

**Sent:** Tue, 22 Jan 2013 08:39:27 -0500  
**From:** "Jarrett, Valerie" <valerie.jarrett@who.eop.gov>  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fw: WP (Robinson): The black president no longer

P6/b(6)

Robinson nailed this!

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**From:** Velz, Peter  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 22, 2013 07:22 AM  
**To:** DL-WHO-Press; August, Hannah; Bates, Andrew J.; Bhowmik, Rachana; Branch, Katherine Y.; Buckhout, Scott; Carney, Jay; Carroll, Bradley; Cobbina, Awenate; Cunnane, Pat; DuBois, Joshua P.; Earnest, Joshua R.; Foster, Heather; Frye, Jocelyn; Gilson, Shannon; Gray, Danielle; Green, Jason; Hankins, Hannah R.; Chen, Hillary; Holzer, Benjamin; Inouye, Shin; Isaac, Nicole M.; James, Jewel; Jarrett, Valerie; Jones, Corey; Lee, Jesse C.; Lewis, Kevin S.; Miranda, Luis; Monteiro, D. Paul; Moscoso, Patricia; Munoz, Cecilia; Page, Darienne M.; Palmieri, Jennifer; Pfeiffer, Dan; Platkin, Alex; Plouffe, David; Rakestraw, London; Richardson, Karen E.; Rosholm, Joanna; Rouse, Peter M.; Russell, Racquel; Samuels, Jonathan D.; Schake, Kristina; Sperling, Gene; Stephens, Semonti; Strautmanis, Michael; Velz, Peter  
**Subject:** WP (Robinson): The black president no longer

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-president-obama-defined-by-race-no-longer/2013/01/21/c414f90e-63fa-11e2-85f5-a8a9228e55e7\\_print.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-president-obama-defined-by-race-no-longer/2013/01/21/c414f90e-63fa-11e2-85f5-a8a9228e55e7_print.html)

### The black president no longer

By [Eugene Robinson](#), Published: January 21

President Barack Hussein Obama's second inauguration was every bit as historic as his first — not because it said so much about the nation's long, bitter, unfinished struggle with issues of race, as was the case four years ago, but because it said so little about the subject.

Reflect for a moment: A black man stood on the Capitol steps and [took the oath of office](#) as president of the United States. *For the second time*. Meaning that not only did voters elect him once — which could be a fluke, a blip, an aberration, a cosmic accident — but then turned around and did it again.

Leading up to Monday's pageant of democracy — perhaps the one occasion when the phrase "pageant of democracy" can be used without irony — commentary focused on prospects for Obama's second term.

Would there be more gridlock and paralysis? Would Obama adopt a more conciliatory tone toward the Republican leadership in the House, or would he press the advantage he won at the polls in November? Would he make good on his promise of an all-out effort to pass new gun-control laws, even at the risk of making some fellow Democrats politically vulnerable? How would he approach immigration, entitlements, economic growth, the long-term debt?

“My fellow Americans, we are made for this moment and we will seize it, so long as we seize it together,” [Obama thundered](#), in a speech built on themes of collective action and responsibility.

Reaction to the address took remarkably little notice of the fact that Obama is an African American. That seems to be old news.

Not for me, though. Not for a black man who grew up in the segregated South, who attended a rally (my mother tells me) at which the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke, who lived through the defeat of Jim Crow and the triumph of the civil rights movement.

For my two sons, this is history — unfinished history, to be sure, but distant enough that they learned it from books. Their children, in turn, will grow up in a world in which one of the central tenets of American exceptionalism — that anyone can be president — is demonstrably true. Or, at least, not demonstrably false.

On Monday morning, before the inauguration, Obama took his family to worship at St. John’s Episcopal Church near the White House. Television images of the president, his wife, Michelle, and his daughters, Malia and Sasha, entering and [then leaving the church](#), were charming but unexceptional — and almost made me cry.

I have always believed that those quotidian pictures of family life are one of the most important legacies of the Obama presidency. For most people, visual information is uniquely powerful. What we see has more impact than what we hear. Pictures of an African American family enveloped by Secret Service protection, ferried down Pennsylvania Avenue in armored limousines, returning at night to sleep in the grand residence of the nation’s head of state — these images show us something new about what is possible, something new about ourselves.

I was always taught that the first black person to fill any job or role previously reserved for whites should expect to be held to a higher standard. Surely Obama has noticed this, too.

You’d think that steering the economy away from the abyss, passing [landmark health-care reform](#), guaranteeing women [equal pay for equal work](#), ending our nation’s [shameful experiment with torture](#) and ordering the raid that [killed Osama bin Laden](#) — for starters — would add up to a pretty impressive first-term résumé.

Voters clearly thought so, but a lot of my fellow pundits seem not to have noticed. Instead, they demand to know why Obama has not somehow charmed Republicans — who announced, you will recall, that their principal aim was making him a one-term president — into meek submission, I suppose through some combination of

glad-handing and perhaps hypnosis.

The truth is that it will take many years to fully assess the Obama presidency. The verdict will depend on what he accomplishes in his second term — and how his initiatives pan out in the coming decades. On health care and the long-term debt, in particular, my hunch is that Obama is taking a much longer view than his critics realize.

But here we are, talking about legacy, not race. Which is simply amazing.

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