

President Obama: He got game!

Written by Irma McClaurin, PhD, Culture and Education Editor
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Well if Stella could get her groove back, why not the President? We saw him in his "A" game mode during the second presidential debate. It was like Ali coming back at Frazier the third and final time around—"the thrilla in Manilla." What we saw was intellect unleashed—the thrilla in Hempstead, N.Y. Not quite as exotic, but it served its purpose. President Barack Hussain Obama, the incumbent, was on point—like Michael Jordan doing a slam dunk.

And what about Romney? He's still trying to sell the American people the Brooklyn Bridge. Or should I say a Shanghai bridge. His major point was that we need to crack down on China. Maybe, but is that the real issue? How do you recover from having dismissed 47% of the population, some of whom might have once been members of the middle-class or who have relatives who are in the middle class? How do you persuade them that because you have run many companies and have been able to shelter your profits to the extent that you only pay 14% in taxes that you have the middle class and the working class interests at heart? How? Talk about China and divert attention away from the real issues.

As for Romney's response to the question concerning women, let's just not go there. He has a notebook—an Affirmative Action rolodex from which he managed to pull out of the hat some gender diversity. Save us women (and other underrepresented folks) from good intentions. Romney has made it clear that he has no interest in diversity, inclusion, gender equity, minority equity, immigration, etc. In other words, if you are not white, male, rich, and in business, Romney has no time for, or interest in, any of us—47% notwithstanding.

MEDIA SPIN ON 'ANGRY BLACK MEN'

There is a real fear that underlies the psyche of White America. It is one rooted in our history of slavery and multi-leveled forms of disenfranchisement that continues today and is manifested in

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poorly-funded schools for the impoverished, the so-called achievement gap, and a vampire-like prison industrial complex that captures young black men at a very early age and sucks out their social promise. Given these and other facts—including the reality that despite years of civil rights acts, affirmative action, diversity programs, multiculturalism, inclusion, and any other form of restorative justice that America has attempted to eradicate the effects of its slave history—Blacks still earn less than whites, even with the same background and education.

The fact that America has reneged on its social contract with Black America gives us a right to be angry. I'm not saying we are—I'm just sayin'! But the reality is that aside from a few Black folks who are preoccupied with being oppressed; most of us do not spend our free time being angry at whites. We may be angry at the persistence of social and economic inequality. And, if conservatives have their way, we have a right to be angry at the persistence of ongoing political inequality.

I was once accused of having this projected malady—the angry Black syndrome (something akin to the types of diseases attributed to rebellious slaves):

Throughout American history, both direct and indirect resistance to authority has been diseased. In an 1851 article in the New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, Louisiana physician Samuel Cartwright reported his discovery of "drapetomania," the disease that caused slaves to flee captivity. Cartwright also reported his discovery of "dysaesthesia aethiopsis," the disease that caused slaves to pay insufficient attention to the master's needs. http://www.alternet.org/story/75081/how_teenage_rebellion_has_become_a_mental_illness; accessed 10/17/2012.

A white colleague once informed me that another (white) colleague was afraid to speak to me because she thought I was "angry." My response was: 1) how did you respond, since you have interacted with me and have never encountered this purported anger, and 2) on what basis has she formed this conclusion? I have never spoken to this individual, directed anger or any other emotion (beyond normative courtesy greetings) towards her, and so what is the evidence or reasoning behind her attributing this characteristic to me?

My "friendly" colleague could provide no explanation. Nor had she challenged this view of me, though she had never had any interactions with me or experienced anything that would cast me as an "angry Black woman." I concluded that our mutual colleague had projected onto me her own personal fears about approaching me or communicating with me. Whatever image of Blacks in general or Black women in particular she held, they caused her to believe that a Black woman would be angry at her just because (for what—for her privilege, for her whiteness, for what?).

I calmly informed my "friendly" colleague that this was not really my issue. It is true that when I was younger, I may have harbored a generic anger directed at whites or "the man." But I had long abandoned such unproductive emotions years ago. Clearly, this colleague harbored some laden emotional fears about interacting with Blacks that she was now projecting onto me. But unless I have contracted the modern version of "dysaesthesia aethiopsis" which made me not pay sufficient attention to her, as far as I was concerned, I owed her nothing. It was not my

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responsibility to make her feel good, to pay attention to her emotional needs, or to comfort her – Not My Issue. I also suggested that my "friendly" colleague examine why she failed to come to my defense. But that's another story.

