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**Afro-Americans Struggle for Political
Equality**
The Rise of Barak Obama

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of an LMD Master Degree

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Dedication

We dedicate this humble work to:

Our family members

Our brothers and sisters

Our friends

For their endless support and encouragement

Acknowledgement

I want to take this opportunity to thank the people and institutions that assisted in fulfilling this project. This thesis would not have been possible without the wholehearted cooperation of the many friends and colleagues who graciously consented to be ready to give us a hand during the work. Also we would like to thank our beloved teachers who truly have been like mentors to guide us through our studies; we would like to thank our head of department for his care and support, our supervisor Aribi Ibrahim for his valuable time that he devoted for us during every step in making this thesis.

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Abstract

The case of Africans is a very delicate issue in the history of America, it plays a crucial part in shaping the US history, as Afro-Americans struggled and suffered many years from slavery till they gain their freedom. The present work represents an attempt to discuss the development of

the African Americans through different stages; our main focus in this paper is the political leaders in the African history and how they contributed in leading their people.

Keywords: slavery- African Americans-development-politics-civil war

ب دورا حاسما في تشكيل تاريخ الولايات المتحدة، تلعب اذ انهاد سياسة جدا في تاريخ امريكا،
حالة الأفارقة هي قضية انقشة تطور منال ريتهم. يمثلهذا العمل محاولة سدنوات طويلا من
القادة السياسيين في على مذكرة المعبودية حتى نالوا حل وناضل الأفارقة و امريكيين وعان حديث
منصب أساسا؛ تركيزنا الرئيسي في هذه الالأميركيين الأفارقة من خلال مراحل مختلف
خيراتل ايكي رمال امهاس فيكيو يقيرفال او مهبوعش عدايق يف.

List of Abbreviations

CBC: Columbia Broadcasting System.

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality.

CNN: Cable News Network.

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

JFK: John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

MM: Muslim Mosque.

NAACP: National Association of the Advancement of Colored People.

NBC: National Broadcasting Company.

NOI: Nation of Islam.

NSA: National Security Agency.

NY: New York.

OAAU: Organization of Afro-American Unity.

SCLC: Southern Christian leadership Conference.

UNIA: Universal Negro Improvement Association.

USA: United States of America.

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General Introduction

By the 1600s, slavery, the practice of holding a person in bondage for labor, was firmly established in the Americas. But slavery was not new. Its roots went back to the world's ancient civilizations. Slavery took many different forms throughout history. In some societies, slaves were mainly domestic servants in wealthy households. Some slaves also labored in mines and fields. People were often enslaved when they were captured in battle or sold to pay off debts. Some slaves were treated with respect. (Kemple, 1991. 13). In America slaves were brought mainly from Africa forcibly in order to work as servants in houses and plantations.

America is the world's leading power although it has a black president, it still suffers from racial issues and the incident of Ferguson which recently is creating a conflict among Americans on race issue, this latter has inspired us to track back the chronological development of African-Americans from the early years of slavery to nowadays. Therefore, we conducted a descriptive study based on the historical diachronic approach.

This dissertation is an attempt to discuss the issue of slavery in America as a corner stone in shaping the US history. In which we tried to answer the following question: How did the African Americans evolved from being enslaved to becoming an important figure in American politics? And from this question we derived the following sub questions, how the African Americans were emancipated? Who were their important political leaders? How Obama became president?

So this dissertation paper is divided into three chapters; the first chapter is a historical account on the slavery issue as a whole in America. Slavery was spread worldwide, it was not only in America however, slavery in America appeared specially in labor. Slaves were first brought to America as a mean to facilitate the production, black slaves worked in different fields and plantations, Africans started to become a majority, voices begun to call for equality with whites the reason why US government issued the emancipation proclamation by the end of 1865 given freedom to African Americans to become American citizens.

The second chapter is devoted to the achievements of the African Americans after being emancipated. Africans started to contribute in different field in the American society, we have

found many Africans who contributed efficiently in the equality struggle, in this chapter we stated some of the important people who left their print in the history of Africans in the United States from the first years after the emancipation till the twentieth century, people like Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King Jr. we saw that they are worthy of being studied.

The third and final chapter is what we tried to get to from drawing the African American timeline of achievements and personalities; it is the most important achievement in the history of African Americans. In 2008 Africans were waiting to hear the result of the presidential election where an African American ran as the president of the United States of America, when Obama became the president, Africans felt as finally their dream came true as one of their own became the president, Barack Obama is the 44th and current president of the United States, we tried through this chapter to give a mini biography on Obama before presidency, his path to the White House, and how white Americans reacted to having a black president and finally his two mandates and his major accomplishments.

Chapter I

Slavery in USA

« Historical account »

Chapter I: Slavery in USA «Historical Account»

I.1.Introduction

Since old times slavery has been in many forms .Slaves contributed in different areas such as farming, house cleaning, sailing, and even teaching .However, in The NewWorld (USA) slavery emerged as a system of forced labor aiming to facilitate crops production.The most important crops included were tobacco and cotton, the majority of slaves included Africans and their descendants whereas their masters were Europeans.

I.2.Slavery and the Framing of the U.S Constitution

The question of prohibiting the African slave-trade by provision in the national constitution caused much and warm debates in the convention that framed that instrument. A compromise was agreed to by the insertion of a clause (art.1., sec.9, clause 1) in the constitution, as follows: “the migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight; but a tax, or duty, may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person”. The idea of prohibiting the African slave-trade, then warmly advocated, was not new. In 1774, the continental congress, while releasing the colonies from their provisions of the American association, had expressly resolved that no slave be imported into any of the United States. Delaware, by her constitution, and Virginia and Maryland by special laws, had prohibited the importation of slaves. Similar prohibitions were in force in all the more northern states; but they did not prevent the merchants of those states from carrying on the slave-trade elsewhere, and already some New England ships were engaged in traffic from the African coast to Georgia and South Carolina. These states were forgetful of or indifferent to the pledges they had made through their delegates in the face of the world by their concurrence in the declaration of independence, and seemed fully determined to maintain not only the slave system of labor, but the nefarious slave-trade. North Carolina did not prohibit the

traffic, but denounced the further importation of slaves into the state as “highly impolitic,” and imposed a heavy duty on future importations.

On the demand of Henry Laurens, of South Carolina, who entered into the negotiations for a preliminary treaty of peace, at a late hour, a clause in the treaty (1782) was interlined, prohibiting, in the British evacuation, the “ carrying away any negroes or other property of the inhabitants”. So this treaty of peace, in which no word had, excepting indirectly, indicated the existence of slavery in the United States, made known to the world that men could be held as property.

The legislature of Connecticut, early in 1784, passed an act that no Negro or mulatto child born within the state after March 1 that year should be held in servitude longer than until the age of twenty-five years.

In 1788 the captain of a vessel in Boston seized three colored persons, took them to the West Indies, and sold them there for slaves. This event caused the legislature of Massachusetts to pass a law to prevent the slave-trade in that state, and for granting relief to the families of such persons as may be kidnapped or decoyed from the commonwealth. The subjected to a heavy penalty any person who should forcibly take or detain any Negro for the purpose of transportation as a slave, and the owner of the vessel in which such kidnapped man should be carried away incurred, also, a heavy penalty. The insurance on the vessel was made void; and the relatives of the person kidnapped, if the latter were sold into slavery in a distant country, were allowed to prosecute for the crime.

On May 12, 1789, a tariff bill having been reported to congress, and being under discussion on the question of its second reading, Parker, of Virginia, moved to insert a clause imposing a duty of 10 dollars on every slave imported. “He was sorry,” he said “the constitution prevented congress from prohibiting the importation altogether. It was contrary to revolutionary principles, and ought not to be permitted (Quintard, 2000. 56). Jackson, of Georgia, made a vehement speech in opposition, in the course of which he said he hoped the opposition would be withdrawn, and that if it should be brought forward again it would comprehend this was an allusion to the indentured white servants who were sold by the captain of vessels on their arrival here to pay the cost of their passage, a practice which had been put a stop to by the revolutionary war, but partially revived. The motion was finally withdrawn (Cox,1973,89).

I.3.The Nation Continues to Grapple with the Slavery Issue

In 1804 a provision was inserted into the act organizing the territory of Orleans, that no slaves should be carried thither, except from some part of the United States, by citizens removing into the territory as actual settlers, (Douglass,1992,46). The object of this provision was to guard against the effect of an act recently adopted by the legislature of South Carolina for reviving the slave-trade after a cessation of it, as to that state, for fifteen years, and of six years as to the whole union. This was a consequence of the vast increase and profitableness of cotton culture, made so by Whitney's cotton-gin

On Feb. 15, 1804, the legislature of new jersey, by an almost unanimous vote, passed an act to abolish slavery in that state by securing freedom to all persons born there after July 4 next ensuing the children of slave parents to become free, masculine at twenty-five years of age, feminine at twenty one.

The rapid extension of settlements in the southwest after the war of 1812-15, and the great profits derived there from the cultivation of cotton, not only caused the revival of the African slave-trade, in spite of prohibitory laws, but it gave occasion to a rival domestic slavetrade, of which the national capital had become one of the centers, where it was carried on by professional slave traders. They bought up the slaves of impoverished planters of Maryland and Virginia, and sold them at large profits in the cotton-growing districts of the south and west. This new traffic, which included many of the worst features of the African slave-trade (Douglass,1992.49).This legislation was frequently resorted to on occasions of alarm, but the profitable extension of cotton cultivation and the demand of slave labor overcome all scruples, within two years after its passage the prohibitory act of South Carolina was repealed. The inter-state slave-traffic was carried on extensively until slavery was abolished in 1863. A Richmond newspaper, in 1861, urging Virginia to join the southern confederacy, which had prohibited the traffic between them and states that would not join them, gave as a most urgent reason for such

an act that, if it were not accomplished, the “old dominion” would lose this trade.(<http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/slavery-us-constitution.htm>)

When admiral Cockburn began his marauding expedition on the American coast in the spring of 1813, he held out a promise of freedom to all slaves who should his standard. Many were seduced on board his vessels, but found themselves wretchedly deceived. Intelligence of these movements reached the plantations farther south, and in the summer of 1813 secret organizations was formed among the slaves to receive and cooperate with the Cockburn’s army of liberation; as they were supposed it to be .one of these secret organizations met regularly on St John’s Island, near Charleston. Their leader was a man of great sagacity and influence, and their meetings were opened and closed by singing a hymn composed by that leader a sort of parody of Hail Columbia.

