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**White Journalists Blow Race Coverage: A Review  
Ashley Todd: A Counter-Argument to "Post-Racialism"  
The Substance of Truth  
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*[This week's Substance of Truth contains two thought-provoking commentaries. -ed]*

**White Journalists Blow Race Coverage: A Review**

The stage theatrics performed by the corporate press in analyzing the dynamics of *Race vis-à-vis* Sen. Obama, has been abysmal, at best. To put it bluntly, they suck. When Barack "Hussein" Obama, a Black man, initially announced his bid for the presidency, it was clear that the predominantly White media was unprepared, to say the least, in tackling the indomitable beast of RACE. The first revelation of this reality came, early 2007, when White pundits began asking the question: "Is Barack Obama Black enough?" It took an unprecedented level of effrontery for the grossly unenlightened conglomerate of White journalists to pose such a question, but, to paraphrase Sinatra, they *did it their way*.

Before long, the same group of overfed self-congratulators would declare, with such temerity, the dawn of a "post-racial" era. Considering the ground-work of "post-racialism," it came as no surprise when the White, *New York Times* columnist, Matt Bai, [declared](#) Obama's candidacy to be "the end of Black politics." Upon Bai's preposterous assertion, numerous Black bloggers/Writers asked a simple question: What the heck is going on? Unfortunately, their reluctance to curtail mass media's long-tradition of re-defining race-discourse had begun to bear fruit.

Once upon a time, a Black scholar's usefulness on TV was exclusively tied to race-analysis – also known as "intellectual ghettoes." Malcolm X, in 1965, lamented the rarity of Whites, in the media, "*asking any negroes what they think about the problem of world health or the space race to land men on the moon.*" The White press seemed to have hearkened to Malcom's timeless words – at least, in part. Now, they figure it tiring to entreat a Black intellectual to analyze the politics of race. Why invite a panel of Black scholars, as Charlie Rose was fond of in the '90s, when one can host a panel of cotton-club-like White pundits who can deliver their tortured analysis of race in the 21st

century. The level of audacity which provoked Matt Bai to suggest that, *"For a lot of younger African-Americans, the resistance of the civil rights generation to Obama's candidacy signified the failure of their parents to come to terms, at the dusk of their lives, with the success of their own struggle - to embrace the idea that black politics might now be disappearing into American politics,"* is what accounts for today's pitiful attempt, by Mass media, to come to grips with the reality of a Black man overseeing the affairs of the country.

White journalists covering the 2008 Presidential race have performed woefully, at best, in covering the 2008 Presidential Race. One salient example of the unsatisfactory job done is the wholesome neglect of Cynthia McKinney's historic presidential run. In contrast, the White press has lauded Ralph Nader, Bob Barr, and other third party candidates with ample coverage in their bid for the presidency. By some unforeseen means, the mainstream media has strategically executed, in McKinney's words, "a whitewash" of the '08 Race. Juxtaposed with the amount of press Ms. McKinney was instantaneously granted in 2006, after an [incident](#) with capitol police, something is, surely, out of kilter.

One of the greatest lies told in history is that the White media operates as the "conscience-filter" of politics. The '08 presidential Race has laid bare that theory and rendered it invalid. In early 2007, Sen. Obama was *compelled* to dispel the [proliferated rumor](#) that he was raised in a Madrassa, and hence, a practicing Muslim. In doing this, the often spineless Senator utilized the oldest trick in political playbook. DENY! DENY! DENY! In his brash attempt to debunk the "smear," Sen. Obama made a convincing case against the humanity of Muslim brothers and sisters. His ["I am not a Muslim"](#) tour was an instant hit with White neo-liberals who saw a conflict between the name, Barack "Hussein" Obama, and their concept of the American dream. If the media were truly a source of correction and conscientiousness, such an effort to dehumanize the quality of life of Islamic and Arabic brethren would have died the death of a thousand qualifications. Regrettably, the White media saw no moral incentive in protecting the integrity of Islamic and Arabic fellows. Those who began to speak out candidly against the rhetorical atrocities committed against middle-eastern people did so at a time when it was politically, economically and socially convenient to do so.

Last week, Gen. Colin Powell gave a ringing endorsement of Sen. Obama. Amongst many of his emotional words was his displayed concern for the handling of Obama's theoretical Islamic ancestry/identity. [Powell asked](#), in the plainest of terms: *"Is there something wrong with being a Muslim in this country? The answer's no, that's not America. Is there something wrong with some seven-year-old Muslim-American kid believing that he or she could be president?"* Sure, Powell's morally upright comments could have dealt a bigger blow five years ago, but his politically-expedient remarks at this point still account for some ethical effect. Upon hearing this, many White neo-liberal Radio/TV talk-show hosts ran with the baton of crusading against Islamophobia.

