

Obama perfect union speech – contemporary racism

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Contemporary Racism President Obama's speech "A More Perfect Union" was a response to many outbursts made about things that Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Obama's former pastor, had said on issues of racism. The reverend made statements that Obama called dismissive when what the world needed most was unity to overcome the continual racism in the country. Quotes from the Reverend such as "In the 21st century, white America got a wake-up call after 9/11/01.

White America and the western world came to realize that people of color had not gone away, faded into the woodwork or just 'disappeared' as the Great White West kept on its merry way of ignoring black concerns" and "Racism is how this country was founded and how this country is still run! ... We [in the U. S.] believe in white supremacy and black inferiority and believe it more than we believe in God" caused an uproar in Washington.

Obama used this opportunity to address race and the problems in the country relating to it. This speech relates to many of the topics we learned about in class regarding race and racism. Obama talks about his family's background and how various people don't like him in office for ridiculous reasons such as that he's "too black" or "not black enough" to be the first black president. They even go as far as to say that he's in office due to affirmative action.

He goes on to talk about his white grandmother and the racist statements she would make, such as that when a black man passes her by on the street she fears him. President Obama's speech relates to white privilege in the sense that the country has only ever had white presidents and therefore a stereotype has been formed that only the typical white collar, white male

<https://assignbuster.com/obama-perfect-union-speech-contemporary-racism/>

deserves to be in office. White people say things like that because they feel like power is being taken away from them and given to black people by having a black president in office.

Obama even quotes about white privilege and the power of whites being taken away by saying, " Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race... when they hear an African-American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed; when they're told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudiced, resentment builds over time. In his speech he also talks about institutional racism which goes all the way back to Brown vs. Board of Education which was the Supreme Court case that ruled separation of black and white students unconstitutional. Obama also talked about this in his speech saying, " Segregated schools were and are inferior schools; we still haven't fixed them, 50 years after Brown v. Board of Education. And the inferior education they provided, then and now, helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between today's black and white students. He went on to say how this gives an inferior education to blacks and how this explains the gap in the income levels of white Americans vs. black Americans which in turn doesn't give black men as many economic opportunities as white men. This not only relates to white privilege because they feel they are deserving of these jobs and educations but it also has a lot to do with institutional racism. By giving these economic opportunities to the better qualified person you are giving it to the one who has a better education.

Through his speech, Obama illuminates the problem within our schools. Funding and quality of education go hand in hand, and since often times African Americans live in poor urban communities, schools struggle for funds to heighten the quality of their education. By talking about the dependence of schools on the income of the people living in the areas surrounding, Obama points out that privileged white kids are able to come out on top verses an African American child who grew up in an underfunded school.

These white kids then get into more prestigious colleges, in turn landing more high paying jobs than the majority of their African American counterparts. Obama also goes on to talk about how people try to act like there is no racism anymore even though it is so blatantly out there. He quoted " Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism. He talks about how things like this widen the gap of racism and how we need to work to close the gap instead. He calls it a racial stalemate saying, " Contrary to the claims of some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naive as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle, or with a single candidacy — particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own. " Obama believes that only by exposing the true roots of racism can we move forward, slowly but with conviction. He encourages more debate and open discussion instead of hiding behind polite political facades. But I have asserted a firm conviction — a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people — that, working together, we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds,

and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union". Overall, the goal of President Obama's speech was to highlight the most taboo of topics in our society: racism. Since the era of reconstruction, white people have tried hard to ignore skin color, but Barack Obama is trying to make a point of not ignoring the color of his skin, but rather using it to his advantage by pointing out the problems we have created.

White supremacy is still very much a real idea, even in our modern 21st century society. Poor education makes finding a good job in tough economic times an almost impossible task for the African American community, simply because they never had the same opportunities as their white peers. Obama encourages Americans to forgive past grievances and instead create a "new normal" - one of racial equality and opportunity regardless of race.