

Abstract

The intellectual, political, and social climate in the presidential election of 2008 made the reliance on color-conscious campaigning a thing of the past. The morally correct approach was to look beyond race and see the merits of the person. Not only should our public policy be color-blind but also our personal choices regarding other persons, particularly our votes for President. It is a form of color-blindness rooted in the belief that we should only look at the individual. Indeed, President-elect Obama seems to hold this position. When one looks at Obama's speech of March 18th, 2008, it shows how the emphasis on color-blindness dominated his thoughts on race and public policy. It may be objected that this speech is the wrong document to view Obama's views on color-blindness, since it was given to distance himself from Reverend Wright's comments about racism and the racist history of the United States. However, a reading of the speech along with a visit to the Obama/Biden website attest to the correctness of thinking that color-blindness is the watchword of the Obama presidency or at least his race for the Presidency.

I contend that Obama's use of the color-blind paradigm, as the focus of public policy decision-making will hurt the social progress of black Americans. Obama it could be claimed is not against all color or race based public policies. Even if this is true, we have to be concerned with the symbolism of his actions. In his press conference he again and again pushed against the connecting of race as a factor in his presidency or public policy.

I argue that color or race conscious policies may be permissible and justifiable if they serve a greater social need. One pressing social need that still exists is the need for black doctors and lawyers to serve the larger black community. If the only manner in which the State can ensure that its black citizens and other underserved groups will receive adequate legal and health care will be to have policies that are color-conscious in that they mark out race or ethnicity as a criteria for admission to med school or law school. This would be permissible use of color-conscious public policies. In this way the government can ensure that good doctors and lawyers serve these communities. One other possible solution would be to force white lawyers and doctors to work in underserved communities. I leave it open as to what the force would entail. If I am right here then there are a number of social goods that can only be distributed at this time to the black or other underserved communities by using color-conscious policies. If it is the goal of the government to ensure that blacks and other groups get these social goods, color-conscious policies will be needed. Obama's stance makes it appear that the social ills of blacks can be addressed by race neutral policies. This I take to be a misguided approach to effective public policies for those groups that have been subjected to social injustice in the distribution of social goods.

I conclude by suggesting that the campaign that Obama ran for the Presidency of the United States had the following consequences:

1. Gives the false impression that racism has lessened to a much greater degree than it has.
2. It makes it more difficult to propose social programs that are color conscious.
3. Does not address any of the social concerns that directly impact blacks.
4. Gives the impression that the insults to the dignity of Black Americans can be soothed over with color-blind policies.

We must constantly be diligent to assess Obama's symbolic behavior regarding color-blindness. Obama seemingly reliance on the use of the color-blind paradigm can be seemed as problematic for the advancement of social justice. This approach to social justice may hinder the move towards a more perfect union.