlined, “On Defensive, Obama Plans Talk on Race.” Staff writers Jodi Kantor and Jeff Zeleny said,

Faced with what his advisers acknowledged was a major test to his candidacy, Senator Barack Obama sought on Monday to contain the damage from incendiary comments made by his pastor and prepared to address the issue of race more directly than at any other moment of his presidential campaign. Though he has faced questions about controversial statements by the pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., for more than a year, Mr. Obama is enduring intense new scrutiny now

over Mr. Wright's characterizations of the United States as fundamentally racist and the government as corrupt and murderous (np).

Janny Scott of the *Times* (March 19, 2008) phrased Obama's racial reconciliation speech (March 18, 2008) as "A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation over Rancor." The *Times'* story emphasized that for the first Black candidate with a good chance at becoming a presidential nominee in a country where racial distrust runs deep and unspoken, embarking upon the most significant public discussion of race in decades, the speech was unprecedented and non-partisan.

Mentioning the problem of Wright, Scott (March 19, 2008) said, Obama had carefully avoided the "stereotype" of an "angry black politician." "Scott also stated Obama had denounced and rejected Wright. Qualifying Obama's speech as one that "may be the most significant public discussion of race in decades," Scott (March 19, 2008) said,

In a speech whose frankness about race many historians said could be likened only to speeches by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, Senator Barack Obama, speaking across the street from where the Constitution was written, traced the country's race problem back to not simply the country's "original sin of slavery" but the protections for it embedded in the Constitution (np).

William Kristol in his column (Mar 24, 2008), "Let's Not, and Say We Did," brought up the Obama and Wright's issue saying,

Why not join another church? The real question, of course, is not why Obama joined Trinity, but why he stayed there for two decades, in the flock of a pastor who accused the U.S. government of inventing the H.I.V. virus as a means of

genocide against people of color, and who suggested soon after 9/11 that America's chickens are coming home to roost (np).

The *Times* columnist Maureen Dowd (March 19, 2008), in her sarcastic article “Black, White and Gray,” called the Obama’s Philadelphia speech on race “momentous and edifying” but that Obama did it certainly for “damage control on his problem with Jeremiah Wright.” In this case, Dowd thought that “after racing [away] from race for a year, he [Obama] plowed in and took a stab at showing blacks what white resentment felt like and whites what black resentment felt like.”

However, *the Times* in its editorial (March 19, 2008) headlined, “Mr. Obama’s Profile in Courage,”

It was not a moment to which Mr. Obama came easily. He hesitated uncomfortably long in dealing with the controversial remarks of his spiritual mentor and former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., who denounced the United States as endemically racist, murderous and corrupt (p. A-18).

The *Times*’ editorial also viewed that it was the moment of faith and politics combined as it said, “Mr. Obama had to address race and religion, the two most toxic subjects in politics. He was as powerful and frank as Mitt Romney was weak and calculating earlier this year in his attempt to persuade the religious right that his Mormonism is Christian enough for them.”

Broadcast Media

Broadcast Media also came up with not less than dramatic, sarcastic—both supple and sore sounds and words.

Fox News

Jeremiah Wright's "firestorm" against America's race relations and American hegemony during wars around the world was the foremost point of a "*Fox Special Report*," hosted by anchor Brit Hume with correspondent Major Garrett and guests, after Obama's Philadelphia speech on March 18, 2008. Fox News said,

Barack Obama concedes he heard a lot of things from his pastor that he didn't agree with in church but refuses to disown the pastor and compares his comments to those of his own white grandmother.... Only days after saying he never heard Reverend Jeremiah Wright's most incendiary comments in church, Barack Obama conceded today that he had, indeed, heard many Wright statements he strongly disagreed with in church. But in an attempt to douse the Wright firestorm, Obama sought to place it all in a much larger context (np).

Major Garrett reported,

Barack Obama faced the Reverend Jeremiah Wright firestorm indirectly and racial tensions in America directly. The urgent political question, the one on which the fate of Obama's campaign may rest, did he say too little about Wright and too much about race? The packed auditorium of supporters and reporters, Obama went farther than ever before in admitting that he listened in the pews to sermons from Wright that many might find objectionable (np).

Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL), Presidential Candidate: Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in the church? Yes. Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely.

Garrett: That's a notable recalibration of Obama's statement to *Fox* on Friday as to

whether he ever witnessed the words from Wright he now so strenuously condemns.

Obama: None of the statements were ones that I heard myself personally in the pews.

Garrett: Obama said walking away from the reverend is not an option regardless of the political pressures or consequences.

Brit Hume on March 20, 2008 (teaming up with their *Fox's* chief Washington correspondent, Jim Angle) said,

Barack Obama hoped to turn the page on the controversy over his long-time minister, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, by distancing himself from the minister's more incendiary remarks, but it has not ended the matter [race and Reverend Wright] (np).

Fox News started warming up the issue through its earlier reports. In a prior report (March 14, 2008), Hume with a panel of discussants including Bret Baier, Fox News White House News Chief, and guests, Mort Kondracke, Fred Barnes and Charles Krauthammer, played a videotape of Jeremiah Wright's sermon,

Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ (Voice): We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back into our own front yards! America's chickens are coming home to roost...

Hume: Senator Barack Obama strongly denounces controversial sermons by his pastor, calling some of them appalling, but many campaign watchers are asking what took so long? We're going to talk about and other developments with the two men who've been on the road with the candidates, Carl Cameron and Major Garrett, the two guys that know it better than anybody."

Fox News (Hume and Garrett: March 18, 2008) in many ways tried to focus on that how the first Black presidential candidate vied for nomination in a country where racial distrust ran deep and unspoken, embarking upon the most significant public discussion of race in decades. In their language “the carnage that Wright started” with “God Damn America!” was likely to persist because “many others are deeply offended.”

CNN

On March 18 (2008), CNN anchors Campbell Brown and Anderson Cooper on assignment for 360 Degrees, with others on the political team, including David Gergen, conservative political strategist Bay Buchanan, Reverend Joseph Lowery of a black church, and Candy Crowley, CNN’s senior political correspondent, explored Obama’s “a more perfect union” speech. The headline of the script was “Senator Barack Obama Confronts Race Issue; Inside African-American Churches.”

Candy Crowley quoted Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright on her segment, “*Raw Politics*,”

Candy Crowley, CNN’s senior political correspondent (voice-over): Incendiary sermons at his own church from his good friend and pastor threaten to undermine the premise of Barack Obama’s campaign. He had to do this.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL), Presidential Candidate (Voice): Did I know him to be an occasionally fierce critic of American domestic and foreign policy? Of course. Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in the church? Yes. Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely.

Crowley commented,

The statement was designed to ward off both the sound bites that had been heard

and those that may be still to come from the sermons of Jeremiah Wright, the fiery pastor of Obama's church. He called Wright's words wrong and divisive, but Obama says he knows a different man than the caricature whose sound bites endlessly play on the airwaves and across the Internet (np).

Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Trinity United Church of Christ (Voice): "... living in a country and culture that is controlled by rich white people.

Crowley: For Obama, who rarely talks about race, the speech was as sweeping as it was specific, as politically risky as it was personally revealing.

Obama (Voice): I can no more disown him than I can disown 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 her by on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.

Crowley: The son of a white woman and a black man, Obama has said, bridging the gap is in his DNA. He spoke today of the history of America's racial divide, of black anger over generations of discrimination.

Obama (Voice): But the anger is real, it is powerful, and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

In the discussion that followed, Faye Wattleton, co-founder of Center for the Advancement of Women, remarked, "... I think that Mr. Obama certainly did not disown his minister ... And I think that that will be used, as well, as an incendiary statement that Mr. Obama will ultimately have to answer." According to another commentator: "I ...

think he [Obama] is going to continue to have some problems. And ... this is a wound that's not going to go away quickly." Another voice uttered: "White suburban voters are going to find the speech enormously appealing."

CNN also highlighted (March 18, 2008) that Obama emphasized, "I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible." Obama added, "It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts -- that out of many, we are truly one." CNN compared Obama's challenge of dealing with Wright phenomenon with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's challenge of his Mormon faith. CNN said

Obama's biggest challenge Tuesday was similar to that faced by ... Romney when he gave a speech during his GOP presidential run to reach voters unfamiliar with his Mormon faith: Obama was looking to explain his church and its worldview to voters aware only of Wright's headline-grabbing comments (np).

MSNBC

Cable news network MSNBC's "Hardball" with Chris Matthews on March 18, 2008, said, "Obama tackles race divide in major speech." Matthews was the host of a discussion with a group of nine guests that included an African American bishop, Charles Blake. Matthews said, "It was the most important speech of Barack Obama's career and the biggest moment of the campaign..."

Matthews went on playing segments of the speech in which Obama said Wright's mistake was in "his offending sermons about America, to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality." Matthews posed the same

questions as other media outlets, “Did ... Obama distance himself enough from Reverend Wright? Did he calm the fears of the White voter?” The answer was already in Mathews’ remark, “Obama tackles race divide in major speech.” Moreover, Mathews “personally” viewed the speech as the best ever given on race in this country.

On “Countdown” for March 26, 2008, MSNBC host Keith Olbermann observed that on the campaign trail in Greensboro, North Carolina, Senator Obama again condemned his pastor’s “very objectionable things” outright. Olbermann referring to a poll about Obama and Hillary Clinton by *NBC News* and *The Wall Street Journal*, mentioned that the results suggested that “the Jeremiah Wright controversy has been less damaging to Barack Obama.”

All six news media outlets, in general, framed the Obama’s speeches primarily with the syndrome of Jeremiah Wright. Addressing the Wright issue, print media could cover it in different ways—through straight news coverage, columnists’ comments, and editorials. In the news items, newspapers, though varying in politics, covered the aspects Obama emphasized in his speeches—criticizing Jeremiah Wright’s “incendiary” voice about American’s bitter race-relations, Obama’s disassociation with Wright, his attempt to find a bridge between the races and, especially, between the working and middle classes.

Scholarly Voices

The researcher understands, though Obama made an apology by confessing his “wrong” association as well as disassociating his relationship with Wright, he could not escape “doubt” of the mainstream media with some exceptions. One commentator on CNN, however, viewed Jeremiah Wright as “a walking representation of someone who

contains both the love and—and the resentment and the frustration of the people in the black community.” Scholar Michael E. Dyson, in his book, *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America* (2016) termed the Jeremiah Wright factor “the divided legacy of a prophet” (p. 80). He contended that it was Wright who “offered Obama a compelling vision of Christian manhood and enjoyed a national reputation as a remarkable pulpit orator.” However, Obama’s “forced confrontation with his former pastor” made him carefully endorse a limited prophetic ambition while criticizing Wright’s particular prophetic style and reach.

In a similar voice, scholars such as Alim and Smitherman (2012) also argued that Jeremiah Wright’s denunciation is standard for biblical prophets who say that God will send a nation to hell for disobedience and corruption, a theme that right-wing evangelicals have been hammering for years from the opposite ideological direction. Dyson (2016) also brought up the views of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who too said, “God would judge America and find it wanting.” Dyson mentioned that the night MLK was murdered, among King’s effects the notes of a sermon he was to preach the next Sunday were found, “Why America May Go to Hell” (p. 81). In other words, MLK, who was once optimistic about racial reconciliation in America with the promulgation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, became skeptical and angry because those acts “did very little to improve” the conditions of “poverty, war, and racism in hundreds of sanctuaries and meeting halls across black America” (p. 82). Comparing the themes and times of MLK and Wright, Dyson, known as an Obama supporter, concluded that for Obama, it is “the optimistic early King, for Wright the revolutionary later King” (p. 82).

Alim et al., (2012) and Dyson (2016) also wondered why Wright's predictable sermons (which were not supposedly praiseworthy) based on by an American Ambassador named Edward Peck, were not addressed by the American media and politicians. Wright agreed with the ambassador's view that "America's violence abroad had boomeranged in domestic disaster" (Dyson, 2016, p. 92). So, Obama surely could not agree with Wright's analysis, "but he might have helped explain Wright better by placing him in an honored tradition of prophets who denounce America's sins rather than dismissing him as incendiary and divisive" (p.92). Alim and Smitherman (2012) argued that "The Wright sermons that were the source of the sound bites" were just quoting the interview Ambassador Peck, a white man, had with Fox News in September 2001.

Perkinson (2012), to the contrary, argued that as a "ritual passage Obama hammers Wright!" in "defense of mainstream opinion" (p. 101), of both the media and racist White public. It looked as if "White-shirted supremacy once again licking its lips over its latest stage production of Black-on-Black agony!" (p. 101). Both the media and Obama hammered Wright, but "Wright's actual claim was never disputed. Without argument, this attack on Jeremiah was like an ad hominem" (Perkinson, 2012, p. 99).

Professor Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (2016) in his book *Democracy in black: How race still enslaves the American soul* appreciated Obama's Philadelphia speech as "one of the most important political speeches in recent history," but said that the speech "offers a great example of how a fear of white fear can work" (p. 89). Explaining further, Glaude said, "the fear of white fear distorts black political behavior" (p.88). According to him, "I can't call Bill O'Reilly a dumbass...No matter the horror of the moment..." (p.88). So, "Obama tried to account for the anger of ...Wright by explaining that he was among

those who grew up in a country that regularly defeated the dreams of African Americans” (p.89). Thus Obama juxtaposed Wright’s anger with that of segments of White America. And thus, Glaude viewed, “It makes it seem that black rage in the face of debilitating inequality is the same as white anger over the loss of white privilege...It also gives license to those who routinely dismiss African American grievances as the cries of perennial victims” (p.89).

This researcher finds substantial arguments made by many scholars, such as Alim et al., (2012), Dyson (2016), Glaude (2016) and Perkinson (2012) supporting the contention that the news media outlets ignored the context behind the Wright’s sermons, and blatantly “misquoted” Wright without looking into the background of the sermons. Dyson (2016), in this context, stated that the media outlets should not have ignored how Black people believe that how the (medical) science has been misused to harm Black lives, such as the Tuskegee experiment of syphilis on nearly 400 unknown Black subjects between 1932 and 1972 that failed to offer them penicillin when it became clear in the 1940s that the new drug could cure the disease (Dyson, 2016, p. 93).

“Media pundits attacked Wright as a racist, hatemonger, and leader of a church that denounces White people” while they needed to understand “the fact that pro-Black is not anti-White” (Alim et al., 2012, p. 68). Not only that, the media outlets ignored Wright’s love and sacrifice for America. Dyson (2016) adds, “Even the angry sermons of Jeremiah Wright have to be read as the bitter complains of a spurned lover” (p. 124). Like millions of other Blacks, Wright served the country while suffering rejection. Alim et al., (2012), and Dyson (2016) mentioned that to serve the country Wright, a valedictorian, voluntarily joined the U.S. marines by deferring his studies in 1963, and later became a

member of the commander-in-chief's medical team. He was a member of the medical team that performed surgery on Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966, for which Wright earned LBJ's commendation.

Both the media outlets and Barack Obama skipped or ignored the basis of Wright's sermons. Although Obama explained the background of anger of Wright's generation, he should have known that Wright's sermon was a reference to Ambassador Peck's interviews and lectures. Moreover, it was a matter of Biblical Jeremiadic preaching style usually used in sermons, irrespective of color. The media missed or ignored the points or misquoted the "God damn America" sermon, as dubbed by the media and did not recognize that it "had to do with U.S. culpability and wrongdoing at home and abroad [and] had [also] been made by others" (Alim et al., 2012, p. 68).

Ironically, most American media and politicians, nearly always, charge Blacks, in Dyson's language (2016), "with ingratitude and disloyalty whenever they acknowledge the tattered history of race as they offer critical love for the nation" (p. 125). This form of distorted meditzation considered as hurting not only Jeremiah Wright but also Obama's (who happened to have a black or brown heritage) chances of serving a country that, from its birth, has always been represented by the whites. So, even the Black liberals have to adopt the "strategy of deracialization" in order to elect politicians who would help dismantle racism. "But the strategy didn't work, even as African Americans appeared to make political gains" (Glaude, 2016, p. 166).

