

A Journey Through Change:

**The Influence of Barack Obama's
Presidential Campaign Speeches**

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Project Introduction

Project Purpose

Inspired by the success of Barack Obama's presidential campaign and the profundity of his language, this project intended to uncover the influence of Obama's campaign speeches during the 2007-2008 election. By selecting three key speeches from Obama's campaign and examining their context, content, media coverage, and impact on public opinion, the project aimed to arrive at a clearer understanding of each speech's effectiveness, as well as its contribution to Obama's larger campaign narrative.

This project is comprised of five distinct sections. The current section reviews the project's intent, research methodology and organization. The following three sections are each dedicated to the analysis of one of Obama's speeches selected for inclusion in this project. The final section serves as the project's conclusion, containing a summary of key findings and a personal narrative about the influence of Obama's speeches on the campaign as a whole.

Selection of Speeches for Analysis

Three speeches were selected for analysis: Obama's speech announcing his intent to run for President; his speech on race relations; and his election night victory speech. In selecting the speeches for inclusion in this research project, the primary goal was to ensure a comprehensive examination of Barack Obama's campaign for President. By selecting speeches that spanned the entire length of his campaign, the project was able to analyze the development of the campaign as a whole and the role played by each speech in this development.

Obama's announcement speech marked the official start to his campaign, as well as the initial formalization of his campaign messages and rhetoric. By using this speech as the starting point, this paper was able to track Obama's message development throughout the campaign. In addition, this speech provided a great deal of context for the campaign. Its inclusion was necessary for a comprehensive picture of Obama's campaign and his successful use of speech as a campaign tactic. This speech highlighted many of the main themes and messages of Obama's campaign, as well as set the campaign's initial tone.

The second speech examined was Obama's speech on race relations in the United States. This speech was given during the Democratic primary season and tackled the largest controversy of the Obama campaign. However, this speech's influence extended beyond the specifics of the controversy that the Obama campaign was facing at the time. Instead, the speech also served as Obama's formal discussion of race. Including this speech allowed for an examination of Obama's response to a campaign crisis, as well as the pressing national issue of race.

The final speech included is Obama's victory speech on election night. This speech marked the formal end of Obama's campaign, as well as the beginning of his transition to the Presidency. This speech served as the final step in message and campaign development, allowing a complete examination of the changes undergone throughout the campaign itself.

In addition to carrying historical weight, each of the three aforementioned speeches served a ceremonial purpose, or larger significance. Instead of examining speeches that aimed at presenting policy ideas or rallying supporters, this paper examined

speeches best known for their emotional appeal and flowing language. In doing this, this research was able to focus on the impact of Obama's words, rather than Obama's changing policy proposals.

Together, these three speeches served as a comprehensive representation of the Obama campaign's use of language to inspire. By examining each of these speeches for their content and impact on media and public opinion, this paper was able to assess the impact of Obama's words on the American voter.

Organization of Analysis

Prior to beginning the detailed analysis within each section, an overview of the environmental context surrounding each speech was completed. This overview described the conditions surrounding the time in which the speech was given, as well as any reasons why the speech itself was given. In addition, this overview provided information on where in the campaign cycle the speech took place, and the events and candidates that were also central to the campaign's development at the time.

Once the environmental context for each speech was established, the speech's content was analyzed for its tone, main messages and use of story. Following this, a media analysis compared the varying coverage of the speech by the elite print media, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The final analysis looked at public opinion polling results from both before and after the speech was given. Comparing these results permitted an informal analysis of the impact the speech had on public opinion. The research methodology adopted in the sections addressing content, media and polling analysis are outlined below.

Instead of concluding each section separately, the project's conclusion summarizes the findings for each of the speeches examined. In addition, the conclusion speaks to overall trends gathered from the project's research, and the implications of these trends. The conclusion also contains a personal narrative section that discusses the impact of Obama's use of campaign language.

Research Methodology: Content Analysis

In order to truly understand the impact of Obama's speeches, the intent must first be understood. By examining the tone, main messages, and use of story in each of the speeches, a baseline understanding of intended content can be established. These three areas of analysis allow for a comprehensive look at both the fundamentals of meaning and the techniques used in the speech. This analysis of the text of each speech served as a crucial part of understanding Obama's campaign messages, as it allowed for a basic look at the content of the speeches, unmarred by the analysis of the speeches' impact on the campaign or on public perceptions of Obama.

The examination of tone was an important part of the speech's content. In this project, tone was defined as the feeling and emotions the speaker intends the listener to experience as words are understood.¹ Tone can be identified through an analysis of basic word choice and of the way in which Obama presents challenges, failures and successes. The examination of tone allowed for a deeper understanding of the background and cause for the speech. It also often points to Obama's true purpose in giving the speech, as well as the state of the campaign. Throughout the campaign, Obama's tone shifted to meet

¹ Cook, J. S. The Elements of Speechwriting and Public Speaking. New York: Macmillan Company, 1989. Pg. 173.

new challenges and a changing political spectrum. Examining these shifts allows for a deeper understanding of the tone of the campaign itself.

The main messages of each speech signify the most important ideas that are presented in the speech. They are often identified not just as the meat of the speech, but also its underlying goals. In Obama's case, the main ideas presented often later became guiding ideas of the campaign's overall messaging. By pinpointing these messages, a fundamental understanding of the speech's purpose is achieved.

Obama consistently uses story in his speeches as a technique to connect on a personal level with his audiences. The use of story can be defined as the inclusion of an anecdote, often personal, that aims to command attention, and draw the listener to a deeper understanding.² Within a speech, the story often serves as evidence supporting the main idea, allowing it to be easily identified. In Obama's case, the presence of a story helped to humanize him, and present his ability to relate to American voters. The tone and end result of the stories included in the speech usually serve as a call to action or dictate understanding to the listeners.

By examining these three aspects of the speech's content, a baseline understanding of the meaning, purpose and impact of the speech can be determined. This is essential in understanding the impact of the speech on media coverage and public opinion.

Research Methodology: Media Analysis

By examining the coverage of Obama's speeches by the elite print media, this paper tracked the response of the mainstream media towards Obama. The print media was selected as the media market to examine for its traditional views and predictable

² Cook, J. S. Pg. 60.

formats and publication. By limiting the media analysis to national newspapers, citizen journalists and partisan outlets were not examined. Instead, the media analysis was limited to the professional press.

The Washington Post, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* were selected as the best representations of national newspapers, with varying political leans. By selecting these three publications, a range of perspectives and styles was included in the analysis of media coverage. *The New York Times*, with a daily readership of 4,473,300, is second only to *USA Today*.³ On Sundays, the *New York Times*' readership jumps to 5,911,700, nearly 1.5 million more than any other paper in the United States. *The New York Times* was chosen for its large readership, as well as its liberal leaning opinion page. *The Wall Street Journal*, with a daily readership of 4,399,100 was selected to represent the conservative leaning print media. Only behind *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* has the third highest readership in the nation, and the highest for a conservative leaning paper. The *Washington Post*, with a daily readership of 1,618,200 and a Sunday readership of 2,204,900 was selected to represent a smaller, more moderate print source. Using these three papers as a representation of the national mainstream print media allowed the coverage to be balanced and comprehensive.

Within each newspaper, the initial goal was to select a single news article and a single editorial for analysis in order to examine the varying treatments of Obama's speech. However, research came to show that *The Wall Street Journal*'s coverage of Obama's speeches was far more limited than the coverage by the other two papers. In addition, the coverage in *The Wall Street Journal*, despite being presented as news, contained a clear partisan bias. As a result, each speech's analysis of coverage in *The*

³ "Readership: Top 75 Newspapers." National Newspaper Network LP. 2007. <http://www.nnnlp.com>.

New York Times and *The Washington Post* contained two articles, while *The Wall Street Journal* contained only one.

Each newspaper article was examined for its tone and framing. In this case, tone was defined as the general attitude of the article set by the author. By examining tone, the perspective and potential bias of the reporter was often uncovered. In addition, the examination of tone allowed for a deeper understanding of the general media's attitude towards Obama at the time. The progression of these attitudes became clear, as the tones shifted from the beginning to the end of the campaign.

The examination of the article's framing was done to help uncover how comprehensive or limited each newspaper's coverage of the speech was. In this case, framing was defined as the central organization the author provided as a way to limit his or her discussion in the article.⁴ While some articles were entirely focused on the speech, Obama's words, and their impact, others merely cited the speech as a primary source as part of a larger argument. The attention paid by each paper to the speeches themselves served as important markers of support and targeted analysis.

By examining both the extent of coverage given to Obama's speeches and its general tone, the media analysis allowed for an appraisal of the print media's treatment of Obama's candidacy and eventual win. This appraisal helps to flush out an understanding of the media coverage that the American voter was exposed to throughout the campaign and any potential impact that it might have had.

⁴ Kuypers, Jim A. Press Bias and Politics: How the Media Frame Controversial Issues. Greenwood Group, 2002.

Research Methodology: Polling Analysis

The polling analysis was used as a marker of the impact that Obama's speeches had on public opinion. By examining polling data that was collected prior to each speech, a solid baseline understanding of public opinion was determined. Then, by examining the results of public opinion polling that was done after each speech was given, informal comparisons were drawn. Any discernible shifts in opinion were used as approximate indicators of the influence of each speech on public perceptions of Obama.

Barack Obama's favorability was the first area in which public opinion polling was examined. Favorability was defined as having a favorable or non-favorable opinion of Obama. The majority of the polls examined in this section had very clear wording that mirrored this definition. By testing favorability, public opinion of Obama's candidacy as a whole was examined. This category of polling extends beyond the basic action of voting for a candidate and instead, focuses on the impression the candidate leaves on the public.

Electability was the second area in which public opinion polling was examined. In this case, electability was defined as a candidate's likelihood to be elected, in comparison to other candidates. In examining public opinion polling about electability, a basic understanding of Obama's electoral support could be determined. This polling ranged from Obama's electability in the Democratic primary to the general election. As the number of candidates in the field narrowed, so did their coverage in national polls.

The final category of polling that was examined in this research was that of Obama's personal qualifications for president and his leadership ability. The definition of this category was intentionally left broad, as to accommodate the various polling that was

done throughout the campaign. The inclusion of this category insured that in addition to the tangible and easily defined polling concepts, an examination of Obama's less tangible qualities would occur.

It is important to note that the purpose of the polling analysis was not to determine statistical significance or causation. Rather, the comparison of polling results was meant to suggest the potential influence of Obama's speeches on public opinion. It is, of course, impossible to rule out other contemporaneous factors that might have contributed to shifts in public opinion. In this analysis, significance should not be assumed to mean statistical significance, but is rather used to imply the importance of polling results.

The methodology of selecting polling results relied on the availability of information. From a complete list of polling done about Obama during the time period before and after the speech, the most appropriate polls were selected for inclusion. The polls were selected based on their relevance to the polling categories, their timeliness, and their comparability to other polls conducted. By pairing polls that examined the same ideas together, results from before and after the speeches could be compared with minimal shift in the ideas being tested.

The polling analysis was conducted to better understand the impact Obama's speeches had on the American public's views of him. By examining Obama's electability, favorability and personal qualifications, the polling represented a comprehensive look at all aspects of public opinion during an election.

Barack Obama's Announcement for President

Environmental Context

Senator Barack Obama announced his candidacy for President on February 10, 2007 in Springfield, Illinois. The formal announcement came after months of increasing speculation about his run. This speculation was largely prompted by the success of his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. This speech, in which Obama talked about his vision of America, introduced him to the national scene and promoted his quickly growing national presence.

The speculation about Obama's run was heightened on October 22, 2006 when Senator Obama spoke with Tim Russert on NBC News' *Meet the Press*. When asked if he was considering a presidential run in 2008, Obama responded,

“Given the responses that I've been getting over the last several months, I have thought about the possibility. But I have not thought it—about it with the seriousness and depth that I think is required.... After oh—after November 7, I'll sit down and, and consider, and if at some point, I change my mind, I will make a public announcement and everybody will be able to go at me.”⁵

This statement surprised much of the American public, because ten months prior, on January 22, 2006, he appeared on *Meet the Press* and ruled out a 2008 run.

Senator Obama officially filed with the FEC on January 16, 2007 and in doing so, began new speculation over when and where he would officially announce his candidacy, and how it would impact the presumptive nominee, Senator Hillary Clinton.⁶

Senator Obama gathered supporters in Springfield, Illinois and spoke of his vision for the nation, and his plan for change. The location of the announcement was likely chosen as a way to weave Obama's experiences in the state of Illinois with those of

⁵ "Illinois Senator Barack Obama: Discusses War in Iraq, Democratic Policy and Upcoming Elections." Interview with Tim Russert. *Meet the Press*. NBC. 22 Oct. 2006. [LexisNexis](#). American University.

⁶ Schor, Elena. "Obama Readies '08 Bid." *The Hill* 17 Jan. 2007. [LexisNexis](#). American University.

President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln served in the Illinois state General Assembly at the Springfield courthouse before becoming President, and Obama's term as an Illinois state senator allowed him to build a strong relationship with the people and politics of Springfield. This subtle tie between the two men was an important part of the symbolism and power behind Obama's announcement speech, and will be explored later in further detail.

It is important to note that at this time, there were at least eight potential candidates for the Democratic nomination for President. In addition to Clinton and Obama, the list of possible candidates included Sen. Christopher Dodd, Sen. Joseph Biden, Gov. Tom Vilsack, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, former Senator John Edwards, and Gov. Bill Richardson.⁷ As of January 29, 2007 only Edwards, Vilsack, Kucinich and Clinton had formally announced their candidacies.⁸ At the time of Senator Obama's announcement, he and the other candidates were largely seen as underdogs to Senator Hillary Clinton, who announced her candidacy on January 20, 2007.⁹ Clinton was expected to win the Democratic nomination for President easily and quickly. While Obama's speech garnered a great deal of public and media attention, it was not believed to be a speech that could change the outcome of the election.

⁷ Pickler, Nedra. "Underdogs Pursue White House Beneath the Radar of Obama-Clinton Clamor." USA Today 31 Dec. 2006. <www.usatoday.com>.

⁸ Malone, Jim. "US 2008 Presidential Field Expands Quickly." Malone Report. 29 Jan. 2007. <<http://www.voanews.com>>.

⁹ Balz, Dan. "Hillary Clinton Opens Presidential Bid." The Washington Post 21 Jan. 2007. <www.washingtonpost.com>.

Content Analysis

Senator Barack Obama's announcement speech marking the beginning of his campaign for President did a more than just inform the American people of his intent to run. By taking the time to explain both his personal and political backgrounds, Obama was able to formally introduce himself to the American audience, gathering attention and interest in his candidacy.

Main Messages

The most prominent message throughout Obama's speech was that of the potential for change. Obama established this as the major theme of his campaign early on, using this speech as a major vehicle for explanation. Within the first couple minutes of his speech, Obama explains his reasons for running for President. As he is explaining, Obama states, "I know I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change." By doing this, Obama speaks directly to the American people, explaining that he is running for President to change the way that politics are done in this nation. In stating this early on, Obama develops the message of change quickly, and uses it as a backdrop for the remainder of the speech.

Later, Obama addresses the type of politics that Americans have become accustomed to. He describes a nation of mounting debts, rising health care costs, and racial inequality that has left many Americans disillusioned and frustrated. By citing specific examples of President George W. Bush's failures, Obama is able to build the need among his listeners for new leadership. Obama then states, "The time for that

politics is over. It's time to turn the page.” Listeners are told that change is necessary, and that they have an opportunity to embrace it in Obama’s campaign.

Woven intricately with the message of change is Obama’s message of unity. This message takes several forms throughout the speech, calling for unity across many lines. Obama first presents this message in the beginning of his speech, when he explains the importance of his experiences in the Illinois state legislature. Obama says,

“It was here we learned to disagree without being disagreeable - that it's possible to compromise so long as you know those principles that can never be compromised; and that so long as we're willing to listen to each other, we can assume the best in people instead of the worst.”

This quote serves as a formal statement of Obama’s belief in the potential for unity across any dividing line. By clearly explaining that he believes people who disagree can work together for a better America, Obama opens his campaign to all voters.

This same message is reinforced later in the speech, when Obama calls upon the American people to bring change to America. After setting the stage by describing a nation that needs change, Obama says, “So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation.” In doing this, Obama presents the challenge of transforming the United States to all Americans. Obama then continues by using the phrase “Let us be the generation” as the start to each following paragraph. In doing this, Obama unifies all Americans in their responsibility to the challenges ahead.

At the end of his speech, Obama takes an opportunity to present his messages of change and unity as inextricably tied to one another. After weaving each of the two messages into his speech independently of one another, Obama shifts and presents them together, as a single idea. Obama states, “By ourselves, this change will not happen. Divided, we are bound to fail.” In doing this, Obama imparts Americans with the idea that

in order to bring about change, they must first put aside their differences and join together. Obama uses this speech as an opportunity to define his campaign as a vehicle towards changing the United States.

Tone

Obama used this speech as an opportunity to clearly establish a tone for his campaign. By beginning his campaign with a carefully constructed speech that maintained a hopeful tone throughout, Obama was able to establish an aura of confidence in the eyes of Americans. This hopeful tone mirrored Obama's later campaign messages and slogans. However, in this speech, rather than serving as an overused campaign slogan, Obama used the idea of hope as a subtle way to set a clear tone.

The main way that Obama achieves this tone is through the direct assurance that despite challenges, Americans will overcome. This theme is recurring throughout the speech, and serves as the foundation for Obama's discussion of hope. At the start of his speech, Obama says,

“In the face of war, you believe there can be peace. In the face of despair, you believe there can be hope. In the face of a politics that's shut you out, that's told you to settle, that's divided us for too long, you believe we can be one people, reaching for what's possible, building that more perfect union.”¹⁰

In stating this early on in his speech, Obama clearly acknowledges that there are challenges ahead, and that the essence of hope is an essential part of overcoming these challenges.

Several minutes later, Obama tells his listeners that, “we can build a more hopeful America.” By doing this, Obama reassures his listeners that remaining hopeful will actually shape America's future. This overt use of the word “hope” actually helps to

¹⁰ "Barack Obama's Announcement for President." Springfield, IL. 10 Feb. 2007. <www.barackobama.com>.

maintain the hopeful tone established earlier in the speech. Listeners are not only able to understand the tone, but also see how it can impact their future.

Obama relies on this same tone towards the end of the speech. It is here that Obama lays his vision for the nation and the campaign's priorities. After explaining his plans for the nation, Obama returns to the basic need for hope. He says, "I know there are those who don't believe we can do all these things. I understand the skepticism. After all, every four years, candidates from both parties make similar promises, and I expect this year will be no different." In this quote, Obama directly acknowledges the reason why being hopeful of a candidate's plan is difficult. By doing this, Obama is directly speaking to the fears of the American people, and assuring that while they are justified, this campaign is different.

Throughout the speech, Obama uses hope as foundation of his tone. By using hopeful language, Obama attempts to convey an inner confidence to his audience. In doing this, Obama portrays himself as a politician who personally believes in the importance of hope. Also, by maintaining this tone, Obama is able to recognize the challenges presented before him, without seeming negative. Instead, he establishes the challenges, and then explains that in order to overcome them, America must be hopeful. This speech introduced Americans to not just the candidate, but also to the messaging that was central to his win.

Use of Story

In addition to serving as the formal announcement of his candidacy, Obama's speech needed to serve as an introduction to the American people. Recognizing this, Obama used stories to portray both his personal and political background. Early in the

speech, Obama explains the personal journey that began for him at the end of college. He describes his job doing community organizing in Chicago, and then his choice to return to law school. In doing so, Obama describes his political roots, and the issues that first brought him into public service. Obama's storytelling is personal, and serves the purpose of portraying Obama's background in politics. While Obama does not use specific stories to supplement this message, he describes important phases of his life, and the choices he had to make to get through each one. In doing this, Obama portrays himself as human, and understanding of the challenges that average Americans face.

In addition to using personal anecdotes, Obama uses historical anecdote and story to supplement his speech's message. Using the symbolism of the speech's location, Obama ties his experience to that of President Abraham Lincoln. Obama uses Lincoln's story as evidence that difficult change is possible. He says,

“But the life of a tall, gangly, self-made Springfield lawyer tells us that a different future is possible. He tells us that there is power in words. He tells us that there is power in conviction. That beneath all the differences of race and region, faith and station, we are one people. He tells us that there is power in hope.”

In referencing Lincoln, Obama is also able to recognize the historical significance of his campaign. Later in Obama's campaign, references and comparisons to Lincoln become more prominent, highlighting Obama's messages of change and unity.

In this speech, Obama uses story to supplement the already strong messages that he presents to his listeners. Instead of focusing on stories of other Americans, Obama uses personal stories and political references to build his public image at the start of the campaign. By doing this, Obama begins his campaign with a strong commitment to a core set of messages and personal images.

Content Conclusion

Obama uses his announcement speech as an opportunity to share the themes and messages of his campaign directly to the American people. By doing this, Obama begins the campaign with his vision for the future clearly articulated. The speech's content presents this vision, while also establishing a clear tone and voice for the entirety of Obama's campaign

Announcement Speech- Media Analysis

The New York Times- News Article

On February 11, 2007, *The New York Times* published a story titled, “Obama Formally Enters Presidential Race with Calls for Generational Change.” Written by Adam Nagourney and Jeff Zeleny, the article served as the primary news piece addressing Obama’s announcement speech the day before. Focused on presenting the highlights of Obama’s speech and his coming challenges in the campaign, the article’s tone was hopeful, yet uncertain.

