

**IS THIS THE DAWN OF A POST-RACIAL AGE?:
FROM OTHELLO TO OBAMA**

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From Pre-racial to Post-racial Age?

Can there be such a phenomenon as a post-racial society? Here we need to distinguish between a post-racial society and post-racism age? Outgrowing racism – though difficult – can nevertheless be attained sooner than the disappearance of race as a demographic category. South Africa will outgrow racism as a form of prejudice by about the middle of this twenty-first century. But it may take South Africa at least one additional full century to outgrow race-consciousness. A post-racial society is one which has not only abandoned racism as a form of bigotry but has also shed off race-consciousness as a residual mode of defining a group.

In the pre-feudal days western society was at one time pre-tribal. Then most western European countries became tribal and feudal. And from the Treaty of Westphalia onwards Western Europe became more national and post-tribal, except in places like Scotland where clan loyalties are still powerful and compelling.

If periods of national history can be pre-tribal, tribal or post-tribal, why cannot periods of continental history also be either pre-racial, racial or post-racial? It is possible to argue that while much of pre-colonial Africa was basically tribal, the continent south of the Sahara was still essentially pre-racial. It is almost certain that much of pre-colonial Africa knew very little about either race or racism before large-scale penetration by the Arabs, and especially before the even more spectacular arrival of Europeans. To the present day most African languages have no word for “race” which is different from the word for “tribe”. In Kiswahili both “race” and “tribe” are referred to as kabila, which is itself a word borrowed from the Arabic language.

In this presentation, we have indeed conceded that sub-Saharan Africa was once pre-racial. European penetration, even more than the impact of the Arabs, racialized the quality of political life in colonized Africa. The big question since the end of political apartheid is whether we are slowly heading for a world which is not only post-racism but may eventually become post-racial.

In the context of the Black Atlantic world, there is a transition from the pre-racism world of Shakespeare's Othello to the potentially post-racism America of Barack Obama. In the Venice of Othello, race-consciousness was indeed widely manifest from time to time. What was indeed still underdeveloped and obviously rare was the kind of racism which could lynch a Black man for engaging in inter-racial sex.

Of all the countries with a white majority population, the one which was earliest in allowing a man of colour to be the absolute best in cultural creativity was Czarist Russia, rather than the Soviet communists. Indeed, Russia's supreme literary hero has continued to be Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837). He continues to be regarded as more than Russia's Shakespeare. Pushkin remains not only Russia's greatest poet, but also a great novelist, dramatist and short-story writer. Pushkin's importance to Russian literature exceeded Shakespeare's significance to English literature. In his versatile genius, Pushkin is widely acknowledged as the founder of modern Russian literature.

But how is this related to the debate about Europe before racism? It would be an exaggeration to portray Aleksandr Pushkin as a symbol of pre-racial Russia. But there is no doubt that by American definitions of a black person, Pushkin was indeed a man of colour. Pushkin's mother was the granddaughter of Abram Hannibal, an Ethiopian princeling who was bought as a slave from Constantinople. Tradition has it that

Pushkin's father was adopted by Peter the Great and later fought alongside the Czar as his comrade-in-arms.

Pushkin immortalized his father and the father's links with Peter the Great in Pushkin's unfinished novel *Arap Petra Velikogo [The Negro of Peter the Great]* which was published in 1837.

Across the Atlantic in North America it took much longer than a century before such upward racial mobility was even conceivable. But in 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was startlingly prophetic when he envisaged a Black President of the United States by 2008. In a talk broadcast on the voice of America in 1968 (the year of his own assassination) Bobby Kennedy prophesied as follows:

[Things are] moving so fast in race relations, a Negro could be president in 40 years ... There is no question about it. In the next 40 years a Negro can achieve the same position that my brother had.¹

Barack Obama has now attained the highest pinnacle of political power ever reached by a man of colour in a primarily white society. What we already know is that Aleksandr Pushkin did indeed successfully rise to the pinnacle of cultural power in a society with a white majority. Was this possible only in a Russia which had yet to evolve into a more racist society? It was certainly a Russia which recognized supreme genius regardless of race.

