



# **Brother Bill: President Clinton and the Politics of Race and Class**

Daryl A Carter

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As President Barack Obama was sworn into office on January 20, 2009, the United States was abuzz with talk of the first African American president. At this historic moment, one man standing on the inaugural platform, seemingly a relic of the past, had actually been called by the moniker the "first black president" for years.

President William Jefferson Clinton had long enjoyed the support of African Americans during his political career, but the man from Hope also had a complex and tenuous relationship with this faction of his political base. Clinton stood at the nexus of intense political battles between conservatives' demands for a return to the past and African Americans' demands for change and fuller equality. He also struggled with the class dynamics dividing the American electorate, especially African Americans. Those with financial means seized newfound opportunities to go to college, enter the professions, pursue entrepreneurial ambitions, and engage in mainstream politics, while those without financial means were essentially left behind. The former became key to Clinton's political success as he skillfully negotiated the African American class structure while at the same time maintaining the support of white Americans. The results were tremendously positive for some African Americans. For others, the Clinton presidency was devastating.

Brother Bill examines President Clinton's political relationship with African Americans and illuminates the nuances of race and class at the end of the twentieth century, an era of technological, political, and social upheaval.



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