Unfortunately, their epiphany comes too little, too late. Two months of amendment can hardly alter the damage done after 19 months (in the context of the '08 Presidential Race) of continual attack. Many White neo-liberal hosts have been just as culpable as their neo-conservative counterparts in rendering paralyzed the voices who speak truth to power. Their inability to speak up candidly against injustice is leaving an indelible stain on the concept of democracy and equality. Speaking only when profitable to their cause, they blow with the cultural wind and remain steadfast in an illusory state of progressivism. White newscasters such as Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow frequently "defend" the plight of Black voters, but almost always is their defense

directly tied into the objective of electing their candidate, Sen. Obama. Such acts of political profit are an immoral waste of time and energy.

HBO Host and Comedian, Bill Maher, who has deemed Obama the "Jackie Robinson of American politics," appeared on *Larry King Live* a couple of weeks ago. In a discussion on *Race*, Maher spoke of Obama's meteoric rise as emblematic of the country coming "a long way in a relatively short period of time – relatively." The self-described "crazy-liberal" hopes that society would "move faster," in addressing the enormous racial disparities between Black and White. Maher, who once referred to Sen. Obama as "our boy," must be living in a state of grand-delusion. Coming a long way – with Sen. Obama's candidacy as the yard stick – would connote a starting point of inequality. But most Blacks are immediately suspicious of such inference – as it would suggest that any step away from inequality is improvement. Malcolm X had a philosophical answer to that: "You don't stick a knife in a man's back nine inches, and then pull it out six inches, and say you're making progress." Mass media, however, seems overtly hesitant to pay homage to that blurb.

A few weeks ago, CNN hosted a segment in which they attempted to make Whites feel comfortable with their bigotry – or in the words of BlackCommentator.com publisher, Peter Gamble, "the white curtain of racism." Banking on the wisdom of a *New York Times* [Op-Ed column](#), CNN noted how *possible* it was to be discriminatory or hateful toward a certain group, without knowing it! In a manner similar to a child therapist, the host explained, with much detail, the logic of "subconscious-racism." With rage ricocheting through my entire body, I wondered: "Dr. Goebbels must be feeling real good with himself right about now." Perhaps he's thinking: "I'm a good man, after all. It wasn't my fault. The Devil (my subconscious) made me do it!" CNN and the columnist's excuse was that certain factions of society have inbred perceptions of ethnic groups, but cease to act upon those sentiments. The Holy Bible, which most Whites accept as irrefutable, informs that, "As a Man [or Woman] thinketh in his [or her] heart, so he [or she] is." A recent [AP/Yahoo poll](#), which found one-third of White Democrats to harbor racist resentments toward Blacks – costing Sen. Obama at least 6 percent in the polls – demonstrated how ridiculous it is for CNN, MSNBC, FOX News and other media conglomerates to tout the absurd claim that a "reverse Bradley effect" might be at work – the premise of which mysteriously causes more whites than expected, to vote for Sen. Obama on election day. With the likes of Pat Buchanan, the – in Tavis Smiley's words – "racial arsonist," who employed Klansman on his woeful presidential campaigns, working as paid analysts and consultants with major networks, one can definitely see how inexcusably narrow-minded race-discourse has become within the last 20 months.

White journalists' analysis of race has often paled in sharp-contrast to that of their Black counterparts. In an effort to assuage the incongruity, White pundits often recruit Black pundits/scholars/buddies/consultants who lend credence to their attempts to rewrite history. Two perfect examples of this arose in the cases of Sen. McCain's [description](#) of his opponent as "that one," and Ashley Todd's [fabricated account](#) of being robbed and mutilated by a menacing Black man. In the case of John McCain, most Black bloggers condemned his racially-hostile comments, but certain White pundits never believed it to be worthy of scrutiny, to begin with. Following McCain's debate remark, Comedy Central Host, John Stewart, was swift in refuting any malice involved in McCain's characterization of Obama. "I don't think McCain was referring to him as a boy... I don't think that when he said that one, that it was a racial thing," Stewart opined. At this point, one of Stewart's few, and rarely seen, Black correspondents had *come out* to affirm his boss's take: "You're right, it wasn't," the correspondent noted.