In the wider Atlantic world the best examples of a Europe before racism may be found more in the creative literature or drama of the period than in official documents or solemn records. A particularly compelling illustration is afforded by a comparison of two

plays by William Shakespeare – Othello and The Merchant of Venice, both plays being set mainly in Venice.

But here we must distinguish between prejudice based mainly on differences in skin colour and prejudice based on differences in culture. Religious bigotry is prejudice rooted in cultural variations, while racial intolerance is usually a derivative of differences in colour.

During the era of William Shakespeare religion was a much bigger cause of conflict within and between societies than was skin colour. It is partly because of this contrast between religion and race that there is more anti-Semitism in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice than there is colour prejudice in Othello. While the Moor Othello does trigger race consciousness among the Venetian aristocracy, Othello is highly respected as a military hero. The play does highlight consciousness of physical differences, but minimizes outright racism and intolerance.

Othello as a character emerges as a tragic hero in spite of his marrying a white woman and, indeed, despite his killing the woman in a fit of unjustified jealousy. In the centuries which followed Shakespeare, inter-racial sexual mating became repugnant to mainstream British and Anglo-Saxon culture. It culminated in Jim Crow: a model of American apartheid.

Between Othello and Shylock

In Othello we have a Black man addressed as “My Lord” by a white woman in the bedroom. We see him kissing her after murdering her. Yet the play's villain is Iago, a scheming White man who succeeded in transforming Othello's tender love for Desdemona into a murderous jealous rage. This became Shakespeare's most memorable

portrayal of domestic violence. Yet we pity Othello, rather than hating him. And we admire his decisiveness when he kills himself as soon as he discovers his monumental injustice to Desdemona. He says to her dead body:

*I kissed thee ere I killed thee.
No way but this,
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.*

Before he dies, Othello also calls upon the rest of us:

*When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate.

Nor set down ought in malice. Then must you speak,
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well.*

[Act V, Scene II]

Shakespeare even makes Othello more prejudiced against another culture than against another race. Here is a Black man who is not against white people, but against Muslims. In Shakespeare's day, Islam was almost equated with the Ottoman Empire. The words "Turk" and "Muslim" were almost interchangeable.

The last words uttered by Othello before he stabs himself are essentially Islamophobic. Othello tells us about a man he killed in Aleppo (Syria). He described the victim as a "turbaned Turk". Othello also knew Muslims were circumcised. He used even the circumcision as a term of Islamophobic abuse:

*...in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took him by th' throat the circumcised dog
And smote him — thus*

[Othello stabs himself.]

Othello is clearly much more culture conscious than colour conscious. The skin of the Turk was probably white, but Othello is more offended by the Turk's culture – turban, circumcision and all. We are back to the Shakespearean rank order of prejudice. We are witnessing culture prejudice in Othello, rather than colour bias. The culture of Venice at the time manifested colour consciousness, but fell short of outright racism.

In contrast to this sympathetic treatment of the Moor of Venice, Othello, Shakespeare is fundamentally unsympathetic to the Jew of Venice called Shylock. He is portrayed stereotypically as a greedy Jewish money-lender constantly worried about ducats rather than dignity. Ducats were the Venetian bottom line in Shakespeare's day.

Shylock is also portrayed as almost literally blood-thirsty as he insists on getting the literal pound of flesh from a fellow human being. Demanding a literal pound of flesh is horrid, but as a crime it is far less horrid than Othello's strangulation of his innocent wife. Yet Othello emerges as, at worst, a foolish but tragic hero – whereas Shylock is obsessed with gruesome greed. Once again, we see in Shakespeare a greater aversion to a man from a different culture (Shylock) than to a man of a different colour (Othello).

But does not Shakespeare assign to Shylock great lines of defense of racial and cultural equality? Was Shakespeare ambivalent about the Jew? Was he torn between the apartheid of colour and the apartheid of culture?