They held meetings every night, and had arranged a plan for the rising of all the slaves in Charleston when the British should appear. At one of the meetings the question “What shall be done with the white people” was warmly discussed. Some advocated their indiscriminate slaughter as the only security for liberty, and this seemed to be the prevailing opinion, when the leader and the author of the hymn came in and said “Brethren, you know me. You know that I am ready to gain your liberty and mine. But not one needless drop of blood must be shed. I have a master whom I love, and the man who takes his life must pass over my dead body “(Quintard,2000.80).Had Cockburn been faithful to his promises to the Negroes, and landed and declared freedom to the slaves of South Carolina, no doubt many thousands of colored people would have flocked to his standard. But he was content to fill his pockets by plundering and carrying on a petty slave-trade for his gain.

I.4.Developing Conflict over American Slavery

On March 13, 1824, articles of convention between the United States and Great Britain were signed at London, by diplomatists appointed for the purpose, providing for the adoption of measures to suppress the African slave-trade. The first article provided that the commanders and commissioned officers of each of the two contracting powers, duly authorized to cruise on the coast of Africa, America and the West Indies, for the suppression of the slave-traffic, were empowered under certain restrictions, to detain, examine, capture and deliver over for trial and adjudication by some competent tribunal, any ship or vessel concerned in the illicit traffic of slaves, and carrying the flag of either nation. This convention was signed by Richard Rush for the United States and by W. Huskisson and Sir Stratford Canning for Great Britain.

On March 6, 1857, Roger B. Taney, chief -justice of the United States, and a majority of his associates in the supreme court, uttered an extra-judicial opinion, that any person who had been a slave, or a descendant of a slave, could not enjoy the rights of citizenship in the United States. Five years afterwards (1862) Secretary Seward issued to a man who had been a slave to travel abroad as a "citizen in the United States". Six years later (July 20, 1868) the national constitution was so amended that to all persons, to whatever race or color, born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and wherein the State they reside. By the same amendment every civil right was given to every such person. And by a subsequent amendment (1869), it was decreed that "the rights of any of the citizens of the United States, or any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude should not be abridged."

By a provision of the national constitution the foreign slave-trade in the United States was abolished, and congress declared it to be "piracy". Encouraged by the practical sympathy of the national government, the friends of the slave-labor system formed plans for its perpetuity, which practically disregarded the plain requirements of the fundamental law. They resolved to reopen the African slave-trade. Africans were kidnapped in their native country, brought across the sea, and landed in colonial times, and placed in perpetual slavery. In Louisiana, leading citizens engaged in a scheme for legalizing the traffic, under the guise of what they called the African-labor supply Association, of which James B. De Bow, editor of De Bow review, published in New Orleans, was president. His review was the acknowledged organ of the slave-holders, and wielded extensive and powerful influence when the flames of the civil war were kindling.

On April 7, 1862, a treaty was concluded between the United States and great Britain for the suppression of the African slave-trade, and signed at the city of Washington, D. C. by it ships of the respective nations should have the right of search of suspected slave-ships; but that right was restricted to vessels of war authorized expressly for that subject, and in no case to be exercised with respect to a vessel to the navy of either of the powers, but only as regards merchant vessels. Nothing was done under this treaty, as the emancipation proclamation and other circumstances made action unnecessary.

In his annual message to the confederate congress (Nov. 7, 1864), President Davis drew a gloomy picture of the condition of the confederate finances and the military strength. He showed that the confederate debt, without real basis of credit, and a paper currency

depreciated several hundred per cent. It had been recommended, as the enlistments and conscription of the white people failed to make up losses in the confederate army, to arm the slaves; but this was considered too dangerous, for they would be more likely to fight for the Nationals than for the confederate, Davis was averse to a general arming of the Negroes, but he recommended the employment of 40,000 of them as pioneer and engineer laborers in the army, and not as soldiers, excepting in the last extremity. "should the alternative ever be presented," he said, "of a subjugation, or the employment of the slaves as a soldiers, there seems to be no reason to doubt what should then be the decision"; and he suggested the propriety of holding out the Negroes, as an inducement for him to give a faithful service, even as a laborer in the army, a promise of his emancipation at the end of the war. These proposition and suggestions disturbed the slave-holders, for they indicate an acknowledgment on the part of the government that the cause was to reduce the alternative of liberating the slaves and relying upon them to secure the independence of the confederacy, or of absolute subjugation. There was wide spread discontent; and when news of the reelection of the president Lincoln, by an unprecedented majority, reached the people, they yearned for peace rather than for independence. ([Http://www.Sonofthesouth.net/slavery/slavery-usconstitution.htm](http://www.Sonofthesouth.net/slavery/slavery-usconstitution.htm))

I.4.1.The American Civil War

In the late years of slavery, voices begun to shout calling for the abolishment of slavery, the U.S was divided into two parts south and north this latter was against the idea of slavery, the American civil war was a bloody war where white military forces from the south fought against their compatriot northern military forces.

The Civil War was fought in 10,000 places, from Val Verde, New Mexico, and Tullahoma, Tennessee, to St. Albans, Vermont, and Fernandina on the Florida coast. More than 3 million Americans fought in it, and over 600,000 men, 2 % of the population, died in it. American homes became military headquarters, American churches and schoolhouses sheltered the dying, and huge foraging armies swept across American farms and burned American towns. Americans slaughtered one another wholesale.

In two days at Shiloh, on the banks of the Tennessee River, more American men fell than in all the previous American wars combined. At Cold Harbor, some 7,000 Americans fell in twenty minutes. Men who had never strayed twenty miles from their own front doors

now found themselves soldiers in great armies, fighting epic battles hundreds of miles from home, all they cared about is that, slavery is ended.

The Civil War has been given many names: The War Between the States, the War Against Northern Aggression, the Second American Revolution, the Lost Cause, the War of the Rebellion, the Brothers' War, and the Late Unpleasantness. Walt Whitman called it the War of Attempted Secession. Confederate General Joseph Johnston called it the War against the States. By whatever name, it was unquestionably the most important event in the life of the America. It saw the end of slavery and the downfall of a southern planter aristocracy. It was the beginning of a new social political and economic order.

Between 1861 and 1865, Americans made war on each other and killed each other in great numbers — if only to become the kind of country that could no longer conceive of how that was possible. What began as a bitter dispute over Union and States' Rights, ended as a struggle over the meaning of freedom in America. At Gettysburg in 1863, Abraham Lincoln said perhaps more than he knew. The war was about a "new birth of freedom." (Lowery, 1992.

63)

I.4.2 African Americans in the Civil War

The battle for emancipation, some would argue, was won by the slaves themselves. While this remains a debate, it is clear that the slaves did contribute significantly to their own freedom. By running from masters to become contrabands for the Union, laboring behind the scenes for Northern armies, and risking their lives on the battlefield, the slaves centralized the issue of freedom and played a key role in the North's victory.

After initially striving to keep the slavery issue out of the war, the Northerners began enlisting blacks to assist them in the fight. Lincoln's Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act, both of 1862, were significant in building the Northern military, because together they punished rebel slaveholders and encouraged employment of blacks in the Union army. These black slaves fought both on the line as soldiers and behind the scenes in labor tasks. Many blacks, inspired by their involvement, returned home to free their families and friends. Some even re-inhabited the plantations, took over the former masters' possessions, and began their own cropping. Other plantations had been left in the hands of white women, the old, and disabled when the men had left to fight for the Confederate army. This led to a further breakup in slave discipline and labor production in the South.

Since the proclamation only affected the states in rebellion, it didn't actually free any slaves. What it did do, however, was strengthen the Northern war effort. They now were fighting for a cause. By the end of the Civil War, over 500,000 slaves had escaped to the North, many of whom joined the Union Army, greatly increasing its man power. The Emancipation Proclamation also led to the 13th Amendment, enacted on December 18, 1865, which legally freed all slaves still in bondage.

I.5.The Emancipation Proclamation “Abraham Lincoln”

On September 22, 1862, soon after the Union victory at Antietam, Abraham Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that as of January 1, 1863, all slaves in the rebellious states “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” While the Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave, it was an important turning point in the war, transforming the fight to preserve the nation into a battle for human freedom.

I.5.1.Lincoln’s Position on Slavery

Slavery was “an unqualified evil to the negro, the white man, and the State,” said Abraham Lincoln in the 1850s. Yet in his first inaugural address, Lincoln declared that he had “no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists.” He repeated this promise in his first message to Congress on July 4, 1861, when the Civil War was three months old.

I.5.2.The Move Towards Emancipation

Most Republicans had become convinced by 1862 that the war against a slaveholders’ rebellion must become a war against slavery itself, and they put increasing pressure on Lincoln to proclaim an emancipation policy. This would have comported with Lincoln’s personal convictions, but as president he felt compelled to balance these convictions against the danger of alienating half of the Union constituency. By the summer of 1862, however, it was clear that he risked alienating the Republican half of his constituency if he did not act against slavery. (Allen, 2004.67)

First, he believed his oath of office to uphold the Constitution prevented him from tampering with slavery in the states. Whatever Lincoln believed personally, and he was decidedly antislavery, his official duty, as he reminded others time and gain did not permit him to interfere directly with slavery, which was a local institution under state protection. As long as the Confederate states remained technically in the Union, and Lincoln insisted that they did,

then the citizens of those states, whether Unionist in sentiment or not, were entitled to the protection of their Constitutional rights. (Allen, 2004. 68)

Second, he had good reason to be concerned about the disposition of the four slave states that remained in the Union Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. He feared that if he should take direct action against slavery, these states (except for Delaware) might also bolt and joins the Confederacy, which would seriously weaken the Union military cause.