The "angry Black" is an historical social trope that has been used to conveniently describe everyone from the First Lady Michelle Obama to the President. The translation is quite simple. Blacks who are confident, assertive, and consider themselves social equals must be regulated.

And one form of regulation is labeling. We did it with the term "politically correct." It is used derisively, and is intended to somehow capture the totality of an individual's thinking. It is reductionist in its usage, and intentionally so. Think about all the conversations you have engaged in or overheard in which someone is labeled "politically correct." Once that label has been adhered to the thought processes of the individual, they are dismissed. Their words are no longer viewed as valuable or worthy of consideration or argumentation – "you're just being politically correct." It is an insult, a closure to debate, and should be challenged whenever it is leveled against someone. What exactly does it mean?

The same is true with the "angry Black" label. What exactly does it mean? I saw no display of, or hints of, anger in the President's debating performance or his demeanor. He was calm, direct, somewhat aggressive, and engaged, but angry he was not. And the moment at which he should have been angry, when Romney implied that and his staff were in collusion in misinforming the American people about the events in Libya, he addressed the insult calming, with great assurance, and with great Presidential presence. So why does the media spin it this way? Why are they so invested in projecting the President as an Angry Black man? Go figure.

Contrast this labeling of "angry Black man" to the post-debate commentary about Vice President Biden. He was described in the media in the following ways: "...arrogant, rude, disrespectful, condescending, and yes, juvenile..." A Google search reveals other terms attributed to Biden that include "aggressive" and "feisty," but nowhere is Biden ever described as "angry." Why not?

The "anger" that President Obama is presumed to have, or that was attributed to First Lady Michelle Obama during the last Presidential campaign is a projection, or what Freudian psychoanalysts might call "transference." The theory is that people can redirect strong emotional but unconscious feelings towards another. If we follow this theory, then the attribution of Black anger is not ours, but rather a projection of some whites. That is, there are many whites who are angry that a Black man has excelled and is able to rise to the highest level of power in the country and possibly the world. They are angry that they failed to accomplish this remarkable. There are other whites who recognize the depths of social inequality that has permeated our history and upon reflection know that if these events had happened to them and their people that they would be justifiably angry.

VOTING AS A FORM OF STRUGGLE AND EMPOWERMENT

What we witnessed was a game changer. The President got game, and will continue to build on the momentum for the next few weeks. On November 6, 2012, however, the ball will be in our

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court. We can exercise our vote and continue the transformation that Obama's election began four years ago. Another four years will make a serious mark on the social fabric of this country—in a good way.

Re-electing President Obama will not eradicate centuries of inequality, structural injustice, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, or ageism. And, President Obama will have to be more vocal in his support of raising the quality of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for African Americans in particular, and directly addressing the assaults being made on women's rights, among others. He will have to protect Obamacare, disclose which politicians are blocking his job legislation, and follow through to lobby hard for the passage of the Dream Act. I mean what would happen if all Latina/Hispanic workers took a "day of absence" and did a work stoppage as a form of protest?

But anyone who advocates that people, especially African Americans, stay away from the polls on November 6 is a fool. We have earned our right to vote through a legacy of resistance and resiliency. Voting as a privilege was won through the deaths of James Cheney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, Cecil Price, James Meredith, Viola Fauver Gregg Liuzzo, and, of course Martin Luther King (whites and Blacks). Because of their sacrifice, a vote for President Obama is not a vote for the lesser among two evils as has too often been the case in the past.

Rather, a vote to re-elect President Barack Hussain Obama is a vote of affirmation and empowerment that the winds of change are upon the shores of America. We cannot go back to the old days. President Obama may not be "the one" to magically transform this country instantaneously. Let's look at what he has to work with. President Obama may simply be the harbinger of what is yet to come. Whatever his purpose is in the larger scheme of the universe, in America's destiny, his first election signaled a welcome change. He now needs the opportunity to continue down this challenging path—one with tremendous opposition in Congress and the Senate. Yet, still he rises and prevails.

Let's do our part to keep it moving forward. VOTE.

Read More:

http://www.alternet.org/story/75081/how_teenage_rebellion_has_become_a_mental_illness

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi_civil_rights_workers%27_murders

<http://www.legacy.com/memorial-sites/civil-rights/>

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