

# OBAMA

IN PURSUIT OF A  
MORE PERFECT UNION

## LESSON FIVE

### THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will examine the challenges and opportunities, including legislative success and political backlash, President Obama and his administration faced during his two terms in office. Through watching select film clips from **Obama: In Pursuit of a More Perfect Union**, students will weigh multiple points of view from advisors, journalists, scholars, and friends of President Obama who share their firsthand experiences, reflections, and insightful critiques. Through this process, students will analyze points of view while continuing to strengthen their historical perspective taking skills.

This lesson is an overview of President Obama's two terms in office, from 2008 to 2016. It is not a comprehensive survey but rather an opportunity for students to identify bias and point of view, and strengthen other critical media analysis skills.



### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- > What did President Obama accomplish over his two terms in office?
- > What significant challenges did Obama face, and how did his administration respond?
- > What role did race play during his two terms in office?
- > How was the Obama White House a reflection of a more perfect union?



### LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will:
- > Listen to multiple perspectives about President Obama's eight years in office.
  - > Explore different facets of President Obama's leadership.
  - > Examine how Obama addressed political backlash throughout his administration.
  - > Understand the historical significance of the first Black family in the White House.
  - > Synthesize their learning by completing The More Perfect Nation Venn diagram for this lesson.



### MATERIALS

- Listed in order as they appear in the lesson:
- > Equipment to screen film clips and interview threads curated for this lesson
  - > Film Clips
  - > Handout One: Film Transcripts
  - > Handout Two: The Challenge of Change Concept Map
  - > Handout Three: Lesson Five Venn Diagram

Two  
55-minute  
class periods



U.S. Government, Civics, English  
Language Arts/Rhetoric



All Handouts can be copied as PDFs or uploaded to a shared online platform. Access to the internet via a smartphone or laptop computer is necessary for the completion of this lesson.



## ACTIVITIES

“ Obviously at the inauguration, I think that there was justifiable pride on the part of the country that we had taken a step to move us beyond some of the searing legacies of racial discrimination in this country. But, that lasted about a day. ”

— **BARACK OBAMA**

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# OPENING

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**Teacher Note:** Begin class by watching two film clips from the beginning of Episode 3, **Obama: In Pursuit of A More Perfect Union** about the accomplishments and challenges the Obama administration faced and the role of race in his presidency.

> **Watch Opening Clip, Part I: First Day** (3:08)

> **Watch Opening Clip, Part II: Race and the Presidency** (3:26)

After watching both film clips, distribute **Handout One: Film Transcripts**. Have students read and underline sentences they believe suggest the opportunities and the challenges ahead for President Obama.



## SMALL GROUP WORK



**Teacher Note:** Transition and organize the class into four small groups. Assign each group one quote. Have students share their points of view in relation to the quote. This offers an opportunity to warm up for the central activity of this lesson.

### Group One

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: “No one thought we would live to see this day. But what did that day signify? That was the question. How much had America changed because it had finally gotten rid of this hereditary barrier to occupancy of the White House that is race?”

### Group Two

Reverend Al Sharpton states in the film clip, “It was naive for us to think there wouldn’t be a backlash to the first Black president.” He states in a later interview segment, “Donald Trump caught into a backlash fervor of the fears, unfounded fears, of many people. And striking on simplistic things like they’re not one of us, we need to go back to old America, make America great again.”

> What do you think gives rise to backlash?

### Group Three

Organizer Loretta Augustine-Herron shared, “They didn’t care whether the American people suffered, they only cared with the perception of not working with this president. And it was all about race. You can dress it up, you can dress it down, but it was all about race.”

> Why was the perception of not working with this president so critical for opponents of Obama?

### Group Four

Journalist David Maraniss claimed, “I don’t think you can ever separate politics from race when it comes to Barack Obama.”

> Do you agree or disagree with this claim? Why?

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# ANALYZING FILM AS TEXT

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## THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE STATIONS



**Teacher Note:** There are several variations for organizing the stations for this activity depending upon class size, in person or remote learning, and most importantly access to reliable Wi-Fi. Here are examples to adapt to your classroom setting and needs.



### STEP ONE: SELECT MODEL

**Independent learning:** Create online stations for each student to explore independently in class, at home, or both. All materials are available online and can be easily accessed with reliable internet.

**Class rotation:** Organize class into small groups and assign one topic per group. The small groups rotate to computer stations that are set up with headsets for listening to film clips.

**Jigsaw model:** Adapt the stations as a jigsaw model. Organize students into small home groups and number off 1 – 7. Each group is responsible for gathering information, taking detailed notes on their assigned station, and preparing talking points to review within an assigned amount of time. Reorganize students into expert groups so they can share prepared talking points with their fellow “experts.”



