Afra,

Seven years ago you asked for a scalpel, not an elegy, and I answered by carving through the “post-racial president” myth. I argued that Barack Obama’s symbolism never rewired the machinery of race, power, or state surveillance; it merely draped rusted infrastructure in fresh paint. That 2018 brief was a field report written at the edge of a storm front. Now—May 2025—the storm has swept through, strewing debris and stripping away any excuse for optimism, so I’m revisiting the argument in one continuous cut.

The “post-racial” veneer peeled the moment social temperature spiked. George Floyd’s murder in 2020 supplied the heat: millions marched, corporations mouthed equity pledges, and school boards banned anything that whispered critical race theory. Public confidence in Black-White relations plunged to a generational low and never rebounded. The pattern is thermodynamic. Without structural energy—wealth transfer, education reform, housing equity—disorder grows. Optics buy time; they do not buy transformation, and symbolism, once hailed as cure, now reads as camouflage.

While the nation argued over statues and slogans, the surveillance lattice I warned about matured. Congress renewed Section 702 and quietly widened its reach to cloud hosts, content-delivery networks, and even payment processors. Facial-recognition firms sidestepped privacy suits by paying plaintiffs in stock rather than deleting databases; generative-AI models then swallowed the same image streams as training fodder. Once a face lands inside a multibillion-parameter weight matrix, deletion becomes a physics problem, not a policy question. The state no longer merely watches; it simulates citizens at scale.

Foreign policy followed the same plug-and-play logic. Obama normalized remote war and watch-list governance, so successors simply picked up the turnkey kit. Trump lifted Obama’s seven-nation vetting matrix for his travel ban. Biden pulled troops from Afghanistan yet kept the drone lattice humming by outsourcing target packets to regional partners. The kill chain is now software as foreign policy: allies supply metadata, Washington supplies explosives, and Congress signs the checks between press releases of concern.

My 2018 brief missed three things. First, I treated data brokers as conduits and failed to see that foundation models would ossify into permanent reservoirs, entombing every biometric they ingest. Second, I underestimated street-level traction: Juneteenth became a federal holiday, several states enacted police-accountability laws, and ubiquitous phone video turned civilians into roving subpoena machines—small dents in thick armor, but dents. Third, I kept the lens domestic, overlooking how Minneapolis ignited marches in London, Lagos, Sydney, and São Paulo and forced Westminster and Brussels to draft the first meaningful immune response to American surveillance exports.

The repair mechanism I’m willing to fight for is likewise blunt. For **three full generations—seventy-five years—Americans who can document direct African-American lineage should owe no federal income, payroll, or capital-gains tax.** Duration matters. Seventy-five years stretches from the nation’s first emancipation rumbles through Reconstruction into Jim Crow’s cement curing—long enough for compounding to reset asset trajectories across families, yet finite enough to sunset in living memory of the youngest beneficiaries. Tax relief leverages an existing system rather than birthing new bureaucracy. Flip one flag in the IRS eligibility table; backfill the lost revenue from the general fund; let the ledger run in daylight so every other taxpayer sees the cost of the original extraction. When the clock strikes year seventy-six, tax parity resumes and the account closes. Cash grants, vouchers, and land credits invite gatekeepers who will be gamed. A tax holiday is brute, transparent, and self-liquidating. Fairness objections will howl, but stalemate is already unfair—this proposal sets both a meter and an end date.

That is the state of the argument and the remedy I’m prepared to endorse. The machinery I mapped never paused, and neither can I.

—Shiloh