

**THE HERO, BARACK OBAMA, AND HIS UNIQUENESS: A STUDY OF  
*THE AUDACITY OF HOPE***

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**Abstract**

The essay establishes that Barack Obama's uniqueness and admiration lies in his manner of approach to the people and the enthusiasm with which he discharges his political responsibilities. The theories of heroism and racism are employed in the analysis of the text, *The Audacity of Hope*. The essay notes Obama's endearing commitment to the well-being of the masses: he identifies with the masses, brings himself to their level, visits both the urban rich and the rural poor, holds meetings with them, identifies their problems and tries to solve them to the best of his ability. His political career does not interfere with his emotional attachment to his wife and children. His sagacity, boldness and political acumen win him the American presidency. His victories in politics help to break racism to a reasonable extent and restore the hope, confidence and pride of the black race. Obama is a black hero and a model character. The method of research is qualitative – critical reading and interpretation of the primary text and using the library and internet sources to support or refute the arguments raised in the essay.

**Key words:** *Heroism, unique, actions, masses, racism, black, white and America.*

**Introduction**

Not much work has been carried out on heroism and the attributes of a hero. A few scholars who have carried out researches on this direction fail to come up with an all-embracing definition of heroism and the attributes of a hero. For all we know, heroism is a positive concept and many people aspire to the status of a hero. Some scholars who have worked on heroism include Zeno E. Franco, Kathy Blau and Philip G. Zimbardo. They submit that heroism represents the ideal of citizens transforming civic action and, at the same time, accepting either physical peril or social sacrifice. Heroism is frequently viewed as an apex of human behaviour and watching a heroic act is compelling: literally

commanding people's attention. They project a straightforward definition of heroism that is, at first, satisfying and that is: "To act in a pro-social manner despite personal risk" (1). They however identify a number of subtle interrelated paradoxes that makes heroism one of the most complex human behaviours to study, and go on to state that the contradictory nature of heroism is what makes it compelling. They recognize that heroism is a social attribute and not a personal thing and that the act itself is a solitary existential choice. Heroes are historically, culturally and situationally determined and that is why heroes of one era may prove to be villains in another time when controverting evidence emerges. They, however, acknowledge that some heroes endure across the centuries.

P.G. Zimbardo classifies heroism into three-martial heroism, civil heroism and social heroism (461-462). Martial heroism is also referred to as military heroism. He submits that the willingness to take a conspicuous and bold action in a way that sets one apart from his already brave peers serves as the high-water mark of heroism in modern warfare. He writes that civil heroism is similar to martial heroism because it involves physical peril but there is no military code of conduct to fall back upon and the actor in civil heroism may not have been trained to deal with the situation. So, there is no specific script that guides the individual towards heroic action as in the case of martial heroism. Dr. Amilo Kanu, in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, is a martial hero. At the outbreak of the Nigerian/Biafran War, Dr. Kanu is given a crucial appointment as "Director for Mobilization" (35) because of his credibility and dedication to the Biafran cause. He performs this work so selflessly that the death of his first son could not prevent him from carrying out a national assignment. When Nigeria threatens to take over Umuahia, Dr. Kanu joins the army and carries guns to the war front against the advice of his close associates and His Excellency himself. In

