2008 was a momentous year in American history. Theoretically, with the election of President Barack Obama, the American people helped shatter the glass ceiling that has been a barrier to political power for black men in this country. President Obama’s tenure as the President of the United States has been one of the most fascinating stories in this nation’s history. Much of the fascination with President Obama stems from his "rock star" personality, his oratory skills and his ability to bring people together. Another fascination factor, although not directly acknowledged, is President Obama’s race. As the son of a white American mother and black father from the African country of Kenya, many Americans wanted to believe that the election of President Obama had ushered in an era of racial harmony. However, that does not seem to be the case. In fact, there seems to be an undercurrent of racial tension brewing since his ascension to this country's exalted position of power. As the country moves toward midterm elections it is plain to see that America has not become a bellwether of racial harmony. The almost rabid furor of the Republican Party, and newly formed Tea Party Movement, to "take our country back" has a decidedly unharmonious tone. Interestingly, the news media, particularly conservative talk show pundits, and also the supposedly objective mainstream media, appear to be the driving force behind the reinvigorated biases that lurk in the American subconscious.

Would there be a Tea Party Movement if Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity, and Bill O’Reilly, to name a few of the conservative operatives who are stoking the flames of fear, were not on the airways daily demonizing President Barack Hussein Obama? Would there be conspiracy theories regarding his citizenship and rejection of his legitimacy to be President of the United States if it were not for the racially tinged and blatantly disrespectful rhetoric spewed by the aforementioned talking heads? ABC News political blogger Steven Portnoy recently reported that Rush Limbaugh, who appears to be the heart and soul of the conservative fraction of the Republican Party, referred to President Obama as a "jackass", an idiot, and "economic illiterate," questioned whether the level of disdain and disrespect displayed by Limbaugh was "over the top". Bill O’Reilly, a well known and polarizing figure whose provocative statements are his stock and trade, has frequently made the statement on his show "The O’Reilly Factor" and other televised talk shows as well, that "...white Americans are terrified," inferring that because a black man with a funny name is President somehow white people are in danger. This bogey-man attitude of Bill O’Reilly was evident recently on the mid-day talk show The View. When asked about the controversial issue of the mosque at the 9/11 ground zero site in New York City, O’Reiley responded "Muslims killed us on 9/11", a statement that so disgusted The View regulars Joy Behar and Whoopi Goldberg that they walked off the set. Muslims, 911, and Barack Hussein Obama are the staples the conservative media uses to rally their troops and to frighten other Americans into joining their cause. As O’Reilly stated "Muslims killed us on 9/11", Barack Hussein Obama sounds like a Muslim name; therefore they have to be connected. Irresponsible ranting is also a constant of another FOX News pundit Sean Hannity. Hannity’s favorite epithet for President Obama is "socialist"--the new scare word. "Obama is a socialist. Doesn’t he know that socialism kills wealth" claims Hannity. A recent
Hannity diatribe accused President Obama being "wrong on health care, wrong on the economy", and causing the recession, as if the two term Bush Presidency and the debacle it caused did not exist. Someone once said, to paraphrase, "If you tell a lie, and keep repeating it, people will believe it to be true." And that seems to be the strategy of President Obama’s foes. Say anything to denigrate him. Turn America against him. Obama must go. "We want our country back."

When George W. Bush was president for eight years and the country was spiraling downward there was not the kind of vitriol directed at him, even as his poll numbers plummeted, that our current president receives. The American people were told by the media, especially conservative media, e.g. FOX News, that even if you were adamant in your disapproval of George W. Bush the office of the president should be respected. It now seems that respect for the office of the presidency does not apply. If a talking head can call the President of the United States a "jackass" and "idiot"; if a South Carolina politician can call the President a liar from the floor of Congress, if daily, a sitting President of the United States can be maligned relentlessly by the media something is very wrong. It seems President Obama has faced more criticism than any other president in recent U.S. history. While some of that criticism comes in the afterglow of the tremendous optimism generated by his election, (some people didn’t hear him say that change would not be accomplished overnight) much of the criticism directed at him regarding the economy, his health care policy, the stimulus package, and everything else that is currently wrong with America. Even the less zestful critiques of Obama as an elitist "egghead" feels like pundits grasping for straws, (isn’t the president supposed to have the best credentials possible for what is supposed to be one of the most powerful positions in the world?) These criticisms masks the true feelings of a certain segment of the population: they cannot accept a black president. For one to say that race is not a factor in the negative coverage the president has received is naive. One simply has to review the comments of Limbaugh, OReilly, Hannity and Beck. For all the impact that President Obama’s election has had on shattering the glass ceiling, it is evident that this country still has a way to go in terms of acceptance. The cloud of racism will hang over this country’s every day until people learn the true meaning of equality. Race is the elephant in the room that people refuse acknowledge.