When discussing Obama’s speech, the authors used language and a tone that mirrored Obama’s campaign message. The article opened with the following quote,

“Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, standing before the Old State Capitol where Abraham Lincoln began his political career, announced his candidacy for the White House on Saturday by presenting himself as an agent of generational change who could transform a government hobbled by cynicism, petty corruption and ‘a smallness of our politics’”¹¹

By beginning the article with a strong image and clear symbolism, the article worked to reinforce the speech’s intended messaging and set a positive tone. The image of Senator Barack Obama against the Illinois Old State Capitol is intentional and pragmatic, as is the author’s mention of Lincoln. These images tell the reader that Obama is a real candidate, a candidate who can win, and a candidate that can bring change to the nation. The authors themselves blatantly recognize the meaning behind the event, and its impact on our political future by saying, “It was the latest step in a journey rich with historic possibilities and symbolism.” It is their direct articulation of this that elevates this article

¹¹ Nagourney, Adam, and Jeff Zeleny. "Obama Formally Enters Presidential Race With Calls for Generational Change." The New York Times 11 Feb. 2007. LexisNexis. American University.

past a mere presentation of news, to a hopeful reflection on the speech and Obama's candidacy as a whole.

Despite the positive tone in the start of the article, the authors shift and take on a critical analysis of Obama's challenges to come. Instead of maintaining a wide frame, the article shifts focus to providing analysis about the impact of Obama's announcement on the rest of the campaign. The authors begin this frame shift with the acknowledgement of Obama's "charmed introduction to national politics" and his relative inexperience in the lights of Washington. Obama's inexperience is used as a platform for comparison to what the authors refer to as a "challenge that would seem daunting to even the most talented politician." The challenge they are referring to is the political muscle of Senator Hillary Clinton. As an answer to this challenge, the article describes the hurdles that Obama must clear in order to defend his candidacy. Calling on Obama to provide plans for his policy ideas and to stop relying on his personality and the idea of hope to carry him through, the article is harshly critical of Obama's style.

Despite this criticism, the article ends on a positive note as the authors shift back to a positive tone, and widen their frame. By once again quoting Obama's speech, the article essentially portrays Obama's messages directly to the reader, with the objective goal of informing its readers of the events that occurred. Throughout the article, the authors addressed Obama's future challenges, as well as the benefits that he brought to the campaign. Overall, the article served as a reflective piece with a great deal of analysis about the impact Obama would have on the presidential race.

The New York Times-Opinion Article

Also published on February 11, 2007 in the *New York Times* was an opinion article written by Frank Rich that was titled, "Stop Him Before He Gets More Experience." The article examined Obama's campaign presence a day after his official announcement, and contrasted it to the other candidates in the field. By framing the article around a discussion of the Iraq War, Rich uses Obama's experiences and decisions to discuss his qualifications for the role of president, as well as his experience in politics.

Rich's first argument is that Obama's judgment is what sets him apart from his fellow candidates. In an interview with Rich, Obama stated that he believes, "What people are looking for is judgment."¹² By citing Obama's decision not to back the Iraq War as his primary evidence, Rich presents the idea that Obama exhibits judgment that other candidates did not. However, as he presents this evidence, he tempers it with criticisms that mirror Obama's image as just a pretty face. By mentioning Obama's Men's Vogue photo shoot, best selling books and the onset of "Obamamania," Rich portrays the candidate as someone who must learn to overcome the celebrity of politics.

The messages Rich includes about Obama's celebrity lead the reader to wonder if there is any substance behind this candidate. In an attempt to satisfy this need, Rich asserts that Obama's withdrawal plan is detailed and extensive. His plan is an attempt at a compromise of the current issues in the war, a balance between withdrawal and escalation. Rich points out that this plan is a clear attempt to end the war, and will never get the support within the Senate that it needs to pass into law. However, this is not the point that Rich wants the reader to walk away with. Instead, he uses a quote from Obama

¹² Rich, Frank. "Stop Him Before He Gets More Experience." The Washington Post 11 Feb. 2007. LexisNexis. American University.

himself to communicate the true importance of Obama's actions in the Senate. Rich tells us that, "The real point of every Iraq proposal, Mr. Obama observes, is to crank up the political heat until 'enough pressure builds within the Republican Party that they essentially revolt.'" The reader is left with the understanding that Obama's strategy is more than just skin deep. With this casual introduction to political strategy, Rich is asking his readers to look beyond the decisions that Obama makes, and see through to the influence that the decisions have on those around them.

The tone of Rich's article is very balanced, and takes the time to develop both highly supportive and highly critical arguments about Obama's candidacy. The article's gradual progression allows the reader to follow along, and come to understand the implications of certain political choices. At the end, Rich introduces the argument that perhaps it is not experience that makes a candidate right. Instead, he forges the argument that conventional wisdom might be wrong in this case. Instead, he says that as the war progresses, Americans might decide to stray from the party and the people who led the nation into war. In other words, Americans might stray from the Washington insiders for the benefit of the experience that Obama lacks. Rich's final argument is that Obama's inexperience is not necessarily a bad thing. Instead he says that it might be the thing that allows Obama's campaign to be successful.

Unlike the news article examined previously, this article does not rely on Obama's announcement speech as a roadmap to the campaign's future. Instead, Rich's article examines Obama's candidacy broadly, and for its worth as a political strategy machine. However, by adopting the use of the Iraq War as a frame, Rich is able to focus his readers on a specific example of the campaign's success.

What is most interesting about the comparison of the two *New York Times* articles is the significant difference in the authors' tone. While each article carried a similar message, that Americans should give this guy a chance, they took alternate routes. Instead of extrapolating on the rhetoric and symbolism behind the campaign, Rich looked down the road two years, to the things that would matter on November 4, 2008. The opinion article showed Americans that perhaps there was something beyond the glitz and glamour of "Obamamania."

The Washington Post- News Article

On February 11, 2007, *The Washington Post's* Dan Balz and Anne E Kornblut published an article titled, "Obama Joins Race With Goals Set High; Now-Official Presidential Candidate Talks of Universal Health Care, Leaving Iraq." Much like *The New York Times* news article profiled above, this article served as the newspaper's primary coverage of the event. The author's framed the article as a comparison of Obama's candidacy with others in the field. By doing this, the article aimed to showcase Obama's placement as relative to other candidates.

As a result of the comparative frame, this article did not mirror the positive tone and deep symbolism of Obama's campaign event. Instead, the article takes on a realistic tone, providing the reader with background on the challenges that Obama faces. The first of the challenges presented is Obama's need to "transform himself from political phenomenon into the kind of candidate who can withstand the rigors of the marathon ahead."¹³ By acknowledging Obama's status as a "political phenomenon," the article is

¹³ Balz, Dan, and Anne Kornblut. "Obama Joins Race With Goals Set High; Now-Official Presidential Candidate Talks of Universal Health Care, Leaving Iraq." *The Washington Post* 11 Feb. 2007. LexisNexis. American University.

slightly more critical, blatantly stating that Obama has more to prove than other candidates. This tone is reinforced throughout the rest of the article, with the author's language as a vehicle. By stating that Obama will be "challenged to fill in the blanks of a policy agenda that is longer on goals than details," the article reinforces ideas that are prevalent in public opinion at the time. Rather than provide information that is challenging to the reader's point of view, the article seems to simply articulate the fears of voters.

The article's other main purpose was to serve as a public introduction of Obama. Citing the symbolism of his speech, the article builds a parallel between Obama and President Abraham Lincoln. In addition, it examines the ways in which Obama's rhetoric is reminiscent of President John F. Kennedy's. These parallels are used as a gateway to an introduction of Obama. The article outlines his personal history, as well as his rise in the national political arena in 2004. Alongside these accomplishments, the article lists those that make Obama the "phenomenon," such as his books, appearances on Oprah and ESPN, and in People Magazine. Once again, the article's tone is quite hesitant towards Obama's candidacy, almost as if to advocate the experience and stability of another candidate.

The end of the article presents a dramatic shift in tone and structure. Instead of continuing to provide a careful and critical look into the candidate and his policies, the article jumps back to Obama's announcement speech. By quoting several segments of Obama's speech, the article's tone dramatically shifts. The authors use the imagery of the turning of a page that was also used during Obama's speech as a promise for the changes that Obama's campaign has and will continue to bring to elections. Citing his website,

growing staff, and use of the Obama horizon symbol as proof, the article suggests that Obama's campaign is different from his competitors. This setup served the authors well, as it allowed them to then sell the audience Obama's bold message. By providing readers with a quote from Obama's speech, the authors allowed their readers to get a feel for the Obama candidacy. The article ended with the following quote, "I want to win, but I don't just want to win. I want to transform this country." Left almost as a challenge to the reader, this quote largely represents Obama's campaign, and his future goals. It is clear that the authors were looking for a way to challenge their readers, and perhaps even themselves.

The Washington Post- Opinion Article

On this same day, an Outlook section article was published that threw out the rules of conventional journalism in favor of a softer approach. The article was a compilation of eight personal reflections about Obama. While the stories do not necessarily reflect on Obama's announcement speech, the article itself represents an important segment of the media's tone at the time. While other papers published rather traditional opinion articles either supporting or not supporting Obama's candidacy and the success of his announcement speech, *The Washington Post* fulfilled a far more basic need, the need for personal information and public comfort.

By collecting stories from eight people who knew a younger Obama, the paper turned off some of the political noise surrounding his candidacy, and let readers see the real Barack Obama. Framing each story as a testimony to Obama's personal and political attributes, the article attempted to present a comprehensive and realistic picture of who he is. With two stories about basketball and one about a rusty mustard-yellow Toyota

Tercel, the contributors gave the public something that no one else could, a look into the person behind the politics. The stories were humanizing and raw, and showcased Obama's passions.

Four of the stories were about political experiences that contributors remember having with Obama. Ranging from a failed attempt to campaign at a St. Patrick's Day Parade, to the anticipation of Obama's now-famous 2004 DNC Speech, the stories cast Obama in the political light that most Americans were used to seeing him in. However, instead of looking from the outside in, the readers read about the events from the inside out. These stories not only reinforced messages of Obama's political passion and talents, but also gave them grounding in truth.

One of the stories was deeply personal, and showed the public a side of politics rarely seen. This story was written by Valerie Jarrett, who was cited as Obama's former finance chair of Obama's Senate Campaign. Today, she serves as a White House Senior Advisor. Jarrett described a time when Obama returned from a jog while on vacation, and was completely shocked to have had his picture taken. She describes the experience by stating, "As he entered the kitchen he had a look of complete disbelief on his face...He was completely mystified that somebody would be interested in a picture of him."¹⁴ This story brings out the truly personal side of Obama's life, and the impact that politics has had on his day-to-day life.

While none of the stories directly reflect on Obama's announcement speech, their timing is not coincidental. Running this series of anecdotes as an outlook piece the day after Obama's speech can be seen as informal public relations. *The Washington Post*, a

¹⁴ "A Rusty Toyota, a Mean Jump Shot, Good Ears." *The Washington Post* 11 Feb. 2007. [LexisNexis](#). American University.

paper with an admittedly liberal bend, searched for a way to present Obama to its readers in the same way that he officially presented himself to American voters. By finding stories that highlight Obama's passion, past and perseverance, the Post helped to illustrate a picture that resonates with their readers and supplements the messages of Obama's speech.

When compared to the Op-Ed piece published in *The New York Times*, the differences are endless. It is clear that each article served a specific purpose, filling a niche desired by the paper, editors or readers. What ties these two pieces together is an honest appraisal of who Obama is, including his faults, blemishes and challenges. In presenting a more comprehensive image, both articles served as an orientation or a tutorial for voters. While both of these articles served their goal of educating and challenging their audiences, they also fulfilled Obama's campaign goal. By engaging voters in new and honest ways, the campaign hoped to strike a chord. This article does just this, while promoting the tone and tenor of Obama's campaign.

The Wall Street Journal

On January 12, 2007 *The Wall Street Journal* published an article by Jackie Calmes titled, "Politics & Economics: Obama's 'Improbable Quest'; After Official Entry, His Task Is to Conquer Questions of Experience." This article was *The Wall Street Journal's* sole news story dedicated to the coverage of Senator Barack Obama's announcement speech and initial campaign events. What sets this article apart from the others that have been discussed is that it pairs Obama's announcement speech with his campaign's opening weekend events in Iowa. By pairing the messages of these separate events together, the author establishes the frame of the article to be the start of Obama's

campaign and the assessment of his campaign priorities on behalf of the readers. In addition, the article applies a critical tone to analyzing Obama's words in contrast to his plans. Unlike several other news articles, this attempts to extrapolate policy from campaign rhetoric.

The article begins with a clear and brisk acknowledgement of Obama's limited experience and untraditional resume. The author states that Obama's sudden fame should be attributed to "his charismatic style and eloquence in two best-selling books and a memorable address at the 2004 Democratic Convention."¹⁵ This assertion is made directly after the author lists Obama's professional accomplishments, and classifies him as "relatively untested." This introduction sets a clear tone for the article, that Obama's qualifications should be questioned. In fact, the author concludes the introduction with the belief that Obama has more to prove in the area of policy than any other candidate.

The article then changes its focus to the examination of Obama's platform presentation and the policy specifics that he provides. Calmes provides the reader with the analysis that states, "Mostly he kept up an audience-stirring diagnosis of the nation's ills and offered promises... but no specific remedies." What is most interesting about this argument is that Calmes uses a quote from Obama himself to help assert the point that specifics do not play a role in the campaign. Obama stated, "One of the narratives that's established itself in the mainstream media is this notion that, 'Well, you know, Obama has a pretty good style. He can deliver a pretty good speech, but he seems to prioritize rhetoric over substance.' Now, factually that's incorrect." The use of this quote actually reinforces the message to the audience, and grants it leverage. This idea grants the author

¹⁵ Calmes, Jackie. "Politics & Economics: Obama's 'Improbable Quest'; After Official Entry, His Task Is to Conquer Questions of Experience." The Wall Street Journal 12 Feb. 2007. Proquest. American University.

a stepping stool to support his point that rather than present policy specifics, Obama believes that his role is to make grand statements. This idea was common not only at the time the article was written, but throughout the campaign. Despite a clear personal bias, the author does recognize that Obama and his campaign promised that policy specifics would be released as they were finalized. However, in addition, the author presents the idea that Obama's campaign is working to frame his inexperience as an opportunity to walk into Washington as an outsider. This point in particular is interesting, as it strays from the conventional understanding of Obama's inexperience. While the other articles examined stated a defined relationship between Obama's Washington status and his level of experience, this author believes that it is an idea largely contrived by a campaign. This interpretation feeds upon the already negative assumptions being made by the author for the audience, and supports the article's truly negative tone.

Towards the conclusion of the article, the author returns to his main frame, as he pins Obama up against his leading competition in Iowa, Senator John Edwards. The author correctly identifies the candidates as sharing an audience and vying for the top seat in Iowa. This connection is important, as the author is able to correctly segment voter audiences, as well as foresee Obama's potential for success in the campaign. The potential of this success is largely tied to Obama's position on the Iraq War, the author suggests. Like several of the other articles, this article reflects on the importance of Obama's decision to not support the war. This point is especially true when examining the voting record of both Senator Edwards and Senator Clinton- both of whom supported the war. The author makes the point that Obama's position is an "applause line," as opposed to a blemish in the past.

When examined as a whole, this article takes on a clearly different tone than the other two news articles. What is most interesting is that the evidence used in each of the articles does not vary significantly. Nor do the ideas discussed. Instead, a significant influencing factor is the tone in which the author chooses to present their material. In this case, the author exerts a clear opinion on Obama's weaknesses and relative inexperience. However, the merits of this article are significant- as the author manages to weave a news story about Obama's announcement speech with a discussion of his policy preparedness. This level of analysis was not as readily apparent in the other articles, and thus prompted the reader to wonder what information they might be missing.

Announcement Speech- Polling Influence

Overall Favorability- Before the Speech

Prior to Barack Obama's speech announcing his candidacy for President, the general American public's awareness of him was very limited. The majority of Americans had not heard enough about Obama to have an opinion. Of those who had, the majority maintained very neutral opinions of him, while small segments held positive or negative opinions about him. Overall, favorability varied greatly by the political affiliation of the respondent.

CBS News conducted a poll on January 6, 2007 that asked the question, "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?"¹⁶ This question tested several areas of public opinion, including public awareness of the candidate and his campaign. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1

	Average Response	Republican Respondents	Democratic Respondents	Independent Respondents
Favorable	28%	16%	34%	31%
Not Favorable	10	18	7	8
Undecided	14	14	15	13
Haven't Heard Enough	47	52	43	48

(From CBS News, January 6, 2007)

Democrats were most likely to find Obama favorable, at 34%. Independents were close behind, with an approval rating of 31%. Democrats and Independents responded similarly throughout the rest of the poll as well, citing 7% and 8% un-favorability

¹⁶ "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?" CBS News. 6 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

respectively. These numbers were dramatically different than the responses collected from Republican respondents. Only 16% responded favorably, while surprisingly, only 18% responded un-favorably. This low un-favorability can largely be attributed to 52% of respondents who answered that they hadn't heard enough about the candidate. This was higher than any other group. This divide suggests that at this time, Barack Obama remained relatively unknown by the Republican general public.

CBS conducted this same poll days later, on January 22, 2007.¹⁷ The question remained exactly the same, but resulted in different responses. Obama's favorability increased among both Republican and Democratic responders. The full results are presented in the table below.

Table 2

	Average Response	Republican Respondents	Democratic Respondents	Independent Respondents
Favorable	29%	20%	39%	27%
Not Favorable	9	14	4	11
Undecided	20	23	19	21
Haven't Heard Enough	41	43	38	41

(From CBS News, January 22, 2007)

These results indicate an increase in favorability in both Republican and Democratic populations. Republican favorability increased by 4%, and Democratic favorability by 5%. However, independent favorability actually dropped, from 31% to 27%. These results were mirrored in the un-favorability ratings: Republicans dropped 4%, Democrats dropped 3% and Independents rose 3%. Across the board, more respondents were undecided about Senator Barack Obama and less felt as though they did not have enough information. This poll showcases Obama's increasing positive public

¹⁷ "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?" CBS News. 22 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

awareness. The increased awareness led to rise in favorability, a fall in un-favorability and a growing audience.

Overall Favorability- After the Speech

After Obama's speech, polling agencies failed to conduct polls that examined his overall favorability. Instead, the polling that was done was far more specific in nature, and focused on testing the public's reaction to Obama and the growing awareness of his candidacy. The results from the favorability polling conducted before Obama's speech should be seen as a baseline representation of Obama's early favorability. It is important to note that these polls are the best representation of Obama's national favorability at the start of the campaign, and should be used to better understand the progression of his campaign and its success.

Conclusions about Overall Favorability

Obama's relative anonymity early in the campaign shaded him from the often highly negative criticism afforded by a campaign's opposite party, and their voters. In addition, this anonymity allowed him to avoid any early partisan attacks.

The polls indicate that the majority of Americans at this time had still not learned enough about Obama. However, those who had were largely positive, or maintained a neutral stance. This balance of public opinion was a huge benefit to the Obama campaign prior to the formal announcement. Voters were open to Obama's message, and were often interested in collecting more information about him or the campaign.

Electability- Before the Speech

Throughout the month of January, several news outlets conducted polls comparing Senator Barack Obama to Senator Hillary Clinton. These polls were often looking to test Obama's "electability" in the Democratic nomination process. Overall, these polls found that Obama's electability at the time was very low. Senator Hillary Clinton's electability was significantly higher, and the polls showcased her as the front runner in the Democratic race. However, Obama led in electability polling in comparison to any of the other Democratic candidates in the field at the time.

In an ABC/Washington Post poll released on January 21, 2007, democratic respondents were asked who they would vote for in a Democratic primary. Information was collected for nine candidates, and respondents had the option of stating "other", "none of these" or "no opinion."¹⁸ In this poll, Hillary Clinton led with 41% of the respondents. Obama fell into second place, with only 17%.

A similar poll by CBS asked, "Suppose the race for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 2008 comes down to a choice between Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama. Who would you most like to see nominated?"¹⁹ The results, released on January 22, 2007, showed a significant difference between partisan groups. Democrats were far more likely to support Clinton, at 51%, while Republicans chose Obama at 36%. Independents were evenly split between the two candidates, Clinton getting 29% and Obama 28%. These results indicate a large partisan divide, which will be explored further in the section's conclusion.

¹⁸ "If the 2008 Democratic presidential primary or caucus in your state were being held today, and the candidates were..." ABC News/ Washington Post. 21 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

¹⁹ "Suppose the race for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 2008 comes down to a choice between Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama. Who would you most like to see nominated..." CBS News. 22 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

Electability- After the Speech

Directly after Obama's announcement speech, several agencies conducted polling that directly contrasted Senator Barack Obama with both Republican and Democratic candidates. These polls found that after his announcement speech, Obama's electability increased greatly. This was especially true within the context of the Democratic nomination process. While Obama still fell short of Sen. Clinton's electability, he began narrowing her lead. Polling that was focused on Obama's general election electability showcased that he was beginning to establish himself as a candidate that could successfully compete against the Republican nominee for President.