It is indeed true that one of the great speeches in The Merchant of Venice is Shylock's eloquent assertion that Jews were no less human than Christians. Julius K. Nyerere of Tanzania loved that speech when he was translating it into Kiswahili for publication by Oxford University Press in the 1960s:

...I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? – fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?

But Shylock soon disappoints us about his real motives. As Shylock continues, it becomes clear that he is not using a shared humanity as a reason for tolerance, but as a reason for revenge. When wronged by somebody else, a Christian may at least consider turning the other cheek. But Shylock says instead:

And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? ...If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why revenge! The villainy you teach me, I will execute...²

The conclusion to be drawn regarding Shylock and Othello is that in Shakespeare's era, culture prejudice (such as anti-Semitism) was much stronger than colour prejudice (such as Negrophobia). The apartheid of values overshadowed the apartheid of skin-colour. Venice represented a Europe which was yet to be truly consumed by outright racism or the bigotry of skin-colour.

However, in the succeeding centuries the English people and their overseas descendants became more and more averse to Blackness and less and less hostile to Jewishness. Among Anglo-Saxon prejudices, colour eventually overshadowed culture decisively for several centuries. The Europe of institutionalized racism was asserting and consolidating itself in this new phase of the Black Atlantic.

But the Obama phenomenon now poses new challenges. The central question which our own twenty-first century now poses is whether at the global level we are returning to a kind of Shakespearean scale of values. Of course, colour racism is still alive and well, but is it losing salience in human behavior? Culture conflict goes back to the Crusades and further back to tribal societies, but are we witnessing a resurgence of cultural belligerence in human affairs in the wake of globalization and unprecedented intercontinental migratory patterns?

In his campaign to win the White House, Barack Obama was sometimes less threatened by his obvious Black skin colour than by the obstinate suspicion that he might be a closet Muslim. A hypothetical Obama friendship with a Muslim Imam would have destroyed Obama more decisively than did his 20 year friendship with the Christian Reverend, Jeremiah Wright. Is the Sheikh of Islam the next Shylock of culture-prejudice? Is this culture-line slowly superceding the colour line as the dominant foundation of inter-group prejudice?

There may have been far more racist American voters than the polls indicated before elections. It may be too early to reach definite conclusions, but Barack Obama and Nelson Mandela between them may nevertheless be pioneering Icons of a newly unfolding postracial age. Let us look more closely at this historic juxtaposition.

Paradoxes of a Broken Home

Are Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama really icons of the post-racial age which is still unfolding. If they are, they are very different post-racial icons. Mandela was very much a child of the struggle against racism at its height – whereas Obama attained

maturity when racism was on the decline and the civil rights movement in the United States had already attained some of its most important achievements.

Indeed, Obama was born nearly a decade after the Supreme Court decision *Brown versus the Board of Education* in 1954, which struck down school segregation in the United States. Obama was born in the 1960s when the civil rights struggle was at its most earnest, voting rights for Black people were expanded.

The racial system of Jim Crow was under sustained attack, but the country was not yet dreaming about a post-racial America.

Obama's parents – Ann Dunham, the White woman from Kansas, and the Senior Obama, a Black man from Kenya – were married during the final decade of an America which still had laws against inter-racial marriages – what the laws called “miscegenation”.

By a strange coincidence young Barack saw his Dad for the last time at just about the time when the Supreme Court had just struck down anti-miscegenation laws as unconstitutional. The case was between the State of Virginia and an inter-racial couple coincidentally with the surname Loving [Virginia versus Loving]. Young Barack was ten years old when he saw his Dad for the last time – and after an interval of eight years since that last encounter.

The racial system in the United States was being dismantled bit by bit. The deracialization of America had begun. A post racial America awaited Obama's potential leadership as conceivably the first Black President of the United States.

A major precondition of Obama's preparation for the American presidency was his being abandoned by his African father. Being brought up by a single white mother,

instead of by a biracial couple, turned out to be a political blessing in disguise for the younger Obama.

His parents' divorce is probably destined to be counted by historians as one of the most significant matrimonial breakups in history.