As president, Barack Obama would incur more criticism as he a few times confronted Black outrage over an outbreak of killings of unarmed Blacks by mostly white police officers. For example, the media's lambasting of Obama was clear when Obama

talked about “excesses” of police officers in case of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who was arrested by police in 2009, and the killing of an unarmed black teen, Trayvon Martin, by a neighborhood volunteer, George Zimmerman in 2012. In Martin’s case, sports journalist and cultural critic Bernard Goldberg asserted that “there was no good reason for the president to say if he had a son he would look like Trayvon Martin” (p. 187). Goldberg even fantasized about how Obama might revise his speech, “I implied their only ‘crime’ was being Black. What I should have added is that there’s a good reason for all of that. People—and not just Whites—are suspicious of young Black men because young Black men give them plenty of reason to be suspicious” (Dyson, 2016, p. 187).

Hence, the tones of doubting Obama’s leadership, with the accusation not being properly in the center of America, were prevalent across the media outlets in varied ways. Perkinson (2012) called some of the “Wright effect” as “media fetishization” (pp. 91, 98). However, as the time passed, the Jeremiah Wright issue subsided, while the issues of race, police actions against African Americans, and socioeconomic conditions of Blacks more often than not surfaced on different occasions—the Washington March Anniversary and Civil Rights Act of 1964 anniversary, for example.

After about seven years, the *Journal*’s staff writer Josh Dawsey, the *Times*’ Peter Baker, and the *Post*’s Katie Zezima, who covered Obama’s speech on April 10, 2014, at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas on the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, mentioned race issues, not Wright. It was almost the same for the broadcast networks, except a few times during the 50th Anniversary observation of the Washington March in 2013.

However, *Fox's* Greta Van Susteren (popularly known as Greta) brought up the Jeremiah Wright issue as Wright was criticizing the Tea Party, as well as president Obama, at a gathering on the MLK Day on January 22, 2014. The Fox anchor said, "Obama's Former Pastor Says Tea Party Is 'Lynch Mob 2.0.'" Van Susteren interviewed Former Congressman Allen West (R-FL) who reacted, "If he were to check his history, Jim Crow laws, the formulation of the Ku Klux Klan, poll taxes, literacy tests, all those came from the Democrat Party." West continued, "They're just trying to demonize the Tea Party because they understand the impact that that grassroots movement will have in these midterm elections."

Barack Obama's speeches as president and the media coverage on the 50th anniversary of MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington D.C., and on the 50th anniversary of Civil Rights Act of 1964 at the LBJ Library in Austin, Texas, had different strictures—the critical tone of Jeremiah Wright-related obsession had subsided but was not totally abandoned.

In sum, this chapter discussed and analyzed how the selected media outlets framed Obama's speeches dealing with racial reconciliation and Jeremiah Wright and looked at how some scholars also interpreted those speeches. All the media outlets framed Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright inseparably in the context of "Americanness" and race-relations. All six news outlets cited Wright's sermons as incendiary, what Obama finally confessed as having heard "a profoundly distorted view of this country." Even after Obama severed relations with Wright, the conservative media such as the *Wall Street Journal* and Fox News viewed Obama's long-term relations with

Wright would affect him because the anger with which Wright's sermons were delivered were disturbing to many Americans.

Chapter V discusses the political tones discerned in the coverage of Obama's speeches by the selected media outlets.

CHAPTER V – POLITICAL TONES

Political tones (as overtone and/or undertone) could be characterized along the lines such as Obama’s speeches, historic convergence, and divergence, as well as characterization of Barack Obama himself by questioning his integrity, policies and approach in dealing with issues of race, sociopolitical and economic conditions, to name a few. The reflection of tone also becomes discernible in the ways in which Obama is evaluated in comparison to the performances of other political personalities and former presidents of the United States.

Media tones are usually draped and coded. Detecting and analyzing political tones used by the media in covering and interpreting Obama’s speeches could be ambitious. This researcher, however, tried to identify the diction, words, and terms used by the selected media outlets to determine the extent and depth of comments that determine outlook and attitudes of the media outlets toward the relevant issues in racial conciliation in a broader context.

Obama’s Negotiation with Two World Views: E Pluribus Unum or Not

The legacy media outlets found Obama’s speeches, especially “A More Perfect Union” speech (March 18, 2008), both unifying and untying.

Print Media

The Wall Street Journal

Covering Obama’s “perfect union” speech, *The Wall Street Journal’s* story, “Obama Aims to Quell Pastor Controversy,” (March 18, 2008) stated that though Obama tried to quell the Jeremiah Wright controversy, it had done little to take the edge off a shrill debate on the race issue. In a follow-up story (March 19, 2008) titled, “Obama Puts

Race Closer To Center Of Campaign,” staff writers Jackie Calmes and Nick Timiraos summarized the speech as,

The speech went over some of the complexities, condemning Mr. Wright's remarks but saying they reflect how many African-Americans feel given the history of racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. Sen. Obama also showed understanding for whites who feel victimized by affirmative action (np).

This analytical news item included comments of different experts from both the Democratic Party and Republican Party besides academic scholars. Addressing the race issue as “Obama's gamble,” Calmes and Timiraos on March 19, 2008, said,

Obama “hasn't emphasized issues of concern mainly to minorities, focusing instead on issues of broad interest such as health care, education, and the Iraq war. The 46-year-old senator has cast himself as a representative of a post-civil-rights generation less angry than an older generation of African-Americans personified by Messrs. Wright and Jackson, who are both 66 (np).

In an earlier dispatch (2008, March 17), *Journal* reporters Christopher Cooper and Nick Timiraos in their story, “Obama Under Fire As Personal Ties Stir Controversy,” said, “Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama is entering a new phase of scrutiny as he grapples with the fallout from statements by his longtime spiritual adviser and the indictment of a former political patron” (p. A-1).

The *Journal's* scrutiny, as in other news outlets, was followed up by columnists and other contributors. *Journal* columnist Shelby Steele (March 18, 2008) said Obama's pastor, “Rev. Jeremiah Wright is a challenger who goes far past Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson in his anti-American outrage. Associating with such an anti-American man and

exposing his two daughters to messages of hatred and a subtext of anti-white vitriol, was a “portent of presidential judgment,” said Steele, a conservative African-American scholar. Calling Obama a “bargainer,” Steele said that Obama used his “Two identity, Two persona” approach in the presidential campaign through the Philadelphia speech. In his column, “The Obama Bargain,” Steele, said,

No matter his ultimate political fate, there is already enough pathos in Barack Obama to make him a cautionary tale. His public persona thrives on a manipulation of whites (bargaining), and his private sense of racial identity demands both self-betrayal and duplicity. His is the story of a man who flew so high, yet neglected to become himself (p. A-23).

Quoting a Hillary Clinton surrogate, Geraldine Ferraro, who earlier had said, “If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position,” Steele argued that Obama’s race gave him “just the edge he needed—an edge that would never be available to a white, not even a white woman.” He further explained,

Bargaining is a mask that blacks can wear in the American mainstream, one that enables them to put whites at their ease. This mask diffuses the anxiety that goes along with being white in a multiracial society. Bargainers make the subliminal promise to whites not to shame them with America's history of racism, on the condition that they will not hold the bargainer's race against him. And whites love this bargain—and feel affection for the bargainer—because it gives them racial innocence in a society where whites live under constant threat of being stigmatized as racist. So the bargainer presents himself as an opportunity for whites to experience racial innocence (p. A-23).

In a later news analysis titled, “Obama Denounces Ex-Pastor For ‘Rants,’” Nick Timiraos and Jackie Calmes (April 30, 2008) said, “Sen. Barack Obama angrily broke with his former pastor Tuesday and, more broadly, with the minister's discordant views of race in America, as the persistent controversy threatened to derail his bid to become the nation's first black president” (p. A-1). According to the *Journal*, Jeremiah Wright’s “racially incendiary comments have roiled the Obama campaign.

But in a softer tone, in an editorial on March 19, 2008, entitled, “Discovering Obama,” The *Journal* called the Obama-Jeremiah debate “a chiefly political crisis.” According to The Journal, “Mr. Obama's fault, rather, was to maintain a two-decade entanglement with Mr. Wright without ever seeming to harbor qualms about the causes espoused by his mentor and spiritual guide.” The editorial continued,

In Philadelphia yesterday, the Senator tried to explain his puzzling 20-year attendance at Reverend Wright's Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ, while also using his nearly 5,000-word address to elaborate on the themes that have energized his candidacy. It was an instructive moment, though not always in the way the Senator intended (p. A-16).

The Washington Post

Covering Obama’s “A More Perfect Union” speech, *The Washington Post* staff writers Shailagh Murray and Dan Balz (March 19, 2008) in their story, “Obama Urges U.S.: ‘Move Beyond Our Old Racial Wounds,’” opined,

The speech drew praise for its forthright expression of black-white divisions and for its call to all Americans to begin to reconcile those differences. Whether it will solve the potentially serious political problems that Wright's long-standing

relationship with Obama has created is a far different question and one upon which political strategists disagreed on Tuesday after the address (np).

According to Murray and Balz (March 19, 2008), Obama also addressed the anger “within segments of the white community.” Obama had said, “Most working and middle-class white Americans don’t feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. Many work hard to make ends meet, only to see their children bused to school across town or lose a job or a space in a coveted school to an African American who is given advantages because of past discrimination.”

Murray and Balz (March 19, 2008) observed,

To wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns—this, too, widens the racial divide and blocks the path to understanding. Both whites and blacks, Obama said, must recognize “what ails” the other -- and embrace, as he said Wright has not, the idea that America can change. "This union may never be perfect," he said. "But generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected" (np).

However, *Post*'s staff writer, Kristen Mack (2008, March 24) in an analytical piece titled, “Thoughts about Race, From Beyond the Pulpit,” said,

Controversial sound bites from sermons by Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., prompted the Illinois senator to take on the subject of race, which has surfaced several times during the battle between Obama and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) for the Democratic presidential nomination (p. B-1)

The New York Times

Jodi Kantor and Jeff Zeleny of *The New York Times* (March 18, 2008) wrote, In strategic terms, Mr. Wright's statements are tricky for the Obama campaign to address. The more the candidate denounces the minister's words, the more voters may question why Mr. Obama attached himself to Mr. Wright in the first place and stuck with him for so long, not only attending his church but also naming a book after one of his sermons (np).

Referring to Obama's strategy, they said that five weeks before the Pennsylvania primary, Obama had hoped to be refining his strategy to win over the support of White male voters—a demographic that began to slip away in his Ohio defeat. Instead, he was facing his second straight week of negative news coverage. In a television interview with PBS, Obama called his pastor's remarks "stupid" and conceded, "It has been a distraction from the core message of our campaign." Kantor and Zeleny (March 18, 2008) further pointed out that if Obama's earlier appearances in the day were any guide, he was making a few subtle alterations to his routine on the campaign trail. In his many months of stumping, Obama had rarely bid farewell to an audience the way he did at a morning event in Monaca, Pa., "God bless you and God bless America!" he proclaimed.

Kantor and Zeleny emphasized that both sides, Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton, and Republican candidates, could advance arguments such as Obama was "unvetted," and that he was less electable than others. "Mr. Wright's statements, said strategists, threaten his greatest strength, his reputation as a unifying, uplifting figure, capable of moving the country past old labels and divisions."

In Janny Scott's (March 19, 2008), view, Obama faced two choices-- One is denouncing Wright's ferocious charges about white America, and distancing himself from the man who drew him to Christianity, married him and baptized his two children. Or trying to explain what appeared too many to be the contradiction between Wright's worldview and the one Obama had professed as his own. According to Scott, "to some extent, he did both."

Janny Scott also said,

Yet the speech was also hopeful, patriotic, and quintessentially American—delivered against a blue backdrop and a phalanx of stars and stripes. Mr. Obama invoked the fundamental values of equality of opportunity, fairness, and social justice. He confronted race head-on, then reached beyond it to talk sympathetically about the experiences of the white working class and the plight of workers stripped of jobs and pensions (np).

Scott quoted Paul Finkelman, a professor at Albany Law School who has written extensively about slavery, race and the Constitution as saying, "As far as I know, he's the first politician since the Civil War to recognize how deeply embedded slavery and race have been in our Constitution."Finkelman added,

That's a profoundly important thing to say. But what's important about the way he said it is he doesn't use this as a springboard for anger or for frustration. He doesn't say, 'O.K., slavery was bad, therefore people are owed something.' This is not a reparations speech. This is a speech about saying it's time for the nation to do better, to form a more perfect union (np).

Scott also observed that Obama's address came more than a year into a campaign conceived and conducted to appear to transcend the issue of race, to try to build a broad coalition of racial and ethnic groups favoring change. In the issues, he has emphasized and the language he has used, as well as in the way he has presented himself, he has worked to elude pigeonholing as a black politician.

Times editorial (2008, March 19) headlined, "Mr. Obama's Profile in Courage," comparing him with Romney who could not face questions about his Mormon faith and politics said, "This is Jeremiah who brought him to Christianity. "The editorial added that Obama raised the discussion to a higher plane.

Inaugural addresses by Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt come to mind, as does John F. Kennedy's 1960 speech on religion, with its enduring vision of the separation between church and state. Senator Barack Obama, who has not faced such tests of character this year, faced one on Tuesday. It is hard to imagine how he could have handled it better.

On Tuesday, Mr. Obama drew a bright line between his religious connection with Mr. Wright, which should be none of the voters' business and having a political connection, which would be very much their business. The distinction seems especially urgent...to blur the line between church and state (p. A-18).

William Kristol in his column (March 24, 2008) wrote,

Luckily, Obama isn't really interested in getting enmeshed in a national conversation on race. He had avoided race talk before the Reverend Wright controversy erupted. And despite the speech's catnip of a promised conversation

on race tossed to eager commentators, it's clear he's more than willing to avoid it from now on.

This is all for the best. With respect to having a national conversation on race, my recommendation is: Let's not, and say we did (np).

But Kristol (Mar 24, 2008) believed,

Racial progress has in fact continued in America. A new national conversation about race isn't necessary to end what Obama calls the "racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years" because we're not stuck in such a stalemate. In fact, as Obama himself suggests in the same speech, younger Americans aren't stalemated. They come far closer than their grandparents and parents to routinely obeying Martin Luther King's injunction to judge one another by the content of our character, not the color of our skin.

Over the last several decades, we've done pretty well in overcoming racial barriers and prejudice. Problems remain. But we won't make progress if we now have to endure a din of race talk that will do more to divide us than to unite us and more to confuse than to clarify (np).

Another *Times* columnist, Maureen Dowd, (March 19, 2008) in her sarcastic article, "Black, White and Gray" called the Obama's Philadelphia speech on race "momentous and edifying" but said that he did it certainly for "damage control on his problem with Jeremiah Wright." According to Dowd, Obama "went to great pains to honor the human dimension of his relationship with his politically threatening 'old uncle,' as he calls him." Dowd juxtaposed the position Obama displayed by his "multihued, crazy-quilted DNA, he talked about cringing when he heard the white

grandmother who raised him use racial stereotypes and confess her fear of passing black men on the street.” In this case, Dowd viewed that Obama “after racing from race for a year, he plowed in and took a stab at showing blacks what white resentment felt like and whites what black resentment felt like. Obama could safely do this because of his “absurd extent” of being a “Gray,” which is a “welcome relief from black and white.”

Broadcast Media

Fox News

On March 20, 2008, Brit Hume on “Special Political Report” brought up the issue from a different angle and commented that “Geraldine Ferraro said Barack Obama’s speech mentioning her on race was good, but—and wait until you hear what comes after the but... Obama, meanwhile, gives his granny another dose of publicity and seems to stereotype all white people while he’s at it. A new Fox poll suggests this flap is hurting him.”

Also, Fox News brought up the issue of Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam. At an earlier occasion (February 26, 2008), Sean Hannity (*Fox News* host) raised some questions. How about fundamental fairness, he asked, when the church that Barack Obama used to go honored the Minister Louis Farrakhan, who “refers to the white man as the skunk of the planet Earth?” How could Obama become a post-racial candidate, who maintained relations, especially with Wright for 25 years? So, in Fox News’ terms, Obama is an America-hater as his pastors.

CNN

CNN’s Candy Crowley on the “Raw Politics,” (March 18, 2008) mentioned the “incendiary sermons” of Wright that threatened to undermine the premise of Barack

Obama's campaign. So, Obama, "who rarely talks about race," had to address the issue. Crowley questioned whether Obama disowned his pastor. Despite positive comments about Obama's approach, one commentator, Ronald Martin, thought it was like "Peter disowning Jesus." Martin said, "You own up to your issues. You own up to your deficiencies, but you also say, we are going to move ahead."