the war front, he distinguishes himself so much as a courageous fighter. The shattered bones, wounds and bruises he sustains from war fronts could not discourage him from going back to the fronts. The battalion to which Dr. Kanu was attached would have been taken unawares and massacred by the Nigerian soldiers but his timely intervention saved the squad. This is evident in his words to Akwaelumo, his friend, “my mind immediately went to our limited stock of *Ogbunigwe*. Without waiting for my commander’s orders, I made for them. In a trice, I was launching them in the direction of the guns. How I got moved from there to this place [hospital], I don’t know!” (216). Dr. Kanu is eventually killed by an air raid at Queen Elizabeth’s Hospital where he is recuperating from his war front injuries. The standard for duty-bound and non-duty bound physical risk heroism differs but, the style of engagement and potential sacrifices are comparable. Death, serious injury, disfigurement and pain are all possible outcomes of acting on behalf of others in jeopardy. Franco, Blau and Zimbardo posit that a typical example of civil hero is a civilian bystander who performs an emergency rescue. In contrast with martial and civil heroisms, Zimbardo projects that social heroism does not involve immediate physical peril. It is associated with considerable risk and personal sacrifice in other dimensions of life, including serious financial consequences, loss of social status, possible long-term health problems, and social ostracism. Shepela et al posit that the goal of social heroism can be seen as the preservation of a community-sanctioned value or standard that is perceived to be under threat. In some cases, the actor is actually trying to establish a set of extra-community standards – pushing toward a new ideal that has not yet found wide acceptance. Shepela et al refer to social heroism as courageous resistance. A. Eagly and S. Becker, and then I. Hughes Hallett submit that martial and civil heroes are most often viewed as the archetypal heroic figures and that their actions are usually dramatic, occur rapidly, and are comparatively free from

controversy. And Franco and Zimbardo believe that social heroism is typically less dramatic, unfolds over a much longer period of time and is frequently undertaken in private rather than in public settings. Many scholars such as Howerth, Peterson and Seligman posit that social heroism should be viewed as more heroic than physically risk forms of heroism. Examples of social heroes are Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) and Nelson Mandela (1918-2013). Martin Luther was murdered because he was campaigning for the equal treatment of the black and white people in America. Mandela, on the other hand, spent most of the active part of his life in prison because he was fighting against apartheid in South Africa.

From all indications, Obama's heroism falls under social heroism because it has virtually all the features of social heroism. As hinted earlier, social heroism is concerned with the preservation of a community-sanctioned value or standard that is perceived to be under threat. Obama fights to restore the equality of all categories of race in America, and this is an acceptable standard all over the globe. It is also hinted that the actor in social heroism is actually trying to establish a set of extra community standards, pushing towards a new ideal that has not yet found wide acceptance. In the same vein, Obama succeeds in making the white Americans, at least to a reasonable extent, to accept the equality of all races which was an ideal that had not found wide acceptance by white Americans. For Obama to achieve his mission, he employs courageous resistance which is associated with social heroism.

Franco, Blau and Zimbardo define heroism as a social activity that is – (a) in service to others in need; (b) engaged in voluntarily; (c) with recognition of possible risks/costs; (d) in which the actor is willing to accept anticipated sacrifice; and (e) without external gain anticipated at the time of the action. Going through the issues

itemized in the definition above, it is clearly discernable that Obama's heroism is in accord with them. His venturing into the fight for racial equality is to free the black and others from racial inferiority complex. His fight is a personal decision which he knows can have possible risks or costs and demands personal sacrifices which he is willing to accommodate without anticipating any external gain at the time of the action. In consolidation of Franco et al postulation, Shepela et al and Tangney and Dearing submit that while heroism is generally considered to be a pro-social behaviour and the act must be witnessed or evaluated by spectators to receive acclaim, the decision to act in a heroic manner does not necessarily emanate from pro-social motivation, nor does it require an audience. The decision to act is almost always a private, interior process that occurs before and in the absence of public knowledge about what is about to unfold. For many heroes, engaging heroically may have more to do with the individuals' examination of their own deeply held standards for behaviour in a given situation and that despite profound reservations about the actions they are about to undertake, these internalized standards are considered to be so inviolable as to compel action even in the face of peril.

Douglas M. Stenstrom and Mathew Curtis' theory of heroism is in line with that of Franco et al. They also submit that heroism involves five criteria which are social activity in service to others, engaged in voluntarily, with recognition of possible risks or costs, with the actor accepting the sacrifice and there is no external gain anticipated by the actor. According to Stenstrom and Curtis, Jaywickreme and Stefano provide a separate multifaceted definition with three criteria: a typical situation for the behaviour, unusual behaviour in part because of personal risk, and furthering welfare of others. However, one line of reasoning is that heroism is part of the larger construct of prosocial behaviour and that the element of risk is what separates altruism from heroism.