CNN News anchor, Campbell Brown, was less ambiguous. *"Give me a break,"* the White pundit hollered. *"I can hear my grandfather talking about one of his kids or grandkids as 'that one.' He used it a lot. Maybe it's a generational thing. Maybe it wasn't a term of endearment the way it was when my grandfather used it. Maybe McCain did mean to be disrespectful. But racist? I don't think so."* Following Ms. Brown's logic, Barack Obama would have to be a grandchild for McCain to successfully call him "that one," and be devoid of any racist or pejorative intent.

Last week, when a Pittsburgh white lady, Ashley Todd, lied about an encounter with a six-foot Black man – who had allegedly robbed and engraved the letter, "B," into her face, White pundits rallied around to protect Todd from any charges of racial animosity. Black pundits were immediately summoned on CNN to "control the atmosphere." On MSNBC, Obama-supporter and author, Melissa Harris Lacewell, [went as far](#) as proclaiming the initial skepticism surrounding the case to be a sign of distinctive racial progress. The political-science professor suggested that while the Ashley Todd fiasco is not "the end of American racism," the "measured response" by law enforcement marks the dawn of a new racial era, and displays how "different" the "country is now than... it was 50 years ago." Sean Bell, Troy Davis, Amadou Diallo, Mumia Abu Jamal, [Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren](#) might argue otherwise.

The hubris of White corporate media structures has played itself out extensively in the 2008 Presidential Race. *Saturday Night Live* is an explicit example of this reality. Last season, when SNL sought a perfect match to impersonate Democratic Presidential Nominee, Sen. Obama, it seemed quite odd that the SNL executives picked a White man to play the part. The inability of SNL to enlist a talented Black comic is a birth child of the White media's decision, early last year, to arrogantly host [all-white panel discussions](#) on race. To hide this reality, certain tokens are dipped into the political slot. But when a Black man is granted a show, on a national stage, to confront the role of Race in the presidential election, certain prerequisites must be at play. The host must display a knack for [Stepin Fetchit](#)-like characteristics, or be an unabashed [despiser of Black Women](#). White media executives understand the devastating effect serious-minded Black talk-show hosts would have on the truncated version of race-discourse hosted by White journalists. It is in this vein that, till this day, no Black personality hosts a nightly newscast on any of the major TV news networks.

Author and Journalist, Tavis Smiley's All-American Presidential Debates, last year, legitimized this truth. The top GOP front-runners, at the time, were [nowhere to be found](#) – as they last wished to answer the "hostile" and "unreceptive" questions from people of color/culture around the world (One Republican would [rather share a meal at IHOP](#), than answer questions the debate textbooks don't cover). With this logic in place, it came as no surprise when the Presidential debates, all hosted by White men, were devoid of any mention on the specific plight of people of color/culture in the U.S. and beyond.

Does anybody believe that if Black journalists were in control, the dehumanization of Arab souls would have operated unimpeded, bigots like [John McCain](#) and [Sarah Palin](#) would retrieve a free pass in their nonchalance toward peoples of culture/color, the illusion of "post-racialism" would pass the smell-test, the folly-imbued concept of "race-transcendence" might be entertained as anything other than wishful-thinking? The simple answer is: NO! BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member and Columnist, Dr. Lenore Daniels, had some [choice words](#) for the half-witted White pundits last week: *"[I]t's not just Racism! It's white supremacy! You can't wake up one day and be absolved of racism in an atmosphere of white supremacy. Racism seeps out every day*

*in every way and you know it if your life is devalued by the continual reiteration everywhere of white privilege.”* It would behoove White journalists, who hope to analyze race in the future and maintain their credibility, to meditate on her sobering caution.

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**The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**

### **Ashley Todd: A Counter-Argument to “Post-Racialism”**

Perhaps one of the greatest ironies of the 2008 Presidential race is the constant assertion of the notion of a “post-racial” period, while juxtaposed with an endless torrent of refuting occurrences. Last week, Ashley Todd, a Pittsburgh McCain worker, [reported](#) a compelling story of being *“robbed at an ATM at the corner of Liberty Avenue and Pearl Street in the Bloomfield area around 9 p.m. Wednesday after leaving a Republican phone bank.”* To avoid misleading the local police station, Todd was quick to comment that her purported attacker was a *“dark-skinned African-American man about 6’4”,* who *“stole \$60 from her and became enraged after seeing a bumper sticker supporting Republican Presidential Candidate John McCain on her car.”*

