

President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr.: A Postmodern Prophet and Gift Sent by God and the Spirits of Our African Ancestral Spirits

By Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., Ed. D.



His Excellency Barack Hussein Obama, Jr.

44th President of the United States of America & a Postmodern Prophet Sent by God and the Ancestral Spirits of Africa

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Introduction



President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr.

44th President of the United States of America and first African in The White House

I am sure most of us are aware that President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr. is not just an ordinary human being or Black man; but rather, he was anointed by God to fulfill a specific mission on earth on behalf of mankind and the Black Race, as we all have come to do in many different shapes and forms. As a consequence, this illustrious son of African descent has by the grace of God displayed a depth of wisdom and leadership beyond human understanding that must be celebrated in flying colors, irrespective of the antagonism he has faced from weak and vicious human minds during the course of his tenure as the 44th President of the United States of America and the first Black man to reside and preside in the White House.

Also, those of us who are of African descent should take great pride in our own son, Barack Hussein Obama, Jr., who is the focus of my discourse today. This decision is based on our African religious and cultural precepts and expression members of the Kwa linguistic group of Liberia (Krahn, Kru, Grebo, Bassa, Sarpo, Gbi, Deiweion) solemnly make, “Dehkontee: “There is time for everything.” Yes, I also join the chorus of proud African fathers, mothers, and the spirits of our ancestors to say now is the time to salute and celebrate the son of Africa who has brought great pride to us all—the postmodern African prophet, President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr.

Perhaps many of you may want to know my rationale for starting such a controversial discourse during the last year of President Obama’s administration as a two-term sitting President of the United States of America. Also, I am certain you are wondering why this conversation was not initiated by a Jessie Jackson, or a Cornel West, or a Reverend Al Sharpton. Or, you are wondering why this special message is not coming from a Donald Trump, a Ted Cruz, or a Bill or Hilary Clinton but from an African American Rabbi of ancient African Jewish descent?

Well, for me, the answer is very simple. First, it is due to the fact that “A prophet is never accepted in his own home or among his own people”; and there are many reasons for this, too. One, it may be because our judgments may be clouded or impaired by jealousy, racism, or pure ignorance. Secondly, I have also observed that celebrating Black History Month in the United States of America is a mere façade because in my professional opinion the celebration of Black History Month in February each year is not done properly in keeping with the norms and mores of African history and culture. Even though, my contention is in no way meant to downplay the heroic scholarly and political lobbying done by my predecessors the likes of Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X, to bring the essence of celebrating Black History to national and international prominence. Kudos to them all!



Carter Godwin Woodson was an African-American historian, author, journalist and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Woodson was one of the first scholars to study African-American history

Notwithstanding, the principal reason for my contention about celebrating Black History Month only in the month of February each year is because Africa is the root or beginning of human existence and civilization; and that the history of the universe is as timeless and ageless as the creator of the Universe and Africa itself! In this light, we should be celebrating our Blackness and achievements daily and not just only in the month of February. In addition, the celebration of Black History Month should be culturally connected to African traditions that reflect our African roots and achievements. As an example, I will demonstrate and explain some African traditions as they relate to the significance of the topic under discussion: President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr., 44th President of the United States of America. Thus, in the true tradition of our forefathers, I cordially invite you to join me under my palm wine tree to celebrate the achievement of our son and to discuss some African cultural beliefs and practices that you may find very useful in your everyday lives as members of both the human race and the Black Race. For, as our old folks say, “There is time for everything: “Dehkontee”! Therefore, let us celebrate our blessed African heritage in flying colors every blessed day! Enjoy!

Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., Ed. D.