CNN, overall, acknowledged that Obama made a direct appeal to the suburban demographic. He told his audience that "to wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns—this too widens the racial divide and blocks the path to understanding."

MSNBC

On cable news network MSNBC's "Hardball," host Chris Matthews on March 18, 2008, said, "Obama tackles race divide in major speech. It was the most important speech of Barack Obama's career and the biggest moment of the campaign...A divide as American as the Grand Canyon, a speech worthy of Abraham Lincoln."

Matthews played the part of Obama's speech in which Obama said Wright made the mistake with "his offending sermons about America, to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality." The host also raised similar questions as other media outlets, "Did ... Obama distance himself enough from Reverend Wright? Did he calm the fears of the white voters?" Matthews "personally" viewed the speech as the best ever given on race in this country.

In the meantime, some columnists, writers, and commentators of the media outlets under discussion raised the issue of Obama's "lapse of judgment" since he "now

admits that he heard Wright make ‘controversial’ remarks in church,” and “he let the much-investigated Rezko curry favor by buying the plot of land next to his and selling a slice back, so Obama could have a bigger yard.”

Lapse of Judgement

Journal writer, Shelby Steele, a conservative African-American scholar, in his column, “The Obama Bargain” (2008, March 18), said, “Being with such an anti-American man and exposing his two daughters with messages of “hatred” and “a subtext of anti-white vitriol,” Obama made himself a “portent of presidential judgment.”

Judging Obama’s integrity, *Post* columnist Richard Cohen (March 18, 2008) said, “So for Obama, Wright posed a dilemma. The minister is well known and respected and, clearly, adored by Obama. His language of resentment, even of hate, has a certain context to Obama. It does not shock. I understand, really I do.” Cohen continued,

A presidential candidate is not a mere church member, and he operates in a different context. We examine everything about him for the slightest clue about character. On Wright, Obama has shown a worrisome tic. He has done so also with his relationship with Tony Rezko, the shadowy Chicago political figure.

Obama last week submitted to a grilling on this matter by the staff of the Chicago Tribune and was given a clean bill of health. I accept it. But that hardly changes the fact that Obama should never have done business with Rezko in the first place. He concedes that now, but it was still a failure of judgment (p. A-19).

“Newly alert to the perils of not seeming patriotic enough, he ended a speech in Pennsylvania the other morning with ‘God bless America.’”

Fox News anchor Brit Hume on March 20, 2008, referring to Geraldine Ferraro said, Ferraro issued one of the sharpest democratic criticism so far, telling the newspaper the *Daily Breeze* that Obama's association with Reverend Wright raises serious questions about his judgment. Bill O'Reilly of Fox News (March 14, 2008) commented, "because Barack Obama is running on his judgment, a big question pops up. How can you be close to a man who hates America that much?"

According to CNN, the Philadelphia speech was a balancing act for the senator, who needed to take into consideration the views of these backers along with those of many white, working-class voters he has struggled to woo. David Gergen, CNN's senior political analyst, said,

In... my judgment, it was the best speech of this campaign by anybody, eloquently and thoughtfully addressing the issue of race, and also showing us a great deal about Barack Obama as a leader. Ironically, in my judgment, the last person who could give a speech about race that was this good was Bill Clinton, who—you know, who also understood it well and had an enormous insights into these issues (np).

But "Did it put out the fire?" Candy Crowley asked and replied, "No. It did not put out the fire with the right. He's going to continue to be harpooned by—and held under enormous criticism by the right." But Crowley agreed that Obama's speech did "an enormous amount of good for him in suburban communities among better educated."

Racial Stalemate to Continue

The Washington Post

The *Post* staff writer, Kristen Mack (March 24, 2008), in an analytical piece titled, "Thoughts about Race, From Beyond the Pulpit," said,

Controversial sound bites from sermons by Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., prompted the Illinois senator to take on the subject of race, which has surfaced several times during the battle between Obama and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) for the Democratic presidential nomination (np).

Mack's story was based on opinions of different churchgoers and leaders as well as political scholars whom she interviewed about Obama's calling on Americans to confront their differences and move beyond a "racial stalemate." A White churchgoer (Susan Shearouse) said, she "doesn't usually think much about race," but opined that she could not think of "no better place than church to discuss the difficult topic of race." To the contrary, Rev. Steve Proctor, pastor of the 650-member United Methodist congregation, said he did not consider bringing the debate on race, religions, and politics into his sermon.

According to Mack, political scholar, Kathleen Hall Jamieson said she was not sure Obama's speech will spark a national conversation about race. "A political problem does not create the type of moment that leads to a national dialogue. It was a beautifully crafted speech; it is not a speech capable of transforming the environment." Americans needed to be in the right frame of mind to talk about race Jamieson said adding that "they

are far more likely to be altruistic when they are not thinking about putting gas in their car, feeding their families and holding on to their jobs.”

Post's Dan Balz's story(March 20, 2008) said, Obama lived in black and white throughout his life, and it seemed as if everything he had seen and absorbed and internalized about the divisions between the races went into what he said in Philadelphia. Calling the speech a “political rhetoric,” Balz forwarded, “At heart, this was a speech designed for a political purpose, and Obama may have received more credit than he deserves for taking up the subject.” He added, “Watching Obama speak in what seemed like deliberately flat and unemotional tones, there was no way to think about the address as other than a political rescue mission. And on that, there is no simple verdict, only lingering questions.”

The New York Times

The *Times*' Jeff Zeleny's (March 19, 2008) comment about the racial stalemate was, “After running a campaign that in many ways tried not to be defined by race, Mr. Obama placed himself squarely in the middle of the debate over how to address it, a living bridge between whites and blacks still divided by the legacy of slavery and all that came after it.” He (March 20, 2008) reported Senator Obama tried to steer his campaign from a focus on race that had threatened to envelop his candidacy and back to the economy, war and a host of other concerns. One day after delivering a major address about the racial divide, Mr. Obama barely mentioned the topic on his first campaign visit to North Carolina. From a foreign policy address in Fayetteville to a public forum here, Mr. Obama made just a passing reference to race, after a voter broached the subject.” The

news reporters were doubtful whether Obama's race-related speeches (though praised by many) were going to help racial reconciliation improve much.

How Obama was Right or Wrong

The national broadcast outlets, especially Fox News, subtly framed Obama's relationship with Wright as a matter of "reverse racism," for which Obama delivered "a more perfect union" speech to ease up the criticism of his opponents (Perkinson, 2012; Rowland and Jones, 2011). While, beside other news outlets, CNN started broadcasting Obama's campaign speeches that did not cover race-relations issues directly, Hume, Hannity and colleagues of Fox News not only covered race-related issues, they juxtaposed Obama's "perfect union" rhetoric with his previous statements including one interview Obama had with the Fox News a few days before.

Brit Hume (March 18, 2008) said, "Only days after saying he never heard Reverend Jeremiah Wright's most incendiary comments in church, Barack Obama conceded today that he had, indeed, heard many Wright statements he strongly disagreed with in church."

Though Obama made an apology by confessing his "wrong" association as well as disassociating himself from Wright, he could not escape "doubt" of the mainstream media. One commentator on *CNN* termed Wright "a walking representation of someone who contains both the love and— and the resentment and the frustration of the people in the black community." *Fox News* brought Obama's fragmented performatives together to say that Obama made "an attempt to douse the Wright firestorm, Obama sought to place it all in a much larger context." Fox News in a subtle way questioned Obama's honesty.

Hannity of Fox News (July 15, 2014) accused Obama of playing “race card” on immigration policy issues. Hannity even accused Michelle Obama, who in May (2014) had traveled to Topeka, Kansas, and “gave a speech to graduates there during which she warned that it's common still in America for people of color to be stopped on the streets simply because of their color.” On the same Hannity’s program, Cheryl Chumley of *Washington Times* mentioned that “The rhetoric coming out of the White House right now, the race card being thrown by Attorney General Eric Holder, is not new.” They also told the audience that in 2009, President Obama himself used his national platform to enter a local issue, slamming white police officers, characterizing them as behaving stupidly when they were simply responding to a call at a black Harvard University professor’s home.

Considering these soundbites, the mass media rhetoric approached the issue as a psychological dilemma in Obama, a “bound man” trapped by his career and ambitions for which he had to retain his black-half to reach the Blacks and white-half to go deep into the larger White world. This has a resemblance to Carstarphen’s (2009) citation of a reporter, named Washington, who called Obama tactics as “a thin line” (p. 418). About Obama’s colorlines, Enck-Wanzer (2011) argued, “Of course, Obama is in a bit of a double-bind ...” (p. 28).

Ron Christie (2012), who claims to be conservative, did not accept the view that Obama addressed the race issue properly. He believed Obama’s speech on race was born of political necessity for his survival to remain in the race of the Democratic nomination for president than it was a desire for him to expand the intellectual debate or discourse on the race issue. Christie (2012) stated, “Unfortunately, the media took it upon themselves

to elevate Obama's words as part of their narrative that Obama was a uniquely historical figure who has transcended his race" (p. 112). Judith Trent et al., (2011) argued that Obama cleared his view (by no mention of race) in his Iowa primary speech, "Why I am running," in which he mentioned health care, education, jobs, wages, pension, global warming, and an end to Iraq war. According to them, "Clearly, Obama's message was aimed at assembling a broad enough coalition to win the election" (p. 191).

In the dominant journalistic view, mention of race might be normal and natural, but the journalists, columnists, broadcasters, and commentators usually assume a farsighted impact of the dynamics of race for their readers/audiences. When the journalists themselves use race rhetoric they do not mention the differentiated dual or multiple experience of race(s) as class, gender etc. in America, but it is all there in the texture. Most of the news outlets brought some fragments of Obama speeches without referring to historical contexts of "white hegemony" over African Americans and causes of their anger and frustrations.

The news media, in this situation, framed race as a matter of identity that one can choose to adopt or ignore, rather than as a social structure with enduring political and economic consequences. Scholars such as Donna Young (2012) call this rhetoric "color-blindness" (p. 501), which was on all sides—the mainstream media, the public, and Obama. Fox News not only played the role of its color-blindness and conservative ideology, it also doubted Obama's honesty and served as a "counterweight" (Jones, 2012, p. 179) to the liberalism of mainstream news media outlets.

Transcendence of Color and Class

Obama said in his Philadelphia speech, “I can no more disown him [Wright] than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can disown my white grandmother” (par. 21). All the news outlets referred to Obama’s mixed body, indirectly. Mentioning the phrases, both print and broadcast media played “passing” indirectly for Obama as a “mixed” but more subtly as “white,” who did not want reparation of “original sin of slavery,” on the one hand, and continuously blaming and framing (stereotyping) the black politicians and pastors as angry, on the other. Mendible (2012) termed “passing” for [Obama-type] “blacks” (p. 13) as white, the only way that an African American man or woman could gain access to the privileges, citizenship, and freedoms granted by whites. Casey R. Kelly (2011) termed it in social meaning that connects “our faces to our souls” (p. 246). Borrowing from McGee (1990), Kelly (2011) and Enck-Wanzer (2012) explained that race as “the people” functions ideologically by affecting the ways in which marked bodies and their attendant social structures are constructed, organized, and ruled. Jeffrey A. Bennett (2008) argued, while “passing” can be used as art of conveying or concealing, it is useful for waging protest and resistance by the subordinated people.

Perkinson (2012), in this context, argued that as a “ritual passage Obama hammers Wright!” in “defense of mainstream opinion” (p. 101)—both the media and racist white public. It looked like “White-shirted supremacy once again licking its lips over its latest stage production of black-on-black agony!” (Perkinson, 2012, p. 101). Both the media and Obama hammered Wright, but “Wright’s actual claim was never disputed.

Without argument, this attack on Wright was like an “ad hominem” (Perkinson, 2012, p. 99).

Even Obama’s name conjured xenophobic passions during the 2008 campaign. Obama’s middle name, Hussein, was underscored by, among others, talk show host Bill Cunningham, as foreignness and his unfitness for Oval Office. Cunningham even derisively declared, “the media ... is going to peel the bark off Barack Hussein Obama” (Dyson, 2016, p. 127). Obama had to explain and reassert his deep and abiding love for the country—no other president or presidential contender had to or would have to face (if not a person of color). Obama had to make sure, in Dyson’s language, he was really “Made in America” (p. 130).

The media outlets repeatedly evaluated Obama’s competence for the Oval Office—Obama as a senator, then as a president, time and again by his speeches and actions in tackling difficult issues.

Scaling of Obama’s Speeches and Performatives

The *Wall Street Journal* found similarities between the “a more perfect union” speech with some speeches of President Reagan and, even more so, with President Johnson’s 1965 “We Shall Overcome.” It headlined its story, “Obama Aims to Quell Pastor Controversy” and referred to Republican candidate Sen. John McCain’s situation as he accepted the endorsement of televangelist James Hagee, who was criticized over anti-Catholic remarks.

The *Washington Post* found a likeness between “a more perfect union,” as Obama titled his speech, with President Reagan and more with Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 “We

Shall Overcome” speech, through which he urged Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.

The *New York Times* stated that many historians compared Obama’s speech to those of John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Lincoln. According to Prof. Finkelman of Albany Law School, Obama was the first politician to talk on the crucial race/slavery issue since Civil War.

With a headline, “Why Comparisons between L.B.J. and Obama Can Mislead,” Brendan Nyhan of the *Times* (May 22, 2014) commented that

The implications of Johnson’s administration for Obama are different from what many of ... [some] commentators think. What we perceive as presidential leadership (or lack of it) often reflects structural factors that are largely beyond the control of the chief executive himself—a reality of presidential power that critics of Mr. Obama’s speechmaking and relations with Congress often fail to appreciate (np).

According to Nyhan, an educator, LBJ’s favorable circumstances helped him for presidential activism. LBJ became president when public liberalism was high; he did not create the demand for greater government involvement in society. President Obama has served at a time when demand for government is much lower.

In Nyhan’s opinion, Obama’s critics also often faulted him for failing to twist arms in Congress as effectively as Johnson, who had been mythologized as pushing the “Great Society” agenda into law by sheer force of will. In reality, Johnson’s historic legislative accomplishments were enabled by an enormous Democratic majority in Congress, especially after the 1964 election. When those majorities diminished, so too

did his influence, as Obama himself pointed out this year. For these reasons, the frequent comparisons made between the two presidents are unfair. Beyond the changes in how politics works over the last 50 years, the circumstances were never as favorable for the current president, who took office with more modest demand for a liberal agenda, smaller Congressional majorities, and a far more unified opposition party. Unsurprisingly, those constraints breed frustration among Obama supporters and puzzlement among observers who wonder why he can't do what LBJ did. At some point, however, they will come to realize that Obama can't change public opinion or push bills through Congress by sheer force of will – and neither could Johnson.

In a later op-ed article, *Times'* columnist Frank Bruni (January 6, 2015) defended Obama for not accomplishing as much as LBJ. Frank Bruni said, "We measure our presidents against not only our hopes for the present, which are sometimes unreasonable but also our understanding of the past, which can be just as flawed." The article with a headline, "The Man or the Moment: Barack Obama, Lyndon Johnson and Presidential Comparisons," referred to Princeton University professor/historian Julian Zelizer's book, *The Fierce Urgency of Now* in which Zelizer reminded us that many of Johnson's signature victories came during a two-year period when Democrats had two-thirds majorities in both the Senate, where they held 68 seats, and the House, where they held 295.

Frank Bruni explained further that "Its setting is the 1960s, as the title, a phrase uttered by Martin Luther King Jr., suggests that Johnson was largely favored by the Congress and of forces beyond the presidency that did not exist much for Obama,

especially after the first two-year when Democratic Party lost majority in the both the chambers.

LBJ Library picked up an article by a British journalist, Alex Massie (of the conservative *Spectator* magazine), who discussed “Why can’t Barack Obama be more like Lyndon Johnson?” written about a year before the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (April 23, 2013).

Referring to *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd criticism of Obama’s absence of “willpower” to take initiative to pass gun control, for example, Massie said that “Lyndon Johnson’s celebrated legislative achievements were in reality only a function of the congressional election results—not his powers of persuasion. In 1965 and 1966, after the enormous Democratic gains of the 1964 election, Johnson was a towering figure who passed sweeping legislation.” For Obama, Massie argued in the line of Tim Stanley, another British journalist, and Ryan Lizza of *New Yorker*, “A fundamental fact of modern political life is that the only way to advance a coherent agenda in Washington is through partisan dominance.” When Obama had large Democratic majorities in Congress during his first two years in office, he led one of the most successful legislative periods in modern history. After he lost the House, his agenda froze and the status quo of serial fiscal crises began. Like it or not, for many years, Washington has been most productive when one party controlled both Congress and the White House.

