

## Race, Law, and the Body Politic: Personal Responsibility and Response: Re-Imagining a More Perfect Union-Notes 4

Tonight, we discuss personal action and responsibility as we imagine how to construct a more perfect union. We begin with the second presidential inaugural speech of Barack Obama in which he stated,

“We the people, in order to form a more perfect union ...” — 221 years ago, in a hall that still stands across the street, a group of men gathered and, with these simple words, launched America's improbable experiment in democracy. Farmers and scholars, statesmen and patriots who had traveled across an ocean to escape tyranny and persecution finally made real their declaration of independence at a Philadelphia convention that lasted through the spring of 1787.

The document they produced was eventually signed but ultimately unfinished. It was stained by this nation's original sin of slavery

What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part — through protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience, and always at great risk — to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time.” (transcript: [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467))

From the above statement we see that President Obama sees

1. A body politic committed to Constitutional ideals.
2. Intentionality of involvement.
3. Social progress is obtainable.

Is Obama's vision practical?

From the Center for American Progress:

“The next decade will prove pivotal to the future of the United States. America will either adopt an ambitious program of national rebuilding and address the serious challenges of the present day, or it will confront continued national stagnation. National rebuilding requires bold, immediate, and interlocking action to subdue a devastating pandemic, recover from the resulting economic collapse, reduce societal inequalities, address climate change, and navigate the shifting tectonic plates of the international system.”

[www.americanprogress.org/events/2021/01/07/494329/building-perfect-union/](http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2021/01/07/494329/building-perfect-union/)

The question before us that looms large is what should be our role in rebuilding this nation?

- Does the present require more socio-political action?
- Is there a need to distinguish between intent and action when it comes to social change?
- Does protest work bring about change?
- What are the things individuals can do to create a perfect union?
- How can we address the economic disparities that are tied to racial injustice?
- What individual investments have you made for perfecting the union?
- What policy changes need to be enacted to better perfect our society?
- Does education help or hinder change in contemporary society? Are we called to be teachers?

Suggested Readings:

**I Am Because We Are: Readings in Africana Philosophy**, by Fred Hord and Jonathan Lee | Apr 26, 2016.

**Is Racism in the “Heart”? Tommie Shelby**

**[www.tommieshelby.com/uploads/4/5/1/0/45107805/racism.pdf](http://www.tommieshelby.com/uploads/4/5/1/0/45107805/racism.pdf)**