Barack Obama: Is His Racial Identity A Significant Issue

Is Barack Obama’s Racial Identity A significant issue?

Americans often conduct race as a given, pre-assigned quality that characterizes an individual’s identity. The meanings assigned to individuals with certain characteristics like skin-tone color show how these individuals are treated in society. Barack Obama's racial identity was a significant issue that had America in controversy prior to the election and during the presidency because of his color of skin and stance as the first president of color. Even though Obama was a different skin color there were still racial tensions. When he said a white police officer “acted stupid” because he arrested a university professor because neighbors thought that the officer was breaking into houses. That triggered people which invited more criticism but also some of the critics were African Americans. Then Obama read a eulogy to the black parishioners that got killed by the white supremacist in North Carolina people ”mostly white, accused him of dividing the country when he spoke emphatically about the racism faced by black American” Obama was the first black president and with that came a lot of racism, he had to face on his way and during his time at the White House. Then CNN did a poll of whether the relations between blacks and whites had gotten worse and this poll was taken near the end of Obama's eight-year presidency and it found that fifty-four percent of Americans agreed that it did get worse. People would always question if Obama was actually born here.

Reading this article showed me that no matter if you are a different skin color there will still be criticism and racial divide. No matter how much you try to please people you still wouldn’t please all of them because there is a lot of history behind racism. Like for example when Obama was trying to better the racial divide people would just give him criticism and it would just make more racial barriers. So in order for people to stop racism they have to meet someone out of their own race and to wilfully reject any stereotypes or have information to counterattack the stereotypes. In our class textbook on chapter 2, it speaks about how, “The media, for example, tend to portray cultural groups in stereotypic ways” This supports my stance because in the textbook it said that sometimes some news doesn't pass the information that would help fight against stereotypes.

What also led Barack Obama's racial identity to become significant was the mass exposure that mainstream media had on him. In the article, Racism in the Era of Trump: An Oral History by Priyanka Boghani from the Public Broadcasting Service, touches on both Trump and Barack Obama and how both of them underwent a political journey contrived upon the rise of racial anger that Americans. This article, in a nutshell, talks about how Trump used the birther conspiracy as political leverage as well as how his response to a violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville produced criticism even from members of his own party. As well as how he has continued to use anti-immigrant as political leverage. This article is not just based on Trump but as well on Barack and how he was stereotyped by mainstream media upon his racial identity. I will mainly put emphasis upon the subject of Obama in correlation to racial identity. From the very first days of Barack Obama’s candidacy, there was an effort established by mainstream media creating insinuations that Obama must have done something wrongful like cheating or even being able to be a candidate because of the uncertainty if he was even born in the United States. This is what blew up the mainstream media as it spoke to, “All types of other

anxieties that many white Americans had about Barack Obama; that there was something about him that was just different; that there was something that was sinister; that he must have cheated; that he must be bending or breaking the rules". The reactions to Obama were not simply about him "breaking the rules" it was more than that it was correlated in a deeper sense a sense of racial profiling made by Americans because of the emphasis that media put upon them. In regards to this context, it is correlated to stereotyping of old foundational beliefs of racism which is solidified of whites believing that all colored people are the same, that they are all wrong doers and so forth.

I strongly thought that this article opens up the exposure and impact that media can have on people's opinions. As well as, it shows how racism is carried throughout history through various channels of communication. Racism has always played a role in individuals' determinations of what they decide. Although Obama ended up winning by media manipulating and amplifying Obama's candidacy to a magnitude they were able to change the minds of many Americans causing Obama to lose voters.

In the textbook in chapter 2 it says that "Recent studies show that the old racist stereotypes of African Americans are still alive and well—in reality TV, of all places." They did an analysis of 10 reality TV shows and in those 10 they had Survivor and The Apprentice, which revealed that every show had at least one actor that is African American that fit the stereotype. Some people tend to believe things on TV or negative experiences and if there is a stereotype they are going to gravitate on believing it so I'm not surprised that they had stereotypes on Obama since he was the first black president.

To sum up this essay in regards to Barack Obama's racial identity it does show that it was an issue in regards to him being the first colored president that was trying to please both sides but people's racial perspectives got the best of them because it creative