### STEP TWO: ASSIGN CONCEPT MAP

Explain to students that as they move through the stations they will be creating a concept map on the Obama administration using the terms **Legislation** and **Leadership** as their guideposts. As students watch the film clips and review the transcripts they will document their ideas, thoughts, and questions and make connections along this journey. If students are new to concept mapping, here are two resources to explore: YouTube tutorial and visual examples. Remind students of a few best practices for creating concept maps:

- > Write ideas in text boxes and arrange them hierarchically on a page.
- > Link concepts with arrows to convey shared meaning and connections between concepts.
- > Label arrows with notes to remind you of the connections.
- > List each concept only once, but make multiple links between concepts.



### STEP THREE: COMPLETE STATIONS

#### > **Topic One: Health Care**

Watch Film Clip One (4:26)

#### > **Topic Two: Gun Violence**

Watch Film Clip Two (3:38)

#### > **Topic Three: Racial Profiling and Excessive Force**

Watch Film Clip Three (4:20)

> **Topic Four: Backlash**

Watch Film Clip Four

Part I: Birther Movement: (4:22)

Part II: Succession (5:13)

> **Topic Five: Shirley Sherrod**

Watch Film Clip Five

Part I: (1:18)

Part II: (3:17)

> **Topic Six: The Obama White House**

Watch Film Clip Six (3:17)

> **Topic Seven: My Brother's Keeper**

Watch Film Clip Seven (3:26)

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## SYNTHESIZING LEARNING

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**Handout: The More Perfect Union Venn Diagram**

Reflecting on this lesson, add your ideas, thoughts, and analysis to the circles.

Use these prompts help spark your thinking:

- > **Obama circle:** What did you learn about the challenges and accomplishments of the Obama administration?
- > **You circle:** What is your point of view of the Obama administration?
- > **America circle:** What did you learn about the connections between Obama, his administration, and America?
- > **Overlaps:** Where do these ideas overlap?



**Teacher Note:** If you are teaching the lessons in a series, students will already have this Venn diagram handout.

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## HANDOUT ONE, LESSON FIVE

# FILM CLIP TRANSCRIPT

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### PART I: THE FIRST DAY

**BARACK OBAMA:** I wanted to get everyone together on the first day — to welcome you to the White House. From our vantage point, yesterday you couldn't help but be inspired by the sight of Americans as far as the eye could see. They were there because they believe this is a moment of great change in America. A time for reinvigorating our democracy and remaking our country. However long we are keepers of the public trust, we should never forget that we are here as public servants and public service is a privilege. Public service is, simply and absolutely, about advancing the interests of Americans.

**MARTY NESBITT:** I remember my wife and I heading up to the residence on the first day that they were in the White House and riding up with an elevator operator. He's an African American guy who had worked in the White House for forty years, at that time. And I said, "So, how did it feel during this whole process where an African American was on his way to be elected president of the United States?" And he said, "At no time during the entire campaign, did I ever think he was going to win." He said, "That is how improbable it all felt to a man my age."

**HENRY LOUIS GATES:** No one thought we would live to see this day. But what did that day signify? That was the question. How much had America changed because it had finally gotten rid of this hereditary barrier to occupancy of the White House that is race?

**MICHELE NORRIS:** During the Obama candidacy, there was a word that was in vogue. There were a lot of people, people of influence, talking about the notion that America might be entering a post-racial status. Post-racial is an interesting word, you know. It was a new word. It was not part of the American vernacular. It's interesting why we as a society embraced that word. Was it hope that maybe race would be less important? Was it hubris? Were we deluded?

**AL SHARPTON:** I think that when you study history, every time we made a step forward, there was always a backlash. We go from Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation into Reconstruction. Ku Klux Klan. White Citizens' Council; backlash. Supreme Court decisions; backlash. Turn of the century, NAACP is formed; backlash. Lynchings. All the way up through the Civil Rights Movement. It was naive for us to think there wouldn't be a backlash to the first Black president.

### PART II: RACE AND THE PRESIDENCY

**LORETTA AUGUSTINE-HERRON:** When Barack became president, he still had this sense of fair play. Now, all through his organizing days, this was a kind of an argument between us. Barack insisted that we appoint some of the other members of the community, who had fought against us, in the interest of cohesiveness. And we were like, "Why?"

**BARACK OBAMA:** The strongest democracies flourish from frequent and lively debate, but they endure when people of every background and belief find a way to set aside smaller differences in service of a greater purpose. I have full faith and confidence that we can do it. But we're going to have to work together.