Why? Had Barack Obama Senior remained married to his wife from Kansas, and had the boy been brought up by both parents, the boy would have become more of an African and less of a full-blooded American.

His credentials for being an attractive candidate for the U.S. Presidency would have been drastically reduced.

Since Barack is now the first Black President of the most powerful nation on earth, and if the break-up of his parents turns out to have been a presidential blessing in disguise, that divorce stands a chance of being the most historic in history.

Ann Dunham's divorce from the older Obama may turn out to be almost as historic as the brutal so-called "divorce" of Anne Boleyn from Henry VIII. Anne Boleyn was of course executed. The King's obsession with divorce or annulment set the stage for the birth of the Church of England (the Anglican and Episcopalian legacy).

If young Barack had been brought up by his Dad, and become a member of the Black Diaspora of post coloniality, he would have been a case of another African sending remittances home to Kenya.

If he was prepared to serve in the poor areas of Chicago as a matter of conscience, he would also have been tempted to serve in Africa – a case of brain gain.

Since he was one of the most brilliant Black students ever to graduate from Harvard Law School, this brilliance could have been mobilized to serve Africa as brain gain.

There is another great *might-have-been*. If Barack Obama's mother had been black, but his wife was white, it is unlikely he would have been chosen as the Democratic nominee for President. American culture accepts a white mother of a Black child more easily than a white wife of a Black man.

An African American married to a white woman could have been less attractive to African American voters – as well as less politically attractive to blue-collar white voters.

A white First Lady married to a Black President would have been a bleak prospect to many race-conscious voters, both Black and White.

Many African American women sometimes feel offended when a highly eligible Black male turns to a White female and proposes marriage. An Obama married to a white woman would not have made it even half way.

From Colour Line to Culture Line

At the beginning of the 20th Century W.E.B. DuBois, the great African American thinker and leader, predicted that the central problem of the twentieth century was going to be the problem of the colour line. DuBois foresaw the century engulfed by racism, lynching, the white man's burden and what came to be known as apartheid. The 20th century was overwhelmed by refugees on the run from racially and nationalistically instigated conflicts.³

Now that we are in the twenty-first century, the question has arisen whether the central problem of the twenty-first century was going to be the problem of the culture

line. Has a transition occurred between a clash of identities (such as races) to a clash of values (such as cultural norms in conflict)? Are refugees of the 21st century already disproportionately cultural refugees?

Samuel Huntington is not, of course, a latter-day W.E.B. DuBois, but on the eve of the twenty-first century Huntington forecast that the twenty-first century was headed for a clash of civilizations.

He argued that now that the Cold War was over, future conflicts in the world would be less and less between states and ideological blocs and more between civilizations and cultural coalitions.

Huntington launched this debate with his article in FOREIGN AFFAIRS, New York, in 1993 – an article which reverberated around the world. He followed this up with a major book on the same subject.⁴

While another African American distinguished scholar at the University of Chicago, William Julius Wilson, had predicted earlier the declining significance of race,⁵ as race was increasingly overshadowed by class and economics, Huntington predicted the rising salience of culture, overshadowing both race and class. Wilson, once a Chicago professor, has since also moved to Harvard.

Worldwide there was evidence in the last years of the twentieth century that the salience of race was on the decline. There was also evidence that the salience of culture was on the rise. However, today this balance varies country by country. South Africa is a less racist society than it was in the 1980s. But the Netherlands and Norway may be more racist now than 20 years ago.

Overt discrimination was ending in Africa and the United States; Black folks have had the vote and influenced outcomes. In the U.S., the House of Representatives has had multiple Black members, but the Senate has had only five Black members in 200 years.⁶

Yet the new Black Senator – Barack Obama – has become a superstar and is widely regarded as President of the United States. Under George W. Bush, the United States has had two Black Secretaries of State in a row – one male, one female.⁷

Old style race-based European colonialism has ended in Africa. Political apartheid has collapsed in South Africa.

