PART II

POLITICS AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION
Like many of you, I became a sociologist inspired by social movement politics. I was a student leader, member of a Marxist group, and worked with squatter settlement communities in my native Puerto Rico and continued my activism while attending grad school in Wisconsin. Although I am no longer the Marxista cuadrado of yesteryear, Marx’s (1845) 11th thesis on Feuerbach—“The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it”—remains central to my praxis. I still believe wholeheartedly in the fundamental role of collective action and in Dr. King’s (1967) notion, appropriated by Obama, of “the fierce urgency of now.”

In my remarks I will address four things. First, I will criticize the way we all—left, right, and center—conceptualize racism. Second, I will argue we must appreciate the fact that the dominant racial ideology of the modern world-system has mutated into an apparently non-racial, subtle, colorblind one. Yet, hidden within this color-blind Trojan horse, the new ideology is still all about the business of racial domination. Third, I will offer a critique of the Obama phenomenon and argue that, more than anything else, it represents the culmination of 40 years of reshuffling of America’s “racial structure.” Lastly, I will add my voice and analysis to those who believe in the urgent need for revitalizing social movement politics in America and the world—and yes, as so many of you have articulated so eloquently today, new politics, yes, new forms of movements, and yes, new social actors.

Talking about racism has become quite tricky in contemporary America and, in truth, almost anywhere in the world. Racism has been

---

1 This paper is a slightly amended version of a speech by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva given at the Critical Sociologist Conference meeting in Boston in August of 2008. We have attempted to keep the emotion, rhythm, and style of a speech, but for this volume we have added footnotes, citations, and expanded upon some ideas. Lastly, although for ease of reading and rhetorical force we kept the pronouns in the first person, this version is a collaborative project.