His eagerness that these Border States pursue independent action against slavery led him in March 1862 to take the unprecedented step of proposing that Congress offer pecuniary aid to any state that would adopt some plan of gradual emancipation, an offer he repeated in the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln would not act against slavery until he became convinced that the Border States had no intention of taking him up on his offer. (Allen, 2004. 69)

Third, he was concerned about maintaining support for the war. There were many Democrats in the Free states and while they could support a war to preserve the Union, a war to abolish slavery might well alienate them from the cause. Many Northerners feared an influx of black laborers should slavery be abolished. Political opposition on the home front, what was called the fire in the rear, could make it that much more difficult to enlist men in the army and successfully prosecute the war.

Finally, there were diplomatic considerations for proceeding cautiously. Lincoln's administration rightly feared that England and France might recognize the Confederacy and provide support that would lead to a negotiated peace that recognized Confederate independence. Early in the war, attacking slavery seemed to pose more of a diplomatic problem than not doing so. Europe was dependent on Southern cotton, and, as long as European leaders believed the conflict was a domestic insurrection over internal political issues they would likely stay out of it. But should the Union make it a war against slavery, foreigners might see it as a play for Northern expansion and empire that would damage their own interests and lead them to intervene in the struggle. (Allen, 2004.71)

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation; the day of Jubilee had arrived. The *Washington Morning Chronicle* spoke for all the supporters intoxicated with joy: the Emancipation Proclamation was a great moral landmark, a shrine at which future visionaries shall renew their vows, a pillar of fire which shall yet guide other nations out of the night of their bondage. Abraham Lincoln is entitled to the everlasting gratitude of a despised

race freed, the plaudits of a distracted country saved, and an inscription of undying fame in the impartial records of history. It was a second Declaration of Independence.

Lincoln would continue to defend the Emancipation Proclamation and refuse to retreat from it (the promise being made, it must be kept, he said) even as he simultaneously continued to press for the Border States to adopt plans of gradual emancipation. Lincoln feared, however, that the Emancipation Proclamation might not hold up if challenged in Court, and he worried about what would be done should he not be reelected in 1864. Only a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery would guarantee the result proclaimed on January 1, and Lincoln and the Republicans worked hard to secure its passage. In April 1864, an Amendment that stated neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist in the United

States passed the Senate but it was defeated in the House in June. Following Lincoln's reelection, however, on January 31, 1865 the House approved the Thirteenth Amendment and it was ratified by that year's end. (Allen, 2004. 74)

I.6. Conclusion

From the earliest days of colonial settlement, when Africans were first forcibly brought to the colonies to labor as slaves, many resisted and ran away from their masters. Slave labor became the foundation of American society and culture. In the years following the American Revolution, sentiment of "equality and freedom for all" were strong, and slavery was gradually outlawed in the northern states. But in southern states where agricultural interests dominated the economy, slavery thrived and expanded.

Chapter II

African American political Legacy

Chapter II: African American political legacy

II.1.Introduction

African Americans realized that they are now entering the last phase of a transitional period between slavery and freedom. It is time for the black people to draw upon the universal values in their own experience, in the next phase of Afro-Americans life; a celebration must be created not a celebration of oppression, but a celebration of survival and freedom. Since the abolishment of slavery in the 1860s by Abraham Lincoln, black people felt relieved and yet they started to feel free to express themselves.

II.2.The Reconstruction Era

It refers to the period following the Civil War of rebuilding the United States. It was a time of great pain and endless questions. On what terms would the confederacy be allowed back into the Union? Who would establish the terms, Congress or the President? What was to be the place of freed black during the 1860's there was a new era, not just in terms of politics but also in terms of freedom and equality. African Americans became more and more free and accepted.

During the reconstruction era Blacks were getting wealthier, and the concept of racism started to fade. Even though racism was going away, black communities still continued to struggle as half of African Americans lived in poverty, and the ones that weren't in poverty lived in predominantly black neighborhoods. This is a huge factor in history because we cannot just expect racism and segregation to die out so quickly it takes time for the older generations to forget about the days of racism and the ideas that "blacks are lower." This is a huge part of

history and the hardships African Americans need to go through to gain full equality in the South? Did Abolition mean that black men would now enjoy the same status as white men? What was to be done with the confederate leaders, who were seen as traitors by many in the North?

Although the military conflict had ended, reconstruction was in many ways still a war. This important struggle was waged by radical northerners who wanted to punish the south and southerners who desperately wanted to preserve their way of life.

Slavery theoretically died with the end of the Civil War. Three constitutional amendments altered the nature of African-American rights. The Thirteenth Amendment formally abolished slavery in all states and territories. The Fourteenth Amendment prohibited states from depriving any male citizen of equal protection under the law, regardless of race. The Fifteenth Amendment granted the right to vote to African-American males. Ratification of these amendments became a requirement for Southern states to be readmitted into the Union. Although these measures were positive steps toward racial equality, their enforcement proved to be extremely difficult.

The period of Presidential Reconstruction lasted from 1865 to 1867. Andrew Johnson, as Lincoln's successor, proposed a very lenient policy toward the south. He pardoned most southern whites, appointed provisional governors and outlined steps for the creation of new state governments. Johnson felt that each state government could best decide how they wanted blacks to be treated. Many in the North were infuriated that the South would be returning their former Confederate leaders to power. They were also alarmed by Southern adoption of Black Codes that sought to maintain white supremacy. Recently freed blacks found the post-war south very similar to the pre-war south.

Congressional elections of 1866 brought radical republicans to power. They wanted to punish the south, and to prevent the ruling class from continuing in power. They passed the military reconstruction acts of 1867, which divided the South into five military districts and outlined how the new governments would be designed. Under federal bayonets, blacks, including those who had recently been freed, received the right to vote, hold political offices, and became judges and police chiefs. They held positions that formerly belonged to Southern Democrats, President Johnson vetoed all the Radical initiatives, but Congress overruled him each time. It was the Radical Republicans who impeached President Johnson in 1868. The

Senate, by a single vote, failed to convict him, but his power to hinder radical reform was diminished.

I.3.The Political State of African Americans During the Reconstruction Era

One of the most important aspects of Reconstruction was the active participation of African Americans (including thousands of former slaves) in the political, economic and social life of the South. The era was to a great extent defined by their quest for autonomy and equal rights under the law, both as individuals and for the black community as a whole. During reconstruction, some 2,000 African Americans held public offices, from the local level all the way up to the U.S. Senates, though they never achieved representation in government proportionate to their numbers.

During the first two years of reconstruction, blacks organized Equal Rights Leagues throughout the South and held state and local conventions to protest discriminatory treatment and demand suffrage, as well as equality before the law. These African American activists bitterly opposed the reconstruction policies of President Andrew Johnson, which excluded blacks from southern politics and allowed state legislatures to pass restrictive “black codes” regulating the lives of the freed men and women. Fierce resistance to these discriminatory laws, as well as growing opposition to Johnson’s policies in the North, led to a Republican victory in the U.S. congressional elections of 1866 and to a new phase of reconstruction that would give African Americans a more active role in the political, economic and social life of the South. Among these African American leaders Hiram Revels, the first African American elected to the U.S senate (he took the Senate seat from Mississippi that had been vacated by Jefferson Davis in 1861)

During reconstruction, Cardozo was elected to the Constitutional Convention in 1886 and he soon after became the first black state official in South Carolina’s history. He was Secretary of State from 1868 to 1872 and the state Treasurer from 1872 to 1876. His greatest challenge in his political career came when he ran for reelection. The Democrats accused him of misappropriating funds and ran a smear campaign against him. This campaign was highly effective: Cardozo was defeated for reelection in 1876.

The United States Senate was more difficult for blacks to penetrate, but the great state of Mississippi provided the doorway through which Hiram Revel would pass. Mr. Revel was an educator and an ordained minister. He was born on September 1, 1822, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, to free parents. He received a formal education in the north, in both Indiana and

Illinois. During the Civil War he helped organize two black volunteer regiments for service in the Union Army and also joined as a chaplain to a black regiment stationed in Mississippi.

In January 1870, Revel became the first black senator from Mississippi when he was chosen to fill the unexpired term of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Upon his arrival in the Senate, he was an opponent of the re-admittance of Georgia into the Union unless an effort was made to protect the black population. In his brief career as a senator, Revel withstood white outrage against his fulfilling Davis's term, and he fought to secure employment for black mechanics at the Naval Shipyard in the nation's capital. He was also successful in passing a bill that relieved the political disabilities of former Confederate Brig.

General Arthur E. Reynolds. In Revel's most famous speech he stated that his purpose was to serve his race; but most importantly, he was in the Senate to champion the cause of all loyal citizens irrespective of color or race. Revel shared with Francis Cardozo a love of education. After his brief tenure in the Senate, he became the president of Alcorn University in Mississippi. He also became a popular lecturer, and as he traveled he became a voice for civil rights. Also one of the eminent African American activists is Frederick Douglass one of the most important black American leader of the 19th century. He was born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, in Talbot County, on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1808, the son of a slave woman, and in all likelihood, her white master. Upon his escape from slavery at age 20, Douglass adopted a new surname from the hero of Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*.

Douglass's public life ranged from his work as an abolitionist in the early 1840s to his attacks on Jim Crow segregation in the 1890s. Douglass lived the bulk of his career in Rochester, N.Y, where for 16 years he edited the most influential black newspaper of the mid-19th century, called successively *The North Star* (1847-51), *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (1851-58), and *The Douglass Monthly* (1859-63). Douglass achieved international fame as an orator with few peers and as a writer of persuasive power. In thousands of speeches and editorials Douglass levied an irresistible indictment against slavery and racism, provided an indomitable voice of hope for his people, embraced antislavery politics, and preached his own brand of American ideals. By the 1870s Douglass had moved to Washington, D.C., where he edited the newspaper *The New National Era* and became president of the ill-fated *Freedmen's Bank*. As a stalwart Republican, he was appointed Marshall (1877-81) and recorder of deeds (1881-86) for the District of Columbia, and charged of affaires for Santo Domingo and minister to Haiti

(1889-91), Douglass died of heart failure in 1895. In addition to the newspapers he edited Douglass immortalized his formative years as a slave in the first of three autobiographies, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, published in 1845. This and

two subsequent autobiographies, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881).