These theories of heroism are appropriate in this essay because it focuses on Obama's heroic actions to establish the equality of all categories of race – White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander in the United States of America.

Racism, on the other hand, is a form of discrimination that is based on the colour of the skin. Derald Wing Sue writes that racism is any attitude, action, institutional structure or social policy that subordinates persons or groups because of their colour. It involves the power to carry out systematic discriminatory practice in a broad and continuing manner. Sue records that racism has attitudinal (racial prejudice) and behavioral (discriminatory) components and classifies it into three different forms: individual, institutional and cultural forms. In his explanation of the forms, he writes that individual racism is any attitude or action whether intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious, that subordinates persons or groups because of their colour. It can be manifested in overt, intentional, and conscious efforts to harm, or it can be subtle, unintentional, and unconscious. He explains that institutional racism is any institutional policy, practice or structure in government, business, unions, schools, churches, courts, and law enforcement entities by which decisions are made to unfairly subordinate persons of colour while allowing other groups to profit from such actions. Cultural racism is the individual and institutional expression of the superiority of one group's cultural heritage over another group's (arts, craft, language, traditions, beliefs and values) and its imposition on racial/ethnic minority groups (31-33). All the three forms are necessary for this essay, because racism whether individual, institutional or cultural, is a prominent theme in the chosen text -*The Audacity of Hope*. Charles Wilson classifies racism as overt and institutional. The overt racism, to him, is the most easily recognized because it operates on a personal level: one individual hates another because

of his or her racial origin, or a group despises another simply because of who each is. The institutional racism is subtle because it is not the traditional display of racism. Wilson's explanation of racism is similar to that of Sue. Teun Van Dijk projects racism as a social system of power abuse or domination reproduced by social practices of discrimination on the one hand, and by prejudiced attitudes and ideologies on the other. But G.M. Fredrickson is of the position that "an action should only be labeled racist if the discrimination in question is against an unchangeable characteristic of the victim" (qtd in Kealy<sup>2</sup>). The definitions above indicate that racism manifests itself in social, political and economic lives of a people.

According to A. Binitie, human races were first classified by Blumenbach, Johann and Friedrich as White or Caucasian, Yellow or Mongolian, Brown or Malayan, Black or Ethiopian (13). This form of classification is no more in order because using a particular nationality to represent a race is not sufficient enough to describe a race. The superiority and inferiority which characterize the act of racism is somehow relative to time, geographical location and the persons involved, because a particular race that is considered superior at a given time, within a given location, and among a given set of people may be considered inferior when the conditioning factors change. However, the complexity of racism resides in the fact that it can manifest in virtually all areas of human endeavour such as economic, political, social, religious and cultural.

Though acute and blatant cases of racism are not as obvious in other parts of the world as it was in South Africa, there are indications that racism still exists in several societies of the world and that is why many contemporary writers still showcase instances of racism in their literary works. Sue posits that the subordination of people of colour in the United States occurs not just on an individual level but also in the activities and procedures of the institutions, corporations and social systems (31).

Santosh Kumari submits that in America, equal opportunities are granted to the black but the practice of segregation continues and gets sanctioned even by the Supreme Court. Educational institutions and medical facilities in hospitals are separately established for the black. The equality rights look pretentious and impractical without political governance. Discrimination and segregation prevail as earlier (103). In support of Kumari, James Baldman laments that many men now living have seen with their eyes; black men and boys are being murdered here today in cold blood, and with impunity; and it is a very serious matter when the government which is sworn to protect the interest of all American citizens allies itself with the enemies of black men (86-7). What all these go to show is that racism is a global issue, and that the white people where ever they are feel that they are superior to the black and, therefore, are created by God to rule the world.

