

The African American Quest for Universal Freedom: Unfinished Business

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Abstract

African Americans have been struggling for freedom in the United States since the birth of the Republic in the eighteenth century. Originally brought to North America against their will, they have consistently put abstract promises of freedom, equality and democracy to the test and frequently found them dismally wanting in practice. Of all the nation's diverse ethnic groups, Blacks (in common with Native Americans) have always been best placed to discern the gap between the fiction and the reality of the American Dream. During the course of history the Black quest for equal citizenship and racial equality, and against stigmatization and police brutality developed into a full-blown social revolution designed to achieve what Martin Luther King, Jr called "certain basic structural changes in the architecture of American Society". While the United States may have been considered an "affluent society", for the vast majority of African Americans, unemployment, underemployment, substandard housing, and police brutality constituted what Malcolm X once described as an "American nightmare." In 2008 the impossible happened: An African American was elected president of the United States. When Barack Obama was elected as the first African American President in the history of the United States, more than thirteen million people of African descent living in the United States believed that things would finally and drastically change for the better. Unfortunately, things did not improve much. Some cosmetic changes have been going on, but the core issues are still deeply rooted in the American society. The business is far away from being finished.

Keywords: Barack Obama, inequality, protests, racism, social revolution.