On February 15th, 2007 Fox Broadcasting Company released a poll asking, "If Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were the only choices in the Democratic primary, how would you vote?"²⁰ Of Democratic respondents, Clinton won the poll with 49%, and Obama received 32%. However, of Independent respondents, Obama won by 43%, while Clinton received 31%. This poll showcases a dramatic shift from the poll results released by CBS on January 22, 2007. Clinton's lead among democratic respondents decreases, while Obama's support among this same community increases. The January polls suggests Clinton had a 24% lead over Obama among Democratic respondents. The poll conducted after Obama's announcement speech shows Clinton with a 17% lead. Among Independents, the results are equally as positive for the Obama campaign. In the January poll, Clinton's lead over Obama was insignificant, but present at 1%. In the February poll, Obama took the lead with Independent voters, with a 12% margin. These shifts are dramatic, especially for having taken place in less than a month

²⁰ "If Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were the only choices in the Democratic primary, how would you vote?" Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Feb. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

On February 14th, Harris Poll released a poll that examined the support levels of all Democratic candidates for President. The poll asked, “If you were to vote and had to select from the following candidates, for which of the following people would you consider voting...”²¹ The poll then listed 17 potential candidates, and respondents were allowed to select a total of three candidates that they would consider voting for. Clinton was selected by 47% of respondents, and was the highest ranked Democrat. Obama came in second, with 37%. While this poll’s methodology was slightly different, it can be compared to the one conducted by ABC News/Washington Post. In that poll, Clinton’s margin over Obama was 24%. This margin is cut dramatically in the second poll, where Clinton’s margin is only 10%. These results mirror those of the first poll mentioned; Obama’s support increased dramatically from the baselines polls taken in January to the post-announcement polls in February.

Obama’s growing support among Democratic voters led news agencies to begin polling Obama’s support in a general election setting. By comparing Obama to one of the two frontrunners in the Republican primary process, polls were able to get a sense of whether or not voters felt Obama was a candidate that would hold up during a general election. On February 15, 2007, Fox Broadcasting Agency released a poll that asked, “Thinking ahead to the next presidential election, if the 2008 general election were held today and the candidates were Democrat Barack Obama, and Republican Rudy Giuliani, for whom would you vote?”²² The poll results were separated by partisan group and Independents. Of Democratic respondents, 65% stated Obama. Of Republican

²¹ “If you could vote for one candidate, who would you most likely vote for...” Harris Poll. 14 Feb. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

²² “Thinking ahead to the next presidential election, if the 2008 general election were held today and the candidates were Democrat Barack Obama, and Republican Rudy Giuliani, for whom would you vote?” Fox Broadcasting Company. 15 Feb. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

respondents, 76% stated Giuliani. Independents were closely split, with 42% stating Giuliani, and 39% stating Obama. These results indicated that Republican partisans were more likely to support Giuliani than Democratic partisans were to support Obama. This can largely be attributed to the status of each of the campaigns at this time. In February 2007, Giuliani was largely seen as the Republican front runner, while Obama was still trailing Clinton. This difference is clearly illustrated in this poll, as fewer Democrats were willing to pledge their support to Obama.

Another poll that examined Obama in relation to a Republican candidate was released by USA Today/ Gallup on February 14, 2007. The poll measured “preferences expressed when registered voters were asked to make a choice between Barack Obama and John McCain.”²³ The results placed McCain and Obama completely equal, both collecting 48% of the respondents’ support. These results are especially interesting when considered in relation to the results comparing Giuliani and Obama. The significant difference between these polls is the candidates’ support within their own party. McCain, like Obama, was considered second to another candidate in his party. As a result, these poll results did not necessarily communicate steadfast support to a specific candidate, but instead, opposition to another candidate. These results might also be tied to specific partisan lines, rather than candidate preferences.

Conclusions about Electability

The results of polling that compared Clinton and Obama’s support among partisan groups point to an interesting divide. The polling results from before the speech can be interpreted to suggest that the partisan voters selected a candidate that they felt would

²³“Preferences expressed when registered voters were asked to make a choice between Barack Obama and John McCain.”USA Today/Gallup. 14 Feb. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

help their party win the Presidential election. Democrats selected Clinton for her wide public awareness, and Republicans selected Obama for what they thought was an unlikely win. After the speech, the same poll was conducted with Democrats and Independents. These results indicate that fewer Democrats felt tied to Clinton's campaign, and were comfortable voting for Obama. In addition, Independents dramatically shifted their support towards Obama. This shift can be attributed to the speech, as it not only introduced Americans to Obama, but also promoted a positive image of his candidacy.

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- Before the Speech

Prior to his speech, polling agencies began testing the public's awareness and opinions regarding Obama's personality and leadership characteristics. The poll results indicate that generally speaking, Americans felt that Obama had integrity and strong leadership skills. While these polling results varied slightly by partisan affiliation, the difference was not dramatic. However, when tested on the issue of experience, Obama lost a great deal of public support. Especially among Republicans, Obama was not seen as having enough experience. Overall, these polls found that the general public maintained a fairly neutral or even slightly positive opinion of Obama's ability to lead and serve the nation in the role of the President.

Perhaps the most interesting polls run prior to Obama's announcement speech were a series of three that CBS released on January 22, 2007. Each poll asked groups of partisan voters and Independents for their opinion. The first poll asked, "Do you think

Barack Obama has more honesty and integrity than most people in public life?”²⁴ Of Democratic respondents, 49% felt that Obama has more honesty and integrity than most people in public life, and 36% did not know. Of Republican respondents, 37% believed he has more, and 47% did not know. Independents closely mirrored Republicans, with 36% responding positively, and 45% not knowing. Again, this poll illustrates that at this time, Senator Obama maintained a fairly positive public opinion among the Americans who knew something about him. While the number of people who did not know enough about him was still rather high, Obama did not have a large negative association.

On this same day, CBS released a poll that asked, “Do you think Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, or not?”²⁵ Much like the previous poll, the majority of Americans responded positively, or by stating that they did not yet have enough information to make a judgment. Democratic responders were most likely to believe that Obama has strong leadership qualities, and least likely to state that they did not know. Republicans responses directly contrasted, as they were the least likely to believe in Obama’s leadership qualities, and most likely to state that they did not know. Independents responses were exactly in between those of the partisan respondents. An important finding is that only 13% of all respondents felt as though Obama did not have strong leadership qualities.

Also on January 22, 2007, CBS released a poll that asked, “Do you think Barack Obama has the right kind of experience to be a good president, or not?”²⁶ This

²⁴ “Do you think Barack Obama has more honesty and integrity than most people in public life?” CBS News. 22 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

²⁵ “Do you think Barack Obama has strong qualities of leadership, or not?” CBS News. 22 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

²⁶ “Do you think Barack Obama has the right kind of experience to be a good president, or not?” CBS News. 22 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

poll tested not only public opinion, but also the potential influence that an “experience” campaign could have on voter perceptions of Obama. This is exceptionally important, especially when considered in contrast to the general public perception of the other leading Democratic candidate, Senator Hillary Clinton. The results of this poll varied greatly by partisan group. Of Democratic respondents, 33% believed that Obama has the right kind of experience to be a good President. This is in comparison to 27% of Independents, and only 17% of Republicans. Republicans were most likely to believe that Obama did not have the right kind of experience, at 42%. Only 25% of Democrats and 29% of Independents felt this way

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- After the Speech

After Obama’s speech, polling agencies examined the public’s opinion of Obama, and found that it had increased since before the speech. After the speech, the majority of Americans polling believed that Obama would make a good President. These results indicated that Americans saw Obama’s fresh new ideas as his greatest strength and his lack of experience as his greatest weakness. These results were largely favorable in nature, and showcased the areas in which Obama’s strengths lay.

On February 14, 2007, USA Today/ Gallup released a series of polls that tested public opinion about Obama, and his qualifications. These polls did not focus on Obama’s “electability”, but rather, his actual success in office. The first poll released asked if respondents felt that Obama would make a good or bad President.²⁷ Of all respondents, 53% felt that he would make a good President, and only 19% stated that he would not. An additional 28% stated that they did not have an opinion. These results are

²⁷ “Percentage of adults who say Barack Obama would make a good or bad president.” USAToday/ Gallup. 14 Feb. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

exceptionally positive, especially when considered in the context of general public opinion at the time. It is important to note that the percentage of respondents who did not have an opinion is small, especially compared to the January poll results about public awareness of Obama.

At the same time, USA Today/ Gallup released a poll that examined the reasons that adults believed Obama would be a good President.²⁸ At the top of the list, with 22% was Obama's "young, new, fresh ideas." This reason later became the cornerstone of Obama's campaign, and an idea that clearly separated him from his main Democratic opponent, Senator Hillary Clinton. Following that, 15% of responders cited that Obama is "knowledgeable and intelligent." In addition to these two reasons, 9% of responders cited that they agreed with Obama on the issues, and 8% felt that he was charismatic. This list of characteristics served an important role in the campaign, both in negative and positive ways.

USA Today/ Gallup also asked voters to cite the reasons why Obama would be a bad President²⁹ At the top of this list, with 40% was lack of experience. This is a common theme throughout the campaign, and even the polling. Although Obama's experience level was the topic of a poll produced prior to the announcement speech, it is difficult to track the differences in these two sets of results. The results of the January 22, 2007 poll conducted by CBS was split by partisan affiliation, and was not used as a follow up to an earlier question. So, while the two polls both address the question of Obama's experience, their results cannot be directly compared. However, even without

²⁸ "Reasons adults say Barack Obama would be a good president." USAToday/ Gallup. 14 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

²⁹ "Reasons adults say Barack Obama would be a bad president." USAToday/ Gallup. 14 Jan. 2007. Polling the Nation. American University.

comparison, it is clear that his experience is a divisive issue. This proved to be true during the campaign- when his opponents used this idea as a main arguing point. While his experience was the clear and dominant response, three others were measured. Both “too liberal” and “do not agree with him on the issues” received 8%. An additional 7% of respondents believed that Obama was not qualified for the position.

The last three polls present data that is entirely based on a voter’s opinion or perceptions of the Obama, and his candidacy. What is most powerful about these polls is that they capture Obama’s strengths and weaknesses at an early stage in the campaign. This data clearly shapes his messaging and tone- which are both most clearly illustrated in his speeches.

Conclusions about Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics

Through the dramatic changes in polling results, one can infer that Obama’s announcement speech not only increased his candidacy’s public awareness, but also its positive perception. One idea that became clear through the polling results is that Americans did not feel that Obama lacked strong leadership qualities. This idea identifies a clear campaign strength for Obama that even crosses partisan lines. Obama’s leadership skills later served as an important influence in the campaign’s tone and messaging.

Despite a general agreement on Obama’s leadership abilities, partisan groups varied greatly on their perspective of his experience. As the results show, Republicans are far less likely than Democrats or Independents to believe that Obama has the right kind of experience to be President. These results are hard to interpret, because this split could be a result of several factors. It is likely that Democrats and Republicans have differing

definitions of experience, or that partisan responders are more likely to believe in the strengths and qualifications in their party's candidate. These poll results proved to be crucial throughout the campaign, as Obama had to fight against a growing public opinion that he did not have enough experience.

The polling also indicated several of Obama's strengths, such as his "young, new, fresh ideas" and his knowledge and intelligence. However, these strengths were later used by his opponent's campaigns to raise doubts about Obama. By conveying Obama as being elitist, professorial and out of touch, opposing campaigns tried to frame his intelligence as a detriment to his character. Despite this, Obama's campaign used these characteristics to help frame his candidacy, as well as provide a deeper understanding of the public perception of his character.

Complete Polling Conclusions

While the polling surrounding Obama's official announcement speech is not conclusive in establishing segments of supportive populations, it illustrates a clear public perception. What is most interesting about this illustration is that despite being drawn very early on in the campaign, it remained representative of the public's opinion throughout. It is clear that Obama's announcement speech increased public knowledge of him and his campaign. Additionally, it raised the public's opinion of him, and his "electability" when compared to Senator Hillary Clinton. The speech accomplished its goals of reaching out to the American public, establishing Senator Barack Obama as a candidate, and promoting positive imagery.

Barack Obama's Speech on Race Relations

Environmental Context

In March of 2008, Senator Barack Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton were deeply immersed in the increasingly divisive race for the Democratic nomination for President. Just weeks after the February 5, 2008 “Super Tuesday” primaries, Clinton and Obama were closer in delegate count than many had predicted. As of March 11, 2008, Clinton had an estimate of 1,229 pledged delegates, and 237 superdelegates, giving her a total of 1,480 delegates. By the same date, Obama had 1,385 pledged delegates and 206 superdelegates, for a total of 1,610 delegates.³⁰ With the next big primary contest being held in Pennsylvania on April 22, the Obama and Clinton campaigns were both dedicated to winning the greatest number of delegates.

However, on March 13, 2008, the demeanor of the race changed. That morning, on ABC's *Good Morning America*, Brian Ross showed excerpts of sermons that Reverend Jeremiah Wright had delivered as Pastor of Trinity Church in Chicago, Illinois. At the time, Trinity Church was the Obama family's home congregation, and Reverend Wright was a close family friend. In addition to marrying Barack and Michelle Obama, Reverend Wright baptized their two daughters, and served as an inspiration for Obama's book, *The Audacity of Hope*.³¹ The clips that Brian Ross showed on *Good Morning America* were from a sermon that Reverend Wright delivered about 9/11 and the government's treatment of black Americans. The clips themselves were inflammatory, and showed a passionate Wright. The clips included a statement by Wright that explained

³⁰ "CNN Election Center 2008: Delegate Scorecard." 29 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.cnn.com/>>.

³¹ Ross, Brian, and Rehab El-Buri. Obama's Pastor: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11. ABC News. 13 Mar. 2008. <www.abcnews.go.com>.

black Americans should yell, "God Damn America," rather than "God Bless America."³² This newscast began an extensive controversy about Reverend Wright's philosophies, his relationship with Barack Obama, and the differences between black and white Americans.

Throughout the early part of this controversy, the Obama campaign attempted to maintain quiet, and not allow race to become a central issue within the campaign. However, the controversy quickly ballooned, and began raising public doubts about Obama's judgment, patriotism and qualifications for President.³³ After witnessing the impact of this controversy, Senator Obama himself decided that he wanted to speak to Americans about race relations in the United States. Obama notified his staff on Saturday, March 15, and began writing the text of the speech himself.³⁴ On Tuesday, March 18, 2008, at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Obama gave the speech, which was titled, "A More Perfect Union." The speech was not only meant as an opportunity to clarify Obama and Wright's relationship, but also as an opportunity to begin a conversation about race in the United States.

³² Ross, Brian, Rehab El-Buri, and Avni Patel. Rev. Wright Beyond the Bite; See His Context for Yourself. ABC News. 24 Apr. 200. <www.abcnews.go.com>.

³³ Bevan, Tom. "Obama's Rationale for Bid in Jeopardy Over Wright." Real Clear Politics. 18 Mar. 2008. <www.realclearpolitics.com>.

³⁴ Calmes, Jackie, and Nick Timiraos. "Obama Puts Race Closer To Center Of Campaign." The Wall Street Journal 19 Mar. 2008. Proquest. American University.

Content Analysis

Senator Barack Obama's speech on race was not a mere oratory on the differences of the black and white experience in America. Rather, the speech served as a call to action for the American people. The speech, titled, "A More Perfect Union" made the central argument that America is not yet perfect, and that we, as Americans, must fight to make it more perfect. The strength of the speech lies in the fact that it calls on Americans to be active in their world and to fight for the type of America that they believe all citizens deserve. In particular, the speech uses a message tied to our past, and experiences of the present day to engage the listeners in a battle for a better America.

Main Messages

Obama begins the speech by stating, "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union."³⁵ By quoting the United States Constitution, Obama spoke directly to the American public and presented them with a reminder about the ever-constant struggle a nation of freedom requires. This quote serves as the basic thread through the rest of the speech, both as an anchor to the past and a connection to the work that must be done in the future. Obama uses this idea of striving for a more perfect union as the fundamental argument for fighting racism in this country. By doing this, Obama asks Americans not to fight because they are black or white, but to fight because they are American.

In addition to serving as a call to action, Obama uses the idea of an imperfect union to explain why America is still struggling with race relations. He says, "The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect." This quote is an important part

³⁵ "A More Perfect Union." Philadelphia, PA. 18 Mar. 2008. www.barackobama.com.

of the speech, because in addition to stating that the nation must work through its race relations, Obama also references the controversy surrounding him and Reverend Wright. By tying the controversy to the idea of an imperfect union, Obama quietly acknowledges that Reverend Wright serves as part of the problem. This allows Obama to connect to his audience, almost as a plea for understanding.

Obama also references the idea of an imperfect union towards the end of his speech. Obama states that Reverend Wright's biggest mistake is his belief in the idea that America is static, and cannot make progress beyond its current challenges. Evoking the spirit of working to perfect our union, Obama contradicts this idea by saying, "America can change. That is true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope - the audacity to hope - for what we can and must achieve tomorrow." This statement, while referencing Obama's second novel, *The Audacity of Hope*, also clarifies that Obama does not agree with Reverend Wright's philosophy. This allows Obama to again subtly separate himself from Wright, comforting the listener that the two men's philosophies on race and America differ greatly.

Perhaps the most poignant use of the imperfect union theme throughout the speech is in the final paragraph. Obama states, "But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the two-hundred and twenty one years since a band of patriots signed that document in Philadelphia, that is where the perfection begins." This quote serves as the speech's formal call to action, igniting Obama's listeners in the quest for dramatic change in our nation. In addition, it also serves as the conclusion of the theme and messaging that ran throughout the speech.

Tone

As a result of the very consistent use of messaging and theme, Obama's speech on race maintained an honest, realistic and yet hopeful tone. Early in the speech, Obama states, "...we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction - towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren." This quote acknowledges that while all Americans are different, they all share the same desire to perfect their nation.

Despite the truly negative attention that he had been receiving at this time, Obama stayed close to his campaign's message of hope. This allowed him to portray a confidence and security in his message, despite the critics. In his speech, while calling on Americans to act, Obama spread the idea that change could come to the United States. This idea mirrors the tone of his campaign, and allows listeners to better understand his political perspective, and become comfortable with his common rhetoric. By including language that mirrored his campaign, Obama provided listeners with exposure to his ideas without the directness of a campaign rally or stump speech. This was especially effective in establishing easy access for interested voters, and drawing them in.

Use of Story

Throughout the speech, Obama uses two especially powerful stories to connect to his audience. The first is a personal story, outlining his family background and the impact it has had on his understanding of race in America. In addition to serving as a clarification of Obama's family history, this part of the speech allowed Obama to be portrayed as every American. Black and white, Obama's family background includes a

diverse story, and Obama uses this to connect to his audience. In addition, this section serves as an “introduction” of Obama. Until this point in the campaign, Obama had been fairly hesitant to evoke race at all, especially in reference to himself. However, this speech allowed Obama to present his background to American voters, and showcase what about it made him a unique candidate. This use of personal story was a technique that was likely intended to leave the listener feeling as though they were a part of Obama’s experience.

The second story used in the speech was about Ashley Baia, a young white woman who began campaigning for Obama in a predominantly black area, very early in the race. Ashley’s mother was diagnosed with cancer when Ashley was just nine years old. She was fired from her job and lost her health insurance because she had to miss work to get the necessary treatment. To help save money, Ashley convinced her mother that she loved eating mustard and relish sandwiches, because they were so cheap. Obama explained that Ashley decided to campaign for him because she wanted to, “help the millions of other children in the country who want and need to help their parents too.” Obama then described Ashley’s meeting with an elderly African American man on the campaign trail. Obama explained that when Ashley asked this man why he was campaigning, he responded, “I am here because of Ashley.” Obama used this story – and the difference in age and race between the two – as a representation of the perfect union that Americans are seeking. However, by using real people, Obama was able to convey a sense of basic human need to his listeners. In doing this, Obama personalized his message, while also illustrating the direct impact it has on everyday Americans.

The success of the stories in Obama's speech is rooted in his ability to transform an idea into a call to action. Listeners were engaged at a level of interest, but also at a level of human need.

Content Conclusion

The strength of Obama's speech about race is largely rooted in his ability to make the speech about so much more. Instead of merely dictating a vision of what America should look like, Obama was able to illustrate the steps needed to accomplish this. He gave a speech that touched upon not only the Reverend Wright controversy and race relations in the United States, but also the work that Americans must do to better our nation. His call to action touched Americans because it was not merely about our past or present, but about the world that would influence our future.

Race Speech- Media Analysis

The New York Times- News Article

On March 19, 2008, *The New York Times* published a news article referencing Senator Barack Obama's speech on race given the day before. The article, titled, "A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation Over Rancor" was written by Janny Scott, and discussed Obama's speech, and its impact on race relations in the United States. Although the article served as the primary news piece about Obama's speech, its tone was far from objective. Instead, Scott's approach was complimentary, painting Obama's speech as a successful step towards racial understanding. Scott also examined the historical implications of Obama's speech, and the meaning that it would have for generations to come.

Scott set the complimentary tone early, by acknowledging the incredible weight the speech carried. The article began,

"It was an extraordinary moment- the first black candidate with a good chance at becoming a presidential nominee, in a country in which racial distrust runs deep and often unspoken, embarking at a critical juncture in his campaign upon what may be the most significant public discussion of race in decades."³⁶

By opening the article with this statement, the author quickly establishes not only a personal point of view, but also the predominant tone for the remainder of the article. Later, Scott calls Obama's speech, "hopeful, patriotic [and] quintessentially American." This characterization served as a clear attempt to not only neutralize the speech's sensitive topic, but also present it in a way that seemed accessible and safe for a general audience. Doing this allowed Scott to remove the racial stigma from Obama's speech, and thoroughly present its content, meaning and influence.