**KELLY O'DONNELL:** Democrats are claiming this as a major victory for President Obama.

**NANCY PELOSI:** Barack Obama, in just a few short weeks as president, has passed one of the biggest packages for economic relief in our country's history.

**KELLY O'DONNELL:** The package is intended to cut taxes, increase jobs, and modernize infrastructure. But it's a victory that came with almost no Republican support, a long way from those hopes of bipartisanship.

**LORETTA AUGUSTINE-HERRON:** They didn't care whether the American people suffered, they only cared with the perception of not working with this president. And it was all about race. You can dress it up, you can dress it down, but it was all about race.

**ANNOUNCER:** Madam Speaker! The President of the United States!

**MICHELE NORRIS:** When he was elected, there were a lot of Americans who had never had a Black boss. And here he was, the highest authority figure in the land.

**DAVID REMNICK:** Look, let's not be naive here. Political parties are in a permanent state of opposition and political battle. And to some degree that's as it should be — it's a battle for ideas and whose policy is better and all the rest. On the other hand, he was met with [an] absolute wall of recalcitrance from Day One.

DAVID MARANISS: I don't think you can ever separate politics from race when it comes to Barack Obama. How did he become president and why? The first important reason was the speech he gave in 2004 at the Democratic convention, where his whole theme was bringing the divergent threads of America together and he gets elected president, and the Republicans say, "Forget that! We don't want that! We don't want you!"

TA-NEHISI COATES: This does not require a Mitch McConnell or John Boehner or Paul Ryan to be personally racist. That's not really the question — or be bad people or bigots or whatever, however you want — that's not the actual question. The question is structural. What is the Republican Party right now? What was the Republican Party when Barack Obama entered the office? It was a White party. How can you have your first Black president and race or racism be no factor?

BARACK OBAMA: Anne Compton. Hey, Anne.

REPORTER: Could I ask you about race?

BARACK OBAMA: You may.

REPORTER: Yours is a rather historic presidency and I'm just wondering whether in any of the policy debates that you've had within the White House, the issue of race has come up? Or has the last 64 days been a relatively colorblind time?

BARACK OBAMA: I think that the last 64 days has been dominated by me trying to figure out how we're going to fix the economy. And that's — affects Black, Brown, and White. And, you know, obviously at the inauguration, I think that there was justifiable pride on the part of the country that we had taken a step to move us beyond, some of the searing legacies of racial discrimination in this country. But that lasted about a day.

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC ONE: HEALTH CARE

*(Lower Third: Bipartisan Health Care Summit, February 25, 2010)*

SHERRILYN IFILL: I could understand why he was driving them crazy. There were just moments where he was so masterful, so intellectually capable, so astute, so informed, so clear.

BARACK OBAMA: Part of the goal here, I think, is to figure out what are the areas that we do agree on? What are the areas where we don't agree? And at the end of that process, then make an honest assessment

as to whether we can bridge these differences. I don't know yet whether we can.

SHERRILYN IFILL: And this is, of course, the reality about race and racism in this country. The exclusion of Black people was not because they actually thought we were inferior; it was because they feared competition. And, it was the fear of somebody just like him that would potentially shatter and smash every stereotype. And I think it was maddening for them.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOLIS: Does it frustrate you when your own supporters see racism when you don't think it exists?

BARACK OBAMA: Well, look, I think that race is such a volatile issue in this society — it always has been — that it becomes hard for people to separate out race being sort of a part of the backdrop of American society versus race being a predominant factor in any given debate. The overwhelming part of the American population, I think, is right now following this debate, and they're trying to figure out, is this going to help me?

CROWD: Kill the bill! Kill the bill! Kill the bill! Kill the bill!

JOHN BOEHNER: This healthcare bill will ruin our country. It's time to stop it.

REPORTER: It is the 11th hour in the debate over healthcare reform. Democrats insist they've got the momentum, but the president is taking no chances.

LESTER HOLT: President Obama made a last-minute visit to the Capitol this afternoon to call on democratic lawmakers to ignore the political risk and do what he calls the right thing. The question is whether or not right-leaning Democrats will go along when the votes are cast tomorrow afternoon.

REPORTER: Around the Capitol today, protestors gather to cheer on the plan's opponents.

PROTESTORS: Kill the bill! Kill the bill!

REPORTER: And to jeer Democratic leaders.

CROWD: Kill the bill! Kill the bill!

JOHN LEWIS: As we start walking, the Democratic members, I will never forget it.

PROTESTORS: Boo! Boo!

JOHN LEWIS: It was one of the anniversaries of the march across the bridge in Selma.