II.4. Booker T. Washington a Black Adviser for a U.S President

➤ Educator, Civil Rights Activist (1856–1915)

Educator Booker T. Washington was one of the foremost African-American leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, founder of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, now known as Tuskegee University.

Born to a slave on April 5, 1856, Booker Taliaferro Washington's life had little promise early on. In Franklin County, Virginia, as in most states prior to the Civil War, the child of a slave became a slave. Booker's mother, Jane, worked as a cook for plantation owner James Burroughs. His father was an unknown white man, most likely from a nearby plantation. Booker and his mother lived in a one-room log cabin with a large fireplace, which also served as the plantation's kitchen.

In 1872, Booker T. Washington left home and walked 500 miles to Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute in Virginia. Along the way he took odd jobs to support himself. He convinced administrators to let him attend the school and took a job as a janitor to help pay his tuition. The school's founder and headmaster, General Samuel C. Armstrong, soon discovered the hardworking boy and offered him a scholarship, sponsored by a white man. Armstrong had been a commander of a Union African-American regiment during the Civil War and was a strong supporter of providing newly freed slaves with a practical education. Armstrong became Washington's mentor, strengthening his values of hard work and strong moral character.

II.4.W. E. B. du Bois 1868 – 1963

W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most important African-American activists during the first half of the 20th century. He co-founded the NAACP and supported Pan-Africanism.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, better known as W.E.B. Du Bois, was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. While growing up in a mostly European

American town, W.E.B. Du Bois identified himself as "mulatto," but freely attended school with whites and was enthusiastically supported in his academic studies by his white teachers. In 1885, he moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to attend Fisk University. It was there that he first encountered Jim Crow laws. For the first time, he began analyzing the deep troubles of American racism.

Du Bois graduated from Fisk University, a black institution at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1888. He received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895. His doctoral dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870*, was published in 1896. Although Du Bois took an advanced degree in history, he was broadly trained in the social sciences; and, at a time when sociologists were theorizing about race relations, he was conducting empirical inquiries into the condition of blacks. For more than a decade he devoted himself to sociological investigations of blacks in America, producing 16 research monographs published between 1897 and 1914 at Atlanta (Georgia) University, where he was a professor.

Although Du Bois had originally believed that social science could provide the knowledge to solve the race problem, he gradually came to the conclusion that in a climate of virulent racism, expressed in such evils as lynching, peonage, disfranchisement, Jim Crow segregation laws, and race riots, social change could be accomplished only through agitation and protest. In this view, he clashed with the most influential black leader of the period, Booker T. Washington, who, preaching a philosophy of accommodation, urged blacks to accept discrimination for the time being and elevate themselves through hard work and economic gain, thus winning the respect of the whites. In 1903, in his famous book *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois charged that Washington's strategy, rather than freeing the black man from oppression, would serve only to perpetuate it. This attack crystallized the opposition to Booker T. Washington among many black intellectuals, polarizing the leaders of the black community into two wings—the "conservative" supporters of Washington and his "radical" critics.

Two years later, in 1905, Du Bois took the lead in founding the Niagara Movement, which was dedicated chiefly to attacking the platform of Booker T. Washington (Harris, 1993, 27). The small organization, which met annually until 1909, was seriously weakened by internal squabbles and Washington's opposition. But it was significant as an ideological forerunner and direct inspiration for the interracial NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) founded in 1909. Du Bois played a prominent part in the creation of the NAACP and became the association's director of research and editor of its magazine, *The*

Crisis. In this role he wielded an unequalled influence among middle-class blacks and progressive whites as the propagandist for the black protest from 1910 until 1934.

Both in the Niagara Movement and in the NAACP, Du Bois acted mainly as an integrationist, but his thinking always exhibited, to varying degrees, separatist-nationalist tendencies. In «*The Souls of Black Folk*” he had expressed the characteristic dualism of black American.

II.6. African American Activism in the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century the African Americans were still struggling with racial issues, mainly the Jim Crow segregation laws. During the war years, the NAACP increased its legal efforts in the fight against Jim Crow racial discrimination. It won several Supreme Court rulings, including a 1944 ruling in *Smith vs. Allwright* that the Southern white primary was illegal. Other anti-discrimination activities also took place during the war. In 1943 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded in the previous year in Chicago to combat racial segregation through non-violent means, supported a sit-in (the act of entering an establishment such as a restaurant and peacefully refusing to leave in protest of their prejudicial policies) in a racially segregated Chicago restaurant.

Following the war, the NAACP gained new members as black servicemen returning home were again shocked by the blatant cruelty of the Jim Crow prejudice and discrimination that was still going on in the United States. A new group of young lawyers saw more legal successes between 1948 and 1951, including decisions against discrimination in higher educational institutions and in housing. In 1948 the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that restrictions could not be placed on real estate to forbid its sale to people on account of race. In *Sweatt v. Painter* the Court ruled that blacks could not be denied entrance to a state university law school on account of race.

The biggest legal victory for the NAACP against Jim Crow laws came in the 1954 U.S Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Springle 49). A lawsuit challenged a local school board decision in Topeka, Kansas that denied black student Linda Brown, a third-grader, from attending the all-white public school, which was the school nearest her home. Several other similar instances had occurred in other states, and they were all combined into a single Supreme Court case. The resulting Court decision overturned the 1896 *Plessey vs. Fergusson*'s decision. The "separate but equal" principle was no longer valid. The *Brown* decision stated that racially segregated public schools were illegal. The ruling did not provide a specific time by which schools had to desegregate, a fact that kept some schools segregated

for another decade. Much to the frustration of black Americans, the ruling only applied to schools and no other public places such as theaters, restaurants, and places of employment.

The *Brown* decision posed dramatic implications. Black Americans were inspired to seek an end to other Jim Crow segregationist laws and to end all discriminatory practices as soon as possible. However, in the Jim Crow South, whites resisted the Court ruling. School employees who helped black children enroll at white schools were fired. A Virginia school system closed all of its public schools to avoid integration and sent their white children to private schools (Sprigle, 1949, 42).

II.6.1. The Civil Rights Movement

Blacks, frustrated by the slow pace of change following the *Brown* decision, decided they had to fight for their rights. Protests against Jim Crow laws became widespread and used strategies such as sit-ins. Protestors would walk into hotels, restaurants, and libraries where blacks were not allowed and sit down, quietly refusing to leave when asked. In one famous incident, four black college students sat at a Greensboro, North Carolina, lunch counter. Refused service, they sat there for hours until the restaurant closed. Sit-ins spread across the South, protests spread to other areas of discrimination in the South. In August 1955, Rosa Parks (1913–2005), a secretary for the local chapter of the NAACP in Montgomery, Alabama, was arrested for not giving up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery city bus. Local Jim Crow laws and traditions required blacks to sit toward the back of buses and give up their seats if the white section was full and whites wanted seats further back. Parks, with her bag of groceries, was tired of giving in. Her arrest triggered a boycott (to stop buying a certain product until demands are met) of the Montgomery buses by blacks, who comprised almost 70 percent of the bus riders. For 382 days, the boycott persisted, significantly reducing the revenue of the city bus department. Blacks rode in carpools, took taxis, or walked. In some instances, police arrested carpool drivers and charged them with picking up hitchhikers, which was illegal in Alabama. Bombs were thrown at the homes of black leaders. The boycott ended when the city bus department changed its policy shortly after Parks, defended by NAACP lawyers, won a Supreme Court decision that ruled bus segregation was illegal. It was another major victory against Jim Crow laws segregating public transportation. The boycott was the first organized mass protest by blacks and catapulted their leader, Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), a young Montgomery Baptist minister, into the national spotlight.

Protests against Jim Crow laws paved the way for a broad social movement known as the Civil Rights Movement. Activists included whites as well as blacks, and all sought equal rights for black Americans. It was also known as the Black Freedom Movement. Following the Montgomery boycott, King and other leaders formed the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference (SCLC) in 1957 to coordinate work of the various civil rights groups around the South. Preaching nonviolent resistance to Jim Crow laws and other discriminatory policies, King pressed forward, challenging long held segregationist traditions.

II.6.2. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968)

King, both a Baptist minister and civil-rights activist, had a seismic impact on race relations in the United States, beginning in the mid-1950s. Among many efforts, King headed the SCLC. Through his activism, he played a pivotal role in ending the legal segregation of African-American citizens in the South and other areas of the nation, as well as the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, among several other honors. King was assassinated in April 1968, and continues to be remembered as one of the most lauded African-American leaders in history, often referenced by his 1963 speech, "I Have a Dream".

Born as Michael King Jr. on January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. was the middle child of Michael King Sr. and Alberta Williams King. The King and Williams families were rooted in rural Georgia. Martin Jr.'s grandfather, A.D. Williams, was a rural minister for years and then moved to Atlanta in 1893.

Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, Martin Luther King Jr. entered public school at age 5. In May, 1936 he was baptized, In 1948, Martin Luther King Jr. earned a sociology degree from Morehouse College and attended the liberal Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania. He thrived in all his studies, and was valedictorian of his class in 1951, and elected student body president. He also earned a fellowship for graduate study. But Martin also rebelled against his father's more conservative influence by drinking beer and playing pool while at college. He became involved with a white woman and went through a difficult time before he could break off the affair.

On December 1, 1955, they got another chance to make their case. That evening, 42-year-old Rosa Parks boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus to go home from an exhausting day at work. She sat in the first row of the "colored" section in the middle of the bus. As the bus traveled its route, all the seats in the white section filled up, then several more white passengers boarded the

bus. The bus driver noted that there were several white men standing and demanded that Parks and several other African Americans give up their seats. Three other African American passengers reluctantly gave up their places, but Parks remained seated. The driver asked her again to give up her seat and again she refused. Parks was arrested and booked for violating the Montgomery City Code. At her trial a week later, in a 30-minute hearing, Parks was found guilty and fined \$10 and assessed \$4 court fee.

