

The Next Four Years: All Of Us, Some Of Us, Or None Of Us?

Written by Julianne Malveaux NNPA Columnist
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President Barack Obama has the opportunity, in this second term, to put his feet on history. He won an election that his opponent had essentially claimed, he has been firm about that which he would negotiate on, and he has offered a progressive inauguration speech that offers up a liberal agenda, embracing Social Security and Medicare, uplifting immigrants and gay rights, and embracing ways to address inequality.

One could not help but applaud the strong direction of President Obama's speech. But those of us in the African- American community wonder why we could not get a shout out about high unemployment and poverty rates, inner city challenges, and income, economic and unemployment disparities. Failing to address the community that offered him 97 percent of their vote indicates that there is a reckless disregard of his strongest supporters.

I understand that President Obama is the President of the whole United States, not the President of Black America. At the same time some of the evils that affect African-Americans are issues that any President would address. To be sure, some of the gaps that are recorded and experienced have not changed since the 60s. Imagine the impact this President could have if he made a minor attempt in closing the gaps.

The inauguration speech spoke to all of us when it offered a progressive agenda. It spoke to some when it called out other communities and offered advancement some of them, but it spoke to none of us in the African American community unless we chose to parse the subtleties, the Bible, the references to Detroit, and the acknowledgement of inequalities.

Hundreds of thousands of people thronged to the site of the inauguration speech. Many of them were parents and grandparents who were determined that their children and grandchildren had

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the opportunity to witness history. A second term for President Obama is actually more exciting than a first term because now this President is freed from the shackles of re-election possibilities and free to do his thing.

Will his thing improve the lot of all of us, some of us, or none of us. In the African-American community, many think we won't get a thing but an amazing and uplifting symbolism. There are still those who cheer simply because we have an African-American president. Can we put our cheer on for results?

In the next 18 months, President Obama has the opportunity to do whatever he wants to do. He can target resources and opportunities to any community he chooses to embrace his targets. For example, more than \$500 million was directed to a failed wind experiment in California. What about offering the same opportunity to inner cities?

The liberal agenda we heard during the President's inauguration suggested that all of us would have the opportunity to benefit from progressive economic plans. He called out some communities, which suggested that some of us would get special attention. His failure to give a shout out to the African-American community suggests that none of us can count on special attention.

President Barack Obama can make a difference by targeting the African-American community, either directly or subtly in his choices about public policy. While this president has a window of opportunity, who will gain? All of us, some of us, or none of us? Our president will leave a legacy when he decides that African-Americans deserve the same focus that other communities do. We need our President to target disparate unemployment, unequal wages and wealth, and differential access to education and opportunity. Immigration and marriage equality addresses some of us. Why can't we address the inequality that faces all of us?

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