Overt racism is on the defensive, in spite of rear guard action in Great Britain, Germany, France, the United States and indeed the law-enforcement system in Norway. At the global level there is more Islamophobia than Negrophobia. But there are a few countries where Negrophobia is increasing rather than diminishing.

Globalization has generated international migration. And these migratory patterns in the short run continue to trigger racist challenges and responses. But over the long haul migration is eroding prejudice based on skin colour and increasing prejudice based on conflicting values. But in what sense is this rise in culture-conflict threatening to erode Africa's ecumenical spirit?

A major area of the salience of culture is the confrontation between political Islam, on one side, and the American anti-terrorist alliance, on the other.

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of apartheid, far more Muslims than Blacks have perished in conflicts with white folks. The natural enemy of the white man is now perceived to be less and less a person with a different skin colour, and more and more a person with a different religion and values. The salience of culture continues

to rise. Barack Obama's prospects for the United States presidency were threatened less by his being Black (which is self-evident) than by the widespread rumours that he is a closet Muslim in disguise. His African name of Obama is less of a handicap than his middle Muslim name, Hussein.

Inter-racial wars of Black versus White have almost disappeared. But intercultural and inter-religious wars are raging in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Chechnya, between Israelis and Palestinians – and between Al-Qaeda and its enemies in Africa and the world. On the whole these conflicts are producing cultural refugees – rather than racial asylum-seekers. Africa is caught in the crossfire.

The worst terrorist acts in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years have not been between races, but between civilizations. These include the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and the 2002 suicide bombing of the Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya.

In order to kill 12 Americans, Arab militants killed over 200 Kenyans in the Embassy atrocity in Nairobi. The Kenyans were caught in the crossfire in 1998.⁸ And the number of Kenyans who were killed at the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa was three times the number of Israeli casualties.⁹

In confrontations between antagonistic cultures, many cultural bystanders are often annihilated by default.

The jails of the United States are still full of Black people in disproportionate members.¹⁰ But Black prisoners have been convicted for violating the civil code and are in jail for such alleged offenses as robbery, rape, murder, assault and drug abuse.¹¹

But the overwhelming political prisoners under American jurisdiction are culturally distinct. They are Muslims suspected of terrorist intent – whether the suspicions are validated or not.¹² Many of those come from African members of the Muslim world. Most prisoners have never had access to a lawyer, or been told of the evidence against them. Both the Black Atlantic and the Black Indian Ocean have become major theaters of culturally inspired terrorism and counter-terrorism.

As for extraordinary rendition by which the United States sends terrorist suspects for interrogation in countries with a history of torture, unfortunately many of those receiving countries are in Africa – both north of the Sahara and in the Horn of Africa. African countries inhabited by both Muslims and Christians are reportedly doing America's dirty work. Good relations between Africa's own Christians and Muslims are endangered by the policy of extraordinary rendition.

Globalized Africans and Declining Racism

On the other hand, the world stage has also provided more positive opportunities for Africans since the end of European colonial rule. One measure of declining racism in the world is the new international recognition of talented Africans and the demand for their skills in the global market place.

It is widely understood that two interactive forces cause the brain drain – the push-out factors in weak countries like those of Africa and the pull-in factors in stronger countries, which serve as magnets. The push-out factors in Africa include political instability, economic uncertainty, the pendulum between too much government (tyranny) and too little (anarchy), and the resulting dilution of occupational opportunities and professional recognition.

The pull-in factors in stronger and more stable countries include higher professional rewards, greater political openness, the reassurance of stability and better prospects for one's children and grandchildren.

But are African conditions always a push-out force? And is the Western world always a pull-in magnetic force? There are changes at work, which are likely to affect the balance between the brain drain and the brain gain.

The senior Barack Obama (the father) resisted the pull-in factors of the United States – and returned to Kenya, leaving his young son behind. Inadvertently, the father permitted his son to become American enough to become a credible candidate for the American Presidency.