“Resurrected” Camelot

In the course of different ways of comparing Obama’s performance with other politicians, especially President Kennedy, the rare and mythic issue of “Camelot” resurrected. Besides individuals and groups, many national and international news media

outlets including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and BBC News, on a few occasions viewed Obama's image as "Black Camelot." Raising the question, Barack Obama legacy: Did he improve US race relations? Nick Bryant of *BBC's* New York correspondent said, Barack Obama "has brought such grace and glamor to America's sleepy capital that it is possible to speak of a Black Camelot" (January 10, 2017).

Scholars such as Gregory Frame (2012) and Katrin Rupp (2011) thought during the 2008 election campaign and later on, Obama supporters and even some media outlets invoked Obama's shining stature of Camelot or Black Camelot. Considering Obama's audacious determination and strength in overcoming vulnerabilities in an unusual historical situation that never saw a man of color in the highest position of America, they were right. Frame (2012) thought of "Obama's position as the inheritor of Kennedy's legacy" (p. 172). In a relatively similar tone, Katrin Rupp (2011) said that hailed by his supporters as a savior figure after the presidency of George W. Bush. Obama, like Kennedy before him, was "seen as a kind of second Arthur, who is, after all, the once and future king" (p.1).

In the American context, the word "Camelot" is mostly used to refer admiringly to the presidency of John F. Kennedy. The Camelot myth, related to a medieval British King Arthur, resurfaced with the brief presidency of Kennedy, who was considered to possess rare qualities of strength to take bold and extraordinary action for the success of the administration and the well-being of the people (Craig, 2013; White, 2012). *The New York Times* columnist Frank Rich (February 3, 2008) said Kennedy had to persuade his party and the country that he was not a wealthy dilettante and not "too young, too

inexperienced and, above all, too Catholic” to be president, About 50 years later, Obama also had to preach “the audacity of Kumbaya,” the message of human and spiritual unity, closeness and compassion by race and color that never been in the Bully Pulpit. “Mr. Obama was at first not black enough to sweep black votes and then too black to get a sizable white vote in South Carolina” (Rich, 2008).

Even before that, a Democratic primary event was headlined, “Barack Obama, Camelot's New Knight” covered by *Washington Post* staff writer, Neely Tucker (January 29, 2008). Reporting about the cheering throng of students at American University, where the Kennedy family members including Caroline Kennedy endorsed Senator Barack Obama as Democratic candidate, Tucker said, though the Camelot issue is a myth in America, “Yesterday, the ideals of one of the nation's most beloved presidents were handed down for a new generation. It should make for a good story.” It was like “Camelot, reconsidered.”

Also on the same day, *New York Times* columnist Alessandra Stanley's article mentioned: “Camelot '08 Overshadows Bush Speech.” With different tidbits in the story, Stanley mentioned: “in Washington, the Kennedy clan sought vindication—and renewed vigor—by passing the torch to an adopted heir.” Stanley further said, when Obama was described as a “son of Camelot,” broadcast network ABC's screen was filled by a black-and-white clip of President Kennedy lifting young John-John in his arms.

Gregory Frame (2012) thought, “Obama has his own idiosyncrasies, including the now iconic ‘fist bump,’ but the loose, observational visual style and cool, easy manner in which Obama relates to the camera recalls the smooth allure of Kennedy” (p. 169). Frame also believed Obama sought to establish himself as Kennedy's natural successor through

his presentation and performance. He mentioned both the Times of London and the BBC showed Obama seeking to reconstruct the image of Kennedy's Camelot: a youthful president hard at work, with his young family always nearby. Moreover, two images, in particular, most explicitly positioned Obama as the progeny of Kennedy. One of them was a photograph that showed Obama searching underneath his desk when Kennedy's daughter, Caroline, came to visit demonstrated Obama's attempt to recreate the famous Tretick photograph of Kennedy's young son, John Jr., peering out from underneath the table as his father worked.

Some others, especially African-Americans, refused to give up their aspirations of "Black Camelot." David Horsey, a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist, writing an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, titled, "Barack Obama built a new kind of Camelot for a new generation" (January 19, 2017), said the moment they were watching the 2008 election results he saw tears in the eyes of his daughter and her friends and "That was the moment I fully appreciated the impact of Barack Obama's rise to the presidency." Now, like others, he wondered was it the effect of Obama that America's electoral system had produced Donald Trump with "which we all fell into division and reactionary rule." But Horsey thinks, "Obama's different sort of Camelot will be defined in fond memory by the coming discord of the Trump administration."

Obama's Camelot stature engendered many other views about him such as symbolism of being the first black president that created enormous hope of change and progress, but that also created a sense of "the seductive danger," because "symbols, as powerful as they can be, are largely a distraction," according to Mychal Denzel Smith, a black writer, author, and television commentator (January 21, 2016). Agreeing with

some progress made by Obama, such as—recovering from the worst economic crisis in generations, reforming health care system and reinventing the energy sector—Smith expressed his frustration about Obama’s dealing with the issues of racism lately exposed in the killings of black young men by police officers. As some other scholars agree that “it’s true that he’s [Obama] spoken more openly about racism in the public sphere as of late,” but those were not in the “prestigious” national spheres such as State of the Union speech, rather with WTF, a weekly podcast run by comedian Marc Maron.

Obama did talk about racism on other occasions, to cite another example, one with *TIME* magazine’s Maya Rhodan, (*TIME*, March 14, 2016). “Nowhere in that vision was an articulation of how the United States can uproot racism,” opined Smith. According to Smith (January 21, 2016), President Obama perhaps even more than usual, because of his symbolism as the first black president, made the country even more unwilling to deal with its legacy of racism, having satisfied itself with the progress made by electing Obama. Eddie Glaude (2016) viewed the problem inherent in the “post-black liberal” philosophy that he thought Obama also represented (p.155). So some media outlets and scholars thought that Barack Obama needed that to create his own space at the very beginning of his 2008 election campaign.

“MySpace” or “Hisspace”

Writing about Obama’s campaign strategy for nomination to presidency, in the article, “The Wiki-Way to the Nomination,” Noam Cohen of the *Times* (June 8, 2008), discussed “MySpace” (Internet campaign name of Obama),

Mr. Obama’s role, at least in the rhetoric, is less leader than facilitator, a conduit for decentralized collaboration as described by James Surowiecki in his book

“The Wisdom of Crowds.” “The ethos of the Net is fundamentally respectful of and invested in the idea of collective wisdom, and in some sense is hostile to the idea that power and authority should belong to a select few,” Mr. Surowiecki wrote (p. WK-4).

Quoting from the James Surowiecki’s “The Wisdom of Crowds,” Cohen further said, Yes, someone is driving the bandwagon, even if he constantly plays down his role—describing himself as a Rorshach [misspelled for *Rorschach*] image on whom others project. Even Wikipedia has administrators who monitor the work there, and open-source projects have their “leaders,” who keep them on course. In truth, there is no such thing as purely collective decision making. As Mr. Surowiecki summed it up in his book: “It has historically been unusual for change to bubble up from below on its own. So it is, in fact, more likely that someone will take it on himself to champion the idea of collective wisdom, and in that way create the conditions that allow it to flourish. This is paradoxical, but no more so than the fact that an individual, not a crowd, wrote ‘The Wisdom of Crowds’” (p. WK-4).

According to the *Times*, during the 2008 election campaign, Obama professed his own reconciliatory idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts; we are truly one.

According to the *Post* columnist David Broder (March 23, 2008), Obama was saying that he had the potential to inform, educate and inspire people of oneness if he was allowed to fill “the bully pulpit” of the presidency. Obama urged people to look beyond their justifiable resentments and help end the “racial stalemate we’ve been stuck in for years.”

David Maraniss, Obama biographer, in his book, *Barack Obama: The Story*, (2012) drew on hundreds of interviews and written sources to present a multi-generational account of Barack Obama and the forces that shaped his character and beliefs. Maraniss (2012) said it is “not only by how his family and environment modeled him but how he reshaped himself” (p. xix). Obama has had the ability to make “a perfectionist drive for unity” within himself and within his community, said Maraniss. He further remarked that the only choice he had, was to “embrace it all,” meaning a “philosophy that was large enough to take in life in all of its colors and contradictions” (p. xxii). According to Maraniss, as a biracial and cross-cultural man, Obama seemingly possesses “antithesis” characteristics of “what it takes to rise in a world of emotion and visceral power, yet Obama holds that contradiction in subtle balance with his uncommon will and overriding sense of purpose” (pp. xxii, xxxiii). Based on all his qualities and ambitions, Maraniss (2012, p. 571) drew the conclusion that Obama got his (his family’s) destination, that is “his own El Doredo” (Spanish for ‘the golden one,’ or ‘the gilded one’) a reference to his maternal ancestry, but for Obama “MySpace.”

Scholars such as Alim and Smitherman (2012), Glaude (2016), and Mendible (2012) thought that Obama had to articulate that way to make a space of his own. Alim and Smitherman (2012) called it a “remix” of “White and Black jeremiadic traditions,” (p. 87) though the mediated process, in many cases, adopted “the racially coded meanings of articulate” as a function of “enlightened exceptionalism” (p. 32). In a negative tone, Glaude (2016) called it a “devastating irony that rests at the heart of black liberalism” (p. 157). Mendible (2012) termed “passing” for [Obama-type] “blacks” (p. 13) as white, the only way that an African-American man or woman could gain access to the privileges,

citizenship, and freedoms granted by whites. Nakayama and Martin (1999) viewed “passing” as unique moment “the reconfiguration of racial relations in the United States” (p. viii).

In sum, Chapter V presented a critical analysis of the political tones of the coverage of Obama’s “a more perfect union” speech and some related speeches by the selected media outlets. Some of the *Times*, CNN, MSNBC items used controlled tones in classifying Obama. For example, Janny Scott of the *Times* (March 19, 2008) praised Obama’s racial reconciliation speech (of March 18, 2008) in her article titled, “Obama Chooses Reconciliation over Rancor.” According to Scott, Obama “worked to elude pigeonholing as a black politician,” not as a Jeremiah Wright. On the contrary, *Times*’ columnist Maureen Dowd (March 19, 2008) said Obama’s efforts were certainly for “damage control on his problem with Jeremiah Wright.”

While the *Times*, CNN, and MSNBC engendered a positive tone toward Obama’s hope for the reconciliation of racial discord, conservative media perceived Obama’s efforts as still short of narrowing down the gap between the liberal and conservative expectations. However, all the media outlets, with some degrees of differences, bracketed Obama to “apologia,” to keep his election campaign afloat. The *Journal*’s news stories, in general, viewed Obama’s racial reconciliation approach as “Obama’s gamble,” while an editorial in a politer tone called it “a chiefly political crisis.”

All of these politically charged tones that related to racial reconciliation involving the Wright issue might have subsided, but not the race-relations, especially the economic conditions of African Americans. This could be seen from the coverage and explanations

of Obama's speeches on all three occasions--"a more perfect union" (2008), the Washington March anniversary (2013) and Civil Rights Act of 1964 anniversary (2014).

Chapter VI discusses the links between civil rights and economic rights as informed by CRT.

CHAPTER VI – LINKS BETWEEN CIVIL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

The media coverage of America's first Black Presidential candidate Barack Obama's speeches focusing on "racial reconciliation" clearly did not have much impact on economic disparities, except a limited effect for both the black and white working-class Americans. In fact, Obama paid more attention to addressing his relations with Jeremiah Wright. There was not much even about special interest groups--women, people of color, gays/lesbians/transgendered and people with disabilities. Obama discussed how African Americans were affected by segregation and had been left behind the economic betterment and progress of the country. He also discussed how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Affirmative Action created anger of the jobless White working class.

Media coverage of America's first black President's address to the nation at the "Let Freedom Ring" ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr's "I Have A Dream" speech was marked by how far the country has come in 50 years in terms of economic equality and how far it had to go. Media outlets focused on how Obama championed himself as evidence of the progress that has been made in racial equality 50 years after the most iconic civil rights speech in history. Most of the news outlets quoted Obama, "The arc of the moral universe may bend toward justice, but it does not bend on its own." Obama said those "who gathered 50 years ago were not there in search of some abstract ideal. They were seeking jobs as well as justice. The gap in wealth between races has not lessened, it's grown." Obama hoped people who love their country could change it with the lesson of the past, the promise of tomorrow, in the face of impossible odds. However, the interpretation and the focus of the media outlets varied according to their ideological and policy agendas.

The main issue of the Obama's keynote speech at the civil rights summit at the Johnson Presidential Library was the gains as well as struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. Honoring the legacy of a former president he has barely mentioned previously, President Barack Obama on April 10, 2014, cast Lyndon B. Johnson's push to end legal segregation as a factor in his own ascend to the White House.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's landmark measure the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate among U.S. citizens based on race, outlawing for the first time segregation at lunch counters, buses, and other public places but discrimination still continues in different ways. Obama's speeches and the media coverage touched more on the economic and legal issues in the 50th-anniversary speeches than in the 2008 racial reconciliation speeches.

Journey of justice from the viewpoints of the media outlets was traced along the "Let Freedom Ring," in diverse ways.

"A More Perfect Union" and 50th Anniversary Washington March

Print Media

The Wall Street Journal

In 2008, *Journal* reporters/columnists (though it is an economic newspaper) did not touch much on economic issues Obama addressed. Shelby Steele in his column, "The Obama Bargain" (March 18, 2008) briefly said,

Race helps Mr. Obama in another way -- it lifts his political campaign to the level of allegory, making it the stuff of a far higher drama than budget deficits and education reform. His dark skin, with its powerful evocations of America's tortured racial past, frames the political contest as a morality play. Will his victory

mean America's redemption from its racist past? Will his defeat show an America morally unevolved? Is his campaign a story of black overcoming, an echo of the civil rights movement? Or is it a passing-of-the-torch story, of one generation displacing another? (p. A-23).

On March 19 (2008), columnists Jackie Calmes and Nick Timiraos in their story, "Obama Puts Race Closer to Center of Campaign," said,

Sen. Obama said, the nation must address the resentments and "real culprits" common to black and white problems, which he described as jobs being shipped overseas, bad schools and unaffordable health care. He said America should end the "racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years" (np).

According to Calmes, and Timiraos, Obama also emphasized,

For blacks' part, Sen. Obama said, they have to be aware of similar anger among whites. "Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race," he said. Resentment builds, he said, when whites "hear that an African-American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed" (np).

The *Journal's* Elizabeth Williamson and Peter Nicholas reported Obama's speech with a headline, "Obama Remembers King's Dream" (August 29, 2013). Their story stated,

Mr. Obama, recalling Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech to the marchers in 1963, used his remarks to link the black civil-rights struggle to the goal of offering "a fair shot" at reaching the middle class to all Americans, regardless of race. However, Obama also spoke of racial disparities, saying that amid the many

advances for African-Americans over 50 years, black unemployment “has remained almost twice as high as white unemployment” and that “the gap in wealth between the races has not lessened; it’s grown,” tracing the cause related to “exploding corporate profits” (np).

The reporters interviewed some participants, and they quoted a 17-year-old high school student from Philadelphia, Rodger Selby, who said that while racism could not be fully eliminated, “With these sorts of events, it gets weaker and weaker.”

With a critical headline, “Obama's Economy Hits His Voters Hardest,” *Journal's* columnist Stephen Moore (September 4, 2013) wrote that,

According to the Sentier Research, households headed by single women (who were mostly Obama voters), with and without children present, saw their incomes fell by roughly 7%. The unemployment numbers showed pretty much the same pattern. July's (2013) Bureau of Labor Statistics data (the most recent available) showed a national unemployment rate of 7.4%. The highest jobless rates by far were for key components of the Obama voter bloc: blacks (12.6%), Hispanics (9.4%), those with less than a high-school diploma (11%) and teens (23.7%) (np).