³⁶ Scott, Janny. "A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation Over Rancor." The Washington Post 19 Mar. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

After setting a positive tone for his audience, Scott narrowed the frame of the article to the implications of Obama's speech on race relations in the United States. To start, he clearly established the need behind Obama's discussion, and then identified the areas in which Obama would have to succeed in order to make his argument to the American people. By doing this, Scott was then able to tailor his discussion about the actual content of Obama's speech around these expectations. Scott identified two specific goals for Obama's speech, the first of which was Obama's need to separate himself from Reverend Wright. In addition, Scott stated that Obama must "try to explain what appeared to many to be the contradiction between Mr. Wright's world view and the one Mr. Obama had professed as his." By setting these goals as parameters for the discussion of the speech, Scott's comments were largely limited to the strength and successes of the speech, rather than the weaknesses and failures.

By limiting his comments to the praise and recognition of Obama's success in achieving his prescribed goals, Scott was able to maintain a complimentary tone. The end of the article capitalized on this tone, using quotes from race activists like Julian Bond and Orlando Patterson to legitimize the historical implications of Obama's speech. In doing this, Scott openly establishes both the short term and historical successes of Obama's speech in regards to race relations in the United States.

Despite being codified as a traditional news briefing on Obama's speech, Scott's article serves as a formal presentation of Obama's successes. The frankness of this article is surprising, especially in that it provides little to no criticism of the speech. Instead, Scott utilizes a clearly set tone, and a narrow framing to support his thesis that Obama's speech moved American closer to racial reconciliation.

The New York Times- Opinion Article

On the same day, Maureen Dowd published an Op-Ed in *The New York Times* titled, “Black, White and Gray.” Unlike the former article, Dowd’s article did not assume the role of providing readers with a comprehensive examination of Obama’s successes. Instead, Dowd focused on providing her readers with an honest appraisal of Obama himself. Using the speech as her frame, Dowd utilizes a critical and personal tone to examine the man behind the speech. In doing so, Dowd makes the claim that Obama’s speech radically transforms his public portrait and his personal presence.

Dowd begins her article by clarifying that Obama’s speech was not merely a routine event. Rather, she acknowledges it as a personal affair that was deeply rooted in his background and beliefs. Dowd states that Obama “addressed a painful, difficult subject straightforwardly with a subtlety and decency rare in American politics.”³⁷ In doing so, Dowd establishes an early conclusion about the general success of Obama’s speech, as well as its relevance to the man he truly is. Doing this allows her to quickly move from the general analysis, and transition into a close examination of Obama himself.

Throughout the article, Dowd maintained a critical tone that questions Obama’s popularity, and success as a candidate. This tone allows her to criticize his handling of the Reverend Wright controversy until prior to speech, pointing out his clear failures. Dowd does not limit her assessment, but rather, openly expresses disdain for the way in which Obama responded to questions about his relationship with Wright. Departing from

³⁷ Dowd, Maureen. "Black, White & Gray." *The New York Times* 19 Mar. 2008. [LexisNexis](#). American University.

the speech itself, Dowd uses Obama's broader actions as evidence to support both her negative tone, and critical thesis about his campaign.

Midway through the article Dowd states that Obama has remained up until this point, a black and white candidate. She uses this metaphor as a frame for the remainder of the article. Beyond the obvious connection to Obama's biracial background, Dowd's argument is used to illustrate polar aspects of Obama's candidacy. She makes the claim that Obama supporters overlook his mistakes, for the opportunity to believe in his creed. Using the speech as a foundation, Dowd begins to break this down. She explains, "Up until now, Obama and his worshipers have set it up so that he must be so admirable and ideal and perfect and everything we've ever wanted that any kind of blemish -- even a parking ticket -- was regarded as a major failing." She explains that in this speech, Obama expresses a personal vulnerability that paints him as a "gray" candidate. In doing so, she states that Obama actually strengthens his legitimacy in the national eye. By finding the middle group between black and white, Dowd argues that Obama seizes the meaning of true leadership.

Dowd's article, despite taking on a highly critical tone, concludes that Obama's speech was a success. However, instead of examining the speech's literal meaning, Dowd uses a metaphor about Obama's public persona to assess the influence it has on his campaign. By removing her direct assessment from the speech itself, Dowd is able to capture the public's view of Obama. In doing this, Dowd succeeds at presenting the true impact the speech has on Obama's public portrait.

The Washington Post- News Article

Two days after Obama's speech on race relations in the United States, *The Washington Post* published a news article written by Dan Balz that examined the impact of the speech on the campaign. While this article did not directly provide its readers with a comprehensive news analysis of the speech itself, it served as a major news piece about the speech's influence. The article, published on March 20, 2008, examined the context of the speech, its rhetorical strengths, and its potential impact on both the Democratic primary and the general election.

Throughout the article, Balz maintained a strong, yet objective tone. He acknowledged Obama's successes, as well as his failures, and his upcoming challenges. Rather than setting a unilaterally positive tone, Balz took the opportunity to challenge both Obama, and his critics in the days after the speech. However, he balanced these challenges with honest praise. At the beginning of the article, Balz states,

“In so many ways, Obama's speech was remarkable: ambitious, lofty, gritty, honest and unnerving. In tone and substance, and in the challenge he laid down to the country about the need to somehow move beyond the racial stalemate, it was the kind of speech Americans should expect of a presidential candidate or a president.”³⁸

In doing this, Balz speaks to his audience, compelling them to understand both the short term success of the speech, and the long term challenges presented by Obama. Despite this praise, Balz then continues by illustrating Obama's political motive behind the speech. He states, “But, at heart, this was a speech designed for a political purpose, and Obama may have received more credit than he deserves for taking up the subject.” This balanced praise is a perfect example of Balz's tone throughout the article.

³⁸ Balz, Dan. "Will the Answer Outlive Questions?; Obama's Speech Driven by Necessity." The Washington Post 20 Mar. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

After presenting his reader with an honest appraisal of both the incentive for the speech, and its perceived immediate impact, Balz shifts his focus. By framing the speech as yet another event in the campaign process, Balz is able to then examine the broader implications it had on the Democratic primary. Despite the success of the speech, Balz suggests that the need for the speech signals a problem for Obama. He discusses Obama's campaign in contrast to Senator Hillary Clinton's, citing the speech and the Wright controversy as things that could jeopardize Obama's strength. Balz makes the argument that in order for Obama's speech to have been successful, it had to reach out to Independent voters who had lost confidence in Obama in the face of the controversy. In doing this, Obama would be able to gain the support and confidence of the American people needed to not only claim the Democratic nomination, but also move on to the general election. Balz states that Obama accomplishes this rhetorically, the words he needed to say were in the speech. However, he challenges Obama's true success, by stating that he had yet to accomplish this politically.

In making this argument, Balz removes himself, and the news article from the particulars of the event and the speech itself. Instead, he presents the speech's potential influence as the news story. Instead of taking an unconditionally positive tone, Balz provides an objective, even critical, assessment of both the speech, and the work that Obama must still do. In doing this, he transcends the basics of the speech, and allows his readers an honest appraisal of the state of the Obama campaign.

The Washington Post- Opinion Article

Several days after Balz's article was published, David Broder's editorial titled, "The Real Value of Obama's Speech" appeared in *The Washington Post*. The article,

published on March 23, 2008, makes the argument that the success of Obama's speech did not lie in the words he spoke, or the impact they will have on race relations in the United States. Instead, Broder argues that the speech's greatest success is in the way Obama spoke to the American people, with honesty and a presidential demeanor.

Prior to making his central argument, Broder sets the stage with an appraisal of the speech's intended goals. He states that Obama needed to "douse" the controversy involving Reverend Wright while at the same time, stimulating a national conversation about race. Broder does not speak to the success of these goals, but instead, mentions them to merely grant his readers background on Obama's speech, and the ability to judge success for themselves. After doing this, Broder shifts tone, and steps into the meat of his argument.

For the remainder of the article, Broder's tone was hopeful. He begins by setting this speech, and consequently, Obama, apart from so many other speeches that have been given during this presidential campaign. Broder states, "But almost without exception, these speeches have been campaign rhetoric. This, however, was largely a presidential address -- and on the touchiest issue in American life."³⁹ This statement is not only intended to classify Obama's speech as having surpassed petty campaign rhetoric. By constructing his argument based on this assumption, Broder presents the Obama that Americans can expect after the election. After doing this, Broder continues by complimenting Obama's personal handling of the speech, and his treatment of the race controversy.

³⁹ Broder, David. "The Real Value Of Obama's Speech." The Washington Post 23 Mar. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

By framing the speech in regards to its impact on Obama's public image, Broder is able to sidestep the intricacies of the speech itself. Instead, Broder uses quotes from the speech and examples from Obama's life to prove a larger point, that Obama's presidential nature is clear. As a conclusion to the article, Broder offers the following, "What Obama showed in Philadelphia is the potential similarly to inform, educate and inspire people, if he is allowed to fill "the bully pulpit" of the presidency. If that is what people sense, this will indeed make the Philadelphia speech a historic occasion." In doing this, Broder makes the formal claim the impact of the speech is not on race relations in the United States, but rather, the public's view of Obama. The article urges reader to look at Obama's speech as a testimony to his qualifications and potential successes as President of the United States. By doing this, Broder is moving past the basic requirement of informing his audience. Rather, he is allowing them to see a symbolism that few had perceived this early in the campaign. This article paints a picture not just of a candidate who is striving to change race relations, but of a man who has the power to change the nation.

The Wall Street Journal

On March 19, 2008, *The Wall Street Journal* published a news article outlining the content and influence of Senator Barack Obama's speech about race. The article, titled, "Obama Puts Race Closer To Center Of Campaign" was written by Jackie Calmes and Nick Timiraos. Unlike the news articles published by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, this article was organized in a traditional news format, and maintained an objective tone throughout the majority of the article. By doing this, the authors were

able to present highlights of Obama's speech and the future campaign challenges objectively.

The article begins with a comprehensive summary of the campaign landscape, and the challenges that Obama's campaign had recently faced. In addition, the authors discussed the reasons why Obama's speech served as such an exceptional moment in the progress of the campaign and presidential politics. Citing the primary contest in Pennsylvania as an example, the authors make the argument that Obama's speech had the power to either further divide him from American voters, or bring them closer together. The authors also predict the controversy's potential divisive influence in the general election. In presenting their readers with this background, the authors paint the speech as one moment in a far larger campaign, and remove some of the pressure of success from the reader's mind.

After establishing the background behind the speech, the authors reinforce their tone by examining the critiques of the speech from both sides of the political spectrum. Using quotes from Senator Hillary Clinton and Republican strategist Tony Fabrizio, the authors paint a critical picture of the speech's influence and success. However, despite their attempt to remain objective, it is in doing this that the article's tone shifts, and becomes less objective. By citing individuals who are critical of Obama's campaign, the authors' presentation of criticism is far more comprehensive than that of praise. However by intertwining the use of quotes from Obama's speech with the critical outside analysis, the authors do a thorough job of presenting Obama's messages.

The article concludes with an analysis of the impact of the speech on the campaign as a whole. Instead of hailing this speech as a turning point for the Obama

campaign, the authors take on an unusual perspective. They note, “the true impact of the Obama speech will be difficult to gauge until voters respond in the voting booths and in conversations at home and at work.”⁴⁰ In doing this, the authors create a late-onset frame for their article. Suddenly, the reader is exposed to the idea that despite the analysis presented, the true success of the speech will only be understood through the voting booth. This idea is an important one, and serves to reinforce their objective tone. By failing to present a thesis about whether or not the speech was rhetorically or symbolically successful, the authors maintain the feel of a news article. In comparison to *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* news articles, this article serves to inform the public, rather than persuade.

⁴⁰ Calmes, Jackie, and Nick Timiraos.

Race Speech- Polling Analysis

Overall Favorability-Before the Speech

Favorability polling conducted before Obama's speech on race largely found that the American public on average had a favorable opinion of Obama. However, these polls indicated that when examined by partisan group, this was not true for Republican respondents, as this segment of the public had higher rates of un-favorability.

CBS News released a poll on March 18, 2008 that asked respondents, "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion."⁴¹ The poll was conducted in the three days leading up to Obama's speech on race, right as the Reverend Wright Controversy was receiving a great deal of public attention. This controversy is reflected in the poll results, as only 44% of the respondents had a favorable opinion of Obama. On the other hand, 30% responded that they held a not favorable opinion. At this time, 26% responded that they were either undecided, or had not heard enough. This poll tested straight favorability, and did not frame Obama's candidacy in relation to the Wright controversy, or other candidates in the field. It is important to note that this poll's results are very representative of other poll results found about Obama's favorability at the same time.

For example, CBS conducted a similar, but more comprehensive poll that tested Obama's favorability across partisan lines. The poll's full results are listed below.⁴²

⁴¹ "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion." CBS News. 18 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

⁴² "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion." CBS News. 19 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

Table 3

	Total	Republican	Democrat	Independent
Favorable	44%	23%	61%	41%
Not Favorable	28	52	12	25
Undecided	20	20	18	21
Haven't Heard Enough	8	5	8	12

(From CBS News Poll, March 19, 2008)

This poll's results closely mirror those presented by the previous poll- Obama's favorability remains high, while the number of respondents who are undecided and who do not have a favorable opinion remain close to each other. However, what this poll presents is the dramatic divide between responses from partisan groups. Democrats are far more likely to have a favorable opinion than Republicans, and Independents are between these two groups. The results of this poll and the other previously mentioned CBS poll represent a comprehensive look at Obama's general favorability of the time.

Overall Favorability-After the Speech

After Obama's speech, polling agencies found that there was very little shift in the public's opinion of Obama's favorability from before his speech. Obama's favorability numbers remained relatively similar to those found prior to his speech. These results indicated that despite the speech's perceived success, Americans did not immediately see the speech as an important influencer on their opinion of Obama.

On March 21, 2008, CBS released the results of a poll that tested Obama's favorability after his speech on race.⁴³ The poll was worded exactly as the earlier one was, testing Obama's straight, unframed favorability. Of those polled, 43% responded

⁴³ "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Barack Obama yet to have an opinion?" CBS News. 21 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

that they held a favorable opinion, while 30% responded that they had a not favorable opinion. An additional 22% of respondents were undecided, and 4% had not heard enough about Obama yet to have an opinion. When compared to the results of the same CBS survey released on March 18, the results are not dramatically different. Favorability actually decreased by one percent, while un-favorability remained exactly the same, at 30%. What is truly interesting is that undecided respondents increased by 4%. This poll suggests that Obama's speech had little direct influence on his general favorability. Unlike the polling conducted prior to the speech, polling results separated by partisan group were not available. However, it can be inferred that any shifts present in partisan group favorability would not be large.

On March 25, 2008, the Pew Research Center released a poll that tested the change of Obama's favorability over the course of time in which the speech on race was given. The poll asked, "Thinking about Barack Obama. In the past few days, have you come to have a more favorable opinion of him, a less favorable opinion or hasn't your opinion on him changed lately."⁴⁴ Conducted between the dates of March 20- 24, 2008, this poll directly assessed the change in Obama's favorability as a result of the Wright controversy, and Obama's subsequent speech. Of those polled, 22% responded that their opinion was more favorable, while 30% responded that their opinion was less favorable. The largest percentage of respondents, 46%, responded that their opinion had not changed. What is interesting about this poll is that it did not specifically mention the Wright controversy. Instead, by providing respondents with a specific time frame, the poll was able to test the impact of the controversy on Obama's overall favorability.

⁴⁴ "Thinking about Barack Obama. In the past few days, have you come to have a more favorable opinion of him, a less favorable opinion or hasn't your opinion on him changed lately." Pew Research Center. 25 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

Conclusions about Overall Favorability

Polling conducted to track the changes in Obama's public favorability throughout the Wright controversy and his speech on race indicated a lesser impact on favorability than one might anticipate. The American public's general favorability towards Obama remained fairly consistent from before the speech to after it. The slight bump that was evident in the last poll examined could be interpreted as resulting from the success of the speech, but was not truly large enough to indicate a dramatic shift in public opinion.

It is important to note the timing of this speech in relation to the rest of the campaign. In March of 2008, many Americans had formulated basic opinions about Senator Barack Obama's candidacy, either good or bad. The stable results from the polling might indicate that while the Wright controversy and Obama's speech were important events in the campaign, they did not truly shift pre-existing opinion. Or, these results could also indicate that Obama's speech had not yet impacted public opinion. In this case, as media coverage about the speech and the controversy continued, there would be more dramatic shifts in public opinion.

Another important consideration is the potential challenges of polling public opinion at this time. Since the Wright controversy and Obama's speech both centered on the topics of race relations in the United States, the polling results might be skewed. The unusually high percentage of respondents who stated that the events had no impact on their opinion of Obama might be due to respondent concern over social desirability. Instead of being honest and stating the true impact of the events on their perception of Obama, respondents might have felt pressured to state that they had no impact. The social

desirability to be blind to race issues might have influenced respondents more than the events influence their perceptions of Obama.

Despite this potential conflict, the polls represent a fairly consistent public favorability of Obama and his candidacy. These findings suggest that despite the perceived success of the speech, its immediate impact on voter perception was fairly limited.

Electability- Before the Speech

In March of 2008, the race for Democratic Presidential nominee had narrowed and was limited to Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama. The Republican nomination had unofficially been awarded to Senator John McCain. The polling testing Obama's electability generally took two forms, first, a comparison of his and Clinton's general election electability, and then, of his and McCain's. These polls tested different things, but together provide a clear indication of the public's view of Obama's electability.

On March 12, 2008, NBC News and *The Wall Street Journal* released a poll comparing Obama and Clinton, and their ability to defeat McCain in the general election. The poll read, "Who do you think would have the better chance of defeating John McCain in the general election in November—Hillary Clinton, or Barack Obama?"⁴⁵ While this poll did not directly test support for either candidate, it tested the candidate's general strengths, especially when compared to those of Senator McCain. The poll was asked of respondents who stated that they were a Democrat, or either planned to or had already voted in the Democratic primary. Of these respondents, the poll found that 48%

⁴⁵ "Who do you think would have the better chance of defeating John McCain in the general election in November—Hillary Clinton, or Barack Obama?" NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. 12 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

believed that Obama would have a better chance of defeating McCain, and 38% believed that Clinton would. An additional 11% of respondents cited that they were unsure. These results represent an increase in positive public opinion of Obama, largely in comparison to Clinton. Despite the ongoing Wright controversy, more Democratic Americans felt that Obama would be more likely to win in a general election.

On March 20, 2008, Zogby International released a poll conducted prior to Obama's speech that tested his general election support. This poll examined likely voters of all political affiliations, instead of just Democrats, thus providing a more comprehensive look at public opinion. This poll investigated how likely voters would vote if the 2008 presidential election were between John McCain and Barack Obama.⁴⁶ Of those who responded, 46% stated that they would vote for John McCain, while 40% stated Barack Obama. An additional 11% of respondents stated that they were not yet sure. This poll indicates that John McCain had greater confirmed public support at the time. However, the relatively high number of undecided voters indicates that a significant portion of Americans had yet to decide on a candidate. Some of this can be attributed to the great divide present in the Democratic Party at this time. Democratic voters were potentially less likely to have confirmed support of Obama at this time than Republican voters of McCain, which is reflected in these poll results.

However, it is important to note that polls testing Obama's general election strength against McCain were not always consistent. NBC/ *The Wall Street Journal* released a poll several days earlier that asked the same question, but to a group of

⁴⁶ "How likely voters would vote between Democratic primary candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton." Zogby International. 20 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

registered voters.⁴⁷ This poll produced results that granted Obama the largest portion of support, at 47%. McCain collected 44% of respondent support, and only 6% responded that they were not sure. These results are significantly different from those produced just days later by Zogby's poll. However, this difference might be attributed to the respondent base used in each poll. By using registered voters as the population for the poll, the second poll examined a larger, more diverse segment of the American population. The Zogby poll used only likely voters, who are more likely to have voted in previous elections. The use of likely voters in election polling often limits the number of young Americans and African Americans included in the results, two groups that largely supported Obama in 2008.⁴⁸ Obama's lower level of support in the Zogby poll can potentially be attributed to the make-up of the polling base. This divide is an important distinction, and showcases that at this time electability polling numbers were largely inconsistent.

Electability- After the Speech

After the speech, polling agencies found that Obama's electability either remained the same, or suffered a slight dip. Instead of experiencing a boost due to the speech, the results of these polls indicated that Americans attributed some of the negatives of the Wright controversy to their voting decisions. Only in the Democratic community did Obama's electability increase after the speech, and this increase was very small. Overall, Obama's speech did little to dramatically shift public opinion about Obama's electability.

⁴⁷ "If the next election for president were held today, and John McCain were the Republican candidate and Barack Obama were the Democratic candidate, for whom would you vote?" NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. 12 Mar. 2008. [Polling the Nation](#). American University.

⁴⁸ Newport, Frank. "Who Are Likely Voters and When Do They Matter?" [Gallup](#). 28 July 2008. <www.gallup.com>.

On March 20, 2008, Fox Broadcasting Company released a poll asking registered voters about both Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton's general election electability. The poll asked, "Regardless of how you would vote, which Democratic candidate do you think has a better chance of beating John McCain in the general election in November- Hillary Clinton, or Barack Obama."⁴⁹ Unlike the earlier NBC poll, this poll asked voters of all partisan affiliations. The poll's full results are expressed in the table below.