A distinction needs to be made between *Africans of the blood* and *Africans of the soil*. Those of the blood belong to the African race, but not necessarily to the African continent. Africans of the soil, on the other hand, belong to the African continent but not necessarily to the Black race. By being left behind in America by his Dad, young Barack Obama was prevented from being an African of the soil – and became only an African of the blood.

Most Algerians, Tunisians and Egyptians are Africans of the soil but not of the blood. Most African Americans, Afro-Brazilians, and Afro-Jamaicans are Africans of the blood – belonging to the Black race but no longer to the African continent. However, most Black people that reside south of the Sahara are Africans of both the blood and the soil.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations, was African of the soil by ancestry. F.W. deKlerk, former President of South Africa, was

African of the soil by adoption. On the other hand, Kofi Annan, also of the United Nations, was African of both the blood and the soil.

There are Africans of the blood objectively who may not subjectively regard themselves as Africans at all. These would include Saudi or Kuwaiti princes with Black mothers. The long-time Saudi Ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, was objectively an African of the blood, but subjectively in denial about his Africanity.

The late President Sadat of Egypt was an African of the soil both objectively and subjectively. Because his mother was Black, Anwar Sadat was also an African of the blood, but only objectively. He did not regard himself as a Black African at all.

When Africans of the blood rise higher and higher in national and international positions, that is one more measurement of declining racism in the global equations. It is no longer uncommon to see black cabinet officials, legislators, Judges, businessmen and women, etc., in countries in the Middle East, Europe and the Western Hemisphere. This is a very important development. In the United States, for example, the George W. Bush administration has had three blacks in top government positions: former Secretary of State, Colin Powell; Condoleezza Rice, former National Security Adviser and current Secretary of State, and former Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. Also, the 110th Congress of the United States, which took office in late January 2007, had 43 black members, which included 42 members (nearly 10 percent) of the 435 total members in the House of Representatives, and one black Senator (Senator Barack Obama, born of a Kenyan father and white mother).¹³ The new Congress of 2007 even has two Muslim Black Members in the House of Representatives. In addition, there is a black man,

Clarence Thomas, among the nine members of the U.S. Supreme Court. In Brazil, Raymond Colitt reported in the *Financial Times* in May 2003 that, for the first time a black man, Barbosa Gomes, was appointed to the Brazilian Supreme Court.¹⁴ Will a Black President of the United States be the pinnacle of Black ascent and upward mobility?

When individual Africans rise higher, collective racism is on notice. In the United Kingdom, under Tony Blair, there were two black cabinet ministers in a Labour government. There was Baroness Amos, the first black woman cabinet minister, who was appointed as International Development Secretary in May 2003, and Paul Boateng, Treasury minister, who became the first black minister in the United Kingdom's history in 2002. In Gordon Brown's government, Attorney General Baroness Scotland is a black woman. There was the long-serving and most influential Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States, prince Bandar bin Sultan, whose mother was Black. Barack Obama retained his African names and even his culturally Muslim middle name (Hussein). Unlike Prince Bandar, Barack Obama retained a conscious African connection. Obama was not in denial.

Even before the two African Secretaries-General of the United Nations [Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan], Africa had already produced a black Director-General of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in Paris. He was Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, an African of the blood and of the soil from Senegal. His openly pro-Third World policies infuriated the United States, which finally withdrew from UNESCO in 1985, followed by its compliant ally, the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom returned to UNESCO in 1997 after the sweeping victory of the Labour Party in the 1996 elections.

The International Court of Justice at The Hague elected in 1994 an African of the soil for its first African President – Mohammed Medjauni of Algeria. The World Bank in the 1990s had two African Vice-Presidents – Callisto Madivo, an African of the blood and the soil from Zimbabwe, and Ismail Serageldin, an African of the soil from Egypt. In 1999, Serageldin was also a serious candidate in an unsuccessful bid to become the first UNESCO Director-General of the new millennium.¹⁵

The Commonwealth (former British Commonwealth) had Third World Secretaries-General for two decades – Ramphal of Guyana and Emeka Anyouku of Nigeria. They were only partially diverted by the brain drain.