### **Review of Literature**

Many Scholars have written essays on Barack Obama and his *Audacity of Hope*. Geun Lee submits that the rhetoric of Barack Obama's campaign for the US presidency gives many people in East Asia hope that he will actively assert US leadership in the region and depart from the ways of President George Bush. In the mid-term assessment of Obama's East Asian policies, Lee argues that instead of Obama adhering to his campaign rhetoric, he adopts reactive policies reminiscent of Japan's approach to foreign affairs. He reiterates that Obama's administrations of East Asian policies at the midpoint in his term have betrayed many of the visions and hopes articulated by Obama before and shortly after he was elected. His audacity of hope appears to have been replaced by hope deferred.

Justin Leroy posits that the danger of Obama's rhetoric is that by simply insisting that the potential for change is written in the American Constitution; he avoids national



accountability for the repeated and persistent fallings, both past and present, of a nation that he consistently characterizes as “genius”. However, Leroy observes that, ironically, the truly amazing aspect of Obama’s campaign is not his own personal philosophy of good governance, but its ability to inspire voters to seek concrete change in their lives and in politics. Leroy acknowledges Jay Tolson’s observation that, the fact that a black man has mounted so successfully a charge upon the nation’s highest political office speaks volume about the changes that have occurred in America. But to attribute too much of the significance of Obama’s achievement to changes in attitude towards race is to slight the content of his message. Obama’s message is the promise of a politics of unity and change - a politics that acknowledges differences of identity and interest but at the same time insists upon the need for compromise and cooperation to achieve the common good.

Another scholar, Sonja L. Hanson, identifies “hope, change, innovation, a call to action, repetitive rhetoric, motivating unification, American jeremiad and African jeremiad as the characteristics that contribute to transformational leadership in each of Obama’s speeches. He states that communicating transformational ideas is how transformational leadership is enacted and that the rhetoric of change is a close subcategory of transformational leadership. Hansan claims that Obama’s transformational leadership is his communication; communicating his vision, the action necessary to bring the vision into reality, and communicating why such change is important for the continuous improvement of individual and the nation. His message is that communication is the necessary foundation for a leader to successfully transform the community, the people, the policy and other initiatives.

Isabel L. Cirugeda and Raquel S. Ruiz state that Obama’s persuasive rhetoric about immigration is based on frequent appeals to movement, justice, patriotism,

acknowledgement and personal or local references as well as a predominant use of conceptual metaphors, combined with other devices like personification, repetition and synesthesia. He notes that the most frequent source domain is the myth of the American dream, symbolized as a path forward to citizenship - then orientated to collective goals- and emphasis on the uniqueness of the mosaic of so many cultures under a single identity. Cirugeda and Ruiz record that Obama also resorts to classical rhetoric when he appeals to common sense or goodwill and to flattery and emotionally engage with the audience by means of empathy. He also employs the use of Spanish words to win the interest of the audience, and argumentative strategies to give a positive image of the immigrants.

Another scholar, Susan Schulten, sees a relationship between Obama and some of the most influential former presidents. In Obama's speeches, essays and *The Audacity of Hope*, Schulten observes a pervasive influence of two of the most important contributors to American thought. She identifies Lincoln as a leader whose intellectual legacy integrates the Declaration of Independence with the Constitution in a way that forges a new direction for the country. To hear Obama speak about the constitution reminds the people that Lincoln changed the way Americans understood the nation's central meaning. Subtler are the ways that Obama's conception of politics and the public reflects the work of John Dewey, whose reconceptualization of philosophy in the wake of evolution laid the ground work for the reform politics of the early twentieth century. Obama's approach to politics draws on Lincoln's sense of the constitution and Dewey's concept of value. She records that in *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama's premise is that affirming core values and shared understandings may help the people address problems that have become entrenched by increasing partisanship.