In the night that Rosa Parks was arrested Edgar. Daniel. Nixon, head of the local NAACP chapter met with Martin Luther King Jr. and other local civil rights leaders to plan a citywide bus boycott. King was elected to lead the boycott because he was young, welltrained with solid family connections and had professional standing. But he was also new to the community and had few enemies, so it was felt he would have strong credibility with the black community.

In his first speech as the group's president, King declared, "We have no alternative but to protest. For many years we have shown an amazing patience. We have sometimes given our white brothers the feeling that we liked the way we were being treated. But we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice" (Franklin,1967.36). In February 1960 a group of African-American students began what became known as the "sit-in" movement in Greensboro, North Carolina. The students would sit at racially segregated lunch counters in the city's stores. When asked to leave or sit in the colored section, they just remained seated, subjecting themselves to verbal and sometimes physical abuse. The movement quickly gained traction in several other cities. In April 1960, the SCLC held a conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina with local sit-in leaders. Martin Luther King Jr. encouraged students to continue to use nonviolent methods during their protests. Out of this meeting, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee formed and for a time, worked closely with the SCLC. By August of 1960, the sit-ins had been successful in ending segregation at lunch counters in 27 southern cities.

By 1960, Martin Luther King Jr. was gaining national notoriety. He returned to Atlanta to become co-pastor with his father at Ebenezer Baptist Church, but also continued his civil rights efforts. On October 19, 1960, King and 75 students entered a local department store and requested lunch-counter service but were denied. When they refused to leave the counter area, King and 36 others were arrested. Realizing the incident would hurt the city's reputation, Atlanta's mayor negotiated a truce and charges were eventually dropped. But soon after, King was imprisoned for violating his probation on a traffic conviction. The news of his

imprisonment entered the 1960 presidential campaign, when candidate John F. Kennedy made a phone call to Coretta Scott King. Kennedy expressed his concern for King's harsh treatment for the traffic ticket and political pressure was quickly set in motion. King was soon released.

Dr. King and the civil right movement were not the only active African American that period of time, another activist group the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized Freedom Rides in the spring of 1961. Both black and white activists rode two buses from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans, also a very controversial black activist Malcolm x leader and spokesman of Nation of Islam an African-American religious movement founded in Detroit, by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in July 1930. He set out to improve the spiritual, mental, social, and economic condition of the Black men and women of America. From 1934-1975, the NOI (the Nation of Islam) was led by Elijah Muhammad, who established businesses, large real estate holdings, armed forces and schools.

II.6.3. Malcolm x

➤ An African American Muslim Leader in Racist America

Malcolm X was a prominent figure during the Civil Rights era. Offering an alternative view to the mainstream Civil Rights movement, Malcolm X advocated for both the establishment of a separate black community (rather than integration) and the use of violence in self-defense (rather than non-violence). His forceful, uncompromising belief in the evils of the white man frightened the white. After Malcolm X left the Black Muslim Nation of Islam organization, for which he had been a spokesperson and a leader, his views toward white people softened but his core message of black pride endured. After his assassination in 1965, Malcolm X's autobiography continued to spread his thoughts and passion.

Malcolm X was born as Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska to Earl and Louise Little, a kid, Malcolm would often attend UNIA meetings with his father, who was president of the Omaha chapter at one point, absorbing Garvey's argument that the African-American community had the tools and resources to blossom without dependence on the white man.

After his father's murder by white racists and his mother's institutionalization into a mental health hospital, In October 1938, 13-year-old Malcolm was sent to a foster home, which was soon followed by a detention home.

Malcolm was arrested for drug dealing in February 1946 and sentenced to ten years in prison. He was sent to the Charlestown State Prison in Boston. In the prison Malcolm was introduced

to the nation of Islam by his brother Reginald, Malcolm believed in what his brother Reginald told him. Through personal visits and many letters from Malcolm's siblings, Malcolm began to learn more about the NOI. Using Norfolk Prison Colony's extensive library, Malcolm rediscovered education and began reading extensively. With his ever increasing knowledge, Malcolm began writing to Elijah Muhammad daily.

By 1949, Malcolm had converted to the NOI, which required purity of body, eliminating Malcolm's drug habit. In 1952, Malcolm emerged from prison a devoted follower of the NOI and a proficient writer -- two essential factors in changing his life. In 1953, Malcolm adopted the NOI's tradition of replacing one's last name (which was thought to have been forced upon an ancestor by their white slave-owner) with the letter X, a reference to the unknown heritage complicating African-American identity.

Charismatic and passionate, Malcolm X rose quickly in the NOI, becoming the minister of NOI's Temple Seven in Harlem in June 1954. Malcolm X simultaneously was becoming an accomplished journalist; he wrote for several publications before he founded the NOI's newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. Malcolm X soon became a visible figure in the NOI, but it was the wonder of television that brought him national attention. When CBS aired the documentary "Nation of Islam: The Hate That Hate Produced" in July of 1959, Malcolm X's dynamic speech and obvious charm reached a national audience. His radical claims of black superiority and refusal to accept non-violent strategies got him interviews across the social spectrum. Malcolm X had become a national figure and the face of the NOI.

While Malcolm X became well known, he was not necessarily liked. His views unsettled much of America. Many in the white community feared that Malcolm X's doctrine would incite mass violence against whites. Many in the black community were concerned that

Malcolm X's militancy would destroy the growing effectiveness of the non-violent, mainstream Civil Rights Movement.

Malcolm X's new found fame also attracted the attention of the FBI, which soon began tapping his phone, concerned that some kind of racially based revolution was brewing. Malcolm X's meetings with Cuban Communist leader Fidel Castro did little to alleviate these fears.

By 1961 Malcolm x started to have problems in the organization, many members became jealous of Malcolm's status ,so rumors started to emerge about Malcolm's profiting financially

from the organization, also Malcolm discovered that his mentor and hero Elijah was plunged in immorality and he had four illegitimate children(Perry,1990.69) .After

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Malcolm X, never one to shy away from conflict, publicly interpreted the event as "the chickens coming home to roost."

While Malcolm X claimed that he meant that the feelings of hate within America were so great that they had spilled over from the conflict between black and white and ended up causing the killing of the President. However, his comments were interpreted as support for the death of the beloved President.

Elijah Muhammad, who had specifically ordered all his ministers to remain silent regarding Kennedy's assassination, was very unhappy over the negative publicity. As punishment, Muhammad ordered Malcolm X to be "silenced" for 90 days. Malcolm X accepted this punishment, but he soon discovered that Muhammad intended to push him out of the NOI. In March 1964, the internal and external pressure became too much and Malcolm X announced that he was leaving the Nation of Islam, an organization he had worked so hard to grow.

After leaving the nation of Islam in 1964 Malcolm found his own organization (Muslim mosque), in April 1964 he began a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, in this pilgrimage Malcolm started to rethink his position and decided to prioritize faith over skin color and he symbolized this shift by again changing his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

Malcolm X then toured Africa, where the early influence of Marcus Garvey reemerged. In May 1964, Malcolm X began his own pan-African movement with the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), a secular organization that advocated for human rights for all those of African descent. As head of the OAAU, Malcolm X met with world leaders to forward this mission, generating a far more diverse following than the NOI. Whereas once he had shunned all of white society, he now encouraged interested whites to teach about oppression. Running both the MM and the OAAU exhausted Malcolm, but both spoke to passions that defined his faith and advocacy.

Malcolm X's philosophies had changed dramatically, bringing him more in line with the mainstream Civil Rights movement. However, he still had enemies. Today, Malcolm X remains one of the more controversial figures of the Civil Rights era. He is generally respected for his passionate demand for change in one of history's deadliest times for black leaders.

II.6.4.Radical Black Nationalism

➤ The Black Panthers

Inspired by the ideas of Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton (1942–1989) and Bobby Seale (1936–) founded the Black Panthers in 1966 shortly after Malcolm X's death. The organization initially promoted violent revolution against government authorities. After numerous clashes with police leading to the deaths of some Black Panthers and imprisonment of others, the Black Panthers became less violent. They began providing job training classes for blacks and other peaceful programs.

And in the wake of the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, Merritt Junior College students Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense on October 15, 1966, in West Oakland (officially “Western Oakland,” a district of the city of Oakland), California. Shortening its name to the Black Panther Party, the organization immediately sought to set itself apart from African American cultural nationalist organizations, such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the Nation of Islam, to which it was commonly compared. Although the groups shared certain philosophical positions and tactical features, the Black Panther Party and cultural nationalists differed on a number of basic points. For instance, whereas African American cultural nationalists generally regarded all white people as oppressors, the Black Panther Party distinguished between racist and nonracist whites and allied themselves with progressive members of the latter group. Also, whereas cultural nationalists generally viewed all African Americans as oppressed, the Black Panther Party believed that African American capitalists and elites could and typically did exploit and oppress others, particularly the African American working class. Perhaps most importantly, whereas cultural nationalists placed considerable emphasis on symbolic systems, such as language and imagery, as the means to liberate African Americans, the Black Panther Party believed that such systems, though important, are ineffective in bringing about liberation.

It considered symbols as woefully inadequate to ameliorate the unjust material conditions, such as joblessness, created by capitalism.

From the outset, the Black Panther Party outlined a Ten Point Program, not unlike those of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and Nation of Islam, to initiate national African American community survival projects and to forge alliances with progressive white radicals and other organizations of people of color. A number of positions outlined in the Ten

Point Program address a principle stance of the Black Panther Party: economic exploitation is at the root of all oppression in the United States and abroad, and the abolition of capitalism is a precondition of social justice. In the 1960s this socialist economic outlook, informed by a Marxist political philosophy, resonated with other social movements in the United States and in other parts of the world. Therefore, even as the Black Panther Party found allies both within and beyond the borders of North America, the organization also found itself squarely in the crosshairs of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and its counterintelligence program (Cointelpro). In fact, in 1969 FBI director J. Edgar Hoover considered the Black Panther Party the greatest threat to national security.

