



Is D'Souza Correct About Obama?

Dinesh D'Souza's political documentary — [2016: Obama's America](#) — is beginning to soar at the box office.

D'Souza's film is based upon his book, [The Roots of Obama's Rage](#). Now, while I haven't seen the former, I have read — and reviewed — the latter. In his monograph, D'Souza contends that it isn't Marxism, racialism, leftism, socialism, or liberalism that primarily informs Barack Obama's vision of the world. No, it is another sort of "ism" that animates the president, an "ism" that only a Third World immigrant like D'Souza can really understand and appreciate.

Obama, D'Souza argues, subscribes to what the author calls "anti-colonialism."

By virtue of having had their perceptions shaped in large measure by the Western colonial rule under which they had long lived, non-Westerners like the residents of D'Souza's native India view the world very differently from the manner in which Westerners regard it. To put it more succinctly, from distrust to contempt, varying degrees of animus toward the West characterize Third World peoples.

Obama, D'Souza tries to persuade us, is like an inhabitant from the Third World in this respect. But now that he has amassed all of the power that comes with the United States presidency, Obama is on a quest to rectify what he perceives to be the litany of injustices to which America and the West have historically subjected the rest of the planet.

It is this obsession with redeeming America and delivering justice to the Third World that accounts for the plethora of redistributive schemes that Obama has been busy at work implementing since the day he took office. It is this anti-colonial vision of his that informs Obama's innumerable circumventions of Congress via "executive orders" and "czar" appointments, to say nothing of his utter neglect of the opposition party.

There is much to commend in D'Souza's portrait of Obama.

Ultimately, however, his thesis fails.

Obama is primarily motivated, not by an aversion to colonialism, but by devotion to "Blackism."

"Blackism" is an ideology. It is distinct from both biology and culture. Biological blackness is a result of birth. Yet neither is there a choice on the part of most blacks to be reared in the traditions that





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constitute what we may call “black culture.” But Blackism consists of a few basic tenets that any biologically black person can will to accept.

Blackism is a unique and simple device of which any black person in search of racial “authenticity” can effortlessly avail himself. Like all ideologies, it is a cliff note, so to speak, the *Reader’s Digest* version of the complex of black cultural traditions from which it has been abstracted. And, like all ideologies, it serves the function — the illusion, really — of making immediately accessible to all something that would otherwise require many years of (informal) education.

Blackism endows its adherents with racial authenticity, even if they are light-complexioned with as much Caucasoid as Negroid ancestry, such President Obama, and even if, like President Obama, they had no more exposure to black culture than has an Eskimo who has spent his life in the Arctic.

Blackism promises its adherents authentic blackness. Yet belief in authentic blackness is also one of its tenets. There are still others, namely, belief in a Manichean-like universe comprised of “racist” whites, on the one hand, and, on the other, non-white victims of white racial oppression. The third and, for the most part, final tenet of Blackism demands commitment by its adherents to combating the legacy of white oppression “by whichever means necessary.”

Malcolm X made famous this last line. Indeed, it is to Malcolm X that any discussion of Blackism must refer, for Malcolm was the Blackist par excellence.

Malcolm Little was born and raised in the rural Midwest. While coming of age, the very light complexioned Malcolm — George Schuyler had said that Malcolm wasn’t black, he was yellow! — associated mostly, almost exclusively, with whites. As Malcolm biographer Bruce Perry has shown, Malcolm’s fair skin gave rise to insecurities regarding his racial authenticity. He felt that he had to prove that he was black enough, so to speak.

Thus, there is a sense in which it can perhaps be said that not only did Malcolm subscribe to Blackism, he did as much as anyone to shape it as a doctrine.

Malcolm X exerted considerable influence over Obama. Among the books to which Obama acknowledges his debt in his first memoir, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is mentioned significantly more times than any other. This is particularly telling, considering that Martin Luther King, Jr. is mentioned sparingly. Reverend Jesse Lee Peterson, a black right-leaning commentator, once told fellow commentator Sean Hannity in no uncertain terms that there are absolutely no substantive differences whatsoever between Obama, on the one hand, and such men as Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, and Jeremiah Wright, on the other. They are all of one mind when it comes to their view of “white America” and the place of blacks within it. More specifically, Peterson noted, they regard America as a bastion of “white racist oppression” and perpetual black suffering. Their commitment, first and foremost, is to extracting reparations of one form or another from whites to give to blacks.

There are a few considerations that militate against D’Souza’s thesis that it is primarily an anti-colonial mindset that animates Obama. These same points favor my contention that it is a commitment to Blackism that drives the president.

First, if you follow D’Souza’s logic to term, you are forced to conclude that Obama should be especially sympathetic to America, for America was never a colonial power and was, in fact, an object of colonial rule. In other words, if it is just colonialism that’s stuck in Obama’s craw, then he should be equally disposed to favor any and all colonial peoples and just as disposed to disfavor any and all one-time colonial powers.



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But as D’Souza himself inadvertently, but repeatedly, shows, it isn’t colonialism that Obama despises, and it isn’t the subjects of colonial rule to whom his sympathies extend. It is white colonialism that he disdains and the non-white subjects of colonial rule with whom he sympathizes.

Second, like Malcolm X before him, Obama may very well view black Americans and the non-white inhabitants of the Third World as sharing in a common struggle. But this no more justifies concluding that Obama is an anti-colonialist than it justifies describing Malcolm X first and foremost in these terms. Just as Malcolm X saw himself as a voice for black Americans before all else — just as he was concerned primarily with authentic blackness — so too is Obama most concerned with achieving racial authenticity.

Third, D’Souza grounds his thesis in the title of Obama’s memoir: [Dreams From My Father](#). D’Souza accentuates that it is his father’s dreams that Obama is intent on bringing to fruition. Yet he ignores the subtitle of this book. He ignores that it is intended to be “a story of race and inheritance.” D’Souza neglects the fact that *Dreams* recapitulates Obama’s quest for racial identity.

Fourth and finally, not only does *Dreams* purport to reenact Obama’s odyssey from the wilderness of self-obliviousness to the promised land of racial identity and, thus, self-discovery; as many a commentator has observed, *Dreams* is carefully crafted so as to fit the meta-narrative that has defined African American literature for at least the last half-century. Alex Haley’s *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* exemplified this template. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* — not, incidentally, also written by Haley — also typifies it.

There are undoubtedly many invaluable insights to take away from D’Souza’s *2016*. That Obama is primarily an anti-colonialist, though, is not one of them.

It is to Blackism, not anti-colonialism, that Obama has pledged his allegiance.



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