Amazon Prime submits that Obama has a generally warm and inviting style of communicating and portrays himself as an agent of change in American politics. In writing style, *Audacity of Hope* is a good, though sometimes “preachy” read; at times, it seems a bit too earnest or striving for political correctness. Obama deserves credit for being able to discuss his values and faith in a manner that is more comfortable than many of his political contemporaries. In the book, Obama does a reasonable job of articulating why and how his faith and values cause him to think and act in the way that he does. Amazon states that one can respect Obama’s energy and commitment to change even as one firmly disagrees with his policies and plans. The record recognizes that part of what makes his rhetoric so powerful is the ease with which he articulates the everyday fears, frustrations and aspirations of Americans. Obama critiques all, including himself, and engages in the kind of questioning that is lacking in today’s politics. This essay deviates from the above reviews and concentrates on Obama’s actions that mark him out as a black hero and a unique personality.

### **Analysis of the Text**

Obama’s political life is inspired by his desire to serve the masses and make America a better place for the poor in particular and then for Americans generally. As a senator, Obama firmly believes that for him to realize his leadership objectives, he should not live in isolation from the people he represents: he should closely identify with them and interact with them, not only to know their feelings and needs but also for them to know him and establish their trust in him. He succeeds in bringing the masses closer to himself and to establish their confidence in him within a year of his ascendancy as a senator of the Illinois State. As Obama himself puts it:

One of my favourite tasks of being a senator is hosting town hall meetings. I held thirty-nine of them my first year in the Senate, all across Illinois, in tiny rural towns like Anna and prosperous suburbs like Naperville, in black churches on the South Side and a college in Rock Island.... On the day of the meeting, I'll show up a half hour early to chat with town leaders and will discuss local issues, perhaps a road in need of repaving or plans for a new senior centre, after taking a few photographs, we enter the hall where the crowd is waiting. I shake hands on my way to the stage.... And then for next hour or so, I answer to the people who sent me to Washington. (101)

After reading this portion, I marvel because this type of down to earth service and identification is not what I am familiar with in my own country, Nigeria. The above extract tells a lot about this rare gem, Obama. Not only that he has held thirty-nine of these meetings, which no senator can boast of holding even a half of the number, he derives joy in holding the meetings and that is why he is able to organize such a number of meetings. The fact that he comes a half an hour earlier to the time scheduled for the meeting indicates his level of commitment and dedication to his duty as a senator. He does not only acknowledge the fact that his position as a senator is the making of the Illinois people, he also tries to carry them along and to solve their problems. His visits and meetings are not exclusively reserved for the urban centres, he also visits both the rural poor towns and prosperous suburbs which is an apparent indication that he is neither discriminatory nor has he gone into politics to make money. His knowledge of his people and their problems inspires him to serve them more. This strategy of his yields the required dividends because, at the end of such meetings,

people will come up to shake hands, take pictures, or nudge their child forward to ask for an autograph. They slip things into... [his] hand-articles, business cards, handwritten, notes armed service medallions, small religious objects, good luck charms. And sometimes someone will grab... [his] hand and tell [him] that they have great hopes for [him] but that they are worried that Washington is going to change him and... [he] will end up just like all the rest of the people in power. Please stay who you are, they will say to [him]. Please don't disappoint us. (102)

So many things are to be deduced from this extract. Obama's pattern of politics has clearly endeared him to the people who have now built up a maximum confidence in him. The people's shaking of his hands, taking pictures with him and slipping objects into his hands are all symbolic actions. These actions symbolize acceptance, friendship, love and total surrender to his leadership. They have no doubts, whatsoever, of his capability of delivering their state from its stupor. "Washington" here symbolizes power, and whoever goes into power gets corrupted by it. This impression has been established by the people's prolonged disillusionment in their previous leaders. The people are obviously worried that power may negatively change Obama as it had done to the past leaders and, therefore, implore him to remain steadfast and straight in his politics. The third to the last statement in the extract is particularly remarkable. Though not stated in the text, it foreshadows the people's massive support for him during his presidential campaigns: they vote massively for him and get him to the presidency which is the "great hope" they have for him. His political strategy has made people repose a maximum confidence in his administration which eventually lands him to the presidency. It is as if Marshall Sashkin and Molly Sashkin had Obama in mind when they wrote that "actions that are consistent lead to the development of trust....