➤ **Impact and Repression**

The Black Panther Party came into the national spotlight in May 1967 when a small group of its members, led by its chair, Seale, marched fully armed into the California state legislature in Sacramento. Emboldened by the view that African Americans had a constitutional right to bear arms (based on the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution), the Black Panther Party marched on the body as a protest against the pending Mulford Act. The Black Panther Party viewed the legislation, a gun control bill, as a political maneuver to thwart the organization's effort to combat police brutality in the Oakland community. The images of gun-toting Black Panthers entering the Capitol were supplemented, later that year, with news of Newton's arrest after a shoot-out with police in which an officer was killed. With this newfound publicity, the Black Panther Party grew from an Oakland-based organization into an international one with chapters in 48 states in North America and support groups in Japan, China, France, England, Germany, Sweden, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uruguay, and elsewhere.

In addition to challenging police brutality, the Black Panther Party launched more than 35 Survival Programs and provided community help, such as education, tuberculosis testing, legal aid, transportation assistance, ambulance service, and the manufacture and distribution of free shoes to poor people. Of particular note was the Free Breakfast for Children Program that spread to every major American city with a Black Panther Party chapter; to the chagrin of Hoover, the government adopted it as a federal program that survived into the 21st century.

Notwithstanding the social services the Black Panther Party provided, the FBI declared the group a communist organization and an enemy of the U.S. government. Hoover had pledged that 1969 would be the last year of the Black Panther Party and devoted the resources of the

FBI toward that end. In a protracted program against the Black Panther Party, the FBI used agent provocateurs, sabotage, misinformation, and lethal force to eviscerate the national organization. The FBI's campaign culminated in December 1969 with a five-hour police shootout at the Southern California headquarters of the Black Panther Party and an Illinois state police raid in which Chicago Black Panther leader Fred Hampton was killed. The measures employed by the FBI were so extreme that, years later when they were revealed, the director of the agency publicly apologized for "wrongful uses of power".

From the mid-1970s through the 80s, the activities of the Black Panther Party all but ceased. Although the FBI contributed to its demise, the dissolution of the party's leadership also contributed to the downfall of the organization. Newton went into exile in Cuba. Kathleen Cleaver earned a law degree and took an appointment as a professor. After returning from exile in Cuba, Newton was killed in a drug dispute in August 1989, perishing in an alley in West Oakland, not far from where he and Seale had founded the first Black Panther Party chapter. Cleaver designed clothes in the 1970s and 80s before joining the anticommunist Unification Church en route to becoming a born-again Christian and a registered member of the Republican Party.

➤ **The Black Power**

Black Power was a political slogan and a name for various associated ideologies aimed at achieving self-determination for people of African/Black descent. It is used by African Americans in the United States. The movement was prominent in the late 1960s and early 1970s, emphasizing racial pride and the creation of black political and cultural institutions to nurture and promote black collective interests and advance black values.

"Black Power" expresses a range of political goals, from defense against racial oppression, to the establishment of social institutions and a self-sufficient economy. The earliest known usage of the term is found in a 1954 book by Richard Wright entitled *Black Power*. Although he did not "coin" the phrase, New York politician Adam Clayton Powell Jr used the term on May 29, 1966 during a baccalaureate address at Howard University.

On June 5, 1966, James Meredith was shot in an ambush as he attempted to complete a peaceful march from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. Meredith had already made national headlines in 1962 by becoming the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi.

Civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr, Floyed McKissick of (CORE), and Stokely Carmichael of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) rushed to Meredith's hospital bed. They determined that his march must be completed. As Carmichael and McKissick walked through Mississippi, they observed that little had changed despite federal legislation. Local townspeople harassed the marchers while the police turned a blind eye or arrested the activists as troublemakers. At a mass rally, Carmichael uttered the simple statement: "What we need is black power." Crowds chanted the phrase as a slogan, and a movement began to flower.

Carmichael and McKissick were heavily influenced by the words of Malcolm X, and rejected integration as a short-term goal. Carmichael felt that blacks needed to feel a sense of racial pride and self-respect before any meaningful gains could be achieved. He encouraged the strengthening of African American communities without the help of whites.

Chapters of SNCC and CORE — both integrated organizations — began to reject white membership as Carmichael abandoned peaceful resistance. Martin Luther King Jr. and the NAACP denounced black power as the proper forward path. But black power was a powerful message in the streets of urban America, where resentment boiled and tempers flared.

Soon, African American students began to celebrate African American culture publicly; colleges teemed with young blacks wearing traditional African colors and clothes. Soul singer James Brown had his audience chanting "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud." Hairstyles unique to African Americans became popular and youths proclaimed, «black is beautiful «

The black power movement was different from the beliefs of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and the mainstream nonviolent civil rights movements. because the Black Power Movement was spear-headed by groups like the Black Panthers and Malcolm X which had an ideology that leaned toward Black Nationalism and equality and sometimes even separatism by “any means necessary. So the black power movement summarizes best the ideologies of Malcolm x and the black panthers (Levine, 1996.175).

II.7.The African Americans in Modern America “1980s 1990s”

In the 1980s, black mayors were elected in Chicago, Philadelphia, New York City, and other cities throughout the country. By 1990, there were 318 black mayors. In 1983 and 1988, Jesse Jackson declared his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination and promised to create a “rainbow coalition” of support among poor and dispossessed Americans. Although

unsuccessful in this bid, he was the second black presidential candidate to campaign for nomination by a major political party.

During the 1990's there was a new era, not just in terms of politics but also in terms of freedom and equality. African Americans became more and more free and accepted as the 90's came along. In the 1990s Clinton became President and the rich people in the country were prospering like crazy, while the poor people's minimum wage failed to increase with inflation.

In 1992, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton ran for president with record-breaking levels of black support; when he won, he filled his cabinet and administration with blacks, including Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, Secretary of Energy Hazel O'Leary, and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown. In the months that followed, blacks reversed some of the policies of the Reagan-Bush years. In 1992, the first black woman senator, Carol E. Moseley-Braun, was elected from Illinois.

II.8. The African American Political Contributions in the 21st Century

By the beginning of the third millennium the African American contribution in politics became more apparent, where black people started to serve in important and highly sensitive services concerning the national security and foreign affairs African Americans like Collin Powell and Condoleezza Rice have gone as far as a black American could go.

Colin Luther Powell is a United States statesman and a retired four-star general in the United States Army. He was the 65th United States Secretary of State (2001-2005), serving under President George W. Bush. He was the first African American appointed to that position. He was the first, and so far the only, African American to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

African American's yet, continued to take part in the United States' government when an African American woman Condoleezza Rice became the first black woman to be a U.S. Secretary of State.

Condoleezza Rice was born on November 14, 1954, in Birmingham, Alabama. She grew up surrounded by racism in the segregated South, but went on to become the first woman and first African-American to serve as provost of Stanford University. In 2001, Rice was appointed national security adviser by President George W. Bush, becoming the first black woman (and second woman) to hold the post, and went on to become the first black woman to serve as U.S.

Secretary of State. (She was the nation's 66th Secretary of State, serving from January 2005 to 2009.)

II.9.Conclusion

The years of slavery witnessed the birth of many anti-slavery movements, like the civil rights movement and black panthers, voices begun to shout demanding the equality between whites and blacks, in all over America blacks started to demand their rights, freedom and equality with whites. Black people entered different fields “literature, politics, music, even sportsmen and now an African American is the head of the united states.

Chapter III

***An African American president
of the United States***

Chapter III: An African American President of the United States

III.1.Introduction

Before 2004 no one heard of Barack Obama, he delivered the keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, and then only three years later in 2007, was a candidate for the president of the United States, a man of no record or past portrayed himself as an African-American, who would be the first post-racial, and the most-transparent president America was waiting and hoping for.

III.2.Who's Barack Obama

The reader of Obama's biography will be amazed by how simple his life was until he became president, born on the 4th of August, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii; Barack Obama is the 44th and current president of the United States. Barack Obama was born to a white American mother, Ann Dunham, and a black Kenyan father, [Barack Obama Sr.](#), who were both young college students at the University of Hawaii. When his father left for Harvard, she and Barack stayed behind, and his father ultimately returned alone to Kenya, where he worked as a government economist. Barack's mother remarried an Indonesian oil manager and moved to Jakarta when Barack was six. He later recounted Indonesia as simultaneously lush and a harrowing exposure to tropical poverty. He returned to Hawaii, where he was brought up largely by his grandparents. The family lived in a small apartment - his grandfather was a furniture salesman and an unsuccessful insurance agent and his grandmother worked in a bank, but Barack managed to get into Punahou School, Hawaii's top prep academy. His father wrote to him regularly but, though he traveled around the world on official business for

Kenya, he visited only once, when Barack was ten

(<http://millercenter.org/president/biography/obama-life-before-the-presidency>)

Obama left Hawaii for college, enrolling first at Occidental College in Los Angeles for his freshman and sophomore years, and then at Columbia University in New York City. He read deeply and widely about political and international affairs, graduating from Columbia with a political science major in 1983. After spending an additional year in New York as a researcher with Business International Group, a global business consulting firm, Obama accepted an offer to work as a community organizer in Chicago's largely poor and black South Side. As biographer David Mendell notes in his 2007 book *Obama: From Promise to Power*, the job gave

Obama "his first deep immersion into the African American community he had longed to both understand and belong to."

Obama's main assignment as an organizer was to launch the church-funded Developing Communities Project and, in particular, to organize residents of Altgeld Gardens to pressure Chicago's city hall to improve conditions in the poorly maintained public housing project. His efforts met with some success, but he concluded that, faced with a complex city bureaucracy, "I just can't get things done here without a law degree." In 1988, Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School, where he excelled as a student, graduating magna cum laude and winning election as president of the prestigious Harvard Law Review for the academic year 1990-1991. Although Obama was a liberal, he won the election by persuading the journal's outnumbered conservative staffers that he would treat their views fairly, which he is widely acknowledged to have done. As the first African American president in the long history of the law review, Obama drew widespread media attention and a contract from Random House to write a book about race relations. The book, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995), turned out to be mostly a personal memoir, focusing in particular on his struggle to come to terms with his identity as a black man raised by whites in the absence of his African father. (<http://millercenter.org/president/biography/obama-life-before->

The-presidency)

During a summer internship at Chicago's Sidley and Austin law firm after his first year at Harvard, Obama met Michelle Robinson, a South Side native and Princeton University and Harvard Law School graduate who supervised his work at the firm. He wooed her ardently and, after a four-year courtship, they married in 1992. The Obamas settled in Chicago's racially integrated, middle-class Hyde Park neighborhood, where their first daughter, Malia Ann, was born in 1998 and their second daughter, Natasha (called Sasha), was born in 2001.