PROTESTORS: Boo! Boo!

JOHN LEWIS: And it reminded me —

PROTESTORS: Boo! Boo! Kill the bill! Kill the bill!

JOHN LEWIS: And there were people yelling, using the N-word, cursing people, spitting on members.

BARACK OBAMA: This debate has been a difficult debate. Don't do it for me. Don't do it for the Democratic party. Do it for the American people. They're the ones who are looking for action right now.

JOHN LEWIS: Dr. King, like President Obama, believed that healthcare is a right.

PROTESTORS: Kill the bill! Kill the bill!

JOHN LEWIS: And we were determined. We walked on the floor, we cast our votes, and we passed the bill.

WHITE HOUSE STAFFER: That's it.

DAVID AXELROD: When the final votes came in, I went into my office and I closed the door. I just sobbed because I had a child with a chronic illness, and I almost went bankrupt when I was a young newspaper reporter because we couldn't afford her medication.

BARACK OBAMA: All right! All right, what's next?

DAVID AXELROD: And I knew that because of what he had done, others wouldn't have to go through that. And I went and I found him and I thanked him on behalf of those families. And he put his hand on my shoulder and he said, "That's why we do the work."

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC TWO: GUN SAFETY

NEWS REPORTER: As of 10:30 Eastern, students were still being led — as you see the students here — led from the school by their teachers.

BARACK OBAMA: I know there's not a parent in America who doesn't feel the same overwhelming grief that I do. The majority of those who died today were children. Beautiful little kids between the ages of five and ten years old.

TA-NEHISI COATES: I think he — he's level. He's an extremely level dude. You know, he don't get too hot and he don't get, you know, too cold. At the same time he's a human being.

BARACK OBAMA: This evening, Michelle and I will do what I know every parent in America will do, which is hug our children a little tighter, and we'll tell them that we love them and we'll remind each other how deeply we love one another. But there are families in Connecticut who can not do that tonight. And they need all of us right now.

TA-NEHISI COATES: Sandy Hook is — I mean you have a massacre of children. And the country is paralyzed in its ability to do anything about it.

LESTER HOLT: A poignant reminder today of the toll that gun violence is taking on this nation. Today, the First Lady was among those who gathered in Chicago to say goodbye to Hadiya Pendleton, the teenager who was killed in a random shooting just a week after performing at the president's inauguration.

HADIYA PENDLETON: I'm Hadiya, year 2015.

MARTY NEBITT: She was shot and killed in a place that's not too far from where we all live on the South Side of Chicago.

MICHELLE OBAMA: Hadiya Pendleton was me, and I was her. But I got to grow up.

MARTIN NEBITT: It made us all feel a need for fixing some of these deeply rooted problems.

BARACK OBAMA: A few months ago, in response to too many tragedies, this country took up the cause of protecting more of our people from gun violence. Families that know unspeakable grief summoned the courage to petition their elected leaders. A few minutes ago, a minority in the United States Senate decided it wasn't worth it. They blocked common sense gun reforms, even while these families looked on from the Senate gallery. There were no coherent arguments as to why we wouldn't do this. It came down to politics. So all in all, this was a pretty shameful day for Washington.

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC THREE: RACIAL PROFILING AND EXCESSIVE FORCE

JUROR: In the Circuit Court of the 18th Judicial Circuit in and for Seminole County, Florida, State of Florida versus George Zimmerman. Verdict: We, the jury, find George Zimmerman not guilty.

LESTER HOLT: The shooting death of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, almost 17 months ago opened up emotional questions about racial profiling and about a person's right to defend themselves.

PROTESTORS: Not one more!

LESTER HOLT: It also sparks spirited demands for justice. Now that justice has spoken, those conversations have maybe even grown louder as thousands have taken to the streets in cities coast to coast.

DEMONSTRATOR: Obama! I hope that you are looking! I hope that you are looking!

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD: You see George Zimmerman get off. It's like I don't — I don't know what more y'all needed to see. That was a tough one to swallow.

CROWD: Trayvon Martin! Trayvon Martin! Trayvon Martin!

NEWS REPORTER: There were calls for President Obama to speak out in the wake of the verdict all week, especially from within the African American community. And White House officials tell me that President Obama was watching the reaction to the verdict since it came down last weekend. So, he surprised us all by stepping behind the podium this afternoon.

BARACK OBAMA: The reason I actually wanted to come out today is not to take questions, but to speak to an issue that has obviously gotten a lot of attention over the course of the last week, the issue of the Trayvon Martin ruling. You know... when Trayvon Martin was first shot, I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is that Trayvon Martin could've been me, 35 years ago. And, when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.