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African Cultures and Civilizations Are Ancient and Based on Truths and Meaning



The Pyramid at Giza, Egypt: an example of classical & Ancient African Civilization

African cultures and civilizations are ancient and are based on truths and meaning. They are also based on the precepts of the Lord, exhibiting love for one another and paying homage to the spirits of our ancestors. These concepts are actualized through the handiworks of our ancestors, like the Pyramid at Giza displayed in the photograph above. In addition, whilst on the one hand most westerners may be in denial of the basic truths that civilization started from Africa and that the first human creature God made in his own image was an African, anthropological finds from the continent of Africa continue to confirm that the oldest human fossils and remnants of ancient world civilizations of Egypt, Axum, Nubia, etc., were found in East Africa, along the Nile River Valley. And, as if to further prove a point to mankind, God has again sent us a postmodern prophet from the very disputed region of Africa, this time a descendant of Kenyan lineage, to rule the greatest nation of the world.

Is this historical fact not worth celebrating? Yes, indeed; but, what is even more significant is that in the African tradition, all African mothers and fathers can proudly claim President Obama as their son because a new born child is not only the son of his natural born parents but he is also the son of all African fathers and mothers in the village as you shall learn during the course of this Afrocentric discourse.

Why African Children Regard Their Elders in the Village as Fathers and Mothers

One major cultural difference between westerners and Africans is in the languages we speak. Linguistically, there are certain western terms or words (expressions) that are not found in African linguistic diction, particularly when it comes to citing and distinguishing familial relationships. Apart from this fact, it is commonly believed nine times out of ten that the name given to a child bears a significant influence on the child's future. However, before we delve in the meaning and significance of Barack Obama's name, let me digress a little to give you an insight why Barack is not only the son of his natural born parents but is also son of all African fathers and mothers. In addition, I also want to give you the reason why a child born of another

family is considered the child of the entire village based on the African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child”.

Against this backdrop, note that the responsibility of raising a child is thrust upon the shoulders of all adults and elders in the village. They are expected to serve as role models for the young ones. This type of African tradition enhances a cohesive family structure that helps address the social, political, economic, and emotional needs of children and their families through cultural activities and extended family relationships. In this way, African children receive proper supervision from their numerous village fathers and mothers who ensure they learn the traditions of their forefathers and grow up to be responsible citizens in the future.

The Impact of Language and Communication across Cultural and Political Barriers



Young Barack spending quality time with his dad, Barack H. Obama, Sr.

Based on the extended family structure, African children living in African villages enjoy regular and consistent adult supervision. Part of this success is based on the linguistic pattern of African languages which differs significantly in both expressions and concepts from the perception of a western family and linguistic structure. For example, in the core African family structure, words such as “aunty”, “uncle”, “nephew”, “niece”, “cousin” do not exist. The relationship classification may sometimes require some description if the relationship is distant; but children of siblings are generally regarded as brothers and sisters and not as “first cousins”.

A basic reason for this linguistic difference is because Africans view their family structure from the extended family relationship perspective. Whereas, westerners view their core family structure as a father, mother and children only. Within the African family context, only words such as “brother”, “sister”, “mother”, “father” are used to describe close and extended family relationships whereas westerners tend to distinguish and limit family relationships through the use of terms such as “uncle” (brother of one’s mother and father) or “cousin” (son or daughter of one’s parents’ siblings). On the contrary, within the African family and linguistic context, we refer to our mother’s or father’s brothers and sisters as our “Fathers” or “Mothers”,

and not as aunts or uncles; and our brothers' and sisters' children are regarded as our children and not as "nephews" or "nieces". In the same manner, the children of two brothers or sisters regard one another as "brothers" and "sisters" and not as "first cousins".

So, for instance, Barack Obama, Jr. will refer to his late father's brother as "Father" in his native Luo language because there is no such term as "uncle" in that African language. Correspondingly, the children of his Mother's or Father's brothers and sisters are not referred to as "first cousins" but as "brothers and sisters". The reason is because Africans believe in the communalistic extended family relationship whereas westerners maintain the individualistic core family structure which is reflected in the use of such terms as "uncle", "aunty", "cousin"—whereas Africans use the terms "mother", "father", "brother", "sister" to describe their familial relationships.