His story is the American story values from the heartland, a middle-class upbringing in a strong family, hard work and education as the means of getting ahead, and the conviction that a life so blessed should be lived in service to others.

III.3.Obama and the 2008 Presidential Election

In February 2007, Obama made headlines when he announced his candidacy for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. He was locked in a tight battle with former first lady and then-U.S senator from New York Hillary Rodham Clinton. On June 3, 2008, however,

Obama became the presumptive nominee for the Democratic Party, and Senator Clinton delivered her full support to Obama for the duration of his campaign. On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama defeated Republican presidential nominee John McCain, 52.9 percent to 45.7%, winning election as the 44th president of the United States and the first African American to hold this office. His running mate, Delaware Senator Joe Biden, became vice president. Obama's inauguration took place on January 20, 2009.

When Obama took office, he inherited a global economic recession, two ongoing foreign wars and the lowest international favorability rating for the United States ever. He campaigned on an ambitious agenda of financial reform, alternative energy, and reinventing education and health care all while bringing down the national debt. Because these issues were intertwined with the economic well-being of the nation, he believed all would have to be undertaken simultaneously. During his inauguration speech, Obama summarized the situation by saying, "Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met."(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc3S6zR4B4g>)

III.3.1. First Days in Presidency

Between Inauguration Day and April 29, 2009, the Obama Administration took to the field on many fronts. Obama coaxed Congress to expand health care insurance for children and provide legal protection for women seeking equal pay. A \$787 billion stimulus bill was passed to promote short-term economic growth. Housing and credit markets were put on life support, with a market-based plan to buy U.S banks' toxic assets. Loans were made to the auto industry, and new regulations were proposed for Wall Street. He also cut taxes for working families, small businesses and first-time home buyers. The president also loosened the ban on embryonic stem cell research and moved ahead with a \$3.5 trillion budget plan.

Over his first 100 days in office, President Obama also undertook a complete overhaul of America's foreign policy. He reached out to improve relations with Europe, China and Russia and to open dialogue with Iran, Venezuela and Cuba. He lobbied allies to support a global economic stimulus package. He committed an additional 21,000 troops to Afghanistan and set an August 2010 date for withdrawal of U.S troops from Iraq. In more dramatic incidents, he took on pirates off the coast of Somalia and prepared the nation for a swine flu attack. For his efforts, he was awarded the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize by the Nobel Committee in Norway. (<https://learnfromthelegends.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/>)

III.3.2.The 2010 State of the Union

On January 27, 2010, President Obama delivered his first State of the Union speech. During his oration, Obama addressed the challenges of the economy, proposing a fee for larger banks, announcing a possible freeze on government spending in 2010 and speaking against the Supreme Court's reversal of a law capping campaign finance spending. He also challenged politicians to stop thinking of re-election and start making positive changes, criticizing Republicans for their refusal to support any legislation, and chastising Democrats for not pushing hard enough to get legislation passed. He also insisted that, despite obstacles, he was determined to help American citizens through the nation's current domestic difficulties. "We don't quit. I don't quit," he said. "Let's seize this moment to start anew, to carry the dream forward, and strengthen our union once more." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc3S6zR4B4g>)

III.3.3.Challenges and Successes

In the second part of his term as president, Obama has faced a number of obstacles and scored some victories as well. He signed his health-care reform plan, known as the Affordable Care Act, into law in March 2010. Obama's plan is intended to strengthen consumers' rights and to provide affordable insurance coverage and greater access to medical care. His opponents, however, claim that "Obama care," as they have called it, added new costs to the country's overblown budget and may violate the Constitution with its requirement for individuals to obtain insurance. (<https://learnfromthelegends.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/>)

On the economic front, Obama has worked hard to steer the country through difficult financial times. He signed the Budget Control Act of 2011 in effort to rein in government spending and prevent the government from defaulting on its financial obligations. The act also called for the creation of a bipartisan committee to seek solutions to the country's fiscal issues, but the group failed to reach any agreement on how to solve these problems.

Obama has also handled a number of military and security issues during his presidency. In 2011, he helped repeal the military policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which prevented openly gay troops from serving in the U.S Armed Forces. He also gave the green light to a 2011 covert operation in Pakistan, which led to the killing of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by a team of U.S Navy seals.

Obama made headlines again in June 2012, when a mandate included in his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (initiated in 2010) was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, thus

allowing other important pieces of the law to stay intact. The law includes free health screenings for certain citizens, restrictions to stringent insurance company policies and permission for citizens under age 26 to be insured under parental plans, among several other provisions. In a 5-4 decision, the Court voted to uphold the mandate under which citizens are required to purchase health insurance or pay a tax—a main provision of Obama's health-care law—stating that while the mandate is unconstitutional, according to the Constitution's commerce clause, it falls within Congress' constitutional power tax (<https://learnfromthelegends.wordpress.com/2012/10/29/>)

III.4.Re-Election and Second Term

As he did in 2008, during his campaign for a second presidential term, Obama focused on grassroots initiatives. Celebrities such as Anna Wintour and Sarah Jessica Parker aided the president's campaign by hosting fund-raising events.

"I guarantee you, we will move this country forward," Obama stated in June 2012, at a campaign event in Maryland. "We will finish what we started. And we'll remind the world just why it is the United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc3S6zR4B4g>)

In the 2012 election, Obama faced Republican opponent Mitt Romney and Romney's vice-presidential running mate, U.S Representative Paul Ryan. On the evening of November 6, 2012, Obama was announced the winner of the election, gaining a second four-year term as president. Early election results indicated a close race. By midnight on Election Day, however, Obama had received more than 270 electoral votes—the number of votes required to win a U.S. presidential election; later results showed that the president had won nearly 60 percent of the electoral vote, as well as the popular vote by more than 1 million ballots.

Nearly one month after President Obama's re-election, the nation endured one of its most tragic school shootings to date: On December 14, 2012, 20 children and six adult workers were shot to death at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Two days after the attack, Obama delivered a speech at an interfaith vigil for the victims in Newtown, discussing a need for change in order to make schools safer, and alluding to implementing stricter gun control. "*These tragedies must end*," Obama stated. "We can't accept events like these as routine. In the coming weeks, I'll use whatever power this office holds to engage my fellow citizens,

from law enforcement, to mental-health professionals, to parents and educators, in an effort aimed at preventing more tragedies like this, because what choice do we have? . . . Are we really prepared to say that we're powerless in the face of such carnage, that the politics are too hard?" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc3S6zR4B4g>)

Obama achieved a major legislative victory on January 1, 2013, when the Republican-controlled House of Representatives approved a bipartisan agreement on tax increases and spending cuts, in an effort to avoid the looming fiscal cliff crisis (the Senate voted in favor of the bill earlier that day). The agreement marked a productive first step toward the president's re-election promise of reducing the federal deficit by raising taxes on the extremely wealthy individuals earning more than \$400,000 per year and couples earning more than \$450,000, according to the bill. Prior to the bill's passage, in late 2012, tense negotiations between Republicans and Democrats over spending cuts and tax increases became a bitter political battle. Vice President Joe Biden managed to hammer out a deal with Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Obama pledged to sign the bill into law.

Barack Obama officially began his second term on January 21, 2013. The inauguration was held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Civil rights activist Myrlie Evers-Williams, the widow of Medgar Evers, gave the invocation. Poet Richard Blanco read his poem "One Today." U.S. Supreme Court Chief John Roberts conducted Obama's presidential oath of office. After completing his oath, Obama was congratulated by his wife Michelle and daughters Malia and Sasha.

In his inaugural address, Obama called the nation to action on such issues as climate change, health care and marriage equality. "We must act, knowing that our work will be imperfect. We must act, knowing that today's victories will be only partial and that it will be up to those who stand here in four years and 40 years and 400 years hence to advance the timeless spirit once conferred to us in a spare Philadelphia hall," Obama told the crowd gathered in front of the U.S. Capitol building.

After the inauguration, Obama led the nation through many challenges. None more difficult perhaps, the bombing of the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013. Three people were killed and more than 200 people were injured in this terror attack. Obama traveled to Boston to speak at a memorial service three days after the bombings. To the wounded, he said "Your country is with you. We will all be with you as you learn to stand and walk and, yes, run again. Of that I have no doubt. You will run again." And he applauded the city's citizens' response to this tragedy.

"You've shown us, Boston, that in the face of evil, Americans will lift up what's good"
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBKJSyTcE-E>)

By June, Obama had suffered a significant drop in his approval ratings in a CNN/ORC International poll. He declined to an approval rating of only 45% his lowest rating in more than 18 months. The poll results meant that more than half of Americans disapproved of how Obama was doing as president. Experts attribute the ratings slide to several factors, including the controversy surrounding the NSA (the National Security Act) surveillance program.

Obama defended the NSA's program, which includes email monitoring and telephone wiretapping, during a visit to Germany that June. "We are not rifling through the emails of German citizens or American citizens or French citizens or anyone else," he said, according to the *Financial Times*. "The encroachment on privacy has been strictly limited." Obama stated that the program has helped stop roughly 50 threats.

In early July 2013, President Obama made history when he joined former President George W. Bush in Africa to commemorate the 15th anniversary of Osama bin Laden's first U.S attack. The event marked the first meeting between two U.S presidents on foreign soil in commemoration of an act of terrorism.

Later that month, Obama spoke out about the Trayvon Martin murder trial and the outrage that followed the jury's verdict. His shooter George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing the African American teen in Florida. In a White House press conference, the president said that "when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBKJSyTcE-E>)"

Obama explained that this particular case was a state matter, but he discussed how the federal government could address some of the legislative and racial issues brought up by this situation.