Table 4

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Clinton	33%	40%	27%	26%
Obama	43	44	44	43
Both Can	7	10	3	9
Neither Can	7	-	15	7
Don't Know	10	5	10	15

(From Fox Broadcasting Company, March 20, 2008)

These results indicate a decrease in Democratic public opinion of Obama's electability and a rise in Clinton's. While Obama's electability remains higher than Clinton's, regardless of partisan affiliation, his lead among Democrats is lessened to a total of 4%. An important difference between these two polls is that in the second poll, respondents were able to state that both candidates could win against McCain in the general election. In the case of Democratic respondents, this accounted for 10% of responses. This poll also showcases the general public's opinion of Obama's electability. Both Republican and Independent responders largely selected Obama as most likely to win the general election against John McCain.

Since data for Republican and Independent responders prior to Obama's speech is not available, a direct comparison cannot be done. However, Obama's high levels of

⁴⁹ "Regardless of how you would vote, which Democratic candidate do you think has a better chance of beating John McCain in the general election in November- Hillary Clinton, or Barack Obama." Fox Broadcasting Company. 20 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

perceived electability indicated that despite the Wright controversy, he maintained a strong public image. This strength is likely tied to the success of his speech.

Also on March 20, 2008, Fox released a poll that tested Obama and McCain's general election support. Conducted after Obama's speech on race, the poll asked, "Thinking ahead to the next presidential election, if the 2008 general election were held today for whom would you vote if the candidates were: Barack Obama and John McCain."⁵⁰ The full results of this poll are included in the table below, separated by partisan affiliation.

Table 5

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Obama	43%	70%	11%	37%
McCain	44	18	82	45
Don't Know	13	12	10	18

(From Fox Broadcasting Company, March 20, 2008)

Just like the NBC/ Wall Street Journal that was conducted before Obama's speech, this used registered voters, rather than likely voters as respondents. However, this poll produced very different results. Unlike the previous poll, this poll found that McCain received the greatest support of a general audience, at 44%. The previous poll found that Obama had the greatest support, by a 3% margin. However, this poll also provided results divided by partisan affiliation, showcasing the dramatic differences in general election support for each candidate. Republicans and Democrats surveyed both overwhelmingly supported their party's candidate, while Independent voters leaned McCain. These results indicate a shift of public opinion towards McCain. Despite Obama's speech, the general public lost support for his candidacy.

⁵⁰ "Thinking ahead to the next presidential election, if the 2008 general election were held today for whom would you vote if the candidates were: Barack Obama and John McCain." Fox Broadcasting Company. 20 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

Conclusions about Electability

The electability polling conducted both before and after Obama's speech on race produced relatively inconsistent results. While large trends can be established from the data, it is hard to determine the impact that Obama's speech had on these trends. Both before and after Obama's speech, his general electability compared to Senator Hillary Clinton was high. However, it was not possible to determine the specific impact that Obama's speech had on this electability. When compared to McCain, Obama consistently collected less support in the general election, but remained within a small margin. This was true both before Obama's speech, and after it, meaning that the speech's impact on electability trends was limited.

One explanation for the inconsistency of results is the population being studied. Mentioned above, the use of likely voters versus registered voters can lead to varying results. While some polls indicated whether they were polling likely or registered voters, not all did. This minor omission shapes the types of results produced by the poll, largely because of the demographic makeup of each population.

In addition to having varying research methods, each poll tested a slightly different aspect of electability. This allowed for slight differences in polling results, which made smaller trends harder to identify, and the impact of the speech harder to establish.

Obama's speech on race largely maintained the public's opinion of his electability. The Wright controversy had the power to cost Obama a great deal of public support, but despite this, the public's perception of his electability remained high.

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- Before the Speech

The Wright controversy prompted Americans to begin examining Obama's qualifications for President and his personal qualities more closely. In addition, Americans began questioning the role that race would play in an Obama presidency. Polling agencies, sensing these fears and questions, expanded their polling to include questions concerning Obama's personal judgment, his ability to connect to the average American, and general race relations. These polls largely found that Americans felt that race had been a factor in the campaign, and that Barack Obama had been judged more harshly for it. When examining the impact of the Wright controversy on Obama's campaign, the polls found that the controversy had a dramatic and negative impact on public polling. While large numbers of respondents stated that the controversy had not impacted their perception of Obama, many other respondents indicated that the controversy had a negative impact.

On March 19, 2008, CBS released a poll conducted before Obama's speech on race. The poll asked, "In general, have people you know judged Barack Obama more harshly because he's black, less harshly because he's black or no differently."⁵¹ Of those who responded, 58% indicated that they felt he had been treated no differently because of his race. An additional 11% indicated that he had been judged less harshly, while 27% felt that he had been judged more harshly. These results indicate that the majority of Americans believed that Obama's race had not played a role in his campaign. However, a significant portion of respondents indicated that he had been judged more harshly because of his race. This poll was conducted between the dates of March 15-18, leading

⁵¹ "In general, have people you know judged Barack Obama more harshly because he's black, less harshly because he's black or no differently." CBS News. 19 Mar. 2008. [Polling the Nation](#). American University.

up to Obama's speech on race. The Wright controversy was at its height at this time, as were the traditions of African American churches in the United States. These events and their coverage might have elevated the perception that Obama received harsher judgment because of his race.

In addition to testing the impact of Obama's race on his candidacy, polling agencies at the time began testing the direct impact of the Wright controversy on public opinion of Obama. In a poll released on March 17, 2008, Rasmussen Reports asked respondents, "Do (Reverend Jeremiah) Wright's remarks make you more or less likely to vote for Barack Obama."⁵² A majority 56% of respondents stated that they were less likely to vote for Obama because of Wright's comments. These results indicate that Wright's comments had a strong impact on voter's perception of Obama, as well as of his fit to the role of the President. Despite this strong majority, 30% of those polled stated that Wright's comment had no impact on their likelihood to vote for Obama. This 30% represents a strong middle section of Americans who chose not to assign responsibility of Wright's comments to Obama, or allow them to impact their opinion of him. Finally, 11% of respondents stated that they were more likely to vote for Obama because of Wright's comments. While their motivation is largely unknown, it can be assumed that these voters do not place negative responsibility of Wright's actions onto Obama. This poll's results are interesting because they not only test public opinion of Wright and Obama, but also the degree to which they impact each other.

On March 18, 2008 CBS News released a poll that asked respondents "Have Wright's statements affected your opinion of Obama? [If yes] Do they make you feel

⁵² "Do (Reverend Jeremiah) Wright's remarks make you more or less likely to vote for Barack Obama." Rasmussen Reports. 17 Mar. 2008. [Polling the Nation](#). American University.

more favorable or less favorable towards Obama?”⁵³ This poll limited its respondents to those who had heard or read about the Reverend Wright controversy. By doing this, the poll tested the direct impact of the Wright controversy on Obama’s favorability, as well as whether voters allowed the controversy to influence their personal opinion of Obama. Of those polled, 65% stated that the controversy made no difference in their opinion of Obama. However, 30% of respondents stated that the controversy made them feel less favorable towards Obama. While these results tell us that the majority of voters did not allow the Wright controversy to impact their image of Obama, those Americans who did allow it to impact their image of Obama, did so negatively. Since this poll was entirely conducted prior to Obama’s speech on race, it accurately portrays the public opinion and understanding of the controversy, prior to Obama’s direct address.

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- After the Speech

After Obama’s speech about race, polling agencies continued looking for patterns in public opinion regarding Obama’s race, and its influence on his candidacy. The poll results indicate that Obama’s speech had a large impact on public opinion. The results that were collected after his speech were far more positive and understanding towards the Wright controversy, and its impact on Obama’s candidacy. Obama’s speech was able to alleviate fears and reinstate some of the American people’s confidence that was lost during the controversy.

Fox Broadcasting Company released a poll on March 20, 2008 that examined the root causes of Obama’s success as a Presidential candidate. The poll asked, “Do you think Barack Obama has gotten as far as he has in the presidential race because: he is a

⁵³ “Have Wright’s statements affected your opinion of Obama?” CBS News. 18 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

qualified candidate, he is African-American, or he is an inspirational speaker.”⁵⁴ The results of the poll are separated by partisan affiliation, and displayed in the table below.

Table 6

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Qualified Candidate	22%	29%	15%	19%
African-American	14	12	18	12
Inspirational Speaker	38	32	47	41
Combination	19	20	14	24
Other	1	1	2	1
Don't Know	6	7	3	3

(From Fox Broadcasting Company, March 20, 2008)

Regardless of partisan affiliation, “inspirational speaker” was the characteristic that the greatest percentage of respondents selected as the main reason for his success. However Republicans were far more likely than Democrats to select this as the root cause, by a margin of 15%. Democrats were far more likely than Republicans to state that the cause was that Obama was a “qualified candidate”, by a margin of 14%. However, the most interesting finding directly related to Obama’s race. Obama’s race was the least influential characteristic for Democrats and Independents, as well as in the general total. In contrast, his race was the second most important characteristic for Republican respondents. These results showcase a dramatically different understanding of the influence of Obama’s race on his campaign, and his success as a politician. While this poll does not directly mirror the poll conducted by CBS News prior to Obama’s speech, they both directly assesses the impact of race on the campaign. In comparing the polls, it is evident that there is a strong minority of Americans who believed that Obama’s race

⁵⁴ “Do you think Barack Obama has gotten as far as he has in the presidential race because: he is a qualified candidate, he is African-American, or he is an inspirational speaker.” Fox Broadcasting Company. 20 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

enabled him to succeed in the campaign, without the same level of difficulty as other candidates.

In addition to examining an informal relationship between the Wright controversy and Obama's candidacy, some polling agencies tested the direct impact of Obama's speech. CBS News released a poll on March 21, 2008 that asked voters who had heard of Reverend Wright and Obama's speech about their impact on their likelihood to vote for him. The poll asked, "Have these events [Obama's speech on Tuesday March 18, 2008 about his relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright and race relations in the US] made you more likely to vote for Obama, less likely, or made no difference in whether or not you would vote for Obama."⁵⁵ An overwhelming majority of respondents, 70%, stated that the events made no difference in their likelihood to vote. An additional 14% stated that the events made them more likely to vote for Obama. These results indicate that despite the Wright controversy, Obama's public opinion remained positive. Only 14% of respondents stated that the events made them less likely to vote for Obama.

Comparing these results to those published by the Rasmussen Reports poll discussed earlier showcases the dramatic impact that Obama's speech had on public perception. The percentage of respondents who stated that they were less likely to vote for Obama dropped from 56% to 14%, a decrease of 42%. The percentage of respondents who stated that the events had no impact on their likelihood of voting for Obama increased from 30% to 70%. This shift represents a shift in confidence in Obama's candidacy as a result of his speech. After the speech was given, more Americans felt that

⁵⁵ "Have these events [Obama's speech on Tuesday March 18, 2008 about his relationship with Reverend Jeremiah Wright and race relations in the US] made you more likely to vote for Obama, less likely, or made no different in whether or not you would vote for Obama." CBS News. 21 Mar. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

their likelihood of voting for Obama was not influenced by his and Reverent Wright's connections. The results show us that Obama's speech actually served to alleviate fears of some voters, as well as reassure the American public of his candidacy.

Conclusions about Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics

Obama's speech marked the first time that Obama spoke candidly about his race and the impact it had on his experiences growing up and on the campaign trail. The influence of Obama's speech on public perception of his personal characteristics and qualifications to be President was immense. By speaking directly about race, Obama was able to address the concerns of the American people directly. As a result of the Wright crisis, American had begun to question Obama's personal characteristics and readiness for the Presidency. By discussing the issues that Americans were most worried about at the time, Obama was able to dismiss these concerns.

Race Speech Polling Conclusions

The polling results indicate that American's personal perceptions of Obama after his speech did increase his electability. Americans were relieved of the need to incorporate the Wright controversy into the decision making process. As a result of the speech, Americans were reassured that Obama's personal history and relationships did not disqualify him from being the President. Obama's speech enabled him to reach out to the American people in a personal plea that few other candidates had the opportunity to do.

Barack Obama's Election Night Victory Speech

Environmental Context

On November 4, 2008, Americans headed to the voting booths after a grueling twenty-one month campaign and elected Barack Obama as the next President of the United States. That evening, over 240,000 Americans gathered in Grant Park, waiting as the results of the election were announced.⁵⁶ The history behind the gathering's location in Grant Park was immense. Just forty years before, Grant Park was the site of the Vietnam War protests outside of the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The interactions between protestors and police turned violent, and the incident was later classified as a riot.⁵⁷ However, on election night, Grant Park put its history behind, and served as the site of Obama's victory speech.

Obama delivered his victory speech in front of the thousands of people gathered in Grant Park and 71.5 million Americans who watched at home on their TVs.⁵⁸ The speech came after the networks called the election in Obama's favor, and Senator John McCain delivered his concession speech.

The speech was given on a large, raised platform with a single podium, set against a blue background and several American flags. Before giving the speech, Obama stepped out onto the platform with his family, as an announcer introduced the next First Family of the United States of America. As the applause died down, Michelle Obama and her daughters left the stage, and President-Elect Obama took the podium to deliver a speech.

⁵⁶ Kaufman-Hogan, Liza. "Chicago's Grant Park turns into jubilation park." CNN. 5 Nov. 2008. <www.cnn.com>.

⁵⁷ Jaffe, Ina. "1968 Chicago Riot Left Mark On Political Protests." Weekend Edition. National Public Radio. 23 Aug. 2008. <www.npr.org>.

⁵⁸ Shea, Danny. "Election Night 2008 Ratings: 71.5 Million Watch Obama Victory, ABC, CNN Tops." Weblog post. Huffington Post. 5 Nov. 2008. <www.HuffingtonPost.com>.

After the speech concluded, Obama was joined by Vice President-Elect Biden, and their families.

Obama's speech signaled the end of the campaign and the beginning of his transition to the presidency. Through the use of carefully chosen themes and messaging, Obama was able to conclude one journey and begin the next, while still successfully reaching out to the American people.

Content Analysis

On the evening on November 4, 2008, President-Elect Barack Obama gave a victory speech that signaled the end of his twenty-one month campaign for President. However, the speech did not serve as mere statement of victory but, instead, as a promise for the future. Compared to the previous speeches examined, the speech was short, taking less than twenty minutes to deliver. Despite its length, the speech was able to speak not just to Americans, but also to those who were watching worldwide. The speech looked back on the long campaign, and looked forward to the challenges of the future. Obama used the themes and messages common in his campaign as a framework for speaking to the American people, and did so successfully.

Main Messages

Obama's central messages throughout the speech were national unity and the success of the American spirit. The message of unity was an important one throughout the speech, as it allowed Obama to reach out to his various audiences. At the beginning of the speech, Obama uses a reference dating back to his 2004 Democratic National Convention speech as a way to bring together all Americans. He states, "we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America."⁵⁹ In doing this, Obama attempts to unite the nation, regardless of partisan affiliation. Later in the speech, Obama directly reaches out to the Americans who voted for John McCain, stating that he would still work to be their President. In doing this, Obama clearly establishes his desire to cross partisan lines in favor of the American experience.

⁵⁹ "Remarks of President-Elect Barack Obama: Election Night." Chicago, IL. 4 Nov. 2008. www.barackobama.com.

Throughout the speech, Obama uses the message of the success of the American spirit to explain and to inspire. He explains that we have overcome our uncertainty for change in favor of a better tomorrow. Reiterating his campaign messaging, Obama tells the American people that it is their spirit that can bring change to our world. In addition, Obama references his speech on race by stating, “For that is the true genius of America - that America can change. Our union can be perfected. And what we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.” In doing this, Obama reminds his audiences of the challenges that they have overcome, both as a people and as a campaign. This inspires, while also pointing to potential for overcoming future challenges.

Obama ends the speech with a final message to his audience, a direct call to action. Using his speech as a platform, Obama presents the argument that it is the work of the American people that will change our nation and that it is time for that work to begin. Obama ends his speech with a direct appeal to Americans, asking them to take this time to pursue a better America. He says, “This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time - to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth - that out of many, we are one...”

With this call to action, Obama ends his speech and his campaign, but begins his transition to the presidency. His ending is powerful, evoking emotion, a sense of responsibility and confidence in the American people.

Tone

Obama's tone throughout the speech was controlled and even, recognizing both the significance of the evening and the challenges ahead. Instead of delivering a speech that was blindly positive, Obama crafted a tone appropriate for the occasion, a steadfast confidence in the ability of Americans to overcome the challenges of their future. Obama began the speech by saying, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer." In doing this, Obama immediately spoke to his audience with a graceful confidence in the opportunity of America. This set the tone quickly and effectively, showcasing to the audience Obama's underlying faith in the nation.

This tone was maintained throughout the speech, even through a discussion of the challenges to come. Instead of merely stating the challenges of the future, Obama made a direct promise to the American people. He stated, "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America - I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you - we as a people will get there." In doing this, Obama reiterated not just his confidence, but also his commitment to the American spirit. By pairing his confidence with hope, Obama was able to supplement his speech with the messages that made his campaign so successful. This was a familiar tone for the campaign and his audience, which allowed him to communicate it naturally.

Use of Story

Unlike many of Obama's other speeches, his use of story in this speech is limited to a single, extended example. Towards the end of the speech, as Obama stated that change is possible and that Americans must work to perfect the union, he told the story of Ann Nixon Cooper, a 106 year-old African American woman who voted on Election Day. Obama uses her lifespan as a roadmap to American history, telling her story alongside that of America's over the last century. This allowed Obama to weave the historical significance of his election into the speech, while not isolating its relevance solely to African Americans. Instead, Obama details the changes that our nation has gone through to get to today, allowing his listeners to see the potential for change. By using Ann's story, Obama connected to his listeners on an honest level, appraising the impact on the nation and its citizens. Obama closed Ann's story by saying, "So tonight, let us ask ourselves - if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made?" Serving both as proof of what is possible, and inspiration for the future, Ann's story touches all Americans.

Conclusion

Obama's victory speech was a confident appraisal of the work yet to be done in America. The speech successfully mirrored the messaging and tone of his campaign, as well as the condition of the American spirit. By intertwining hopeful messaging with the realities of the challenges to come, Obama was able to inspire his audience to believe in the future. In addition, Obama's speech worked to unify all Americans after the conclusion of a divisive, nearly two year long campaign. Most importantly, Obama's

speech began the process of transition from candidate to President. By maintaining a confident and hopeful tone, Obama allowed his audiences a glimpse into the future. Moving past the intricacies of the campaign, Obama's speech captured the American spirit, and the change still to come.

Victory Speech-Media Analysis

The New York Times-News Article

On November 5, 2008, *The New York Times* published an article titled, “Obama: Racial Barrier Falls in Decisive Victory.” The article, written by Adam Nagourney and featured on the newspaper’s front page, was dedicated to coverage of Obama’s historic win and his election night speech. In addition, the article touched upon the significance of Obama’s election for race relations in the United States. Throughout the article, Nagourney was able to maintain an objective tone and address Obama’s win without losing the significance of the moment. Instead of dedicating the article simply to an analysis of Obama’s victory speech, the author relies on quotes from the speech to appropriately illustrate the influence and impact of Obama’s win.

The article began with the acknowledgement of Obama’s win as a victory for race relations in the United States. Nagourney states, “It was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.”⁶⁰ By stating this early on, the author establishes a clear tone, the recognition of the significance of Obama’s win. Throughout the rest of the article, the author continues to use this tone as a guiding principle, addressing each aspect of the election night results and Obama’s speech within the tone boundaries that he set early on.

The most direct reference to Obama’s speech comes with the author’s assessment of the tasks set before the newly elected Democratic Congress and President. Nagourney notes that instead of neglecting these responsibilities, Obama directly addressed them in

⁶⁰ Nagourney, Adam. "Obama: racial Barrier Falls in Decisive Victory." *The New York Times* 5 Nov. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

his speech. He states, “He took note of those circumstances in a speech that was notable for its sobriety and its absence of the triumphalism that he might understandably have displayed on a night when he won an Electoral College landslide.” In addition to recognizing the way in which Obama chose to address his upcoming challenges, the author also commented on the tone of Obama’s speech itself. This provided readers with an assessment not only of Obama’s speech, but also of the way in which Obama handled his win.

This article rarely discusses Obama’s victory speech and its success on election night directly. Instead, the author uses Obama’s speech as evidence to back up a broader claim, that Obama’s win was historic in depth, symbolism and impact. Using Obama’s words allows the author to convey the relationship between Obama’s win and the American people’s history directly. Unlike many articles discussing a speech’s success, Nagourney presents the text as intricately immersed in the election night experience, practically as inseparable. By doing this, he encouraged his readers to view the speech as a primary source of sorts, as part of Obama’s personal and public transition to the presidency. By placing Obama’s speech in a broader context, the author is allowed his readers to better understand the meaning of the speech, and how it relates to the post-election American experience.

The New York Times-Opinion Article

On November 6, 2008, *The New York Times* published an editorial by Maureen Dowd titled, “Bring on the Puppy and the Rookie.” As opposed to the news article referenced above, Dowd’s editorial makes no attempt to provide her readers with a news-like assessment of the events of election night. Instead, she outlines her understanding of

the loss of integrity and hope within the White House and Congress over the last dozen years. Using historical events and government action from the Clinton and Bush administrations as her frame, Dowd sets the scene of a dismal and disenfranchised Washington. Dowd's discussion of Obama begins when she notes that he has the "chance to make the White House pristine again."⁶¹ Using this contrast as a bridge, Dowd clearly establishes her tone for the article, a deeply rooted hope for the future.

Utilizing the frame of past mistakes made, Dowd is able to examine Obama's potential for success in the future. By establishing the connection between challenges of the past with the challenges of today, Dowd suggests that Obama's potential is great, as is his potential to stumble. However, she uses Obama's victory speech as evidence for her faith in him. She explains, "[Obama's] somber speech in the dark Chicago night was stark and simple and showed that he sees what he's up against. There was a heaviness in his demeanor." In pointing to his speech's tone as Obama's underlying understanding of his upcoming challenges as president, Dowd invited the reader to hope alongside her.