In an editorial, titled “Discovering Obama,” the *Journal* (March 19, 2008) said,

It is also notable that Mr. Obama situated Mr. Wright within what the Senator sees as the continuing black-white conflict and the worst excesses of racial injustice like Jim Crow. He dwelled on a lack of funding for inner-city schools and a general “lack of economic opportunity.” But Mr. Obama neglected the massive failures of the government programs that were supposed to address these problems, as well as the culture of dependency they ingrained (p. A-16).

The editorial critically said, Mr. Obama's villains, in other words, are the standard-issue populist straw men of Wall Street and the GOP, and his candidacy is a vessel for liberal policy orthodoxy—raise taxes, “invest” more in social programs, restrict trade, retreat from Iraq.

On the Washington March Day, the *Journal's* editorial, “Government and Segregation,” (August 29, 2013) in a slashing tone said that much of Obama's speech was devoted to eloquently extolling the marchers and civil-rights advocates of that era.

Mr. Obama tried to yoke that King aspiration to our current political debates, and here his rhetoric turned to a too-familiar politics of polarization. He spoke about stagnant wages for "working Americans" of all races, "even as corporate profits soar, even as the pay of a fortunate few explodes." And who is to blame? We'll quote the President at length: "Entrenched interests..." (p. A-14).

Disagreeing with Obama's views, the *Journal* editorial commented,

He [Obama] can't resist caricaturing his opponents as Gordon Gekko [the richest one percent] without the social conscience and asserting that "the free market" will grind Americans into poverty... This is not the kind of unifying message that has Americans of nearly all races and creeds still recalling King's words with admiration a half century later. If the President wonders why he hasn't been able to calm America's partisan furies, speeches like this are one answer (p. A-14).

The *Journal* acknowledged that racial hatreds were—and often still are—rooted in historical and individual prejudice in the post-Reconstruction South, and suggested federal laws had to be passed and enforcement imposed, precisely because the national government was the only force powerful enough to break state-enforced segregation.

The Washington Post

The *Washington Post*'s economic columnist Shankar Vedantam (March 24, 2008) wrote a piece entitled, "Unequal Perspectives on Racial Equality," based on scholarly research done at some universities, including Harvard. Vedantam talked about how Jeremiah Wright had "painted a picture of stark inequality" in American life along races.

Vedantam wrote,

The unusual experiment is one of dozens that have found that whites tend to have a relatively rosy impression of what it means to be a black person in America. Whites are more than twice as likely as blacks to believe that the position of African Americans has improved a great deal. Blacks are more than twice as likely as whites to believe that conditions for African Americans are growing worse. Whereas, according to research, the wealth gap between the white and blacks is "5-to-1", which makes a huge impact on their life and its values (p. A-3).

As a consequence,

The average black person in America is 447 percent more likely to be imprisoned than the average white person, and 521 percent more likely to be murdered. Blacks earn 60 cents to the dollar compared with Whites who have the same education levels and marital status. The black poverty rate is nearly twice the white poverty rate. Blacks tend to die five years earlier than whites; the infant mortality rate among black babies is nearly 1 1/2 times the rate among white babies. And because of long-standing patterns of inheritance, blacks and whites begin life with substantial disparities in family wealth (p. A-3).

Vedantam further said, however, according to research, there are differentiations of perception about inequality among the races. Racial (in)equality means different things to Whites and Blacks. Whites see it as an ideal, Blacks as a necessity. When people evaluate progress toward idealistic or optional goals, they tend to focus on progress made. But when people think of necessities—paying the rent—they focus on how much they are short.

S. Hendrix, D. Nakamura, and A. Halsey covered the March on Washington speech, and their story was headlined, “King’s call for justice is celebrated, renewed” (August 29, 2013). They quoted President Obama as saying:

The test was not and never has been whether the doors of opportunity are cracked a bit wider for a few.”...It was whether our economic system provides a fair shot for the many—for the black custodian and the white steelworker, the immigrant dishwasher and the Native American veteran. To win that battle, to answer that call, this remains our great unfinished business (p. A-1).

The *Post*’s Scott Wilson’s analytical story on August 29, 2013, was headlined, “The first black president looks back, and forward,” and said,

President Obama spoke how his work would involve “challenging those who erect new barriers to the vote or ensuring that the scales of justice work equally for all, and the criminal justice system is not simply a pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails.” On the battlefield of justice, he [Obama] said, “men and women without rank or wealth or title or fame would liberate us all in ways that our children now take for granted” (p. A-1).

Wilson's earlier story, (August 28, 2013) "Obama bids to redefine struggle –and his role," said,

Though Obama's relationship with the American civil rights movement has been a vexing one, in preparing for the address, Obama has assembled civil rights advocates at the White House to discuss states' efforts to make it harder to register to vote and cast ballots, nearly five decades after passage of the Voting Rights Act (p. A-1).

On the socioeconomic condition of African-Americans especially, the *Post's* Harold Meyerson (August 28, 2013) commented that the Obama Administration has forgotten minimum wage of the lower ladder workers of the country. In the story, "Minimum Wage: The march's forgotten goal," Meyerson said, "The march 50 years ago was, after all, a march 'For Jobs and Freedom,' and its focus was every bit as economic as it was juridical and social."

The *Post's* Michael Fletcher (Aug 28, 2013) said, "50 years later, economic gap persists." Fletcher, in this respect, referred to Obama's speech delivered at a town-hall-style meeting at Binghamton University in New York in which Obama said that the economic disparities were the legacy of a long history of discrimination. Fletcher mentioned that,

Between 1979 and 2007, incomes shifted drastically, with the top five percent of earners seeing annual salary increased more than three times the size of those in the middle. Fletcher cited William Darity Jr., a professor of public policy, economics and African American studies at Duke University who said, "The relative position of blacks has not changed economically since the march."

“Certainly, poverty has declined for everybody, but it has declined in a way that the proportion of blacks to whites who are poor is about the same as it was 50 years ago” (p. A-1).

The *Post* carried an editorial titled, “Fifty years after the March on Washington, paying tribute and marking progress” (August 29, 2013). The editorial mentioned Obama, the country’s first black president, as “a living symbol of the progress of the past 50 years, [who] stood before tens of thousands of people to offer a reverent remembrance of the men and women who made his path, and the nation’s, possible.” It added that Obama asked his audience to keep that example of unity and cooperation in mind as the nation faced unmet challenges in a world that continued to change rapidly.

An earlier editorial on the Washington March, “A symbol, if not a turning point,” (August 27, 2013) shifted the blame of inequality to the South. The editorial said, Under a succession of presidents in the first half of the 20th century, whether they were “progressive” Democrats or conservative Republicans, the bizarre racial codes of the South became entrenched to varying degrees in much of the country. Long-serving and powerful Southern senators who held many of the levers of power and stymied any legislation that bore the slightest chance of advancing civil rights—even bills meant to curb the lynchings that disgraced America, bolstered it (np).

The New York Times

The *Times*’ Jeff Zeleny (March 19, 2008) in his news story brought up economic issues. Zeleny mentioned that regarding race issues Obama said, “And if we walk away now...if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come

together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American.”

On the Washington March Day, *Times*' Peter Baker and Sheryl Gay Stolberg (August 29, 2013) in their story, “Saluting a Dream, and Adapting It for a New Era,” said,

The symbolic journey from Dr. King to Mr. Obama on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial animated the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom more than any oratory. While Mr. Obama's line about the White House changing was his only reference to his unique place in history, the power of his presence was lost on no one (np).

The reporters also quoted Obama as saying

Because they marched, doors of opportunity and education swung open so their daughters and sons could finally imagine a life for themselves beyond washing somebody else's laundry or shining somebody else's shoes. And “eventually, the White House changed. The arc of the moral universe may bend towards justice,” the president said, adopting a line from Dr. King, but it doesn't bend on its own. To secure the gains this country has made requires constant vigilance, not complacency (np).

Peter Baker's separate piece titled, “President, Not Preacher, but Speaking More on Race,” (August 28, 2013) talked about the criminal justice policies of the United States as Obama also talked on the issue. Baker mentioned a president who often shied away from talking about race was set to deliver his own speech from the Lincoln Memorial. Baker remarked, “Mr. Obama talks about issues historically tied to race. He often frames them

in terms of class, economics, and opportunity, aiming to speak for a broader audience than Dr. King did in 1963” (p. A-14).

Alessandra Stanley wrote a critical item (August 29, 2013) headlined, “At Ceremony for Civil Rights Milestone, an Image That Spoke Volumes.” Stanley said that on a day of almost constant television coverage of civil rights, Obama wasn’t the star. The networks interrupted regular programming to cover Obama’s speech live, but that is standard practice when any president speaks on an important occasion. On the other hand, Stanley also said Obama was reticent about focusing on color and on his color— “Partly Mr. Obama’s reticence is reflexive, a lifelong reluctance...” Stanley thought that Obama did not directly mention the legacy of the 1963 march. According to Stanley, “The soft-pedaling was also a measure of how accustomed the nation has become to an African American president.”

The *Times*’ editorial (Aug 29, 2013) titled, “The Second Dimension,” said, President Obama often quoted the line made famous by the Martin Luther King Jr., that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” The editorial said, “The idea is, like Mr. Obama himself, full of both caution and hope... The arc ‘may bend towards justice, ‘but it doesn’t bend on its own.’” The editorial also mentioned,

The president has grown more comfortable discussing economic inequality openly in his second term, and not a moment too soon. In that light, it was gratifying to hear him take aim at “those who benefit from an unjust status quo,” who resist “minimum-wage increases or stronger labor laws or taxes on the wealthy” in the name of supposedly “sound economic principles” (p. A-26).

Another editorial, “The Fight for Voting Rights, 50 Years Later,” (August 28, 2013) remarked that the U.S. Supreme Court “hobbled the Voting Rights Act of 1964, one of the most effective civil rights laws in American history.” It said,

On the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, the country can take pride in progress made toward the guarantee of equal rights for all. Yet it is disheartening to watch the continuing battles over the right to vote, a core goal of the civil rights movement and the foundation of any functioning democracy (np).

The editorial further said,

[It is] A central element of that law required certain states and jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to obtain federal permission before making changes to their election laws. Finding that ‘things have changed dramatically,’ the court struck down that part of the act.” Within hours, it became clear that things had not changed as much as the court seemed to think (np).

The editorial pointed how Texas and North Carolina, some of the states covered by the Act, announced that they would immediately begin enforcing a photo-identification requirement for voters that a federal court had blocked the year before. Defenders of that state law—which accepts a concealed-handgun license for identification but not a student ID card—said it was necessary to prevent in-person voter fraud, even though state officials have identified only a handful of such cases.

The editorial further said,

These laws, supported by Republican lawmakers trying to suppress Democratic votes, may not be uniquely targeted at racial minorities—they also burden the poor, the elderly, students and others—but that does not change their racial effect.

Either way, what reason is there to keep eligible citizens from voting unless you are afraid of the outcome? (np).

Broadcast Media

Fox News

Brit Hume (March 18, 2008) with his team also brought socioeconomic and class issues up for discussion. Hume commented that Obama had annoyed the White constituents, and especially he was “not going to get them, anyway; or any black people.”

Mort Kondracke, executive editor of *Roll Call*, said,

But—and then, what does it do to white independents who he is going to have to rely upon in the general election? Now, they’re probably going to vote lots on economics, but insofar as he has claimed to be a healer and a unifier, he is not.”

The other thing I have to say is he talks about unity between the white working class and African-Americans, and he said they are both victims of what the great corporate conspiracy, economic policies that favor the few over the many and stuff like that. It is a populist appeal that is not unifying when it comes to solving problems and is not unifying in the general election (np).

In Fox News coverage of Obama’s Washington March speech, a few sound-bites were noteworthy—some approval, many critical. For example, “The 5 O’clock News” and talk show, “The Five,” with host Kimberly Guilfoyle (with Andrea Tantaros, Bob Beckel, Eric Bolling, and Greg Gutfeld) talked about the occasion. “The Five” had a headline, “Today Marks 50 Years since MLK’s ‘I Have a Dream’ Speech; Race in America: 50 Years Later,” Guilfoyle stated,

“...It is a special day in American history. ... Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his legendary “Dream Speech” in Washington. It was a battle cry for liberty and justice for all. It changed the course of our history...Here is President Obama commemorating Dr. King’s dream and his lasting legacy this afternoon (np).

Barack Obama: ... Everyone who realizes what those glorious patriots knew on that day that change does not come from Washington but to Washington, that change has always been built on our willingness—we, the people, to take on the mantle of citizenship, you are marching. And that's the lesson of our past. That's the promise of tomorrow.

Bob Beckel (co-host): ... if Dr. King had been alive today... he would have been ... amazed there was a black president, ... I think he [Obama] talked about change coming from the grassroots into Washington, ... I know there’s been a lot of controversy about Washington dictating from here out. ...

Eric Bolling (co-host): ... King Jr. was a pacifist; he was anti-war. ...[But Obama is] caught between a rock and a hard place right now [over Syrian War].

Dwelling on different issues and speeches of other speakers (such as former President Clinton and US House Representative John Lewis), co-host Tantaros talked about Obamacare and economic condition of the African Americans. Tantaros added, “...This is where the Congressional Black Caucus should stand up and criticize that the black community hasn't done better under President Obama. But we didn’t hear that.”

Even hailing Obama, Tantaros touched a sensitive cultural issue,

His pants are pulled up; he has two degrees, ... very intelligent. ... And he just misses opportunities ... time and again to address the point that you made, Bob,

and Michelle Obama as well. It is a cyclical thing. Guys don't have dads, girls don't have dads, and they repeat the same behavior. It's destructive to men and women (np).

Beckel: Well, ...Obama probably should have addressed them, but you talk about the conservatives and the Republicans who get virtually no votes from the black community, why don't Republicans offer solutions?

In the same way, during "Talking Points Memo," Bill O'Reilly reacted to the events marking the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Bill O'Reilly: ...today President Obama is the headliner [and] nation's first Black President gave an energetic presentation...then President Obama turned political.

Obama: ... the gap of wealth between races has now lessened is wrong. As President Clinton indicated the position of all working Americans regardless of color has eroded making the dream Dr. King described even more elusive.

O'Reilly: Whose fault is that? ... First, Mr. Obama's attempt to manage the economy from Washington—that has largely failed. The private sector must drive economic expansion, not the Feds. And the president has not yet embraced that. And second, ... Even if jobs become more plentiful, you have to be able to do them, you have to speak proper English, be able to do basic math and conduct yourself responsibly...[in] the marketplace.

O'Reilly continued that private sector was "seeking minority workers, it wants them and recruits them. They have to perform." O'Reilly quipped,

There is little institutional bias in this country, and if you practice that, you will get sued. ...The left wants paternalism, cradle to grave protections. And if you

oppose that philosophy there is something wrong with you...America remains the land of opportunity, but only for those who are honest and responsible. If you are irresponsible, lazy and corrupt this country can be a tough place (np).

O'Reilly praised parts of U.S. Representative John Lewis' speech, "We are all in a same boat now. It does not matter we are black or white... we are one people, one family."

O'Reilly, however, called the occasion mostly a matter of "grievance mongering" and said it did not help civil rights.

Juan Williams, an African-American and a Fox News contributor, praised O'Reilly's "Talking Points Memo" of the night. Williams said the tradition of Dr. King was to stand up and act against bad schools, rap culture and the breakdown of the traditional family. "The civil rights challenge of this generation is education," Williams said.

O'Reilly also questioned, "Where Were the Black Republicans?" suspecting that they were not invited to the Washington rally. "All speakers are democrats. That's a glaring error and that's not indicated a desire for inclusion."

CNN

On March 18 (2008), CNN's Candy Crowley in the "Raw Politics" program said, Obama talked of white resentment, grounded, he said, in legitimate concern.

Barack Obama: So, when they are told to bus their children to a school across town, when they hear that an African-American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed, when they're told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudice, resentment builds over time.

Crowley: It was a powerful speech, part history, part personal, and very much on message.

Obama: And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care or education or the need to find good jobs for every American.

Crowley: The question is whether it was enough to put out the pastor's fire.

On March 19, 2008, *CNN*'s "Newsroom Live" ran the morning story with anchors Tony Harris, and Heidi Collins, along with some other correspondents that had the headline, "Barack Obama Speaking Out on Race; Barack Obama's Economic Plan."

Collins: ... Our money team has a special report on your money. It's called "ISSUE #1," the economy.

Tony Harris (*CNN* Anchor): Feeling the middle-class squeeze? Barack Obama says his economic plan will help you. We take a closer look at Obamanomics, that's next.