There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. And those sets of experiences inform how the African American community interprets what happened one night in Florida.

PROTESTORS: Whose streets? Our streets! Whose streets? Our streets!

BARACK OBAMA: I think it's understandable that there have been demonstrations and vigils and protests.

PROTESTORS: Not one more! Justice for Trayvon!

BARACK OBAMA: But beyond protests or vigils, the question is, are there some concrete things that we might be able to do? We need to spend some time thinking about how do we bolster and reinforce our African American boys? And, is there more that we can do to give them a sense that their country cares about them?

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC FOUR: BACKLASH

### Part I: Birther Movement

BARACK OBAMA: Tuesday's Election Day and here in Washington, the talk is all about who will win and who will lose. About parties and politics. I believe it's the fundamental responsibility of all who hold elective office to seek out common ground... All right, everybody have a seat.

JELANI COBB: Time and time again, he's trying to find some sort of middle ground, only to realize that there is no middle ground.

WHITE HOUSE STAFFER: Hello there, sir. Good to see you this morning.

JOHN BOEHNER: How are you?

JELANI COBB: The Republicans are very much following their electorate. They don't want him to be successful in any way. When Mitch McConnell said that his main objective was to ensure that Barack Obama would be a one-term president, he was reflecting a really significant impulse among a not small number of White people in the United States. That Obama, by virtue of the fact of who he was, was an illegitimate occupant of the White House.

DONALD TRUMP: Our current president came out of nowhere, came out of nowhere!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Kenya!

DONALD TRUMP: In fact, I'll go a step further: The people who went to school with him, they don't even know — they never saw him! They don't know who he is. Crazy!

JOELLA EDWARDS: I heard, birther this and I kept saying, "What's birther?" to people, like, "What is this birther stuff?" "Well, you know, because Barack Obama wasn't born in Hawaii." What do you mean he wasn't born in Hawaii? Hey guys! I got a whole three hundred and something classmates that we all grew up together, too.

DONALD TRUMP: People have birth certificates, he doesn't have a birth certificate. Now, he may have one, but there's something on that birth — maybe religion, maybe it says he's a Muslim, I don't know!

NEWSCASTER: Long ago, the president did release a certificate of live birth, which many nonpartisan watchdog groups say definitively proves he was born in the U.S.

BARACK OBAMA: Just want to be clear, I was born in Hawaii.

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON: Donald Trump didn't begin the birther movement, but he extended it. He gave it legs. He exacerbated the narrow and hateful positions on Obama that the birthers had adopted.

DONALD TRUMP: I heard he had terrible marks and he ends up in Harvard. He wrote a book that was better than Ernest Hemingway, but his second book was written by an average person.

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON: Quite vigorously and quite explicitly, Donald Trump had introduced racist rhetoric into the presidency by attacking Barack Obama as he did: Questioning his talent, questioning his skill, questioning his grades in school, which is kind of ironic.

DONALD TRUMP: And, you know, I wrote many bestsellers and also number one bestsellers, including The Art of the Deal. I know something about writing.

BARACK OBAMA: Hello, everybody. As many of you have been briefed, we provided additional information today about the site of my birth. And I have to say that over the last two and a half years, I have watched with bemusement. I've been puzzled at the degree to which this thing just kept on going. We've had every official in Hawaii, Democrat and Republican, every news outlet that has investigated this confirm that yes, in fact, I was born in Hawaii, August 4, 1961, in Kapiolani Hospital. We've posted the certification that is given by the state of Hawaii on the internet for everybody to see. And I know that there's going to be a segment of people for which no matter what we put out, this issue will not be put to rest. But I'm speaking to the vast majority of the American people, as well as to the press. We do not have time for this kind of silliness. We got better stuff to do.

## Part II: Backlash - Succession

DONALD TRUMP: Sadly, the American dream is dead but if I get elected president, I will bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before. And we will make America great again, thank you! Thank you very much.

DAVID AXELROD: In the sense that the country never looks, no matter how popular the president is, for the replica of what they have. They generally look for the remedy.

TRUMP RALLY AUDIENCE: Build that wall! Build that wall! Build that wall!

DAVID AXELROD: By that measure, there's no one who's a greater antithesis to Barack Obama than Donald Trump.

DONALD TRUMP: Build that wall! Build that wall! Build that wall!

STEVE KROFT: What do you think of Donald Trump?

BARACK OBAMA: Well, I think that he is a great publicity seeker.

DONALD TRUMP: Build that wall!

STEVE KROFT: You think he's running out of steam? I mean, you think he's going to disappear?