Dowd's analysis of Obama's speech was not limited to his words. Instead, she uses the speech's visuals to convince the reader of Obama's individual strength, and return to her article's initial tone and framing. Dowd explained,

"In the midst of such a phenomenal, fizzy victory overcoming so many doubts and crazy attacks and even his own middle name, Obama stood alone. He rejected the Democratic kumbaya moment of having your broad coalition on stage with you, as he talked about how everyone would have to pull together..."

⁶¹ Dowd, Maureen. "Bring on the Puppy and the Rookie." The New York Times 6 Nov. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

This statement allows Dowd to support her hopeful thesis that unlike the men that came before him, Obama understands the weight of his role and the gravity of America's current challenges.

While Dowd's article does not address Obama's speech in its entirety, it provided readers a clear picture of the speech's tone and its impact on the American understanding of Obama's transition to President. Dowd's words carry an added significance, as they examine Obama's words in contrast to the American frustration with past administrations. By successfully framing Obama's speech, Dowd portrays the speech an opportunity for hope for America's future, and a symbol for the change to come.

The Washington Post-News Article

On November 5, 2008, *The Washington Post* published an article titled, "Hard Choices and Challenges Follow Triumph" written by Dan Balz. Using election night as a turning point, this article discussed the challenges that lay ahead of Obama and his incoming administration. Instead of focusing on the campaign itself, Balz chose to focus on Obama's win, and how it will influence his governing. In doing this, Balz clearly establishes a frame that limited his discussion to the practical implications of governing during a challenging time. His tone is critical and objective, as he recognizes both Obama's potential successes and failures. By assessing Obama's past behavior, Balz is able to make objective predictions about Obama's future behavior.

The beginning of the article touched upon the depth of Obama's win and the implications that this it might have on Obama's policy formation and governance style. Balz labels Obama's win as a "mandate," citing Obama's winning percentage as larger than any Democrat's since Lyndon Johnson in 1964. However, he states that in order to

govern, Obama must make a critical decision on how to interpret this mandate. It is here that Balz uses Obama's victory night speech as a marker of Obama's judgment. He explains, "Asking for the help of all Americans to tackle the country's most serious challenges, [Obama] prepared supporters and opponents alike for setbacks, disappointments and the need for patience before they succeed."⁶² This is followed by a direct quote from Obama's speech, in which he makes a promise of success to the American people. By tying together his personal assessment and a quote from the speech itself, Balz suggests that Obama is aware of the challenges ahead and his responsibility to the American public. This instills a level of comfort in the reader's mind by establishing a strict confidence in Obama's ability to lead.

In addition to using Obama's speech as a testament to Obama's awareness of the challenges ahead, Balz cites the speech's independent strength. He says, "Obama's victory speech before 125,000 people at Chicago's Grant Park touched the themes of unity, reconciliation and hope that were at the heart of his candidacy." In doing this, Balz is able to touch upon the rhetorical successes of the speech without losing sight of his objectivity. By tying the speech back to Obama's campaign, Balz holds Obama accountable to his words and his promises.

The remainder of the article maintained the same objective tone of news analysis. However, it moved beyond election night and began a discussion about Obama's transition to the presidency. Balz discusses Obama's electoral coalitions, as well as his likely governing coalitions, and makes predictions about how these will influence each

⁶² Balz, Dan. "Hard Choices And Challenges Follow Triumph." The Washington Post 5 Nov. 2008. LexisNexis. American University.

other. While the article's mention of Obama's speech is very limited, it is an important part of the argument Balz makes.

The Washington Post-Opinion Article

Unlike previous speeches, Obama's victory speech was not the topic of a *Washington Post* editorial article in the week following Election Day. While the speech was mentioned by name in several editorials, none of the articles addressed any of the speech's content or future impact. Instead, *The Washington Post's* editorials addressed Obama's historical candidacy, campaign effectiveness and personal transition to the presidency. In order to preserve the consistency of analysis, these articles were not considered for analysis in this project. *The Washington Post's* lack of editorial coverage specifically addressing Obama's speech should itself serve as an analysis of the paper's coverage.

The Wall Street Journal

On November 6, 2008, *The Wall Street Journal* published a news article titled, "Wonder Land: Obama's Dour Vision." The article, written by Daniel Henninger, was published as a news article, but took on the form of a highly critical editorial article. Focused entirely on the speech and its context, the article used Obama's words to make direct accusations about Obama's leadership and his ability to effectively govern. Framing the article around Obama's speech, Henninger made the argument that the speech is proof of Obama's "messianism," which will lead to his eventual fall. In doing this, Henninger established a clearly biased and negative tone that assumes the root of Obama's failures to be personal.

Despite this clear tone, Henninger begins the article with a limited degree of praise for Obama speech. He states, “Barack Obama's victory speech Tuesday night had grace notes... He praised a party of Abraham Lincoln ‘founded on the values of self-reliance, individual liberty and national unity. Those are values we all share.’ And the way such values are kept alive is by a victor's thoughtful mention of them.”⁶³ In doing this, the author established, but did not elaborate on, the idea that Obama’s speech contained ideas worthy of praise. However, he quickly abandons this idea and instead, delved into a critical assessment of Obama’s failures.

Obama’s first failure, as Henninger points out, is his vision of American today. Henninger states, “What I take away from the victory speech is that his vision of America is fairly depressing, a lot more dour than my sense of America in 2008.” He continues on to explain that while America faces challenges in the future, they are not challenges that deserve the “over-writing” that Obama’s speech contained. The author asserts that Obama’s use of America’s past challenges in his speech is ill-founded and further represents his dour vision of America.

In addition, the author directly attacks Obama’s reference to the basis of his race speech. Henninger says, “When in this context he asserts, ‘Our union can be perfected,’ one pauses. Efforts to achieve the abstraction of national perfectibility can prove a dicey proposition.” The author provides no other information to the reader about this assertion, but rather moves on to criticize Obama’s grandiosity and messiah complex. In doing so, he indicates to his readers that Obama’s followers are along for a ride without a certain end.

⁶³ Henninger, Daniel. "Wonder Land: Obama's Dour Vision." The Wall Street Journal 6 Nov. 2008. Proquest. American University.

Throughout the article, Henninger's tone does not waver from that of a critically biased negativity. Using Obama's speech as a guide, Henninger exposes his readers to the idea that Obama's ability to lead is limited and his potential to fail is great. In doing this, he abandons any responsibility to objective news reporting in favor of harsh editorializing. However, unlike the coverage afforded by other newspapers at the same time, this article was strictly focused on Obama's speech and its implications. Instead of portraying a balanced approach to assessing Obama's future potential, the author advocated a unilateral assumption of Obama's future failure. This narrowed focus, while granting readers an intricate look at Obama's speech, did not present a realistic portrait of Obama's potential for both success and failure.

Victory Speech-Polling Analysis

Overall Favorability- Before the Speech

In the days leading up to the election, polling agencies tested Obama's favorability both by himself, and in comparison to Senator John McCain. The polling results show that Obama's favorability prior to Election Day was a great deal higher than his un-favorability. The polls also showcased that there was a small minority of Americans who had not yet decided on their opinion of Obama.

On November 3, 2008, The Marist Institute for Public Opinion released poll results from a one day poll testing Obama's pre-election favorability. The poll asked a pool of registered voters, "Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of Barack Obama?"⁶⁴ The results found that 56% of the respondents had a favorable impression of Obama, while only 37% stated that they had an unfavorable impression. An additional 7% of respondents stated that they were still unsure of their opinion of Obama.

CBS News also released a poll on November 3, 2008 that examined Obama's general favorability. This poll asked, "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable or haven't you heard enough yet to have an opinion?"⁶⁵ This poll, which was conducted over a three day span, found that 50% of respondents had a favorable opinion, while 35% did not. Voters who did not have an opinion or who did not know made up 13% of respondents.

⁶⁴ "Overall, do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of Barack Obama?" Marist Institute for Public Opinion. 3 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

⁶⁵ "Is your opinion of Barack Obama favorable, not favorable or haven't you heard enough yet to have an opinion?" CBS News. 3 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

The combined results of these two polls indicate Obama's generally established level of favorability prior to the election. When compared to other polls taken at the same time, these two represent the average response. These results indicate that Obama had a larger degree of favorability than non-favorability prior to Election Day. In addition, these results indicate that even just several days prior to the election, there was still a sizable population who had yet to form an opinion about Obama.

Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International conducted and released a poll on Election Day that examined voter's general feelings about Obama. The poll asked voters, "If Barack Obama wins today, what best describes your feelings about what he will do as President?"⁶⁶ Four possible response choices were provided, which are listed, along with the poll's results, in the table below. The column labeled "Response among all voters" displays the percentage of total voters who selected each response option. The columns labeled either "Obama" or "McCain" represent the partisan make-up of the respondents for each response.

Table 7

	Response among all voters	Proportion comprised by Obama supporters	Proportion comprised by McCain supporters
Excited	30%	98%	2%
Optimistic, but not Excited	24	77	20
Concerned, but not Scared	20	18	80
Scared	24	4	95

(From Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International, November 2, 2008)

The results of this poll indicate that 54% of voters had a positive feeling towards Obama's election, as opposed to the 44% of voters who had negative feelings. While

⁶⁶ "If Barack Obama wins today, what best describes your feelings about what he will do as President?" Edison Media Research. 4 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

these results are clearly divided among partisan lines, they still indicate that the majority of Americans on Election Day maintained a favorable opinion of Obama.

Overall Favorability- After the Speech

Unlike prior to Election Day, polling agencies did not conduct polling after the election that examined respondents' direct favorability towards Obama. Instead, polling agencies focused their attention on gathering information that was more segmented than general favorability. Since post-election favorability polls were not conducted, there is no direct comparison available to the polls released by The Marist Institute for Public Opinion and CBS prior to the election. Instead, the meaning of general favorability will be extended to include respondents' personal reactions to Obama's election.

On November 7, 2008, USA Today and Gallup released a poll that examined American's general reactions to Obama's election as the next President. These poll results were comprised of four separate questions, all of which were conducted on November 5, 2008. The poll's general question was, "Do each of the following describe or not describe your reaction to Barack Obama being elected President?"⁶⁷ After being asked the question, a respondent was presented with four different emotions, to each of which they must have chosen a response. The results of this extended poll are included in the table below, divided by the emotion tested, and the candidate each respondent voted for.

⁶⁷ "Do each of the following describe or not describe your reaction to Barack Obama being elected President?" USAToday/ Gallup. 7 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

Table 8

“Do each of the following describe or not describe your reaction to Barack Obama being elected President?”				
	Total Yes	Percentage of Yes-Obama Voters	Percentage of Yes-McCain Voters	Total No
Optimistic	67%	85%	41%	30%
Excited	59	93	15	40
Pessimistic	30	12	60	64
Afraid	27	7	56	72

(From USA Today/ Gallup, November 7, 2008)

These results indicate that far larger percentages of Americans felt positively about Obama’s election than those who felt negatively. Of those polled, 67% responded that they were “optimistic,” and 59% stated that they were “excited.” Only 30% stated that they were “pessimistic” about the future and 27% that they were “afraid.” Similar to the results found before the election, these responses were heavily tied to the voter’s personal choice for president.

When comparing the results of this poll to the poll conducted before the election by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International, one can see a significant jump in optimism and excitement. In the first poll, only 30% of respondents stated that they were excited, compared to 59% in the second poll. This same pattern can be seen in the results examining voter optimism, which was at 24% in the first poll, but 67% in the second poll. This large jump in voter excitement can largely be attributed to the Election Night environment, including President-Elect Obama’s victory speech.

Interestingly, respondent concern and fear also increased after Election Day. The first poll showed that while 20% of respondents were concerned about the election of Obama as president, 24% were actually scared. In the polling done after the election, 30% of respondents felt pessimistic, and 27% were afraid. While this increase in negative

feelings is not large, it still indicated a shift in voter feeling. This increase might be attributed to the increasingly negative emotion felt by partisan voters after the election was over.

It is important to note that the methodology of these two polls differed slightly. While respondents in the first poll were asked to select one emotion, respondents in the second poll were given the opportunity to respond to each emotion separately. Despite this difference, the poll results are suggestive of a shift in public opinion from before the election to after the election. These results are hard to attribute solely to Obama's victory speech but point to an overall emotional shift that occurred over a 24 hour period.

Conclusions about Overall Favorability

While favorability polling took on different forms before and after the election, the results are still comparable. In doing this comparison, it becomes evident that public opinion and favorability towards Obama became more positive after the election. As mentioned before, this is not entirely a result of the impact of Obama's speech. However, when examining the impact of Obama's election as a whole, his speech serves as the sole internal opportunity the campaign had to impact favorability. While the election results and coverage were not able to be controlled by the campaign, the speech's tone and content was.

The jump in excitement for Obama might also be attributed to the largely positive election night results. As Americans learned about the voting results, their opinion of Obama might have shifted to reflect the positive numbers. This same concept might also stand to explain the slight jump in un-favorability after the election. As individuals who did not vote for Obama learned of his success in the election, their level of un-

favorability might have increased. Together, these reactions would lead to the results that were collected by USA Today and Gallup after Election Day.

While a direct correlation is not able to be established in this type of analysis, an informal relationship can be inferred. Obama's speech, paired with his sweeping election night win, increased American's general favorability and excitement. In doing this, Obama kicked off his transition to the presidency with a predominately favorable audience.

Electability Polling

Since Obama's victory speech marked the end of his campaign for President, electability polling was no longer conducted, or even relevant. Instead, polling and news agencies began to examine the historical nature of his win, and its direct impact on race relations. This polling will be examined in the following section, Historical/Racial Significance Polling.

Historical/ Racial Significance Polling- After the Speech

The increased attention of polling agencies on the impact of the election on race relations in the United States was likely tied to Obama's mention of race in his victory speech. By addressing both the historical nature of his win, and the challenges in race relations that Americans have already overcome, Obama called additional attention to the subject. Paired with the national increased interest in the topic, Obama's speech allowed for the direct assessment of the campaign's impact on race relations. Polling found that

the average American felt as though Obama's election was a very significant event that would help to improve race relations in the future.

On November 7, 2008, USA Today and Gallup released a poll conducted on November 5th that tested American's opinions about the impact of the election on race relations in the United States. The poll's first question was, "As a result of Barack Obama's election, do you think race relations in this country will get a lot better, get a little better, not change, get a little worse or get a lot worse?"⁶⁸ The full results of this poll are included in the table below.

Table 9

	Response
Get a lot better	28%
Get a little better	42%
Not change	17%
Get a little worse	7%
Get a lot worse	3%

(From USA Today/Gallup, November 7, 2008)

The results indicate that 70% of respondents felt that as a result of Obama's election, race relations will get either a lot or a little better. Only 17% responded that they felt the election would have no impact, while 10% felt that race relations will get either a little worse or a lot worse. Overwhelmingly, Americans indicated in this poll that Obama's election was a positive step forward for race relations in the United States.

The poll's second question was, "How do you view Barack Obama's election as president in terms of progress for blacks in the United States?"⁶⁹ Respondents were offered four options, of which they could choose one. The poll's results are included in

⁶⁸ "As a result of Barack Obama's election, do you think race relations in this country will get a lot better, get a little better, not change, get a little worse or get a lot worse?" USA Today/ Gallup. 7 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

⁶⁹ "How do you view Barack Obama's election as president in terms of progress for blacks in the United States?" USA Today/ Gallup. 7 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

the table below. The column labeled “Response among all voters” displays the percentage of total voters who agreed with each prompt listed in the far column. The columns labeled either “Obama” or “McCain” represent the partisan make up of the respondents for each response.

Table 10

	Response among all voters	Proportion comprised by Obama supporters	Proportion comprised by McCain supporters
Most Important	33%	38%	27%
One of the Most Important	38	44	34
Important	15	12	23
Not that Important	10	6	14

(From USA Today/Gallup, November 7, 2008)

The results of this poll indicate that an overwhelming majority, 71%, of those polled believe that Obama’s election was either the most or one of the most important advances in black progress in the last 100 years. A minority, only 10% of those polled, felt as though his election was “not that important”. This showcases the awareness of the American people to the significance and historical impact of Obama’s election.

Since no equivalent poll was conducted prior to election night, these results cannot be directly compared to those found prior to Obama’s victory speech. However, these results should be examined nonetheless, as a marker of the American public’s awareness of the importance and impact of Obama’s election. It can be inferred that the election’s sweeping results and Obama’s victory speech helped to influence voters to understand the implications of his win for race relations in the United States.

Conclusions about Historical/ Racial Significance Polling

The results of these two polls indicate that at the time, the American public maintained a positive and hopeful opinion of the future for race relations in the United

States. It can be concluded that this overwhelming positive response is largely related to Obama's win in the election. It can be inferred that had he not won, the public's response on the impact of this election would have been far more negative.

In addition to Obama's win, his speech's language served as an important influence. Within his speech, Obama took the time to acknowledge the importance of the win for race relation in the United State. The content analysis shows that Obama was able to fulfill an intricate balance in doing this- acknowledging the significance, without isolating the win entirely as a racial success. This balance was crucial to the shaping of public opinion, as it guided Americans to believe in the significance of the election, without investing too much in its ability to influence the future.

The results found in these polls indicate that the American people, regardless of personal race and partisan affiliation, were able to examine both the potential power and inherent meaning of Obama's election.

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- Before the Speech

In the days prior to the election, polling agencies began a final examination of the public's perception of Obama's personal characteristics. These polls found that the American public's general opinion of Obama was very high, especially in the areas of his ability to identify with average Americans, and his ability to bring needed change to Washington.

On November 3, 2008, CBS News released a poll that examined the public's opinion of Obama's personal understanding of the needs and problems of Americans. The poll, which was conducted several days prior to the election, asked respondents, "Do

you think Barack Obama does or does not understand the needs and problems of people like yourself?”⁷⁰ In addition to testing whether or not Obama can identify the problems of the average American, this poll tests whether or not he is able to understand them. In doing this, the poll essentially tested the public’s perception of Obama’s shared American values. The poll found that 64% of respondents felt that Obama does understand their needs and problems, while only 29% felt that he does not. These results indicate that the American public generally felt that Obama shared a common understanding of the challenges that faced Americas.

This poll is testing an important personal characteristic, whether or not Obama is in touch with real Americans. This issue remained prominent throughout the campaign, especially as a criticism of Obama. The results of this poll indicate that the percentage of Americans who felt that Obama understood their needs extended beyond typical partisan lines. This mass appeal is an important consideration in pre-election analysis.

On the same day, Fox Broadcasting Company released a poll that tested respondent’s perception of Obama’s ability to bring about change. The poll asked respondents, “Do you think Barack Obama can bring the right kind of change to Washington?”⁷¹ This poll served as an informal test of not only Obama’s campaign messaging, but also the public’s view of his personal and leadership qualifications for the presidency. The results of the poll are included in the table below.

⁷⁰ “Do you think Barack Obama does or does not understand the needs and problems of people like yourself?” CBS News. 3 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

⁷¹ “Do you think Barack Obama can bring the right kind of change to Washington?” Fox Broadcasting Company. 3 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

Table 10

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Yes	55%	90%	17%	50%
No	41	9	79	41
Don't Know	4	1	3	8

(From Fox Broadcasting Company, November 3, 2008)

Of the total pool of respondents, 55% responded that they felt he could bring the change needed, while only 41% stated that they did not think that he could. An additional 4% stated that they did not yet know. These results indicate that the majority of Americans felt that Obama would be able to live up to his campaign promises and bring needed change to Washington.

However, these results varied greatly by respondent partisan affiliation. Of Democratic respondents, only 9% stated that they did not think Obama could bring change to Washington. This number jumps to 79% within Republican respondents. This immense difference signals the highly partisan understandings of change during the 2008 election. In contrast, Independent responders presented a far more balanced split, with a mere 9% margin between those who believed in his ability to bring about change and those who did not. These results from this subset of the responding population indicate that among Independent voters, Obama's messages of change still resonated.

Overall, the results of this poll indicate that prior to the election a majority of Americans felt that Obama could bring needed change to Washington. However, these Americans were heavily Democratic or Independent voters. This is an important distinction, and clearly indicates a difference in the absorption of campaign rhetoric largely tied to policy opinion.

Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics- After the Speech

The post election polling showed very similar results to those collected before the election. The American public's opinion of Obama after the election remained very positive in the areas of his ability to understand average American needs as well as his ability to bring change to Washington. The results do not indicate a dramatic shift of public opinion from before Election Day to the day after.

On November 5, 2008, Democracy Corps released a post- election poll that compared American's public opinion of Barack Obama and John McCain. The first question of the poll asked respondents, "I'd like to ask you which presidential candidate you associate more with these terms, Barack Obama or John McCain. Shares your values."⁷² The poll's full results are located in the table below.

Table 11

	Total
Obama much more	39%
Obama somewhat more	11
McCain somewhat more	14
McCain much more	31
Both/Neither/Don't Know	3

(From Democracy Corps, November 5, 2008)

These results indicate that the largest percentage of respondents felt that Obama shares their values much more than McCain. However, the percentage of respondents who selected McCain was only slightly smaller. In addition, nearly equal percentages of respondents selected Obama and McCain as "somewhat more". While Obama carried the overall public's opinion, McCain maintained a strong level of support in this poll. This

⁷² "I'd like to ask you which presidential candidate you associate more with these terms, Barack Obama or John McCain. Shares your values." Democracy Corps. 5 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

narrow margin can largely be attributed to the highly partisan associations that this poll inspires.