Consistency between what you say and what you do reduces other people's uncertainty. This leads them to trust you, because they can see that your actions match your words...Credibility requires that one do [es] what one says one will do. This means keeping promises and fulfilling commitments. In other words, leaders build credibility by telling the truth" (44). Obama is a leader that delivers; he is consistent and credible and matches his words with actions; no wonder then that he wins his people's trust in his administration.

Justin Leroy submits that Obama's message is: "the promise of a politics of unity and change – a politics that acknowledges differences of identity and interest but at the same time insists upon the need for compromise and cooperation to achieve the common good" (qtd by Tolson, 38). The above quotation implies that Obama is a revolutionary leader: he wants to change the status quo and brings in innovations in the administration. He recognizes individual differences and interests but insists that Americans will not work in isolation from one another. To achieve a common goal, there are needs for co-operations and compromises. The rich, the poor, the colored, the black and the white must work together to move America forward. That is why he is different from other leaders. Schulten agrees with this stance when she writes that "Obama's premise is that affirming core values and shared understandings might help us address problems that have become entrenched by increasing partisanship.... He asks us to guide ourselves not by positions but values and beliefs, because values have the potential to surmount problems" (816).

Obama is a forthright person. He refuses to see any sense in George Bush's reduction in the taxation of the wealthy without extending same to the masses. He opposes it vehemently in the Senate and does not even mince words in telling his wealthy supporters that "the tax cuts they'd received from George Bush should be

reversed” (114). Obama’s courage and boldness is admirable. The surprising thing is that these are the same people Obama appeals to raise money for his campaigns but once it comes to the defense of the masses, he seems not to care for whose horse is gored. He frowns at any action that does not benefit the masses and stresses that Bush’s administration should focus on the things that would benefit the people such as the health care services and good education. Taxation cut for the wealthy cannot benefit the masses, rather it will make the poor carry the burden of the rich which is ridiculous. In his own words, he says: “I am very angry about policies that consistently favour the wealthy and powerful over average Americans, and insists that government has an important role in opening up opportunity to all” (10). In another scene, he says: “I consider the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy to be both fiscally irresponsible and morally troubling” (47). It is morally troubling because the action negates natural justice of the rich helping the poor. It is, therefore, not acceptable to Obama.

Obama’s love for the masses and America is also glaring in his attacks on the Administration’s declaration of a total war on Iraq. In opposition to the Iraqi war, “he questioned the administration’s evidence of weapons of mass destruction and suggested that an invasion of Iraq would prove to be a costly error” (47). Obama foresees the danger in carrying out such a war. His fears are eventually confirmed and justified because, not only that billions of dollars which should have been used to fix America and the Americans is spent in carrying out the war, thousands of Americans also lose their lives in the war. The people that lose their lives are not the wealthy but the masses and Obama would have loved it if the money has been used to make America more viable for the masses. All these proclamations against injustice make Barack Obama the masses’ hero. His purpose for venturing into politics is well defined: to better the lot of an ordinary American and he has not swayed in carrying out this function. He

serves the masses because they deserve his service since they are the people that put him in government. But how many leaders still remember their political manifestoes and the masses after ascending to the throne? The fact that Obama does not makes him unique. Obama is remarkably unique and it is his uniqueness that leads to his ascendancy to the presidency in America. During the presidential election, the masses return his love for them: they show him that they recognize what he did for them in Washington by voting for him massively. Gans and Hussey, acknowledging Obama's victory, observe that even Virginia and Indiana states that had never been won by democrats in a generation were won by Obama. Obama's victory has made every black person proud. He is our hero and a model. His boldness is a charm.