BARACK OBAMA: You know, I'll leave it up to the pundits to make that determination. I don't think he'll end up being president of the United States.

AL SHARPTON: Donald Trump caught into a backlash fervor of the fears, unfounded fears, of many people. And striking on simplistic things like they're not one of us, we need to go back to old America, make America great. And no one thought that that could work.

SHIRLEY SHERROD: When they started saying by the year 20-something, there'd be more people of color, I kind of knew there would be a backlash, but I didn't know where it was going to come from.

CHARLAMAGNE THA GOD: Trump, he spoke that language. He spoke directly to the racists. He spoke directly to the bigots. He knew exactly what they were feeling because he was feeling it. He — he knows exactly how he felt seeing that Black man everyday.

TA-NEHISI COATES: I think in general, we deeply underestimate the power of, of hate, of a particular kind of politics, that takes as its base, "I'm not you. You live over there. I live over here. I'm with my people. You're with yours."

Now, there were a lot of things that had to happen in order for Trump to be president, but, I think, he just missed the extent to which what Trump was saying was in fact in deep concert with folks that he had been facing for the past eight years.

BARACK OBAMA: I do think that the country is inexorably changing, I believe, in all kinds of positive ways. But I do think that when you combine that demographic change with all the economic stresses that people have been going through...

PROTESTERS: Racists go home! Racists go home!

BARACK OBAMA: It means that there is going to be potential anger, frustration, fear. Some of it justified but just misdirected. You know, I think somebody like Mr. Trump's taking advantage of that.

DAVID REMNICK: There are some people that are just stone-cold racists. We know that. But there are a lot of people also who feel and are, to some degree or another, feel like they're on the losing end of the stick. There are a lot of people who rose to the bait, I would say. The encouragement of the kind of PR mastery of Trump. Trump made it into a us and them and Black and White. There was no question that he had a self-consciousness of a path to whipping up resentment. And Obama was a Black president.

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC FIVE: SHIRLEY SHERROD

### Part I:

BILL O'REILLY: Back of the book segment tonight, reality check where we fervently embrace the truth. Check one, speaking at an NAACP event in March, Department of Agriculture official Shirley Sherrod was caught on tape saying something very disturbing. Seems a white farmer in Georgia had requested government assistance from Ms. Sherrod.

SHIRLEY SHERROD: I was struggling with the fact that so many Black people have lost their farmland and here I was faced with having to help a White person save their land.

JELANI COBB: Breitbart released a video in which Shirley Sherrod was giving a speech that appeared to disparage White people.

SHIRLEY SHERROD: So, I didn't give him the full force of what I could do.

BILL O'REILLY: Wow. Well, that is simply unacceptable and Ms. Sherrod must resign immediately. The federal government cannot have skin color deciding any assistance.

JELANI COBB: And the White House flinched.

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE: The reaction was swift and certain. White House officials say the decision to fire this official was solely at the discretion of the Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, but the president was briefed afterwards and, we're told, fully supports the decision.

### Part II:

JELANI COBB: Only after the fact do they realize that this video has been doctored. What appears to be an inflammatory anti-White speech is actually an empowering speech about the importance of understanding human beings as human beings irrespective of what they look like, where they're from, or their background. And it's coming from a woman who had experienced the worst of Southern racism.

SHIRLEY SHERROD: It was 45 years ago today that my father's funeral was held. I was a young girl at the age of 17 when my father was murdered by a White man in Baker County.

On the night of my father's death, the thought just came into my head: "You can give up your dream of living in the North, you can stay in the South, and devote your life to working for change."

When I made that commitment, I was making that commitment to Black people and to Black people only, but, you know, God will show you things and He'll put things in your path so that you realize that the struggle is really about poor people.

I decided to use the story of my transformation to try to say to them, "If you look at all that I've been through, my father's murder and all of this, if I can place that where it should be — now and try to work together, why can't we all do it?"

TA-NEHISI COATES: Here you have a Black woman, civil rights activist. In her family is this history of brutality, just the worst kind of racism that you ever want to see. And the notion that the Obama administration bought that this woman was perpetrating some sort of vengeful scheme against White people. They believed Andrew Breitbart. They believed the guy who's actually trying to do them in. It was sad that you would part with Shirley Sherrod, you know, who in some really profound way made it possible for a Black president to exist. You know, in pursuit of people who don't like you, who will never like you, who will never believe you, who will never support you, who have never accepted you.

BARACK OBAMA: Now, last week I had the chance to talk to Shirley Sherrod, an exemplary woman whose experiences mark both the challenges we have faced and the progress that we've made. She deserves better than what happened last week.