While the results of this poll cannot be directly compared to those of the CBS poll released on November 3, 2008, they indicate a similar trend. Both before and after the election, Obama maintains a strong public association with shared values. McCain's public opinion is not directly tested in the pre-election poll, and thus, should not be analyzed in the post-election poll.

The two poll's varying methodology and organization prevent a direct comparison of the influence of Obama's victory night speech. Instead, these results indicate a relative maintenance of public opinion and support from before to after Obama's victory speech.

In this same poll, Democracy Corps tested public opinion of each candidate's ability to bring change. This question was phrased in the same way as the previous question, and asked respondents, "I'd like to ask you which presidential candidate you associate more with these terms, Barack Obama or John McCain. Bringing the right kind of change."⁷³ The results of this poll are included in the table below.

Table 12

	Total
Obama much more	45%
Obama somewhat more	11
McCain somewhat more	17
McCain much more	22
Both/Neither/Don't Know	4

(From Democracy Corps, November 5, 2008)

These results indicate that Obama maintained a far higher level of public opinion in regards to his ability to bring needed change to Washington. A total of 56% of

⁷³ "I'd like to ask you which presidential candidate you associate more with these terms, Barack Obama or John McCain. Bringing the right kind of change." Democracy Corps. 5 Nov. 2008. Polling the Nation. American University.

respondents in this poll selected Obama as the candidate who was more likely to bring change to Washington. In comparison to the 55% total response collected from the Fox Broadcasting poll conducted prior to the election, these results are very consistent.

While these polls response methodologies do not align perfectly, they indicate a general pattern of public opinion. The results show us that election night and Obama's victory speech did not have a noticeable impact on the public's perception of Obama's ability to bring change to the nation. This finding suggests that while Obama's speech reinforced his campaign message of change, it did not reach out to new audiences. Instead, the speech maintained previously obtained levels of support.

Conclusions about Personal Qualifications and Leadership Characteristics

Unlike previous sections that discussed polling about Obama's personal characteristics, this section did not identify any formal influence that his speech had on public opinion. It is important to note that by the conclusion of the campaign, many Americans had determined their personal opinion about each of the candidates' personal qualifications. As a result of this, any shift that occurred from before the speech to after the speech was minimal. Once a voter established their personal opinion, Obama's victory night speech had little impact on their perception of his qualifications for presidency.

An additional element that was responsible for the inconclusive nature of this section's results was the comparability of polls from before and after the victory speech. Unlike in sections relating to previous speeches, this section contained several polls that were matched in content but not methodology. This made the direct comparison of these polls difficult, as were the establishment of any reliable influence.

Despite these challenges, a basic interpretation can be made. After the election, Obama maintained his very positive public persona. This persona was deeply rooted in the public's assessment of Obama's personal values and ability to bring needed change to Washington.

Victory Speech Polling Conclusions

The results from before and after Obama's victory speech do not indicate a substantial shift in public opinion in the areas of favorability, racial and historical significant and personal characteristics. One important consideration in this analysis is the inability of this research to isolate the impact of the speech from the impact of the election itself. This differentiation is increasingly important in analysis about personal characteristics that so heavily rely on audience perception and understanding. This speech's timing coincided with the election itself, making isolated analysis impossible.

An additional factor in this analysis is time. Since the majority of the polling referenced was conducted within several days of the election, the true influence of Obama's speech might not have had time to develop enough to shift public opinion.

Despite these challenges in analysis, it is clear that Obama began his transition to the Presidency with a very positive public persona, and the trust of many Americans in his ability to bring real change to Washington.

Project Conclusions

This project looked to examine the impact of Senator Barack Obama's campaign speeches on the American voter and the election as a whole. By examining each speech's context, content, media coverage and impact on public opinion, the project uncovered an important strength of Obama's campaign, his spoken connection with voters. Obama's speeches represent the beginning of a national conversation, and the start of the American journey towards change.

The conclusion to this project is organized in several sections, each referencing different aspects of the project. The first three sections examine each speech independently, drawing to a close the context, content, media and polling analyses surrounding each speech. By drawing these conclusions separately, each speech can be understood individually. The next section examines the overall trends found in the project. Based on the conclusions of each speech, these trends examine both static and changing aspects of Obama's campaign, and the reasons for his success.

The final part of the project's conclusion is a personal narrative discussing the implications of Obama's use of speeches and language in his campaign. The narrative's perspective is grounded in the findings of this project, as well as a basic understanding of Obama's successful run for President. The conclusion aims not only to summarize the findings of the project, but also the future implications of Obama's transformational approach to campaign speech.

Announcement Speech Conclusions

The true success of Barack Obama's campaign announcement speech is best understood through its impact on setting the tone for Obama's campaign. The speech used a balance of elegant language, powerful messaging and a hopeful tone to truly establish Obama's campaign in the public eye. While other candidates were still developing their exploratory committees and staffs, Obama's speech showcased the depth of his plan for the path to the presidency. This helped to influence the public's general opinion of his campaign, and grant him the legitimacy that many questioned he deserved.

The analysis of Obama's media presence indicated that despite a great deal of excitement over his candidacy, Senator Hillary Clinton remained the media's presumptive nominee. However, the success of Obama's speech earned him positive print coverage, which helped to promote the public's awareness of his candidacy.

Polling results reinforce this idea, indicating that Obama's speech truly did increase the public's awareness of his campaign. In addition to increasing awareness, Obama's speech helped to increase the public's favorability toward him.

Obama's announcement speech can be considered largely influential, as it helped to formalize the public's perception of him, as well as increase general awareness. However, in addition to doing this, Obama's speech provided him with the platform to shape his message, and define who he was in the public's eye. Since Obama was relatively unknown prior to the speech, he was not bounded to a predetermined image, unlike other candidates. Instead, Obama used the speech as an opportunity to craft his message and illustrate for the American public a vision of his campaign.

Race Speech Conclusions

Obama's speech on race relations in the United States served several different purposes, each of which overlapped to make the speech incredibly influential. The content of the speech was honest and personally revealing. Obama's use of personal story and simple language made the speech incredibly accessible to the public, which was an essential component of the speech's success. By speaking directly to the American people, Obama transcended political rhetoric and delivered a speech about the potential for America's success. This speech spoke to all Americans, making it clear that everyone had a direct responsibility for our nation's future.

While the speech itself was incredibly influential, it was the media coverage that it earned that truly transformed the message and impact of the speech. Instead of merely covering the speech as a campaign event, the newspapers analyzed in this project covered the speech as the beginning of a national conversation about race. In doing this, the media not only helped Obama move past the damaging Wright controversy, but also helped to frame the controversy as an opportunity to examine race relations in the nation. In this case, the media's coverage of Obama's speech was an important part of the success of its messaging.

Despite this perceived success, the polling analysis showed very few conclusive trends about public opinion of Obama. Instead, the polling suggested that while his speech might have alleviated some concerns brought about as a result of the Wright controversy, the majority of Americans did not shift their opinion immediately. The analysis suggests that perhaps with a larger time frame, the polling results would indicate a greater influence on public opinion. Noting the complexity of the topics addressed in

the speech, polling immediately following the speech might have reflected the uncertainty felt by the American public, rather than conclusive shifts in opinion and favorability.

Obama's speech about race should be considered a success largely because it was able to address a controversial and personal topic without alienating portions of the population. Instead, Obama used the speech as an opportunity not just to clarify his involvement with Wright, but also to highlight his personal struggles and concerns with race in the United States. By doing this, Obama showed the American people that he was able to tackle difficult subjects with grace and leadership that extended beyond mere campaign formalities.

Victory Speech Conclusions

Obama's speech on election night served not just as his formal statement of victory, but also as the conclusion to his 18-month long campaign. By relying on the same messages and themes that he used throughout the campaign, Obama was able to speak to his supporters and the rest of America about his vision for the nation. In doing this, Obama recognized the historical and personal significance of the election, both for him and for the nation as a whole. The speech was successful in speaking to all necessary audiences, concluding his campaign, and setting the tone for his transition to the Presidency.

After a long campaign filled with the intricacies of policy and governance, Obama used this speech as an opportunity to embrace the language and style that typified his campaign and his vision for the future. By employing a hopeful tone that embraced the

challenges ahead, while still recognizing the significance of the challenges that he had overcome, Obama instills a confidence in his listeners. This is the true success of the speech; the pure impact of Obama's words for the listener. While this cannot be directly understood, the power of his speech is clear, drawing in all audiences.

The media analysis of Obama's victory speech indicates that unlike his previous speeches, the print media did not usually cover the speech itself as news. Instead, the articles focused on Obama's win and the implications it had on the future of the United States. Instead of covering the content and influence of the speech itself, the print media often used the speech as a source for Obama's post election messaging and tone.

Despite the assumed influence Obama's speech had on listeners, the polling analysis did not showcase a major shift in public opinion and favorability. Instead, the polling results indicated that the majority of Americans, regardless of partisan affiliation, saw Obama's win and his speech as important steps forward in race relations in the United States. These results showcase the American people's understanding of the implications of Obama's win, not just the immediate ramifications.

Obama's speech on election night was most influential as a part of the transition from candidate to President. While still maintaining the messages of his campaign, Obama was able to embrace the added complexities of his role as President-Elect, and leave Americans with a renewed faith in their nation.

Overall Trends

Consistent throughout Obama's campaign was his use of speeches as an opportunity to connect with Americans directly. Rather than using a speech as a mere

platform for his ideas, Obama used his speeches to reach out to voters and illustrate his vision of what America could become. This was done most effectively with Obama's use of language and personal story. While each of the speeches examined had a specific political purpose, they each also carried the secondary purpose of presenting Obama to the American people. This was an important aspect of the campaign's strategy- directly connecting voters to Obama and his vision for the United States.

By concurrently tracking media coverage and public opinion polling surrounding Obama's speeches, the project was able to discover the informal relationship between the two. The elite print media's treatment of Obama's campaign speeches was an ever-changing relationship that seemed to mirror the public's changing perception of his candidacy. The media, much like the American people, were initially skeptical of Obama. While the print media attempted to be hopeful about Obama's potential success, a critical tone laced with the realism of the campaign and Obama's chances crept into their coverage. However, as Obama's public presence and favorability grew, so did the media's opinion of him. This became increasingly clear with each speech, as Obama gained popularity. While a formal relationship cannot be determined, it is clear that these two changing variables influenced each other greatly. Obama's campaign clearly understood this, and used speeches as an opportunity to seize the media's attention during important times of the campaign.

One interesting trend throughout Obama's campaign was the consistency of his messaging. Unlike many other campaigns that seize news stories as an opportunity to shift messaging and reach out to new communities, Obama's campaign worked hard to maintain unified messaging. Obama's messages of hope, change, and unity appeared in

all three of the speeches examined in this project. In these speeches, Obama's treatment of these messages did not waver. Instead, Obama defined these ideas early on in his announcement speech, and ensured that they remained a central part of his message during the race and victory speeches. This stability conveyed a sense of internal confidence to the American people, which the campaign used as a way to garner additional support.

Perhaps the most prominent trend found throughout this project is the pure impact that Obama's speeches had on the American public and the campaign as a whole. While each speech varied in environmental context, content, media coverage and public polling, they all served as essential parts of Obama's campaign. The polling and media analyses did not always convey the degree of the speeches' direct influence. Each speech served to better connect Obama and his vision to the American voter, and did so successfully. Obama's speeches, especially his announcement speech and speech on race relations were given at a time rife with challenges. However, instead of turning from these challenges, the speeches addressed them head-on, with the intent not just of overcoming them, but also of advancing upon them.

These trends best summarize the findings of this project, using speeches as primary sources representing Obama's campaign strategy. While each speech succeeded within its own right, the true influence of Obama's speeches is seen through an analysis of their success as a whole, and the impact they will have on political speech in the future.

Personal Narrative: Understanding the Implications of Inspired Political Speech

The primary purpose of this project was to uncover the elements of strength within Barack Obama's campaign speeches. Obama's speeches were well crafted, well delivered, well planned and well received. It was these elements of strength that served to elevate his speeches from mere campaign rhetoric to influential and direct conversations with the American public. The influence of his speeches is undeniable. The media coverage and the polling analysis tell us this. However, what they do not tell us is, why?

While Obama's speeches were essentially just a small piece of a broad campaign strategy, their true strength is not in the placement or planning of the speech, but rather, the connection they forge with the listener. The reality is, without engaged listeners, a speech is merely one man speaking to himself. By using language that was honest, inspiring and personal, Obama was able to connect directly to his listeners.

Basic communication theory tells us that humans thrive on connections. To speak to an audience, you must find a way to connect to them. To persuade, you must play into emotions. To inform, you must first grasp the attention of your listeners.⁷⁴ In his speeches, Obama did all of these, and did them well.

Obama's ability to connect to his listeners is rooted in a simple idea. As people, we understand that in order for our words to create meaning in the mind of another person, they must resonate. The Resonance Principle of Communication explains that, "the critical task is to design our package of stimuli so that it resonates with information already stored within an individual... Resonance takes place when the stimuli put into our communication evoke meaning for the listener or viewer."⁷⁵ What Obama's speeches

⁷⁴ Sussman, Sabrina. "Faith." Editorial. 12 Nov. 2008.

⁷⁵ Schwartz, Tony. The Responsive Chord. New York: Anchor Press, 1973. Pg. 24-25.

illustrate is a skillful execution of this theory. By finding language, stories and issues that resonate with his listeners, Obama is able to transcend his candidacy and speak to the American people on an individual level.

By doing this, Obama was able to surpass Americans' understanding of expected campaign rhetoric and instead, leave them with a new perspective on politics. Instead of using the same old litany about government-based policy changes, Obama found a way to make his speeches about the change that must come from within the United States, from the people. By placing the responsibility among the people, Obama was able to showcase not only his understanding of the challenges we face, but also our fears in overcoming these challenges. Obama acknowledges that the change we seek requires a great deal of work, and that in order for it to come true we must unify as a nation.

These are powerful messages that connect directly to the American psyche. In an environment laden with political skepticism, Obama attempted to renew the American people's faith in their government. By working to inspire trust, Obama connected on a personal level with the fears and uncertainties of the American voter.⁷⁶ Obama's intimate understanding of this principle of influence allowed him to truly excel during the campaign, and gather a diverse electoral coalition on Election Day and the support of the American public as he moved into the future.

While this project's analysis points to areas of significance, the true impact of Obama's speeches cannot be understood today, or even within the next administration. Instead, it is the generations to come that will have the objectivity and understanding to truly grasp the influence of Obama's speeches. By using Obama's model as a guide, future leaders will be able to better connect to voters, and change the tone of Presidential

⁷⁶ Sussman, Sabrina.

campaigns.

What we know now is that Obama excelled because he spoke to Americans not just as voters, but as people.

The implications of this style of speech are completely reliant on its use in the future by American political leaders. Obama's grasp of language is an achievement that future generations of leaders should aspire for. Now that the American people have been exposed to a political campaign based on the use of messages that resonate for them, they understand what is possible.

While Obama's words carry meaning themselves, it is the meaning of the lessons he leaves behind that are most influential. Inspired political speech assumes that a speaker's goal is the development of an intimate relationship with his listener. If these ideas can be applied to our modern-day understanding of government, the American people will benefit from a political process that is engaging and inspiring.

Appendix A

Transcripts of Barack Obama Campaign Speeches

**Senator Barack Obama's Announcement for President
Springfield, IL | February 10, 2007**

Let me begin by saying thanks to all you who've traveled, from far and wide, to brave the cold today.

We all made this journey for a reason. It's humbling, but in my heart I know you didn't come here just for me, you came here because you believe in what this country can be. In the face of war, you believe there can be peace. In the face of despair, you believe there can be hope. In the face of a politics that's shut you out, that's told you to settle, that's divided us for too long, you believe we can be one people, reaching for what's possible, building that more perfect union.

That's the journey we're on today. But let me tell you how I came to be here. As most of you know, I am not a native of this great state. I moved to Illinois over two decades ago. I was a young man then, just a year out of college; I knew no one in Chicago, was without money or family connections. But a group of churches had offered me a job as a community organizer for \$13,000 a year. And I accepted the job, sight unseen, motivated then by a single, simple, powerful idea - that I might play a small part in building a better America.

My work took me to some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. I joined with pastors and lay-people to deal with communities that had been ravaged by plant closings. I saw that the problems people faced weren't simply local in nature - that the decision to close a steel mill was made by distant executives; that the lack of textbooks and computers in schools could be traced to the skewed priorities of politicians a thousand miles away; and that when a child turns to violence, there's a hole in his heart no government alone can fill.

It was in these neighborhoods that I received the best education I ever had, and where I learned the true meaning of my Christian faith.

After three years of this work, I went to law school, because I wanted to understand how the law should work for those in need. I became a civil rights lawyer, and taught constitutional law, and after a time, I came to understand that our cherished rights of liberty and equality depend on the active participation of an awakened electorate. It was with these ideas in mind that I arrived in this capital city as a state Senator.

It was here, in Springfield, where I saw all that is America converge - farmers and teachers, businessmen and laborers, all of them with a story to tell, all of them seeking a seat at the table, all of them clamoring to be heard. I made lasting friendships here - friends that I see in the audience today.

It was here we learned to disagree without being disagreeable - that it's possible to compromise so long as you know those principles that can never be compromised; and that so long as we're willing to listen to each other, we can assume the best in people instead of the worst.

That's why we were able to reform a death penalty system that was broken. That's why we were able to give health insurance to children in need. That's why we made the tax system more fair and just for working families, and that's why we passed ethics reforms that the cynics said could never, ever be passed.

It was here, in Springfield, where North, South, East and West come together that I was reminded of the essential decency of the American people - where I came to believe that through this decency, we can build a more hopeful America.

And that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a divided house to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States.

I recognize there is a certain presumptuousness - a certain audacity - to this announcement. I know I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change.

The genius of our founders is that they designed a system of government that can be changed. And we should take heart, because we've changed this country before. In the face of tyranny, a band of patriots brought an Empire to its knees. In the face of secession, we unified a nation and set the captives free. In the face of Depression, we put people back to work and lifted millions out of poverty. We welcomed immigrants to our shores, we opened railroads to the west, we landed a man on the moon, and we heard a King's call to let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what's needed to be done. Today we are called once more - and it is time for our generation to answer that call.

For that is our unyielding faith - that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it.

That's what Abraham Lincoln understood. He had his doubts. He had his defeats. He had his setbacks. But through his will and his words, he moved a nation and helped free a people. It is because of the millions who rallied to his cause that we are no longer divided, North and South, slave and free. It is because men and women of every race, from every walk of life, continued to march for freedom long after Lincoln was laid to rest, that today we have the chance to face the challenges of this millennium together, as one people - as Americans.

All of us know what those challenges are today - a war with no end, a dependence on oil that threatens our future, schools where too many children aren't learning, and families struggling paycheck to paycheck despite working as hard as they can. We know the challenges. We've heard them. We've talked about them for years.

What's stopped us from meeting these challenges is not the absence of sound policies and sensible plans. What's stopped us is the failure of leadership, the smallness of our politics - the ease with which we're distracted by the petty and trivial, our chronic avoidance of tough decisions, our preference for scoring cheap political points instead of rolling up our sleeves and building a working consensus to tackle big problems.

For the last six years we've been told that our mounting debts don't matter, we've been told that the anxiety Americans feel about rising health care costs and stagnant wages are an illusion, we've been told that climate change is a hoax, and that tough talk and an ill-conceived war can replace diplomacy, and strategy, and foresight. And when all else fails, when Katrina happens, or the death toll in Iraq mounts, we've been told that our crises are somebody else's fault. We're distracted from our real failures, and told to blame the other party, or gay people, or immigrants.

And as people have looked away in disillusionment and frustration, we know what's filled the void. The cynics, and the lobbyists, and the special interests who've turned our government into a game only they can afford to play. They write the checks and you get stuck with the bills, they get the access while you get to write a letter, they think they own this government, but we're here today to take it back. The time for that politics is over. It's time to turn the page.

We've made some progress already. I was proud to help lead the fight in Congress that led to the most sweeping ethics reform since Watergate.

But Washington has a long way to go. And it won't be easy. That's why we'll have to set priorities. We'll have to make hard choices. And although government will play a crucial role in bringing about the changes we need, more money and programs alone will not get us where we need to go. Each of us, in our own lives, will have to accept responsibility - for instilling an ethic of achievement in our children, for adapting to a more competitive economy, for strengthening our communities, and sharing some measure of sacrifice. So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation.

Let us be the generation that reshapes our economy to compete in the digital age. Let's set high standards for our schools and give them the resources they need to succeed. Let's recruit a new army of teachers, and give them better pay and more support in exchange for more accountability. Let's make college more affordable, and let's invest in scientific research, and let's lay down broadband lines through the heart of inner cities and rural towns all across America.

And as our economy changes, let's be the generation that ensures our nation's workers are sharing in our prosperity. Let's protect the hard-earned benefits their companies have promised. Let's make it possible for hardworking Americans to save for retirement. And let's allow our unions and their organizers to lift up this country's middle-class again.

Let's be the generation that ends poverty in America. Every single person willing to work should be able to get job training that leads to a job, and earn a living wage that can pay the bills, and afford child care so their kids have a safe place to go when they work. Let's do this.

Let's be the generation that finally tackles our health care crisis. We can control costs by focusing on prevention, by providing better treatment to the chronically ill, and using technology to cut the bureaucracy. Let's be the generation that says right here, right now, that we will have universal health care in America by the end of the next president's first term.