Obama's pride and boldness in asserting his blackness and identity is remarkable. His approach in speaking against racism is subtle and friendly: he does not show any form of anger to the white who perpetuate racism. He appeals to their conscience and makes them see what America loses by staying apart: America is stronger in unity than in staying apart because what unites America is stronger than what keeps it apart. People admire his convictions, eloquence, articulation and boldness. These attributes of his are able to change the status quo in American politics. According to R.C Rowland and J.M Jones, for a person to accomplish such a change, "the protagonist must be an ordinary person, who accomplishes great things because his/her actions are motivated by values he/she shares with other Americans. The ordinary person in a sense becomes extraordinary, not because he/she is inherently heroic, but because he/she fully enacts the values at the heart of the American dream"(Rowland and Jones 431). It is as if the authors of the above extract had Obama in mind when they wrote the above passage because what they write applies to Obama. Obama was not born a hero. He is just an ordinary person who has performed heroic



actions. He achieves heroism because he is able to touch Americans at the point of their need and make them see the foolishness in retaining the status quo. In doing this, he pushes selfish interest behind and projects America's interest to the fore. People support him for they observe that he is genuinely interested in moving America and the masses forward. He loves America with a passion and that is unique.

He inspires Americans to have a renewed spirit to enable them transform America for the good of both the present generation and generations yet unborn. Most people achieve heroism through the use of arms and ammunitions but Obama achieves heroism through his service to the masses and charismatic oratory which are able to break the jinx of racism in America. To support the above stance, Obama, according to W. Harrel and also A. Ripley, was elected into the Illinois State senate in 1996, re-elected in 1998 and 2002. In 2005, Obama was sworn in as the only African American in the U.S Senate and only the fifth black U.S Senator in the past one hundred years. On December 15, 2008, Obama's successes culminated with his winning the presidency over Senator John McCain with a remarkable gap. The achievement is great because racism has been in existence since the era of slave trade and had caused untold hardship for the black and the coloured people. For a black person to become the president of America is a unique history and a surprise to people all over the globe.

That Obama is a transformational leader is not in doubt. J. M. Howell and B. J. Avolio submit that transformational leaders "inspire followers to transcend their own self-interests for a higher collective purpose, mission or vision" (Howel and Avolie 892). J. Klein acknowledges that Obama "transcends the racial divide so effortlessly that it seems reasonable to expect that he can bridge all the other divisions".

The uniqueness of Obama also reflects in the way he carries his family along with his political career. He does not allow politics to alienate him from his family.

Many people enter into politics and the socials and riches in politics detach them from their family members. Initially, Obama's senatorial job has compelled him to live separately from his family and to pack to Washington but the experience is not palatable for him. Not only that he is lonely, he terribly misses his wife's foods and his family's company. The fact that he stays only three days of the week in Washington and the remaining four days with his family in Chicago does not reduce his loneliness. As the text puts it: "Takeout food didn't taste good anymore; the silence irked me [Obama]. I found myself calling home repeatedly just to listen to my daughters' voices, aching for the warmth of their hugs and the sweet smell of their skin" (72). The extract gives us an insight into the type of father and husband Obama is. Most politicians will cherish the kind of opportunity he has and use it to bring in their girlfriends in their new homes and become alienated from their families. But Obama's own is not surprising because a man that has shown great love for the masses will not give his family less love. His greatest moment becomes when he is rushing home during the weekend to meet his children before they go to bed for the night.

Hanson submits that "Obama's career path and academic achievements also exemplified American ethos, specifically; if you work hard, maintain high moral and family value, then the combination of dedication and opportunity will lead to prosperity regardless of your gender, race, religion or family background" (Hanson 7). The extract fits Obama well: he is hardworking and responsible, no wonder then that he discharges his office work excellently well; he takes his family and his work along, he does not neglect any; he is a lawyer by profession and is able to ascend to the highest political position in spite of racial discrimination. He has restored hope to the black and made them understand that they are not deficient in any way: anybody that works hard, manages well and plans well succeeds regardless of gender, race or family background.