The bizarre story took an unusual twist when Ashley Todd told Pittsburgh police that her “dark-skinned” bandit made sure to carve *“a ‘B’ in her cheek,”* when he noticed the McCain sticker on her car. From the onset, this mystery was suspicious at best. Nevertheless, John McCain and Sarah Palin swiftly conducted personal phone calls with the *victim*: Ashley Todd. Even Sen. Obama’s camp would not risk being charged with condoning this reported act of bestiality. In a [released statement](#), the campaign stated: *“Our thoughts and prayers are with the young woman for her to make a speedy recovery, and we hope that the person who perpetrated this crime is swiftly apprehended and brought to justice.”* Damn. Tawana Brawley must be feeling pretty disgusted at this point.

With the president of *College Republicans* in Pittsburgh, Patrick Graham, comparing the incident to a “hate crime,” mainstream media exploded with outrage. FOX News, the conservative gangsters, milked the cow for what it was worth. Right-Wing radio shows questioned why the “left-wing” news networks didn’t devote more time of coverage to this gruesome tragedy. Before long, questions concerning the verity of Todd’s statement began creeping out of the woodworks. By the third day, the truth had resurrected itself. It turns out, not surprisingly to most Blacks however, that Ashley Todd had **LIED** about the whole ordeal. Todd was neither at the ATM – where the fantasy-driven mugging took place – nor was the backwardly-carved “B” a doing of anyone, other than her very hands. One wonders how skilled or devious the mind of a college student has to be, to have concocted such a well-detailed account of robbery and assault.

Ms. Todd borrowing a page from Susan Smith and Charles Stuart’s playbook is all but a shocker to African-Americans who see the value in embracing history. The myth of the “Black beast” is a resounding one in society these days. John Moody, FOX News’s V.P. went as far as suggesting that, *“If Ms. Todd’s allegations are proven accurate, some voters may revisit their support for Senator [Barack] Obama, not because they are racists ... but because they suddenly feel they do not know enough about the Democratic nominee.”*

Moody’s reminder that society still deems the actions of a singular Black man as representative of the whole culture, or better yet, all Black men, is impressively

refreshing, in an age replete with cries of "post-racialism." Worse than Moody's assessment, is the lingering echo of Jim-Crowism which has found a useful servant in John McCain and Sarah Palin. Ashley Todd's story was deemed credible from the start – as the widespread falsehood that Black Men have a preoccupation with White Women remains a firm belief in this very day and age. Sen. McCain promptly applied this theory in the "lipstick on a pig" charge against his Democratic opponent, a few weeks ago. Banking on the possibility of White Women blindly accepting the untruth that Barack Obama had "assaulted" Gov. Palin with the political cliché, John McCain was able to build a steady case against the "[disrespectful](#)" Obama. The disproportionately white media beltway has been just as culpable in proliferating the slime and slander of bigotry, as the McCain camp's slime-filled talking-points. It has helped ensure that, most of the time, the only Black men featured on TV screens are jail-bound, dead or misogynists. Slain Hip-Hop Icon, Tupac, understood this reality tremendously. In a song titled, "Blasphemy," Tupac noted how "*the media be crucifying brothers severely.*" The severity of mass-media's assault on Black male integrity is what granted Ms. Todd ample confidence in misleading the country, and fearing no backlash.

Following news that Ashley Todd had fabricated the story and told a bold-face lie, the corporate-owned media hurried to provide some alibi in protection their integrity, and that of Ms. Todd. Insistently calling Todd's law-bound statements a "hoax," the mainstream press furthermore played the role of P.R. manager for Ashley, by propagating the myth that Ms. Todd has a history of "mental problems" – hence, unworthy of scrutiny, prosecution and incarceration. Radio host and activist, Mark Thompson, put it best: "Her mental problem is Racism." In the wake of such criminal double standard, certain questions of concern must be raised to protect the sanctity of our democratic values: If Ms. Todd were a Black Woman, would the same media – with a history of [torturing](#) the integrity of Black Women – defend the lying, self-proclaimed victim – at will? Or, if Ms. Todd were a Black Woman, with a white attacker, would the same media outlets been as swiftly responsive in taking up her cause? History suggests otherwise; the present deepens the doubt; and the future is, at best, bleak.

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### **The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog**


**BlackCommentator.com** Columnist, Tolu Olorunda, is an 18-year-old local activist/writer and a Nigerian immigrant. [Click here](#) to reach Mr. Olorunda.

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