Now, many are to blame for the reaction and overreaction that followed these comments, including my own administration. What I said to Shirley was that the full story that she was trying to tell, a story about overcoming our own biases and recognizing ourselves in folks who on the surface seem different, is exactly the kind of story we need to hear in America.

If we can take an opportunity to learn from our imperfections and our mistakes, then I'm confident that we can move forward together and make this country a little more perfect than it was before.

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC SIX: THE OBAMA WHITE HOUSE

MICHELE NORRIS: One of the more interesting things about the First Family and the conversation around race is the casual nature with which they had the conversation that was often missed by people. They did it in interesting ways through the way that they used the architecture of the White House. The people that they brought inside the building, using programs

around culture to help America see their country and to see each other in an interesting way.

MICHELE NORRIS: His presidency begins at a moment where we are turning the page to sort of a new era in America, where the demographics are changing. We are moving closer to becoming a majority minority culture, and we have to think about what it means to be American because, for a long time, the cultural norm around Americanness was built around whiteness.

TA-NEHISI COATES: Obama, I think, gets a lot of flack from the perspective of the presidency, first Black presidency, only being symbolic. But as I argue, I think people underrate the value of symbols. I think the way Obama conducted himself in terms of specifically his relationship with Black culture...

BARACK OBAMA: Hey, brother!

SHAQUILLE O'NEAL: How're you doing, sir?

TA-NEHISI COATES: Communicated a totally different symbol to other people. I think one of the great mistakes was we forgot that. We forgot that there were other people who were watching. We didn't understand that there were other people who were going to see that. Like, see him playing basketball, for instance. And they would feel a kind of way about that.

MICHELE NORRIS: As the cultural default changes, as the conversation changes, as the demographics of the country change...that change creates vertigo for some people. That change makes some people feel really uncomfortable.

DAVID REMNICK: He knows that there's a huge number of people out there talking about taking their country back. Big slogan of the Tea Party movement. He knew that his presence in the White House invariably exacerbated some of the worst elements in our history, that are always there. And so he was very careful.

## TRANSCRIPT TOPIC SEVEN: MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

CHRIS CHAMPAGNE: Good afternoon.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

CHRIS CHAMPAGNE: My name is Chris Champagne, I'm 18. I'm a senior currently at Hyde Park Academy. Last February, President Obama sat down with us and shared his story. And, to my surprise, he was just like

me, growing up without a father and sometimes not too concerned with school.

DAVID AXELROD: The most compelling interactions I ever saw Barack Obama have was with young Black men, particularly young Black men who didn't have fathers, like he didn't have a father.

MICHELE NORRIS: He was on the South Side of Chicago, and he's sitting in this circle, and he's talking to these young men and he's talking about his own life and he's talking about his own struggles and his search for confidence. And he said, "You know, I'm you." That's not something that you traditionally have heard a president say to a room full of young Black men.

CHRIS CHAMPAGNE: Meeting the president and having him tell me that my life, now, is not different from the way his was made me realize I have potential, too. Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honor of introducing you to the president of the United States.

BRODERICK JOHNSON: I remember the very distinct conversation that he and I had not long after he'd been inaugurated for the second term. And he said, you know, in this second term I'm going to do something, recognizing that historically, countless boys and young men of color especially are shut out of opportunities in this country and recognizing that this country is not what it should be.

BARACK OBAMA: Fifty years after Dr. King talked about his dream for America's children, the stubborn fact is that the life chances for the average Black or Brown child in this country lags behind by almost every measure and is worse for boys and young men.

If you're African American, there's about a one in two chance that you grow up without a father in your house. We know that boys who grow up without a father are more likely to be poor and more likely to underperform in school. There's a higher chance you end up in the criminal justice system and a far higher chance that you are the victim of a violent crime. And all of this translates into higher unemployment rates and poverty rates as adults. These statistics should break our hearts and they should compel us to act. And that's what My Brother's Keeper is all about. If we help these wonderful young men become better husbands and fathers, well-educated, hard-working good citizens, then not only will they contribute to the growth and prosperity of this country, but they will pass on those lessons onto their children, onto their grandchildren. And this country will be richer and stronger for it, for generations to come. So let's get going. Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

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## HANDOUT TWO, LESSON FIVE

# THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE CONCEPT MAP

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***Directions:** Create a concept map on President Obama's two terms in office. A concept map is a visual organization and representation of your learning. It shows your ideas and understanding and connects the relationships between these ideas.*

### Here are a few visual models:

- > Begin by writing the words Legislation and Leadership in different areas of your paper and enclose them in shapes. If other big ideas arise, feel free to add other words.
- > Continue to add ideas around your key words and connect ideas with arrows as you uncover new learnings.