Subsequently, this cultural perspective and custom is carried across with respect to the concept of Africans being their "brothers' and sisters' keepers" through the African extended family relationship tradition and the custom of practicing communalism—sharing, and watching one another's backs. Further, the extended family relationship also manifests itself in how children are named particularly with respect to the African concepts of paying homage to our ancestral spirits and our belief in reincarnation. Of course due to the introduction of western "civilization" in Africa and here in the U.S. many Africans do not adhere to the principles described above. However, for instance, let us see how some elements of African culture are reflected in the naming of President Obama by his African father.

The Significance and Meaning in Naming a Child in the African Tradition

First of all, it is important to note that African names are meaningful and that most often than not, a newly born African child may be named after his or her ancestor. If that is the case, then it is the firm belief of the elders that the child may be the reincarnated representation of his or her ancestor. Accordingly, it is also the belief of the family that the child will grow up to relive the great life his or her ancestor lived when the deceased relative was on earth. For this reason, Africans name their children based on what the parents or elders believe are the dictates of the Creator and the spirits of their African forebears.

Sometimes it takes a long time to name a child because the parents and elders want to make sure the name selected will be the right name. Also, due to the fact that African culture and history are ancient and ageless, everything we do as Africans must have a meaning, even including the naming of a child. Against this backdrop, the child is not only regarded as the son or daughter of his natural born parents but the new born is considered the son or daughter of the entire clan or village because in most cases inhabitants of most African villages and towns are blood relatives. Hence, it mandatorily becomes the responsibility of the entire village to raise that child. In this light, children in an African village look up to their elders as their fathers and mothers, and as role models.



The “Blessed” one in his mother’s arms. Ann Dunham-Soreoto, blessed is the fruit of thy womb!

The name “Barack” summarizes why President Barack Obama made his way to the White House. He was rightly named “Barack” by his father which is an African name that literally means: “Blessed”! It is a form of both the Hebrew name Baruch and the Arabic name Mubarak, which also mean “blessed” and relate to the Arabic barakah. The name Obama on the other hand is an ancient Kenyan surname. It is found frequently among the Luo, the third largest ethnic group in Kenya. Further, it is believed that the name derived from the root word “obam”, which means “to lean or bend.” In addition, President Obama's middle name Hussein is the first name of his paternal grandfather and it means “good” or “handsome”. Again, in the African context, especially as it pertains to the concept of reincarnation, President Barack Hussein Obama, Jr. may be considered the reincarnated caricature of his paternal grandfather, Hussein. Hence, like President Obama, I am also the reincarnated representation of my maternal great-grandfather named Prince Wriyee-Kpodeah, the grandson of King Boduo-Cheyleyh of the Nien Dynasty of Krahn kings. But, look how “blessed” Barack was to be the first Black man to reside and preside in the White House. Thus, you can say indeed, he was rightly named!

All Proud Africans Should Celebrate the Presence of a Black First Family in the White House!

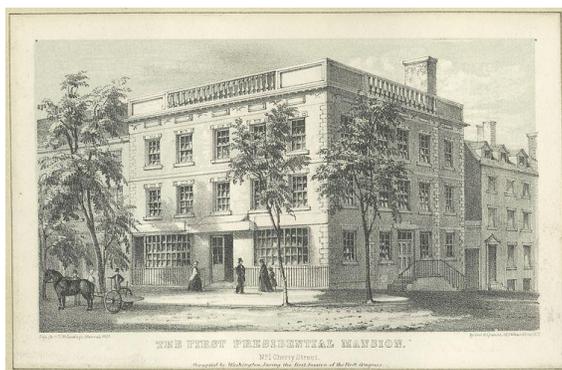


Photo of the First Presidential Mansion in Philadelphia

All proud Africans should celebrate the presence of a Black First Family in the White House because it is indeed historic and is worthy of celebration! Why? Because for more than two hundred years, it seemed that a Black man or woman would never make his way to the White House as President of the United States, except perhaps as maids and menials. Below is a

brief historical account of the White House from the beginning of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 in Philadelphia to the present day. This information is culled from quotes from W.B.Bryan's "The Name White House", Records of the Columbia Historical Society (34-35 [1932]: 308).