Obama found himself grappling with an international crisis in late August and September 2013. It was discovered that Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad had used chemical weapons against civilians. According to the White House website, Obama said that "thousands of people, including over 400 children," had been killed in these attacks. Syria's actions present "a serious national security threat to the United States and to the region, and as a consequence, Assad and

Syria needs to be held accountable." The president then worked to persuade Congress and the international community at large to take action against Syria.

As the positions of the members of Congress revealed that the majority was in favor of refraining from striking Syria, Obama announced an alternative solution. During an address on forthcoming action against Syria made on September 10, 2013, Obama stated that if alAssad agreed with the stipulations outlined in a proposal made by Russia to give up its chemical weapons, then a direct strike against the nation could be avoided. Al-Assad acknowledged the possession of chemical weapons and was receptive to the idea of a proposal from Russia, however Obama stated that "It's too early to tell whether this offer will succeed, and any agreement must verify that the Assad regime keeps its commitments."

Later that month, Obama made diplomatic strides with Iran. He spoke with Iranian president Hassan Rouhani on the phone, which marked the first time the leaders of the two countries have had direct contact in decades. This groundbreaking move by Obama is seen by many as a sign of thawing in the relationship between the United States and Iran. According to an NBC News report, Obama said that "The two of us discussed our ongoing efforts to reach an agreement over Iran's nuclear program." Obama expressed some optimism that a deal on the issue could be reached.

Obama found himself struggling on the domestic front in October 2013. There was a 16-day shutdown of the federal government, which was caused by a dispute over the federal budget. Republicans especially wanted to defund or otherwise derail Obama's Affordable Care Act. After a deal had been reached to end the shutdown, Obama used his weekly address to express his frustration over the situation and his desire for political reform. "The way business is done in Washington has to change. Now that these clouds of crisis and uncertainty have lifted, we need to focus on what the majority of Americans sent us here to do grow the economy, create good jobs, strengthen the middle class, lay the foundation for broad-based prosperity, and get our fiscal house in order for the long haul." (<https://www.cspan.org/video/?315738-1/weekly-presidential-address>)

The Affordable Care Act continued to come under fire in October after the failed launch of HealthCare.gov, which was meant to help people find health insurance. Extra technical support was brought in to work on the troubled website after users encountered difficulty with it in its early days. The act also seemed to impact the existing insurance policies of many Americans, causing them to lose coverage. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Obama insisted that his legislation didn't cause the coverage change, the insurance companies did. He said, "Remember,

before the Affordable Care Act, these bad-apple insurers had free rein every single year to limit the care that you received, or used minor pre-existing conditions to jack up your premiums, or bill you into bankruptcy".<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2013/10/30/Obama>)

Under mounting pressure, Obama found himself apologizing regarding some health care changes. He told those who lost their insurance plans that "I am sorry that they are finding themselves in this situation based on assurances they got from me," according to a NBC News report. Obama pledged to find a remedy to this problem. "We are going to do everything we can to deal with folks who find themselves in a tough position as a consequence of this." (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/nov/7/obama-i-am-sorryhealth-insurance-cancellations/>)

Obama had to manage more challenges in the area of foreign relations around this time as well. In October 2013, German chancellor Angela Merkel revealed that the U.S. National Security Agency had been listening in to her cell phone calls. Speaking at a summit of European leaders, Merkel said that "*Spying among friends is never acceptable*," according to CNN.com.

In the wake of several controversies, Obama saw his approval rating drop to a new low in November 2013. Only 37 percent of Americans polled by CBS News thought he was doing a good job as president. Another 57 percent disapproved of his handling of the nation.

In March 2014, in an effort to provide relief for Ukrainians following the 2014 Ukrainian revolution which began with civil unrest and protests in Kiev and led to the downfall of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's administration, and subsequently, work to establish a new government for the country it was announced that Obama had ordered a round of sanctions targeting individuals and businesses considered by the U.S. government to be Ukraine agitators or involved in the Crimean crisis where Russian troops' seizure of control led to a referendum to decide whether the region could separate from the Ukraine and join Russia.

"The proposed referendum on the future of Crimea would violate the Ukrainian constitution and violate international law," Obama stated at the White House. "In 2014 we are well beyond the days when borders can be redrawn over the heads of democratic leaders." According to the president, the sanctions give the U.S. "the flexibility to adjust our response going forward based on Russia's actions. We took these steps in close coordination with our

European allies (<https://www.c-span.org/video/?318151-2/president-obama-remarks-ukraine>)

Obama faced more difficulties at home and abroad later that year. In addition to the ongoing troubles in Ukraine, tensions between Israelis and Palestinians erupted into violence during the summer. He also faced a domestic situation regarding the U.S-Mexico border, with tens of thousands of children making the perilous crossing alone. Many Republicans called for the rapid deportation of these illegal immigrants while others considered the situation to a humanitarian crisis. Another of the president's woes came from the legislative branch. Speaker of the House John Boehner launched an effort to sue Obama for overstepping his executive powers with some of his actions regarding the Affordable Care Act.

III.5. Where do white Americans Stand from Obama's Presidency?

Some political observers have declared that the election of the first black president signals a new era of post-racial politics in the United States but the data show otherwise, two MIT researchers say. A careful analysis of 2008 exit-poll data, the researchers found that Barack Obama won the election precisely because of his race, most significantly because of his appeal among black voters who turned out in record numbers.

Ironically, the candidate whom commentators chose for ending America's debilitating racial divisions won the election on the basis of increasingly distinct white and nonwhite voting patterns, wrote the two researchers : "Racial polarization in American voting patterns was the highest it has been since the 1984 election", the researchers said.

While some may fairly argue that the fact that whites did not run away from Obama is evidence of post-racial politics, post-election commentators went overboard in suggesting that race doesn't matter in American politics. Given white voting patterns, Republicans may even be tempted to return to racial politics to drive a wedge between white votes and the Democratic Party, Stewart noted. He doubts that will happen. Watching how whites respond to Obama will be very critical to both Obama's future prospects and the nature of future campaigns.(Engerman 06)

Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election by a 2 to 1 margin collecting 365 electoral votes to John McCain's 173. Barack Obama decisively won the presidential election, for many solid reasons and due to many factors, including weaknesses of his Republican opponent, Sen. John McCain.

When he began his presidential journey Obama was a popular personality within his party but a relative unknown across the country yet he was able to pull off an amazing victory over a seasoned opponent. How was this relatively inexperienced politician from Illinois able to defeat an experienced veteran like John McCain? .There were several factors that contributed to his overwhelming victory:

III.5.1.The Need for Change

In many polls taken during the lead up to the 2008 election the majority of Americans felt that the country was headed in the wrong direction. The message was clear there was a need to change where the country was going.

On the economy, the war in Iraq, social issues and other areas of concern the consensus was unmistakable....America needs to change, Barack Obama again seized on the sentiment of the country and adopted change as his campaign centerpiece. McCain on the other hand was espousing a message of more of the same especially in Iraq. And that did not sit well with the majority of Americans. During campaign Obama would declare that it was time for fresh ideas and new ways of doing things. In foreign affairs, with the economy and in health care he emphasized a change was necessary and the country was ready for it.

III.5.2.The Condition of the Economy

When Wall Street went into a spiral it was if someone had handed the key to the election to Barack Obama and said "*take this, it's yours*". He couldn't have asked for a better gift at a better time.

Up to this point the Illinois senator had just been holding his own with John McCain but when major banking institutions started to collapse Obama again rode the wave of opportunity and bolted ahead of his opponent never looking back. McCain did himself no favors in his handling of the news of the financial meltdown by declaring "The fundamentals of the economy are strong" essentially saying there was nothing to fear, But there was and

Obama

knew it. His calm and reserved approach to the catastrophe was in stark contrast to McCain's erratic response which included suspending his campaign, a move that pretty much

sealed his fate. The problems with the economy seemed to be a custom fit for Obama's campaign. It was his strongest ally and he used it to his advantage. Obama never looked more presidential than when he was dealing with the issues of the economy and it was that look that helped him to win the election.

President Obama went into his reelection fight facing significant head winds most, high unemployment and slow economic growth. Even if the nation had technically pulled out of recession, many Americans weren't feeling it. For Obama to win a second term, he was going to have to beat history. No president since the Great Depression had won reelection with unemployment above 7.2 %, the rate when President Reagan was reelected in 1984. For a multitude of reasons Obama's positives, Republican challenger Mitt Romney's negatives, and factors beyond either man's control Obama succeeded.

III.6.Conclusion

Before electing Obama as president, the United States of America was in deep economic problems, the people of America were hoping that their next president would pull them out of the crisis, in his presidential campaign Obama promised that he would end the crisis and give Americans the life that they deserve, those promises somehow guaranteed that Obama win the presidential election of 2008. Obama somehow succeeded to fulfill his presidential program in his first term. In 2012 Obama won a second term as the president, again Americans saw in Obama the president who best meets their needs and yet Obama proved till now that he is the right man in the right place.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

Slavery was a black dot in the human history, and more specifically in the American history, from its beginnings the United States was a nation built upon human misery, up to the beginnings of the 17th century, no American nor slave would believe that one day slavery would end. Slaves, mainly Africans were taken by force from their motherlands to work in plantations unpaid, mistreated and constantly horrified by their masters; African Americans were treated like property.

This thesis was an attempt to expose the overwhelming development of African Americans throughout their own history from being helpless slaves to becoming active productive individuals and political leaders in the American society.

This thesis was divided into three chapters, the first chapter aimed at exposing the beginnings of slavery worldwide and more specifically in the United States also the decisions taken in order to free the slaves, we tried Also to discuss the civil war and the role of the African Americans played in their abolishment.

The second chapter discussed the contributions of African Americans soon after their emancipation and tried to draw a timeline of achievements of the Africans along the twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st century, mentioning the most prominent leaders of that period however,

The third and final chapter tried to deal with the most notable African American achievement of all times, the election of Barack Obama as the president of the United States.

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