Harris: It is issue number one on your minds. The economy.

The discussants heard from senior economic adviser for the Obama campaign,

Dan Tarullo—On the "centerpiece of Senator Obamas campaign" towards improving the lot of the middle class, squeezed considerably in the last seven years, a middle-class tax cut, new jobs, new technology etc.

Anderson Cooper on "360 Degrees" segment, "The March on Washington: 50 years Later," commented

President Obama stands where Dr. King stood half a century ago. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous "I have a Dream" speech. The nation's first African

American president celebrating his legacy and honoring all those who fought and gave their lives. (np).

Obama: Because they march[ed], America became more free and more fair... for women and Latinos, Asians and Native Americans, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, for gays, for Americans with disabilities. America changed for you and for me.

MSNBC

MSNBC touched on the issues of “Race” and “Equality” on the Washington March’s 50th Anniversary commemorating of the 1963 demonstration for jobs, economic justice, and racial equality. The highlighted message was by President Obama’s “Freedom isn’t given, it must be won.”

MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews” (August 28, 2013) started with the “Race issue in the Hardball” (including some guests: Taylor Branch, Michelle Berna Terry Edmonds, Doug Brinkley, Martin Luther King III, and Peter Yarrow). A discussion followed, playing parts of speeches by many politicians and celebrities, including former President Jimmy Carter and Oprah Winfrey.

Despite criticisms of President Obama for his shyness about addressing issues of racial discriminations, the heated message of the show touched many issues, such as the division of the country along the races, deprivation of African-Americans, and also rejection of the president on the basis of his race. Mathews argued, “It’s not often that we have the opportunity to reflect as an entire country on the significance of that turning point in history of 50 years ago.”

Obama: And because they kept marching, America changed... America changed for you and for me.

Mathews: Have conservatives in America judged this man by the content of his character, Taylor Branch?

Branch (Author, *The King Years*): Absolutely not. Conservatives in America talk about conservative politics and use the phrase endlessly, whereas liberals are almost afraid to use the word liberal. But they don't talk ... certainly not about race, even though most of the conservative political appeals have a hidden underpinning in race. This president's weakness is that he can't talk about race very much.

Mathews: Why can't he throw it back at the people who use it implicitly?

Branch: Because he's afraid that it will boomerang on him.

Mathews: He'll be a whiner?

50th Anniversary Civil Rights Act

Print Media

The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal covered President Barack Obama's speech on April 10, 2014, at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library on the marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with a headline, "President Obama Hails Civil Rights Act on 50th Anniversary." The story by Colleen McCain Nelson said that "Leader Pays Tribute to Former President; 'I Have Lived out the Promise of LBJ's Efforts.'" The story also mentioned that Obama hailed the civil-rights legacy of LBJ, saying the laws the former president championed had become as fundamental as the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and opened doors of opportunity for many Americans. The Journal story stated, Obama also pushed back against those who soured on some government programs and who suggested rolling back elements of President Johnson's Great Society. In

this context, Obama said further, “I reject such cynicism because I have lived out the promise of LBJ’s efforts, because Michelle has lived out the legacy of those efforts, because my daughters have lived out the legacy of those efforts, because I and millions of my generation were in a position to take the baton that he handed to us” (np).

Josh Dawsey of the *Journal* covered a related event spoken by Obama in New York (April 12, 2014) The story headlined, “Obama Visits Friendly Turf,” reported that Obama decried moves to require photo identification at polling places as a Republican-led effort to suppress turnout and shape elections. The story also added, “A spokesman for the Republicans responded, ‘Embedded in the Republican Party's DNA is a history of championing civil rights,’ which he said today includes ‘equal access to a quality education.’”

Meanwhile, in an analytical story, Colleen McCain Nelson (April 10, 2014) said, “Obama Shifts Subtly on Civil Rights... Speaks More Forcefully in His Second Term About Need for Equality of Economic Opportunity.” Nelson wrote,

Under Obama Administration, the gap of unemployment last month (March 2014) was 12.4% for blacks and 5.8% for whites. The implications of an uneven economic recovery were evident in the president's declining approval ratings. While a strong majority of African-American voters approved of Mr. Obama's handling of the economy, that support has fallen from 84% in 2010 to 72% in 2014, according to *Wall Street Journal/NBC News* polling. Among Latinos, approval on the economy for Mr. Obama has fallen from 56% in 2010 to 48% this year (np).

With another headline, “Politics & Ideas: A Bipartisan Consensus on Income Inequality?”

William Galston (April 16, 2014) mentioned that,

By contrast, 76% of Republicans, but only 49% of Democrats, believed that most people who wanted to get ahead could do so if they were willing to work hard. In the first place, most Americans believe that inequality of income and wealth was a growing problem. According to the Pew Research Center, in a survey of 1,504 adults in mid-January (2014), “68% of Democrats think that the gap between the rich and everyone else has increased during the past decade. But so do 67% of Independents and— more surprisingly— 61% of Republicans” (np).

However, Galston (April 16, 2014) stated,

More frequently than in recent years, one hears Republicans repeating Jack Kemp’s famous motto: People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Now GOP leaders and presidential aspirants are delivering speeches about poverty and opportunity (np).

The Washington Post

The *Washington Post* as well covered the Obama speech at the LBJ Library. *Post*’s staff writer Karen Tumulty’s story, (April, 10, 2014) “Obama pays tribute to LBJ’s civil rights legacy: ‘Why I’m standing here today,’” stated that the nation’s first African-American president hailed the 50th anniversary of the law that abolished racial barriers, but he warned that complacency could undermine the decades of progress that made his election possible.

Unlike the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Post* reported as Obama mentioned, “What Johnson understood, Obama suggested, is that the presidency is an office that has a

unique power and that its occupants have a limited time to get things done.” Obama recalled that an aide had cautioned Johnson against taking on civil rights because it was a lost cause. “To which, it is said, President Johnson replied, ‘Well, what the hell’s the presidency for?’ What the hell’s the presidency for if not to fight for causes you believe in?” Obama said.

But similar to *Journal, Post* covering Obama’s New York event, “You do have the power,” reported,

Obama said the right to vote is threatened today in a way that it has not been since Johnson signed the act into law. Obamas focus on voting rights is part of a broad Democratic strategy to boost turnout for the midterms, which strategists have identified as the best, and perhaps only, way for the party to make gains in the House and retain control of the Senate (np).

Jonathan Capehart of the *Post* wrote an op-ed headlined, “LBJ’s legacy for gay rights,” (April 13, 2014) in which he said, at his second inaugural, President Obama put under the same historic umbrella the Selma marches for African American equality and the Stonewall riots that ushered in the modern LGBT rights movement.

The *Post* columnist Harold Meyerson in an article, “The forces behind LBJ’s America,” (April 12, 2014) said that the credit of the success of the Civil Rights enactment belonged to Johnson but also to the civil rights movement and a political order in which liberal forces such as the unions held some sway with a number of Republicans and in which some Republicans were liberals themselves.

The New York Times

Covering Obama's speech at the LBJ Library, Peter Baker of the *Times* (April 10, 2014) in the news story headlined, "Salutes Rights Act, Turning 50," said, President Obama presented himself as the living, walking, talking and governing embodiment of the landmark 1964 law that banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin. According to Baker, Obama acknowledged that racism has hardly been erased and that government programs have not always succeeded. Baker said,

Though Mr. Obama often seemed reluctant to be drawn into discussions of race relations in his first term, insistent on being the president of everyone, he has been more open in talking about it since winning re-election. The president made unusually personal comments after the case of Trayvon Martin, the Florida teenager whose death two years ago set off a roiling national debate about race, saying the slain young black man "could have been me." He recently created an initiative called My Brother's Keeper to help young men of color and has been more vocal about voting rights and equal pay for women (np).

In an analytical story that covered Obama's speech at the annual convention of the Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network in Manhattan, Baker (April 11, 2014) further reported, Mr. Obama accused Republicans of trying to rig the elections by making it harder for older people, women, minorities and the impoverished to cast ballots in swing states that could determine control of the Senate.

In a prior political article titled, "What Would Johnson Do?" Peter Baker (April 9, 2014) however hinted at Obama's failure to take early and drastic steps. Baker opined,

“Mr. Obama has become a symbol of liberal frustration over his inability to use government to bring about change. Republicans publicly, and some Democrats privately, blame Mr. Obama for not doing more to work across the aisle, though the White House scoffs at that, laying stalemate at the feet of what they call an obstructionist Republican Party.

Baker quoted Jeffrey A. Engel, director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University, who said that Mr. Obama's health program might ultimately be seen as similar to the lasting legacies of the Great Society or the New Deal. “But the reality of the modern presidency,” Engel said, “is that big things are best done right away before second terms devolve into an exercise in aggravation.” In that case, for better or worse, Johnson represented the high-water mark for American presidents pushing through sweeping legislation—not just the Civil Rights Act, but the Voting Rights Act, Medicare, Medicaid, the Fair Housing Act and major measures on immigration, education, gun control and clean air and water.

In a critical tone, Jason Horowitz, the *Times*' political feature writer (April 14, 2014), said, “Obama Effect Inspiring Few to Seek Office,” meaning political office, about young Obama followers “running for or already holding office around the country.” Horowitz said, Obama once hoped to inspire many of his young supporters to follow when he said, “We are the ones we have been waiting for.” But many “have joined the high-paid consultant ranks.” Horowitz added, “Unlike John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, who inspired virtual legislatures of politicians and became generational touchstones, Obama has so far had little such influence. Mr. Obama had come to

represent that spirit, but he failed, pollsters say, to transform it into meaningful engagement in the political process.

The *Times*' editorial (April 15) titled "Unmet Promise on Discrimination" was also critical of Obama,

President Obama made repeated use of executive orders to advance the administration's goals when Republicans in Congress refused to act. However, executive order measures made, even more, glaring his (Obama's) failure to honor a 2008 campaign pledge to ban discrimination by federal contractors based on sexual orientation or gender identity. What Mr. Obama needs to do is act on his principles and issue such an order... The best way for Mr. Obama to advance the issue and prod the House to do the right thing is to lead by example, not by waiting (p. A-22).

Broadcast Media

Fox News

On April 10, 2014, Fox News "Special Report with Bret Baier" aired, "President Obama marks 50 years of the Civil Rights Act while his Attorney General suggests the two of them are disrespected because of race." Bret Baier said,

Even as president Obama was celebrating how far America has come in race relations over the past 50 years, his top law enforcement official is bemoaning his own treatment and implying it has to do with race. Those are the latest mixed messages from an administration that continues to walk a fine line on this most divisive subject (np).

Baier: Those are just the latest mixed messages coming from an administration that continues to walk a fine line on this divisive subject. Here is Ed Henry.

Baier connected to the Chief White House Correspondent **Ed Henry**,

“Joining civil rights at the LBJ Library we swayed to Gospel and songs today. President Obama celebrated the 50th anniversary of the civil rights act being signed by LBJ... talking of doors of opportunity for everyone.”

Obama:(voice-over) Because of the Civil Rights movement, because of the laws President Johnson signed, new doors of opportunity and education swung open for everybody. “They swung open for you, and they swung open for me. And that's why I'm standing here today—because of those efforts, because of that legacy.” Henry commented, the talk of national action network and suggested race was a factor in Republican attacks on him and the president... The last five years have been defined by significant strides and by lasting reforms, even in the face of unprecedented, unwarranted, ugly and divisive adversity.

Henry's report shifted to Attorney General Eric Holder and House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, etc. Baier afterward started a different report as Fox News Alert—breaking news with an “All-Star Panel” on the issue of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius' possibility of resignation from the Obama administration reportedly for “rollout of ObamaCare.”

CNN

On April 10, 2014, a CNN program showed that President Obama started his speech with LBJ's prominent quote as he said, “Well, what hell the presidency for? If not to fight for causes you believe in.”

After Obama's speech, Brianna Keller, CNN correspondent and anchor, on the "On Wolf [Blitzer]" and "Happening Now" introduced CNN's National Correspondent Suzzane Malvaux. Malvaux was covering the program from Austin, Texas with a background, summit at LBJ Library, marking 50th Anniversary of Civil Rights Act."

Brianna Keiler (voice): Three months ago we heard him [Obama] at the 50th anniversary at March on Washington. This was little bit different talking about LBJ's legacy. What struck you as unique here?

Malvaux: He said, "Presidency, what the hell is the presidency for" One of those points for debate here Brianna... one of the things people have been talking about is how do we bring about change as a country, is even possible replicate duplicate. What happened 50 years ago when ... [among others] ... We heard from President Carter, and said you need to establish relationships between the president and Congress to move big agenda items forward. We heard from President Clinton ... saying people don't have the kind of courage those legislators had 50 years ago to potentially lose their seats to get big items done. Those are the things [legislators] need. Not to understate this, this president, LBJ was backed by a movement of people. ...I talked to Ambassador Young, he said this president needs to have some ways ... a movement to demand that the congress and the president ultimately work together to get something done,...that things are broken in Washington and the president...owes where he is today to LBJ's legacy but also to that movement, the people on the ground that actually made that happen.

Obama's main points of speech were,
Because of the Civil Rights movement, because of the laws President Johnson signed, new doors of opportunity and education swung open for everybody...They swung open

for you, and they swung open for me. And that's why I'm standing here today -- because of those efforts, because of that legacy.

MSNBC

MSNBC's newscasts and talk shows on Obama's speech at the LBJ Library was similar to the comments on the 50th anniversary of MLK, Jr's "I have a Dream" speech. *MSNBC* called it, "The story of America is the story of progress," and said that was true because of men like President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Similar to other news outlets, *MSNBC* also emphasized that the nation progressed as Obama said,

Because I have lived out the promise of LBJ's efforts. Because Michelle has lived out the legacy of those efforts. Because my daughters have lived out the legacy of those efforts. Because I and millions of my generation were in a position to take the baton that he handed to us (np).

On April 10, 2014, "*The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*" (with some guests—Isabel Wilkerson, Jim Downey, Bill Carter, Michael Shear, Loretta Weinberg) started with "President Obama said he wouldn't be where he is today without the work of civil—the civil rights movement and President Lyndon Baines Johnson."

Obama: Progress in this country can be hard and slow.... The Voting Rights Act.

Immigration reform. Fair Housing Act.

Unidentified Female: The next frontier for civil rights.

Obama: Equality required more than absence of oppression.

Stephen Colbert (Comedian): Obama wants equality in the workplace. That makes no sense. Why would I stare at a man's chest?

Isabel Wilkerson (Author of *The Warmth of Other Sons*): Obama acknowledged the role of history. The continuation of poverty especially being suffered by African Americans in the South was essentially gripped in what can only be called a caste system in which every single thing that an individual could do, in that part of the country was determined what they looked like and the caste into which they had been born. So many basic things people could not do.

Chris Mathews on “Hardball”(April 10, 2014) discussed some issues of hatred with some guests (Nia-Malika Henderson, Dale Ho, Jonathan Capehart, Page Hopkins, David Corn)—discriminatory treatment of African-Americans in the justice system, by police and even criticizing President Obama and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. The offenders included Texan Republican Senator Ted Cruz’s renewed birther issue; Congressman Blake Farenthold, who wouldn’t even acknowledge that President Obama is a legitimately elected president. Farenthold claimed Attorney General Eric Holder “Ought to be in jail;” and contempt of the office of president by Rep. Joe Wilson’s (R), “You lie!”

According to another discussant, E.J. Dionne (of *The Washington Post*),

African American voters mattered a lot to carrying many states such as Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York that helped Obama to become president that made a difference. But the existence of a movement, as opposed to just a single person, is so important to all the social change in our history. Lincoln could not have done what he did without the abolitionists, even though he wasn’t an abolitionist. And FDR couldn’t have done all he did without the union movement, even though he wasn’t a member of the union movement (np).

In a later segment of the continued discussion (April 10, 2014) Joan Walsh (editor-at-large with *Salon*) joined the Hardball. Some of the important race-related issues came up in the discussion.

Walsh ... how ugly is this racism? How deep is the racism? And how much are liberals just crying racism, using racism? ...Chris, there is race involved in the reaction to this president.