"The name of the official residence of the President of the United States of America was known as the President's House or Presidential Mansion. For nearly a decade, the Philadelphia mansion served as the seat of the executive branch of the federal government, housed the public and private offices of the President, and was the site of the official entertaining of the nation. Washington's presidential household included nine enslaved Africans from Mount Vernon. John Adams was never a slaveholder.

However, based on the definition of the name "Barack" that I provided above, do you now agree that Barack is indeed truly "blessed" as his name means? Or, do you still have doubts that indeed unto us Africans and the Black Race a prophet was born and that it may take perhaps many more centuries or decades for God to send us another prophet of African descent to reside and preside in the White House?

For you as a person, what does it mean to see a Black man rule a predominantly white society that once conquered Blacks as slaves, just like what our ancestors did to theirs in centuries past during the peak of African civilizations: Axum, Egypt, Songhai, Mali, Gao, and Bene Civilizations? Is it not history repeating itself, for a Black man, a descendant of Africa, to rise to the upper echelon of western civilization and culture? Does this historical fact not add a new meaning to the celebration of Black History Month? Yes, indeed; it does because the Black man worked very diligently to make present day America what it is, including using enslaved Blacks to construct the present day White House. Below is an additional excerpt from Bryan's quotes.

The Construction of the White House in Washington, D.C. and How It Got Its Name



The White House: The Presidential Mansion of the United States of America. In this most spectacular mansion lives the African Prince and United States President Barack H. Obama and members of the First Family, including First Lady Michele Obama and their beautiful princesses, Malia Ann Obama and Natasha Obama, and of course, the mother-in-law of the President, First Grandmother Mrs. Marian Robinson.

“The construction of the President’s House began in 1782 in Washington, D.C, a new capital situated in sparsely settled region far from major population center... on land ceded by two slave states—Virginia and Maryland—ultimately influenced the acquisition of laborers to construct its public buildings...” as quoted in W. B. Bryan, "The Name White House," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 34-35 [1932]: 308). The document notes that Collen Williamson trained enslaved people on the spot at the government quarry at Aquia, Virginia, and that enslaved people quarried and cut the rough stone that was later dressed and laid by Scottish masons to erect the walls of the President’s House. In addition, the document states that “White paint has nothing to do with covering the burning of the house by the British in 1814, although every schoolchild is likely to have heard the story that way.

Meant to wear off for the most part, leaving cracks and crevices filled, the whitewash was never allowed to weather, but was refreshed periodically until the structure at last was painted with white lead paint in 1818: "There is much trouble at the White House, as we call it, I mean the President's" notes Bryan (1932). Nevertheless, the nick name “White House” was supposedly made official by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901. By that time, it had for more than a decade been known as "The White House." The name, though in common use, remained a nickname until September 1901, when Theodore Roosevelt made it official (quoted in W. B. Bryan, "The Name White House," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 34-35 [1932]: 308).

“Dehkontee”: “There Is Time for Everything”



Members of the First Family of the United States of America: (L-R) President Barack Hussein, Natsasha Obama (commonly called “Sasha”), Frist Lady Michelle Obama, and Malia Obama.

The Kwa expression “Dehkontee” which means: “There is time for everything” comes in handy with respect to the rise of the Obamas as the First Family of the United States of America. It is a monumental success for the Black Race and should be celebrated throughout eternity. Yes, in our American democracy, there is time for everything. There is time for a Bush to be in The

White House; and time for Obama to be in the White House. Yes, indeed, there is time to celebrate the life and achievements of our own son, His Excellency Barack Hussein Obama, Jr., the 44th President of the United States of America. In this light, I believe now is the time to jump start a conversation and celebration that will last forever among mankind from different hues and persuasions.