Ralph Bunche and Martin Luther King, Jr. were of course African American Nobel Peace Laureates and therefore Africans of the blood in our sense, but not of the soil. Anwar Sadat and F.W. deKlerk were as Peace Laureates, Africans of the soil but not of the blood. Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela were Africans of both the soil and the blood. All three were South Africans, as was F.W. deKlerk. But we should note that F.W. deKlerk is an “African of the soil” by adoption rather than by indigenous roots to the continent. Kofi Annan as a Nobel Laureate is African of both the soil and the blood. Also elevated more recently is Egyptian Mohamed ElBaradei, Director of the General International Atomic Agency. He is African of the soil.

As the twentieth century was coming to a close, Nelson Mandela achieved a unique status. He became the first truly universal Black moral leader in the world in his own lifetime after spending 27 years in prison. Martin Luther King, Jr. achieved

universal status after his death. Dr. King and Jesus Christ are the only two religious figures whose birthdays are federal holidays in the United States.

Positive globalization needs new legal and moral standards. The shadows in Africa itself are not yet fully lifting. Poverty, underdevelopment, disease and instability are still rampant. The brain drain continues unrelenting. But the shadows of Africa's role in world affairs are indeed more clearly lifting. As Secretary of State of the United States, Colin Powell was an African of the blood and a compatriot of Martin Luther King, Jr. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan was an African of both the soil and the blood – and a compatriot of Kwame Nkrumah. As for W.E.B. DuBois, he was the reverse brain drain from America to Africa. DuBois was also a compatriot of both Colin Powell (fellow African American) and Kwame Nkrumah (fellow Ghanaian).

As for the first African woman to win the Nobel Prize for Peace, this was the achievement of Kenya's Wangari Maathai in 2004. She was also the first Black woman of any country to become such a Nobel Peace Laureate. And Liberia has led the way with the first woman President in Africa's history, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. She also happened to be a Diaspora returnee. A former member of Africa's brain drain returned to make gender history in Liberia.

President Barack Obama may be the final fulfillment of upward political mobility. Will he be the ultimate Brain Gain for Africa? The answer is in the womb of a history, which has yet to unfold.

CONCLUSION

While W.E.B. DuBois's forecast of the colour line was indeed vindicated for the twentieth century, there were longer-term prophetic indications of the culture-line which

had begun to manifest themselves on the eve of the twenty-first century. Globalization as a planetary phenomenon had been preceded by the cultural globalization of Africa itself.

We have defined the Black Atlantic as a combination of Africa with the Black Diaspora scattered in the Western world. We have defined the Black Indian Ocean as a combination of Africa with the Black Diaspora scattered in the Middle East and Asia.

Ironically, the Black Indian Ocean has had a longer history of racial intermarriage than has the Black Atlantic. Therefore, the African Diaspora in the Middle East and Asia started the process of deracialization and declining race-consciousness sooner than has the Western world.

However, the age of postracism has been more dramatic in the Black Atlantic, especially in the aftermath of decolonization and the more recent dismantling of political apartheid in South Africa. But the era of postracism is not the same thing as the postracial age. Postracism implies declining racism, which is more easily achieved than the end of race-consciousness. Barack Obama's dream is of an America which has not only transcended Jim Crow laws and racist attitudes, but has become less and less conscious of racial differences. Booker T. Washington had championed a Black consciousness of humility, encouraging African Americans to learn basic skills without pursuing basic rights. W.E. DuBois had championed a Black consciousness of dignity and racial assertiveness, under the leadership of the Talented Tenth. Marcus Garvey had championed Black separatism even to the extent of promoting African American migration back to Africa. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesse Jackson championed multiracialism, or what Jesse Jackson called "a rainbow coalition".

What is distinctive about Barack Obama is a quest for non-racialism, rather than multiracialism or “rainbow coalition.” Obama is a new stage in the long odyssey of interracial relations. His quest for a postracial America is being helped by a major shift in global patterns of prejudice. Race prejudices of the old kind are on the decline. On the other hand, culture prejudice is on the rise. The scale of values which has characterized Shakespeare’s plays are now being revived. After all, Shakespeare’s Othello was a less racist play than Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice was anti-Semitic.