Following the question, Mathews explained, if President Obama was a middle-of-the-road, just right down the middle with no philosophy, no health care program, no fighting for poor people, he wouldn't have these enemies. Even John McCain was born in the Canal Zone; Barry Goldwater was born outside the States in the Arizona Territory. Nobody made those points. Voter suppression efforts started since the Supreme Court struck down Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. And those are not the only states. It's spread to other parts of the country as well. Most media outlets criticized Obama in handling his socioeconomic issues in a harsh voice. Only a few touched upon the hurdles created by the brute majority of the Republican Party in the Congress, and the continuous attack on the presidential initiatives to reduce poverty of the hard-hit African American families.

The *New York Times* and MSNBC were in agreement that African Americans noticed no meaningful change not only in race relations but also in the in the economic betterment. These two media outlets, in general, said that Obama faced racism on the job and from Congress largely because he is Black, while Obama played defensive. In many cases, *Times'* columnists also attacked Obama as they found Obama inept in handling the issues. *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and obviously, Fox News stated

that bitter partisanship continued to be valued more than patriotism by Obama and that would hinder progress toward “a more perfect union” in terms of greater race-relations. *Journal and Post* in their news stories and editorials were restrained in criticizing Obama, but most columnists, some of whom used to contribute to the *Fox News*, used tones of “unprecedented, unwarranted, ugly and divisive adversity” allegedly caused by the Obama Administration.

These findings based on the analysis of media outlets’ reports deserve more interpretation of the contexts of the key issues and their caveats expressed by erudite scholars and concerned sections of the society. The present conditions of the country in Dyson’s language (2016) “denigrate the greatness and goodness of America” (p. 97).

Denigration Denies Goodness

Reviewing the Economics of Discrimination conceptualized by Nobel Prize-winning economist Gary S. Becker in the 1950s, Professor Kevin M. Murphy of the Booth School of Business, University of Chicago (2015), stated that economic discrimination along the race lines is a part of “imperialistic march” that began in earnest with the Economics of Discrimination, and, “It is still going on.” When Bill O’Reilly in a disparaging tone says, “Even if jobs become more plentiful, you have to be able to do them, you have to speak proper English, be able to do basic math and conduct yourself responsibly...[in] the marketplace,” Murphy’s analysis of the economics of discrimination becomes important. Murphy said, within that frame, that Black people with good skills experience discrimination because of preferences that exist in the society, although discrimination is not a fixed preference as behavioral economists argue. With that preference, employers, even if not racists, could have customers who preferred

not to conduct business with Black people. Such customers, to avoid dealing with a Black employee, would end up paying a higher price in equilibrium, thus subsidizing discrimination. Thus employers do not want to hire Black staff even though have to pay more to hire White employees. This creates two costs, the Black worker is paid less (if hired), and the discriminating employer incurs greater expense to obtain the same productivity.

According to the scholars, people of color, especially Blacks, face “premarket” discrimination (things that happen to people before they enter the labor market) and political-based modes of discrimination (prejudicial rules governing zoning, housing, and education). Referring to Becker, Murphy also mentioned, that in terms of schooling, the United States had routinely discriminated, because the competitive forces that govern the market are not present in state-provided elementary and secondary education. He expected customer-based race discrimination and premarket discrimination to persist more than discrimination among owners of capital, since, as he explained, strong incentives existed to reduce the latter.

In some cases, the college graduates had avoided discrimination by becoming professionals—such as ministers, doctors, and lawyers—who served the Black community. But in case of wages discriminations, the more Black workers were in the marketplace, the broader the base of employers needed to hire them in equilibrium.

Answering to the questions of why wage differentials exist and persist between races, Professor Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (2016) responded in the term of “Value Gap,” (p. 31) by which he meant “White people valued more than others in this country” (p. 31). And that, he said, still distorted American politics. The Value gap is not a mere achievement

gap in education or the wealth gap between White Americans and other groups, “but the value gap reflects something more basic... The value gap is our national DNA.” Glaude Jr. (2016) explained, even the American Revolution which “insisted on the principles of freedom and equality in the context of democratic institutions, were reconciled with the institution of racial slavery.” Further, he said, throughout the American history—all the moments and changes were “always limited by the underlying belief in the supremacy of white people—a belief that adjusted and adapted to new conditions” (p.32).

In a direct reference to the “value gap,” and relapse of the progress, an evangelist activist Jim Wallis (2016) called the scenario “America’s Original Sin,” rooted in the continuation of racism. In his new book, *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*, Wallis said, “Racism is America’s original sin and must be named as such” (xv). Explaining further, Wallis said this sin is the “Legacy of White Racism,” that the United States “was established as a white society, founded upon the near genocide of another race and then the enslavement of yet another” (p.33). In the present context, Wallis said to think of progress, and before they could move forward together Americans have to recognize their original sins. And, for that reason, we have to address our country’s racial injustice, inequality between Whites and people of color, “equal education, good jobs... across racial lines” (p. 218).

Media personality Tavis Smiley in his book *The Covenant with Black America - Ten Years Later* (2016) also said that Black men still fall to police bullets and brutality; Black women still die from preventable diseases, and Black children still struggle to get a high-quality education. The digital divide and environmental inequality still persist. He further said American cities from Ferguson to Baltimore burn with frustration. Even, the

last decade had seen the evaporation of Black wealth, with Black fellow citizens having lost ground in nearly every leading economic category.

Wallis (2016), talking about the criminal justice system, said that the system needs to move from *retributive* justice that merely punishes the alleged “perpetrator of a crime” to *restorative* justice that focuses on “repairing the harm caused by crime” (p. 164). Referring to a few reports on the race-based killing of the Black young men such as in Ferguson and Baltimore, Wallis praised some reports such as by the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Still, he observed, the *Post*’s reporter was an early critic of the Ferguson police but later was convinced by the Justice Department narrative that said Brown’s death “was more complicated” (p.19).

In sum, Chapter VI covered the relationship between civil rights and economic betterment. On this issue, the *Times*, CNN, MSNBC, in general, considered that African Americans noticed no meaningful change in civic and economic improvement in the Age of Obama. In most cases, Obama played defensive. The *Journal*, *Post* and Fox News put emphasis on cohesive conditions of partnership to be taken on by Obama. In reference to president Obama’s speeches on civil rights and economic conditions of African-Americans, the *Journal* and *Post* placed responsibility partly on Obama Administration’s failure and partly on broken black families, even in 2013 and 2014. In his article, “Obama’s Economy Hits His Voters Hardest,” the *Wall Street Journal* columnist Stephen Moore (September 4, 2013) stated that households headed by single women (who were mostly Obama voters), with and without children present, saw their incomes fall by roughly 7 percent.

The *Journal* and Fox News generally questioned who was to blame and shame for Obama's inability to calm America's partisan furies and reduce gaps among the races. According to them, Obama's "rhetoric turned to a too-familiar politics of polarization" (*Journal* editorial: August 29, 2013). Fox News host Bill O'Reilly (August 28, 2013) blamed Obama for an "attempt to manage the economy from Washington," while "the private sector must drive economic expansion. "In the same commentary, O'Reilly stated that African Americans needed "more plentiful [skills and education], to speak proper English, be able to do basic math and conduct yourself responsibly... [in] the marketplace."

Chapter VII concludes the study with a discussion of conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER VII – CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The America's history of acrimonious race-relations spans through centuries addressed by the press, by scholars, politicians, activists and so on. Barack Obama, a man of color, though bi-racial, addressed the issue as part of his audacious effort to become American president. He had to justify his racial legacy of color as well as having a relationship with a pastor and friend Jeremiah Wright, perceived one of the most vocal critiques of America's race relations. While no other contenders had to explain the "color-code" to rise to the historically "White House," except John F. Kennedy (who had to explain his Catholic ancestry, a different "color") 50 years previously, he made it with his extraordinary wit and wisdom by severing relations with Wright, by urging Americans irrespective of race or color to "[move] the society forward" as "one people" toward progress under the umbrella of American Constitution's provision of "a more perfect union."

The issue became a "nightly spectacle" for the media moments, for the public and the matter of racial reconciliation remained a crucial issue all along for the media and the public as well. People of color, especially African-Americans, have continued to face discrimination by allegedly targeted police-killing, voting rights problems, and consequent backlash of "whitelash," also perceived by some scholars and some media outlets.

From this study's perspective, even narrowing down to the Obama's rhetoric of hope for racial reconciliation as mediated by selected American media outlets, there were ample issues to consider. The researcher narrowed the problem by posing four research questions, bypassing many more questions such as could Obama initiate a "dialogue of

the deaf” in the context of a ”post-racial” era and how was that effective? The umbrella research question was premised, How did the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC frame Obama’s race-relations speeches and what are the prominent frames?

The research considered three frames under the umbrella question—racial reconciliation involving Obama’s relation with his pastor-friend Jeremiah Wright, political tone, and civil and economic programs—addressed by Obama and adopted by the Obama Administration, and how they were covered by the media through Obama’s declaration of his presidential candidacy in 2007/2008 to 2014. The examination included both the print and televisual media—The *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC, respectively. The events covered primarily included speeches of Barack Obama from 2008 to 2014 on three occasions—(1) March 18, 2008, Address in response to controversial remarks made by his former pastor Jeremiah Wright in Philadelphia Constitution Center, Pennsylvania; (2) August 28, 2013, Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Washington March and Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech; and, (3) April 10, 2014, Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Obama’s Philadelphia speech, titled “A More Perfect Union,” is known as the famous racial reconciliation speech, which is the main premise of the study that implicated other issues and events.

The study revealed that both the newspapers and the broadcast media framed Obama’s rise to the occasion primarily with the reinforcement of overwhelming view of post-race era. The *Journal’s* news story (March 19, 2008) viewed Obama as “post-civil-

rights generation less angry.” On the Fox News’ “Special Report” with Brit Hume (March 14, 2008), Charles Krauthammer (syndicated columnist) commented, “He [Obama] has presented himself, and has in his words and actions, been a post-racial candidate. And here he is with this raving bigot and his pastor, as we now see.”

Krauthammer made same type of derogatory comments in his column in the *Washington Post* (March 21, 2008), in which he said that Obama's speech “fawned over as a great meditation on race, is little more than an elegantly crafted, brilliantly sophistic justification of that scandalous dereliction.” But Obama in his farewell address (January 10, 2017, the *New York Times* video) said, “After my election, there was talk of a post-racial America. Such a vision, however well intended, was never realistic. Race remains a potent... and often divisive force in our society.”

As a matter of framing Barack Obama and Jeremiah Wright inseparably in the context of “Americanness” and race-relations, all six news outlets cited Wright’s sermons as incendiary, what Obama finally confessed as having heard “a profoundly distorted view of this country.” The *Wall Street Journal* and Fox News not only related Obama to Wright but also to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan whom Wright reportedly praised as “one of the most important voices in the 20th and 21st century.” The *Journal’s* news (March 18, 2008) and editorial emphasized (March 19, 2008) that “Sen. Obama's condemnation of Mr. Wright's statements have done little to take the edge off a shrill debate.” The *Post* in both news and editorials was in the agreement that Wright’s sermons were offensive, anti-American, and racist. Even after Obama severed relations with Wright it might not work, because “... the anger with which they [sermons] are

delivered no doubt is disturbing to many.” The *Post* did not say who these “many” were but seemed to mean Whites.

On Brit Hume’s (Fox News anchor) “Special Report” (March 20, 2008) special correspondent Shannon Bream said, “His [Wright’s] comments sent Obama scrambling to distance himself from the words but not the man.” Brit Hume said Obama conceded that he had, indeed, heard many of Wright’s “most incendiary comments.” Obama attempted to “douse” the firestorm, and “to place it in a much larger context.”

Fox News’ Garrett (March 18, 2008) said, “Obama tried Wright’s incendiary sermons as on par with his white grandmother’s far more subtle racial anxieties.” That means anxieties of Wright and Obama’s grandma cannot be at par, while White grandma’s anxieties could be “subtle” but not those of the Blacks who “created” that subtlety.

While the *Times*, CNN, and MSNBC engendered somewhat positive tone toward Obama’s hope for the reconciliation of racial discord, others perceived Obama’s efforts as still short of narrowing down the gap between the liberal and conservative expectations. The media outlets, with some degrees of differences, bracketed Barack Obama to “apologia,” to keep his election campaign boat sailed. The *Journal*’s news stories, in general, viewed Obama’s racial reconciliation approach as “Obama’s gamble,” while an editorial in a politer tone called it “a chiefly political crisis” (March 19, 2008). The columnists mostly were rampant in their vitriolic assails on Obama. Probably columnist Shelby Steele (2008, March 18) was the fiercest as he viewed Obama as “portent of presidential judgment,” a “bargainer,” who had “Two identity, two persona.”

The *Post*'s news items and editorials exposed a little softer tone, and ran headlines such as "Speech Driven by Necessity," and "Democrats' Obama Dilemma."

The *Post*'s columnist Krauthammer (March 21, 2008) viewed Obama's reconciliation speech as "scandalous dereliction," while Cohen (Mar 18, 2008) exclaimed that when Obama had interviewed with MSNBC there were no issues either "racist" or "vaguely racist." While the *Times*' editorial was headlined, "Mr. Obama's Profile in Courage," columnist Dowd (March 19, 2008) found the speech to be "damage-control." Fox News' Hume remarked (March 20, 2008) that Obama "gives his granny another dose of publicity and seems to stereotype all White people while he's at it," was in contrast to some other news outlets. CNN, *Times*, MSNBC, and in some cases, the *Post* found Obama's effort as transcending both the black-white and bringing especially working classes together. The *Times* found a resemblance with successes of MLK, Jr, and JFK while the *Post* identified him with LBJ. MSNBC's Mathews called the Obama speech "worthy of Abraham Lincoln." Not all the six news outlets but only *Times* and *Post* mentioned Obama as "Resurrected" Camelot, the protégé of JFK.

With regard to civic and economic issues, The *Times*, CNN, MSNBC, in general, considered that African-Americans noticed no meaningful change in civic and economic improvement in the Age of Obama. In most cases, Obama played defensive. The *Journal*, the *Post*, and Fox News put emphasis on cohesive conditions of partnership to be taken by Obama. The *Journal* and *Post* referring to Obama's speeches on the "dream" of civic rights and economic conditions of African-Americans shifted responsibility partly on Obama Administration's failure and partly on broken black families, even in 2013 and 2014. "Obama's Economy Hits His Voters Hardest," the *Journal*'s columnist Stephen

Moore (September 4, 2013) wrote, adding research findings that households headed by single women (who were mostly Obama voters), with and without children present, saw their incomes fall by roughly 7 percent.

The *Journal* and Fox News generally questioned who was to blame and shame for Obama's inability able to calm America's partisan furies and reduce gaps among the races. According to them, it was Obama's "rhetoric turned to a too-familiar politics of polarization" (the *Journal* editorial, August 29, 2013). Fox News host Bill O'Reilly (August 28, 2013) blamed Obama's policy of "attempt to manage the economy from Washington," while "the private sector must drive economic expansion, and African Americans needed "more plentiful [skills and education] speak proper English, be able to do basic math and conduct yourself responsibly...[in] the marketplace."

News stories, editorials, and cable news commenters started remarking about Obama's flexible outlook of talking about civic rights, voting rights, and economic problems of the African-Americans early during Obama's second term. Colleen Nelson of the *Journal* (April 10, 2014) said, "Obama shifts subtly on civil rights... speaks more forcefully in his second term about need for equality of economic opportunity." The *Times'* Baker (April 10, 2014) also acknowledged Obama's changed approach to race issue, such as Obama's comments after the shooting of the Black teenager Martin in Florida, creating an initiative called My Brother's Keeper to help young black men, talk on voting rights and equal pay. Baker, however, said that Obama's inauguration was supposed to usher in something of a post-racial era but has not quite done so.

Implications

The study found a pivotal point—both the media and Obama professed the motto of *E Pluribus Unum* that advocates for assimilation vis-à-vis diversity and equality. David Mendell (2007) of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, Obama once said, “I am not running a race-based campaign” though “I am rooted in the African American community, but not limited by it. I am ... everywhere” (p. 188). In Kitossa’s (2011) language, Obama was “bound by the inertia of ... historical fact” of “conceding the necessity of sustaining hegemonic white supremacy” and he had to unfound presumed “essentialism that blackness equaled radicality” (pp. 2-3) feared by the dominant Whites. This is Obama’s “space” for him and for the oneness of American culture that “should be entirely homogenous” (Terrill, 2009, p. 365), that our experiences are identical.

