



Obama's America: A Transformative Vision of Our National Identity

Ian Reifowitz

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Our national identity is defined by what it means to be an American and whom we include and why when we talk about “the American people.” A country’s national identity is fluid, and Ian Reifowitz argues that President Barack Obama, by emphasizing the ideals Americans hold dear, hopes to redefine ours in a fundamental way. Obama’s conception of America emphasizes two principles of national unity: First, all Americans, regardless of their heritage and cultural traditions, should identify with America as their country, based upon shared democratic values, a shared history, and a shared fate. Second, America should embrace all its citizens as active participants in one “family.” Reifowitz explores Obama’s belief that strengthening our common bonds will encourage Americans to rectify the injustices and heal the racial divisions that still plague our country.

We have the opportunity to demonstrate to the world that a society of many races and cultures can truly become one people. In facing terrorism, violent fundamentalism, and other security issues, Obama’s response centers on a powerful, inspiring, and truly inclusive American narrative. By bolstering America’s identity as diverse yet unified, he aims both to counter the anxieties and fears that radicalism stokes and give proponents of religious and political freedom a model they can defend. The stakes couldn’t be any higher in determining America’s future.

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