### **Keep the following big ideas in mind as guideposts:**

- > The legislative priorities of the Obama Administration
- > The unique facets of President Obama's leadership
- > The backlash his administration experienced and how he responded
- > The Obama White House as the first Black White House

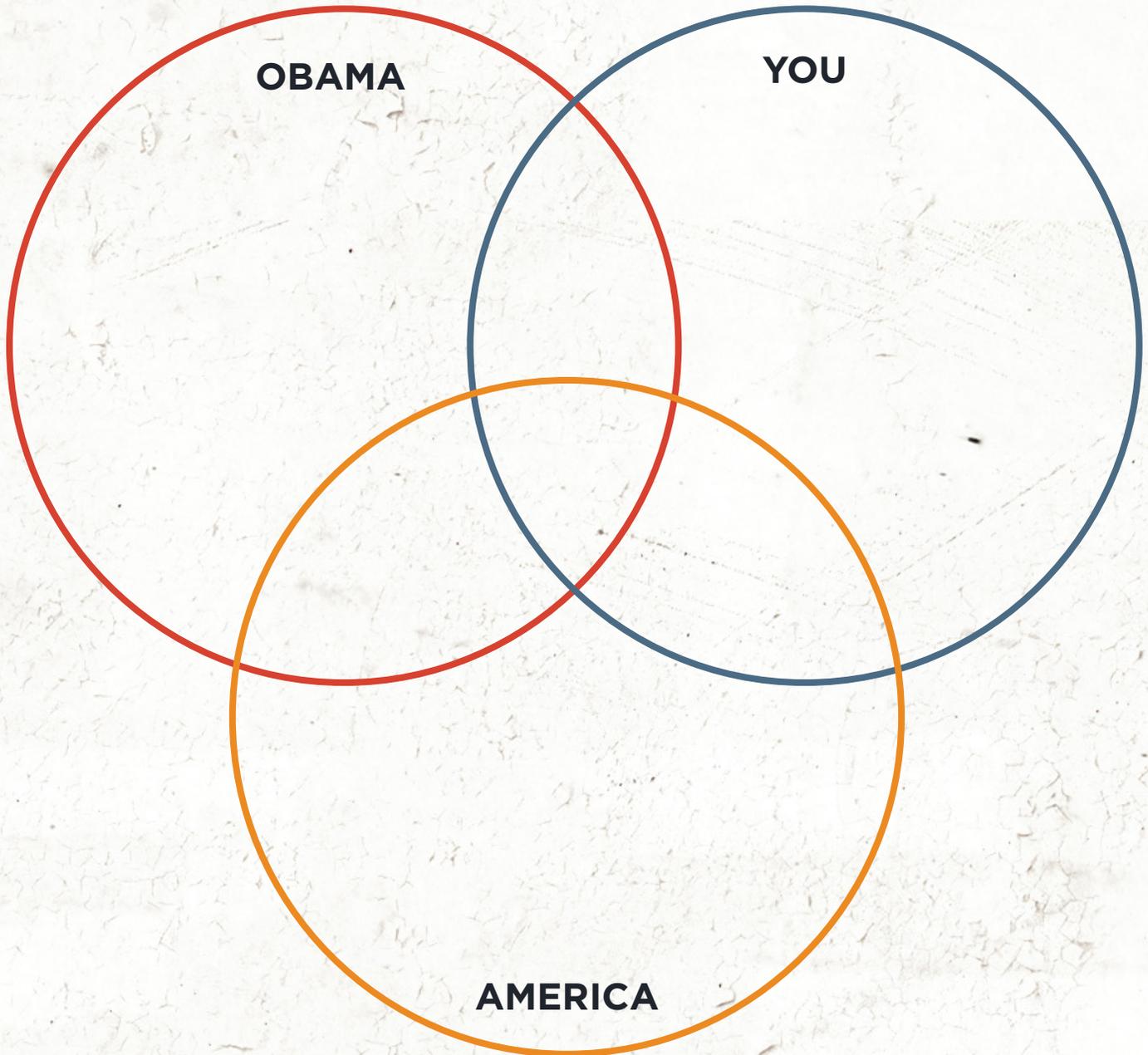
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## HANDOUT THREE, LESSON FIVE

# THE MORE PERFECT UNION VENN DIAGRAM

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*Directions: Use this Venn diagram to capture your ideas and analysis from this lesson.*



**Keep in mind:**

- > How does this information relate to Obama's vision of a more perfect union?
- > How does it relate to your vision of a more perfect union?