George Musgrove (2012) argued that Obama had to dismiss the White view of “Black paranoia.” (p. 9). In a similarly negotiated tone, Rowland and Jones (2011) said that Obama made his views persuasive “with the exception of conservative commentators” (p. 126). In their opinion, the “American Dream is open to ordinary citizens; that makes it such an extraordinary story in human history” (p. 148). This view also propounds the rhetoric of meritocracy, the charisma of individual achievement. Perkinson (2012), Ostertag and Armaline (2011) and Kitosa (2011) in their analyses of Obama’s message threw doubt on the ultimate effect of his “perfect union” rhetoric. Kitosa (2011) thought that such messages might even deepen “white racism” further. Ostertag and Armaline (2011) saw Obama as a “safe” African American leader who in action would do little to threaten the power status quo.

This researcher understands that Obama has been using his race-related rhetoric prudently in his effort to achieve what is good for the individual (here, it is himself) and community (dominated by the White majority). Obama adopted the “prudential mastery of rhetorical and aesthetic materials” by being “appropriately responsive to mutating rhetorical situation” (Erickson, 2000, p. 151) since the situation is dominated by Whites. Like many others, Glaude Eddie (2016), Ivie and Giner (2009), and Gwen Ifill (2009) found that Obama followed the paradigm of meritocracy and exceptionalism in contemporary America where a new generation of African Americans went ahead to take their share of power and wealth from the dominant Whites by ignoring expectations of older generation who wants a more compensated share.

Obama had to be “articulate while black” (2012, Alim and Smitherman, Dyson, 2016). The irony is that Blacks and Obama critics have to be mindful of the post-civil rights condition, which some new generation scholars preferred to call post-racial era or the Age of Obama. Articulation to convince or give a “comfort-zone” to the majority Whites to come to some covenant might continue in the “Age of Trump,” which turned out to be “whitelash.” Professor Carol Anderson (2016) called it “white rage” that might create a litany of setbacks as part of “white Americans’ centuries-long efforts to derail African American progress” (cited by Pamela Newkirk in the *Washington Post* book review, June 22, 2016). Articulation might have to continue in the future for preserving rights or gaining more such as safe neighborhoods, equal education, jobs, voting rights, etc., as a “possible choice” that Smiley called “the impossible choice” (2016, p. 84).

Limitations

The limitations of the study excluded the debates about an issue such as, is it a post-racist era or still a post-civil rights era? The limitation did not allow the study to include many newspapers or broadcast outlets representing all parts of the country. However, the outlets in the study usually have nationwide readership and audiences reaching all regions, with access to the online resources through even cell-phones.

Obama's peace-making efforts at home and abroad (for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize, which raised questions among his critics) is pertinent to these discussions. News media outlets touched those issues in the course of their discussions, especially mentioning that the anti-war movement was also a striking issue of Martin Luther King's Civil Rights Movement. Many progressive scholars, authors, journalists who include Cornel West and Nicolas J S Davies, criticized Obama for his war and "Bombing Legacy" (Davies, 2017, January 19).

This study will contribute to the scholarship of academic and public debate by scanning the frames and tones of the six influential media outlets that usually mediate the political messages and rhetoric. Studies of the paradoxical situation of Obama's race rhetoric, his mystic and mythic aphorisms about race-relations and the nature of reframing of those by the news media would need more scanning in the future. Obama has the capability to make his own space by mystifying all sides of color lines. Nevertheless, Barack Obama already left a controversial legacy of race relations as the 44th U.S. President. He might strive for narrowing down controversies in the post-presidential period encouraging more media coverage and follow-up research as well.

A further proposition of the researcher of this study is that the country (especially the White Americans) made a pause or exception for Obama (being on their side), the repetition of which may not happen in near future. The possibility of incremental antipathy and resistance to the ever-growing ethnic minority groups, who might be a more perceived threat to the extant White privilege of eco-political power, might be more obvious. A recent experimental study by Maureen Craig and Jennifer Richeson (2014) revealed that White Americans, in the context of racial demographic shift, preferred “interactions with their own racial group over minority racial groups, expressed more automatic pro-White/antiminority bias, and more negative attitudes toward Latinos, Blacks, and Asian Americans” (p. 9). Donald Trumps election in 2016 confirms this phenomenon.

It is not possible to conclude this study without discussing 2016 Presidential elections and what it has revealed in terms of unity, race relations and the media’s power to inform and shape public opinion in the United States.

2016 Presidential Election, Unity, Race and the Power of Media

According to Tony Horwitz, president of the Society of American Historians, “The election of 2016 will be remembered as a backlash election. For many Americans, too much change in too short a time—culturally, economically, globally—and Trump gave voice to their fear and anger and nostalgia”(As reported by *time.com*, November 11, 2016). In general, it was an election with “...racist and misogynistic and nativist” overtones. (Stephanie Koontz, professor of history at The Evergreen State College, as reported by *time.com*, November 11, 2016). Elizabeth Hinton, a professor of history at Harvard University, says that “...the mobilization of marginalized white people for

Trump's brand of nationalism is a backlash to Obama and the treat of a black presidency it represented. (*time.com*, November 11, 2016).

Some of Trump's critics, as well as supporters, point to the resurgence of "white nationalism" as a backlash against Barack Obama, who is blamed for "perpetuation of the race cards in this country," as interviews by *National Broadcast Radio* of some of the attendees at Trump's presidential inauguration on January 20, 2017 documented. (Elcinas and Donnella). White Identity politics and race issue remained standby and took a different turn. As reported on November 13, 2016, according to a *time.com* report, the Southern Poverty Law Center had received 200 hate crime reports since Election Day. The same source in 2013 noted "a rise in the number and size of white supremacist groups because of continuing pattern of joblessness and economic decline among white working class" during Obama administration. According to Mendible (2012), the discourse of "Americanness" in the age of Obama repeatedly hearkens for a return to so-called "traditional American values" that upsurge racial discrimination. It seems, in the light of the 2016 election results, that White working and middle- classes did not regarded it as genuine.

The economic benefit or share of power for the minority groups, especially blacks, most probably will remain "trickling down" in terms of "Keynesian neoliberalism," not in terms of West's (or Chomsky's, or Wise's) "insurrectionary and revolutionary concept" (2011, p. 367). The future may take a further bend to "selective amnesia," by which Hoerl (2012) meant "discursive structures which routinely negate and silence those who have challenged systemic racial injustice in recent U.S. history" (p.180). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) argue that since racial identities are differential

over time, minority groups will be (and are being) used by Whites according to necessity in the competitive marketplace.

Economic Policy Institute's Josh Bivens (January 10, 2017) in their assessment of "Obama legacy on wages," said that President Obama left a record on wages that was strong but the actual performance of wages over his tenure was extraordinarily weak because the economy he inherited was a disaster and recovery efforts as well as useful wage-specific initiatives were thwarted by other policymakers.

Recommendations

The study had limited scope of considering all the issues that have been raised by different circles as the legacy of President Barack Obama but need to consider some issues closely related to this study—the media and the racial reconciliation. These require some recommendations as well. People cannot lose hope as many scholars, politicians, activists already took steps to fight back to change the repercussions of the negative resentments. Scholars such as Eddie, Smiley, and West do not believe change is not impossible, just as Obama hoped. In the face of recent conservative town hall meetings, people's "Anger Rises across the Country," reported Jessica Taylor of *NPR* (February 22, 2017).

The study cannot take views of utopia or remain satisfied with the state of dystopia to maintain the status quo or let the conditions deteriorate in a society characterized by mistrust, poverty, police killing even a 12-year-old boy, Tamir Rice, in 2014 for playing with a toy gun (Smith, March 25, 2016). In recent days, thousands of grassroots organizations have been coming together with clarion calls of unity that needs to emerge to save democracy (Alter, February 24, 2017). However, these groups need

strategic planning and better coordination to reach out to the policy-makers and even to the people in rage. This needs to be in the light of an enlarged critical race theory

Critical Race and Class Theory (CR&CT)

This researcher proposes the option of enlarging the CRT into a critical race and class theory (CR&CT) for both the media and African-Americans, especially, on a concept of horizontal framework that would include people of color of other minority communities whom the hegemonic White race and their media outlets employ as a discursive mechanism. Many scholars of CRT, such as Delgado and Stefancic (2012) have focused on a vision of a greater coalition of the people of color who need cooperation among them for gaining greater strength that would embolden them to “push back” (West, 2016) against white hegemony. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) raised a question: “Will minority groups learn to put aside narrow nationalism and binary thinking and work together to confront the forces that suppress them all?” (p. 82). According to them, if contextualism and critical theory teach anything, it is that we rarely challenge our own preconceptions, privileges, and the standpoint from which we reason.

Critical Race and Class Theory should be developed with a positive argument of “Class” as a code word for “Race,” where racial interests intersect.

Unity of Diverse Groups

Unity of Diverse Groups

Greater coalition among diverse groups of activists, especially media organizations of the minorities, has become more important than before to create a congenial atmosphere or in cases to spearhead, what Cornel West says “push back” troubles, genuine causes of the much-pressed minority communities. The National

Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Native American Journalists Association, Asian American Journalists Association, and UNITY: Journalists for Diversity, a small alliance of some journalists' association, need to form a larger umbrella organization to work together. Since these minority organizations are scarce in resources, coordinated works can save them costs of publication of newspapers and periodicals and running broadcast stations, even organizing job fairs, seminars, symposiums etc. This unity has become imperative in the wake of sabotage of the history of African-Americans from within. Former Republican presidential candidate, Secretary of Department of Housing and Urban Development of the Trump Administration, Ben Carson, has created a stir by referring to "enslaved black people" as "immigrants." He also said, "it was possible for someone to be an involuntary immigrant" (Cobb, March 9, 2017).

A brief appraisal of the media's role with regard to the 2016 presidential elections would help the proposal for a community media.

The Power of the Media

The 2016 election exploded the myth of the power of the traditional media. It had been assumed by many scholars that media by framing and agenda setting not only provided a point of view but also played a big role in people's decision-making process. Trump's election revealed how little influence the media hold over public opinion. According to an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, the media approval rating stands at 19 percent. Americans with high confidence in the media are only 6 percent as reported by Associated Press (Comcowich, November 14, 2016). The 2016 election demonstrated the power of social media. According to Pew research Center, 44 percent of all adults in the

United States say they get their news from Facebook. Facebook and Twitter have become important part of the news cycle, says Alyson Shontel, editor-in-chief of *Business Insider US*. It seemed, the ineffectiveness of Obama's "unity" messages, coupled with the technological innovations of the recent decades, demonstrated how traditional media's hold on public opinion has loosened. Recently, a Quinnipiac University poll showed that the media gained some trust of the public as it says, "Even in the era of "fake news," a slim majority of Americans [52%] say they trust the media more than they trust President Trump" (Kauffman, G., February 23, 2017).

Public opinion can be influenced by the "fake media" through a huge number of undetected (in absence of traditional gatekeeping) sources. President Donald Trump has started a new kind of media gatekeeping. The White House even bars certain news outlets such as CNN, Politico, the *New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times* from daily briefing after Donald Trump attacked them for "fake news" (Fahri, February 24, 2017). Almost all news outlets reported about pervading presence of fake news blogs that affected the 2016 US presidential elections. Now, many scholars are coming up with research that fake news in the Age of Cyberculture is "Redefining Politics" (Owens and Curie, January 26, 2017).

Some media writers such as Charles Michio (February 1, 2017) argue that the "Media has been a historical fluke," and "real news" that was actually fake news reportedly fueled Trump's ascendancy. "Media scholars have noted that mainstream journalists tend to take an episodic rather than a thematic perspective towards the events they cover" (Jenkins, 2012, p. 23). Instead of explaining the general background and

implications of issues, news reports emphasize the most recent and attention-getting developments.

Jessica Taylor of *NPR* (February 22, 2017) thinks that people are selective in accepting or rejecting (uses and gratification) media reports or views as one interviewee said, "The media can portray [race relations] in a negative way or positive way, ...But I feel like if the people really want to change, they would take steps towards that." A community-based participatory press (as model of Alternative Communication—AC) might be able to listen to people better and serve them better than the legacy media. The community media will not merely take an episode of an event, but rather explain the general context and background and implications of issues.

It is important to convert the resentment to resolution through effective communication involving people who matter most in relations. It is people's psychosocial language i.e., their response communicators need to understand. New forms of community media can initiate in-depth discussions among the communities of different races that live in the close circuits. The same way, the community media can bring police and community people together in reconciliatory programs as Wichita, Kansas police and African American communities under the banner of Black Lives Matter came together in July 2016 after killings of African-Americans, as well as killing of some police officers last year (May, July 19, 2016).

Concept for the Participatory Media

The purpose of the concept of participatory media is to explore how far the mass media contribute to the understanding of the people about the dimension of the minority problems and enhance racial reconciliation in America. A participatory alternative

communication model can enhance better racial reconciliation bringing communities together. According to Haroon and Abedin (1996), the goal of the alternative communication is better understanding of non-material indicators of development such as self-determination, self-reliance, cultural autonomy, participation of people in the efforts of encouraging and maintaining cohesive relations. Besides that, AC can be effective for addressing local and national issues such as ecological balance by protecting clean water resources and air, forests, and putting spotlight on human rights to equitable shares of wealth, and above all access to the media operation and production systems, what Freire (1971) called “participation for liberation.” According to Freire (1971), a society immersed in problems needs to aim at liberation from the “oppressive” situation and “spiral of silence” through conscientization, education, and communication (cited in Hamelink, 1983). Hamelink (1983) himself advocated introduction of “information literacy” for conscientization of the masses and their liberation from the influence of the discursive process of information by the institutionalized mainstream media. This conscientization through information literacy would be achieved in the community centers to be set up by the people themselves. The community information centers would develop “simulation” to confront the rambling process and pressure of the agenda-setting hierarchical media. Simulation would start from the position of “information-powerless” against the “information-powerful.” Language of the model has been adapted Hamelink’s Frame for Developing Information Literacy (1983).

| From | To |
|--|---|
| Impossibility to know reality via unrelated fragments | Contextualization of information |
| Depositing of information as an obstacle to action | Creative generation of information |
| Framing information resulting in powerlessness of people | Simulation of potential information power |

Hamelink's participatory/AC media framing is a conceptual framework for conscientization of info-poor, and yet to explain how the powerless will participate in the big information media system or pressurize the media to change. In this regard, Habermas (2006) explaining communicative action in the "public sphere," said that citizens could come together as a rational body, in which general interests, such as elimination of poverty, could be discussed, debated and solved upon. Bits and pieces of information can be integrated into and evaluated against the background of evolving problems. Thus, people can be knowledgeable in their reasoning about their political choices without or less antagonizing others.

Borrowing from Fred Stangelaar (1985) and Zainul Abedin's 2012 paper, this research proposes a participatory AC model of communication. The AC features are:

1. A content, language, images, and symbols that arise directly from the people and confront the oppressing situation;
2. An orientation toward a total transformation of the society;
3. An organized force which develops itself by mobilizing subaltern population gradually at the national and international levels through mutual understanding and assistance from other social organizations including non-dominant media, but maintains an autonomous status; and

4. Active participation of subaltern people in the media message production and distribution.

This model is supposed to enhance

(a) Interactions between sender(s) and receiver(s) to enrich a two-way/multi-way communication;

(b) Better interactions between the communicators and people/audiences;

(c) Accessibility to messages by the masses who may not have high education;

and

(d) Enabling groups of people capable of evaluating and correcting the media production. These qualities could be attained in a dialogic process.

Bar, et al. (2009) also found the community-based communication through low-cost mobile phone effective for social change. A project called "VozMob" (Mobile Voices) is an academic-community partnership between the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California and the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California. The project helped low-wage immigrants in Los Angeles to publish stories online about their lives and their communities directly from their mobile phones. This sort of interactive communication (or AC, or CA, whatever it is called) could be used in the community centers. Virtually, local radio and television stations could think of adapting more participatory ideas for exchanging and expanding awareness among people and the media about their problems and resolve.

To conclude, this study proposes that scholars think of further studies about the first black president's impact, which according to some scholars created a backlash or "whitelash," and consider why racial reconciliation as Obama espoused has not

progressed despite some major media support, except some conservative outlets such as Fox News and to some extent the *Wall Street Journal*. Further, how and why Barack Obama claimed to have been able to be a third-term president if allowed but his “Camelot” stature or “Obama-coalition” did not work as expected in the last election.

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