Since the birth of this twenty-first century, far more people have died in militarized cultural conflicts than have died in militarized racial confrontations. Al-Qaeda as a movement of religious militancy has become much more relevant to world politics than has the Ku Klux Klan as a movement of racial arrogance.

Now that Barack Obama has been elected President of the United States, he has made additional history by becoming the most powerful Black man in the history of civilization. A full-scale post-racial world may continue to be elusive for at least another century. But global Africa is already feeling the vibrations of racism in retreat – and the rumblings of cultural forces on the ascendancy. Historians of the future have already been forewarned by a repentant Othello, hereby paraphrased:

*When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of us as we are. Nothing extenuate.
Nor set down ought in malice.
Then must you speak,
Of men that loved not wisely, but too well.*

ENDNOTES

¹ See the *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.) May 27, 1968. This Kennedy prophecy was also cited by the late Tim Russert in the television program Meet the Press, June 8, 2008. Tim Russert died suddenly on June 13, 2008, barely a week after the Meet the Press interview.

² *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene 1.

³ There are more than 20 million asylum seekers, refugees, and others of concern to the UNHCR (over five million of whom are in Africa) according to the UNHCR web site <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/basics/opendoc.htm?tbl=BASICS&id=3b028097c>, as of January 1, 2006 in the world.

⁴ For the relevant article and early responses consult Samuel P. Huntington, et al, "The Clash of Civilizations: The Debate," (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1993). The book-length expansion of Huntington's argument may be found in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁵ Consult William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

⁶ Blacks who have served (or are serving) as Senators include Hiram Revels and Blanche Bruce (both from Mississippi), Edward Brooke (Massachusetts), Carol Moseley Braun and Barack Obama (both from Illinois).

⁷ General Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice are among the few prominent black Republicans who have served under both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush.

⁸ Reports lamenting the end of the African "safe haven," may be found in *New African*, 367 (October 1998), pp. 16-17 as also "Now for Africa," *The Economist* (July 5, 2003), p. 9.

⁹ Beth Potter, "No Vacation From Terror's Reach," *U.S. News & World Report*, (December 9, 2002).

¹⁰ According to the National Urban League's *State of Black America 2007* Report, black men are nearly seven times more likely to be jailed than white men; see "State of Black America," *The Washington Post* (April 21, 2007).

¹¹ There is an epidemic of black-on-black violence. A study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, found that almost half the people murdered in the US annually were black; between 2001 and 2005, nine of 10 black murder victims were killed by other blacks; and blacks -- who comprise 13 percent of the population -- were victims in 15 percent of nonfatal violent crimes. For a report, consult Dan Eggen, "Study: Almost Half of Murder Victims Black," *The Washington Post* (August 10, 2007).

¹² For instance, even an insider - Lt. Col. Stephen E. Abraham of the Army Reserve -- who had been involved with the military hearings at Guantanamo to determine if the detainees were "enemy combatants" -- has called some of the evidence at these hearings 'garbage,' in testimony to Congress; see William Glaberson, "Critic and Ex-Boss Testify on Guantánamo Hearings," *The New York Times* (July 27, 2007).

¹³ Mildred Amer, "Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile," (December 15, 2006), Congressional Research Service.

¹⁴ Raymond Colitt, "Brazil Aims to Show Justice is Colour Blind," (May 30, 2003). Retrieved on May 30, 2004 from *Financial Times*, http://search.ft.com/search/quickSearch_Run.html.

¹⁵ Ismael Serageldin would have stood a better chance of being elected UNESCO's Director General had the Arab voting bloc not been split between Serageldin (an Egyptian) and a candidate put forward by Saudi Arabia. The split among the Arabs gave a Japanese candidate his chance for election. Serageldin later became the Director-General of the new International Library of Alexandria, one of the most technologically advanced of the libraries of the world, and one with close links to UNESCO and other global cultural institutions.