It is a conversation that will enlighten and awaken mankind from their slumber of deceit and jealousy in order to realize that many are called but few are chosen. And, for some reason if you aspired to where Obama is and did not succeed, then it simply means it was not your calling as it is his. For, I tell you the truth, many great men and women the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and so many others who fought and shed their blood so that justice and freedom may reign in favor of the Black Race, they did not make it to the end. They did not live to see a Black man sworn into the Oval Office but they paved the way, and that is also worth celebrating because they served as our African village fathers and mothers and role models. Thus, it is on account of the hard sacrifices and sweats of our African village fathers and mothers that you and I are privileged today to be alive to witness two consecutive historic occasions on which our son, an African American by birth, was sworn into office as the Chief Executive of the greatest nation of the world!

In essence, I want to conclude that part of celebrating Black History Month is not for Blacks to tear each other apart or to be at odds with the opposite race. Instead, we must be loving, patient, and kind to one another. In addition, the celebration of Black History worldwide should be an everyday experience for each of us and it should be inclusive as well: i.e., it should embrace the active involvement of others who are unlike us so that through our celebration we may foster peaceful coexistence among persons of varied cultural, racial, religious, and political descents and persuasions, and, for the expanse of universal knowledge. To God be the glory!

Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., Ed. D.

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About the Author



Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr., B.A., M.F.A., M.Sc.Ed., Ed. D.

Rabbi Prince Joseph Tomoonh-Garlodeyh Gbaba, Sr. is a descendant of the Royal Household of the Nien Dynasty of Krahn kings from the West African nation of Liberia. He began his career forty-two years ago as a playwright, theatre director, actor, and producer when he had a vision during his senior year at Carroll High School and received a calling from God to become an artist/scholar in 1974. Since then he has persistently pursued this calling by seeking greater knowledge and expertise in the performing and liberal arts and education at various institutions of higher learning in Africa and here in the United States of America.

Rabbi Gbaba is a 1980 recipient of a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and French from Liberia College at the University of Liberia. He obtained his Master of Fine Arts in Theatre (emphasis in Directing and Acting) from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1983. He also earned a Master of Science in Education (with emphasis on Elementary and Special Education) in 2002 and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership in 2009 from St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Gbaba is founder and Executive Director of Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Inc. (DATI). He has written, directed, produced and acted in several of his plays including but not limited to: “The Chains of Apartheid” (a revolutionary play that portrayed the liberation struggles in Southern Africa: Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and South Africa, respectively); “No More Hard Times” (a play about the socio-economic and political suppression of the poor in the Liberian

society), “Love for Mymah” (a traditional African love story between two royalties from the Kru and Vai ethnic groups of Liberia), “Zon Ninneh Taryee” (a traditional African folk drama about a legendary Krahn warrior from the Ivory Coast that was captured and killed by his Krahn counterparts in Liberia), “The Resurrection” (the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) “Town Trap” (A drama about the civil war in Liberia), “Chakla Wedding” (a Liberian comedy), “The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville” (a play about the importance of voters’ education and the principles of democracy), etc.

His Dehkontee Artists Theatre has held several command performances for African heads of states at the Executive Mansion Theatre in Monrovia and at the State House in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He is the author of three self-published books: *Conflict Resolution and the Concept of Change; Ah-zeo, Ma Garh, The Frogs and Black Snake in Frogsville*”. Dr. Gbaba taught English Literature, Composition, and Drama from elementary through college levels at various high schools, colleges and universities in Liberia and here in the United States of America, and also served as Acting Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism of Liberia and consultant to the United Nations Children’s Educational Fund (UNICEF) during the civil war in Liberia. He is happily married to his spouse of thirty-three years, and their union is blessed with five children and five grandchildren. His research interest is in qualitative research and Afrocentric curriculum development. His doctoral dissertation is entitled: *The Chiandeh Afrocentric Curriculum and Textbook Experience: Exploring Children’s Responses to an Afrocentric Curriculum* (2009).

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Bowie, Maryland