His good fatherliness again manifests itself when his three - month daughter, Sasha, is diagnosed by her doctor to be having meningitis. According to the text, Obama loses his bearing and becomes emotionally devastated. As he himself puts it:

Michelle and I spent three days with our baby in the hospital, watching nurses hold her down while a doctor performed a spinal tap, listening to her scream, praying she didn't take a turn for the worse.... But I still shudder when I think of those three days; how my world narrowed to a single point, and how I was not interested in anything or anybody outside the four walls of the hospital room - not my work, not my schedule, not my future. (186)

The above extract is very remarkable when we realize that not many men, especially those in Obama's position, will agree to sleep in the hospital with their sick children. The highest things many will do will be to give their wives money and to come during the day to see the sick baby. But Obama does not want to go home because he does not know the turn the illness will take in his absence. His sleepless night does not bother him: what matters to him is the recovery of that baby. This is a strong evidence of emotional attachment which is rare in many men. I think it is not an over statement to say that Obama can give up his political position and everything he has for the single survival of the baby. This assertion is implied in his statement above. And this is an experience he does not want to remember because of how he feels whenever he remembers it.

The first three months of their first daughter's birth, Obama and Michelle are together taking care of the new baby; monitoring her to make sure she is breathing well; making her to smile; singing songs for her and taking numerous pictures with her. According to the text, and as reported by Obama himself: " while Michelle got some

well-earned sleep I would stay up until one or two in the morning changing diapers, heating breast milk; feeling my daughter's soft breath against my chest as I rocked her to sleep, guessing at her infant dreams" (339). His love for his wife and children does not waver. Whenever Michelle starts to nag him concerning his not doing some house chores because of politics, he understands but tells his wife that "for all my flaws, I loved her and the girls more than anything else. My love should be enough I thought. As far as I was concerned, she had nothing to complain about" (340). He, no doubts, appreciates Michelle's travails and, whenever he can, tries to be home to pitch in with the kids. He sincerely appreciates the sacrifices Michelle renders to bring up the kids and move the family forward. He does not add to her problems by demanding so much from her. Thus he says: "I made few demands of Michelle – I didn't expect her to darn my socks or have dinner waiting for me when I got home" (340). This portrays a man who is considerate. Whenever he can, he takes a day off to look after the kids and he is ready and willing to hire and pay an external labour to come and help in the house so as to relieve his wife of some of the numerous tasks in the house. He usually returns home earlier on Friday to look after the girls while Michelle goes to the hair dresser. He treats the kids tenderly and this makes them to be very fond of him. Because he did not grow up with a father in the house, Obama is determined that his "children would have a father they would count on" (346).

Obama is an important U.S. president because of the impact he has made on America and other peoples around the world. He is a caring and helpful person. He has helped the people who could not fend for themselves and people who were victims of tragic events. As a president, he used his position to help jobless people to find jobs and helped to fix the economy. Obama, as the U.S. president, has helped people to have better access to health-care: he signed into law and extended healthcare plan, Patient

Protection, and Affordable Care Act. He has worked hard to end the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. He has focused on terrorism and wars in other countries which needed help. Obama is a virtuous person who has inspired others to do good as he does.

### **Conclusion**

The essay establishes that Barack Obama's uniqueness and admiration lies in his manner of approach to the people and also in discharging his political responsibility. His dedication to duty and the enthusiasm with which he does his work are remarkable and worthy of emulation. Not only that he is committed to the well-being of the masses and fights their cause more than any other leader, he also brings himself to the level of the masses, pays visits to both the rural and urban communities, the poor and the rich, identifies their problems and tries to solve them. The essay records that his uniqueness of character and dedication to the service of the people endear him to the masses and win him presidential elections even in the states which were never won by democrats in a generation.

The essay also notes that Obama's sweet manners also cover his family. He tries the best he can to see that he discharges his responsibilities as a father and husband. He does not allow his political career to interfere with his emotional attachment to his home. He practically lives his life for his family and for the masses. His sagacity, boldness and political acumen enable him to break racism to a maximum extent and become the first black president in the US. His presidency restores the hope and confidence of the black. He is the black hero and a model character.

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