Let's be the generation that finally frees America from the tyranny of oil. We can harness homegrown, alternative fuels like ethanol and spur the production of more fuel-efficient cars. We can set up a system for capping greenhouse gases. We can turn this crisis of global warming into a moment of opportunity for innovation, and job creation, and an incentive for businesses that will serve as a model for the world. Let's be the generation that makes future generations proud of what we did here.

Most of all, let's be the generation that never forgets what happened on that September day and confront the terrorists with everything we've got. Politics doesn't have to divide us on this anymore - we can work together to keep our country safe. I've worked with Republican Senator Dick Lugar to pass a law that will secure and destroy some of

the world's deadliest, unguarded weapons. We can work together to track terrorists down with a stronger military, we can tighten the net around their finances, and we can improve our intelligence capabilities. But let us also understand that ultimate victory against our enemies will come only by rebuilding our alliances and exporting those ideals that bring hope and opportunity to millions around the globe.

But all of this cannot come to pass until we bring an end to this war in Iraq. Most of you know I opposed this war from the start. I thought it was a tragic mistake. Today we grieve for the families who have lost loved ones, the hearts that have been broken, and the young lives that could have been. America, it's time to start bringing our troops home. It's time to admit that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies at the heart of someone else's civil war. That's why I have a plan that will bring our combat troops home by March of 2008. Letting the Iraqis know that we will not be there forever is our last, best hope to pressure the Sunni and Shia to come to the table and find peace.

Finally, there is one other thing that is not too late to get right about this war - and that is the homecoming of the men and women - our veterans - who have sacrificed the most. Let us honor their valor by providing the care they need and rebuilding the military they love. Let us be the generation that begins this work.

I know there are those who don't believe we can do all these things. I understand the skepticism. After all, every four years, candidates from both parties make similar promises, and I expect this year will be no different. All of us running for president will travel around the country offering ten-point plans and making grand speeches; all of us will trumpet those qualities we believe make us uniquely qualified to lead the country. But too many times, after the election is over, and the confetti is swept away, all those promises fade from memory, and the lobbyists and the special interests move in, and people turn away, disappointed as before, left to struggle on their own.

That is why this campaign can't only be about me. It must be about us - it must be about what we can do together. This campaign must be the occasion, the vehicle, of your hopes, and your dreams. It will take your time, your energy, and your advice - to push us forward when we're doing right, and to let us know when we're not. This campaign has to be about reclaiming the meaning of citizenship, restoring our sense of common purpose, and realizing that few obstacles can withstand the power of millions of voices calling for change.

By ourselves, this change will not happen. Divided, we are bound to fail.

But the life of a tall, gangly, self-made Springfield lawyer tells us that a different future is possible.

He tells us that there is power in words.

He tells us that there is power in conviction.

That beneath all the differences of race and region, faith and station, we are one people.

He tells us that there is power in hope.

As Lincoln organized the forces arrayed against slavery, he was heard to say: "Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four winds, and formed and fought to battle through."

That is our purpose here today.

That's why I'm in this race.

Not just to hold an office, but to gather with you to transform a nation.

I want to win that next battle - for justice and opportunity.

I want to win that next battle - for better schools, and better jobs, and health care for all.

I want us to take up the unfinished business of perfecting our union, and building a better America.

And if you will join me in this improbable quest, if you feel destiny calling, and see as I see, a future of endless possibility stretching before us; if you sense, as I sense, that the time is now to shake off our slumber, and slough off our fear, and make good on the debt we owe past and future generations, then I'm ready to take up the cause, and march with you, and work with you. Together, starting today, let us finish the work that needs to be done, and usher in a new birth of freedom on this Earth.

Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: 'A More Perfect Union'
Philadelphia, PA | March 18, 2008

"We the people, in order to form a more perfect union."

Two hundred and twenty one 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, a question that divided the colonies and brought the convention to a stalemate until the founders chose to allow the slave trade to continue for at least twenty more years, and to leave any final resolution to future generations.

Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution - a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time.

And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part - through protests and struggle, 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.

This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign - to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America. I chose to run for the presidency at this moment in history because I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together - unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction - towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

This belief comes from my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people. But it also comes from my own American story.

I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners - an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.

It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts - that out of many, we are truly one.

Throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate Flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans.

This is not to say that race has not been an issue in the campaign. At various stages in the campaign, some commentators have deemed me either "too black" or "not black enough." We saw racial tensions bubble to the surface during the week before the South Carolina primary. The press has scoured every exit poll for the latest evidence of racial polarization, not just in terms of white and black, but black and brown as well.

And yet, it has only been in the last couple of weeks that the discussion of race in this campaign has taken a particularly divisive turn.

On one end of the spectrum, we've heard the implication that my candidacy is somehow an exercise in affirmative action; that it's based solely on the desire of wide-eyed liberals to purchase racial reconciliation on the cheap. On the other end, we've heard my former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, use incendiary language to express views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide, but views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation; that rightly offend white and black alike.

I have already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend Wright that have caused such controversy. For some, nagging questions remain. Did I know him to be an occasionally fierce critic of American domestic and foreign policy? Of course. Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in church? Yes. Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely - just as I'm sure many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests, or rabbis with which you strongly disagreed.

But the remarks that have caused this recent firestorm weren't simply controversial. They weren't simply a religious leader's effort to speak out against perceived injustice. Instead, they expressed a profoundly distorted view of this country - a view that sees white racism as endemic, and that elevates what is wrong with America above all that we know is right with America; a view that sees the conflicts in the Middle East as rooted primarily in the actions of stalwart allies like Israel, instead of emanating from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam.

As such, Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems - two wars, a terrorist threat, a falling economy, a chronic health care crisis and potentially devastating climate change; problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all.

Given my background, my politics, and my professed values and ideals, there will no doubt be those for whom my statements of condemnation are not enough. Why associate myself with Reverend Wright in the first place, they may ask? Why not join another church? And I confess that if all that I knew of Reverend Wright were the snippets of those sermons that have run in an endless loop on the television and You

Tube, or if Trinity United Church of Christ conformed to the caricatures being peddled by some commentators, there is no doubt that I would react in much the same way

But the truth is, that isn't all that I know of the man. The man I met more than twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another; to care for the sick and lift up the poor. He is a man who served his country as a U.S. Marine; who has studied and lectured at some of the finest universities and seminaries in the country, and who for over thirty years led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth - by housing the homeless, ministering to the needy, providing day care services and scholarships and prison ministries, and reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

In my first book, *Dreams From My Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity:

"People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up into the rafters....And in that single note - hope! - I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories - of survival, and freedom, and hope - became our story, my story; the blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears; until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black; in chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a means to reclaim memories that we didn't need to feel shame about...memories that all people might study and cherish - and with which we could start to rebuild."

That has been my experience at Trinity. Like other predominantly black churches across the country, Trinity embodies the black community in its entirety - the doctor and the welfare mom, the model student and the former gang-banger. Like other black churches, Trinity's services are full of raucous laughter and sometimes bawdy humor. They are full of dancing, clapping, screaming and shouting that may seem jarring to the untrained ear. The church contains in full the kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance, the struggles and successes, the love and yes, the bitterness and bias that make up the black experience in America.

And this helps explain, perhaps, my relationship with Reverend Wright. As imperfect as he may be, he has been like family to me. He strengthened my faith, officiated my wedding, and baptized my children. Not once in my conversations with him have I heard him talk about any ethnic group in derogatory terms, or treat whites with whom he interacted with anything but courtesy and respect. He contains within him the contradictions - the good and the bad - of the community that he has served diligently for so many years.

I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother - a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.

These people are a part of me. And they are a part of America, this country that I love.

Some will see this as an attempt to justify or excuse comments that are simply inexcusable. I can assure you it is not. I suppose the politically safe thing would be to move on from this episode and just hope that it fades into the woodwork. We can dismiss Reverend Wright as a crank or a demagogue, just as some have dismissed Geraldine Ferraro, in the aftermath of her recent statements, as harboring some deep-seated racial bias.

But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America - to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality.

The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American.

Understanding this reality requires a reminder of how we arrived at this point. As William Faulkner once wrote, "The past isn't dead and buried. In fact, it isn't even past." We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.

Segregated schools were, and are, inferior schools; we still haven't fixed them, fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the inferior education they provided, then and now, helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between today's black and white students.

Legalized discrimination - where blacks were prevented, often through violence, from owning property, or loans were not granted to African-American business owners, or black homeowners could not access FHA mortgages, or blacks were excluded from unions, or the police force, or fire departments - meant that black families could not amass any meaningful wealth to bequeath to future generations. That history helps explain the wealth and income gap between black and white, and the concentrated pockets of poverty that persists in so many of today's urban and rural communities.

A lack of economic opportunity among black men, and the shame and frustration that came from not being able to provide for one's family, contributed to the erosion of black families - a problem that welfare policies for many years may have worsened. And the lack of basic services in so many urban black neighborhoods - parks for kids to play in, police walking the beat, regular garbage pick-up and building code enforcement - all helped create a cycle of violence, blight and neglect that continue to haunt us.

This is the reality in which Reverend Wright and other African-Americans of his generation grew up. They came of age in the late fifties and early sixties, a time when segregation was still the law of the land and opportunity was systematically constricted. What's remarkable is not how many failed in the face of discrimination, but rather how

many men and women overcame the odds; how many were able to make a way out of no way for those like me who would come after them.

But for all those who scratched and clawed their way to get a piece of the American Dream, there were many who didn't make it - those who were ultimately defeated, in one way or another, by discrimination. That legacy of defeat was passed on to future generations - those young men and increasingly young women who we see standing on street corners or languishing in our prisons, without hope or prospects for the future. Even for those blacks who did make it, questions of race, and racism, continue to define their worldview in fundamental ways. For the men and women of Reverend Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years. That anger may not get expressed in public, in front of white co-workers or white friends. But it does find voice in the barbershop or around the kitchen table. At times, that anger is exploited by politicians, to gin up votes along racial lines, or to make up for a politician's own failings.

And occasionally it finds voice in the church on Sunday morning, in the pulpit and in the pews. The fact that so many people are surprised to hear that anger in some of Reverend Wright's sermons simply reminds us of the old truism that the most segregated hour in American life occurs on Sunday morning. That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity in our condition, and prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change. But the anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

In fact, a similar anger exists within segments of the white community. Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. Their experience is the immigrant experience - as far as they're concerned, no one's handed them anything, they've built it from scratch. They've worked hard all their lives, many times only to see their jobs shipped overseas or their pension dumped after a lifetime of labor. They are anxious about their futures, and feel their dreams slipping away; in an era of stagnant wages and global competition, opportunity comes to be seen as a zero sum game, in which your dreams come at my expense. So when they are told to bus their children to a school across town; when they hear that an African American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed; when they're told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudiced, resentment builds over time.

Like the anger within the black community, these resentments aren't always expressed in polite company. But they have helped shape the political landscape for at least a generation. Anger over welfare and affirmative action helped forge the Reagan Coalition. Politicians routinely exploited fears of crime for their own electoral ends. Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism.

Just as black anger often proved counterproductive, so have these white resentments distracted attention from the real culprits of the middle class squeeze - a corporate culture rife with inside dealing, questionable accounting practices, and short-

term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many. And yet, to wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns - this too widens the racial divide, and blocks the path to understanding.

This is where we are right now. It's a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years. Contrary to the claims of some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naïve as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle, or with a single candidacy - particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own.

But I have asserted a firm conviction - a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people - that working together we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

For the African-American community, that path means embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past. It means continuing to insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life. But it also means binding our particular grievances - for better health care, and better schools, and better jobs - to the larger aspirations of all Americans -- the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man whose been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family. And it means taking full responsibility for own lives - by demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children, and reading to them, and teaching them that while they may face challenges and discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or cynicism; they must always believe that they can write their own destiny.

Ironically, this quintessentially American - and yes, conservative - notion of self-help found frequent expression in Reverend Wright's sermons. But what my former pastor too often failed to understand is that embarking on a program of self-help also requires a belief that society can change.

The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress has been made; as if this country - a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black; Latino and Asian, rich and poor, young and old -- is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. But what we know -- what we have seen - is that America can change. That is true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope - the audacity to hope - for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.

In the white community, the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination - and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past - are real and must be addressed. Not just with words, but with deeds - by investing in our schools and our communities; by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system; by providing this generation with ladders of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.

In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand - that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well.

For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism. We can tackle race only as spectacle - as we did in the OJ trial - or in the wake of tragedy, as we did in the aftermath of Katrina - or as fodder for the nightly news. We can play Reverend Wright's sermons on every channel, every day and talk about them from now until the election, and make the only question in this campaign whether or not the American people think that I somehow believe or sympathize with his most offensive words. We can pounce on some gaffe by a Hillary supporter as evidence that she's playing the race card, or we can speculate on whether white men will all flock to John McCain in the general election regardless of his policies.

We can do that.

But if we do, I can tell you that in the next election, we'll be talking about some other distraction. And then another one. And then another one. And nothing will change.

That is one option. Or, at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, "Not this time." This time we want to talk about the crumbling schools that are stealing the future of black children and white children and Asian children and Hispanic children and Native American children. This time we want to reject the cynicism that tells us that these kids can't learn; that those kids who don't look like us are somebody else's problem. The children of America are not those kids, they are our kids, and we will not let them fall behind in a 21st century economy. Not this time.

This time we want to talk about how the lines in the Emergency Room are filled with whites and blacks and Hispanics who do not have health care; who don't have the power on their own to overcome the special interests in Washington, but who can take them on if we do it together.

This time we want to talk about the shuttered mills that once provided a decent life for men and women of every race, and the homes for sale that once belonged to Americans from every religion, every region, every walk of life. This time we want to talk about the fact that the real problem is not that someone who doesn't look like you might take your job; it's that the corporation you work for will ship it overseas for nothing more than a profit.

This time we want to talk about the men and women of every color and creed who serve together, and fight together, and bleed together under the same proud flag. We want to talk about how to bring them home from a war that never should've been authorized and never should've been waged, and we want to talk about how we'll show our patriotism by caring for them, and their families, and giving them the benefits they have earned.

I would not be running for President if I didn't believe with all my heart that this is what the vast majority of Americans want for this country. This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what

gives me the most hope is the next generation - the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election.

There is one story in particular that I'd like to leave you with today - a story I told when I had the great honor of speaking on Dr. King's birthday at his home church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Atlanta.

There is a young, twenty-three year old white woman named Ashley Baia who organized for our campaign in Florence, South Carolina. She had been working to organize a mostly African-American community since the beginning of this campaign, and one day she was at a roundtable discussion where everyone went around telling their story and why they were there.

And Ashley said that when she was nine years old, her mother got cancer. And because she had to miss days of work, she was let go and lost her health care. They had to file for bankruptcy, and that's when Ashley decided that she had to do something to help her mom.

She knew that food was one of their most expensive costs, and so Ashley convinced her mother that what she really liked and really wanted to eat more than anything else was mustard and relish sandwiches. Because that was the cheapest way to eat.

She did this for a year until her mom got better, and she told everyone at the roundtable that the reason she joined our campaign was so that she could help the millions of other children in the country who want and need to help their parents too.

Now Ashley might have made a different choice. Perhaps somebody told her along the way that the source of her mother's problems were blacks who were on welfare and too lazy to work, or Hispanics who were coming into the country illegally. But she didn't. She sought out allies in her fight against injustice.

Anyway, Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different stories and reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time. And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he does not bring up a specific issue. He does not say health care or the economy. He does not say education or the war. He does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, "I am here because of Ashley."

"I'm here because of Ashley." By itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children.

But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the two-hundred and twenty one years since a band of patriots signed that document in Philadelphia, that is where the perfection begins.

Remarks of Senator Barack Obama: 'A More Perfect Union'
Philadelphia, PA | March 18, 2008

"We the people, in order to form a more perfect union."

Two hundred and twenty one 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, a question that divided the colonies and brought the convention to a stalemate until the founders chose to allow the slave trade to continue for at least twenty more years, and to leave any final resolution to future generations.

Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution - a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time.

And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part - through protests and struggle, 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.

This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign - to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America. I chose to run for the presidency at this moment in history because I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together - unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction - towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

This belief comes from my unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people. But it also comes from my own American story.

I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners - an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.

It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts - that out of many, we are truly one.

Throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate Flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans.

This is not to say that race has not been an issue in the campaign. At various stages in the campaign, some commentators have deemed me either "too black" or "not black enough." We saw racial tensions bubble to the surface during the week before the South Carolina primary. The press has scoured every exit poll for the latest evidence of racial polarization, not just in terms of white and black, but black and brown as well.

And yet, it has only been in the last couple of weeks that the discussion of race in this campaign has taken a particularly divisive turn.

On one end of the spectrum, we've heard the implication that my candidacy is somehow an exercise in affirmative action; that it's based solely on the desire of wide-eyed liberals to purchase racial reconciliation on the cheap. On the other end, we've heard my former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, use incendiary language to express views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide, but views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation; that rightly offend white and black alike.

I have already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend Wright that have caused such controversy. For some, nagging questions remain. Did I know him to be an occasionally fierce critic of American domestic and foreign policy? Of course. Did I ever hear him make remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in church? Yes. Did I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely - just as I'm sure many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests, or rabbis with which you strongly disagreed.

But the remarks that have caused this recent firestorm weren't simply controversial. They weren't simply a religious leader's effort to speak out against perceived injustice. Instead, they expressed a profoundly distorted view of this country - a view that sees white racism as endemic, and that elevates what is wrong with America above all that we know is right with America; a view that sees the conflicts in the Middle East as rooted primarily in the actions of stalwart allies like Israel, instead of emanating from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam.

As such, Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems - two wars, a terrorist threat, a falling economy, a chronic health care crisis and potentially devastating climate change; problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all.

Given my background, my politics, and my professed values and ideals, there will no doubt be those for whom my statements of condemnation are not enough. Why associate myself with Reverend Wright in the first place, they may ask? Why not join another church? And I confess that if all that I knew of Reverend Wright were the

snippets of those sermons that have run in an endless loop on the television and YouTube, or if Trinity United Church of Christ conformed to the caricatures being peddled by some commentators, there is no doubt that I would react in much the same way.

But the truth is, that isn't all that I know of the man. The man I met more than twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another; to care for the sick and lift up the poor. He is a man who served his country as a U.S. Marine; who has studied and lectured at some of the finest universities and seminaries in the country, and who for over thirty years led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth - by housing the homeless, ministering to the needy, providing day care services and scholarships and prison ministries, and reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

In my first book, *Dreams From My Father*, I described the experience of my first service at Trinity:

"People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful wind carrying the reverend's voice up into the rafters....And in that single note - hope! - I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den, Ezekiel's field of dry bones. Those stories - of survival, and freedom, and hope - became our story, my story; the blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears; until this black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black; in chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a means to reclaim memories that we didn't need to feel shame about...memories that all people might study and cherish - and with which we could start to rebuild."

That has been my experience at Trinity. Like other predominantly black churches across the country, Trinity embodies the black community in its entirety - the doctor and the welfare mom, the model student and the former gang-banger. Like other black churches, Trinity's services are full of raucous laughter and sometimes bawdy humor. They are full of dancing, clapping, screaming and shouting that may seem jarring to the untrained ear. The church contains in full the kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance, the struggles and successes, the love and yes, the bitterness and bias that make up the black experience in America.

And this helps explain, perhaps, my relationship with Reverend Wright. As imperfect as he may be, he has been like family to me. He strengthened my faith, officiated my wedding, and baptized my children. Not once in my conversations with him have I heard him talk about any ethnic group in derogatory terms, or treat whites with whom he interacted with anything but courtesy and respect. He contains within him the contradictions - the good and the bad - of the community that he has served diligently for so many years.

I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother - a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.

These people are a part of me. And they are a part of America, this country that I love.

Some will see this as an attempt to justify or excuse comments that are simply inexcusable. I can assure you it is not. I suppose the politically safe thing would be to move on from this episode and just hope that it fades into the woodwork. We can dismiss Reverend Wright as a crank or a demagogue, just as some have dismissed Geraldine Ferraro, in the aftermath of her recent statements, as harboring some deep-seated racial bias.

But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America - to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality.

The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through - a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American.

Understanding this reality requires a reminder of how we arrived at this point. As William Faulkner once wrote, "The past isn't dead and buried. In fact, it isn't even past." We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.

Segregated schools were, and are, inferior schools; we still haven't fixed them, fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the inferior education they provided, then and now, helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between today's black and white students.

Legalized discrimination - where blacks were prevented, often through violence, from owning property, or loans were not granted to African-American business owners, or black homeowners could not access FHA mortgages, or blacks were excluded from unions, or the police force, or fire departments - meant that black families could not amass any meaningful wealth to bequeath to future generations. That history helps explain the wealth and income gap between black and white, and the concentrated pockets of poverty that persists in so many of today's urban and rural communities.

A lack of economic opportunity among black men, and the shame and frustration that came from not being able to provide for one's family, contributed to the erosion of black families - a problem that welfare policies for many years may have worsened. And the lack of basic services in so many urban black neighborhoods - parks for kids to play in, police walking the beat, regular garbage pick-up and building code enforcement - all helped create a cycle of violence, blight and neglect that continue to haunt us.

This is the reality in which Reverend Wright and other African-Americans of his generation grew up. They came of age in the late fifties and early sixties, a time when segregation was still the law of the land and opportunity was systematically constricted. What's remarkable is not how many failed in the face of discrimination, but rather how

many men and women overcame the odds; how many were able to make a way out of no way for those like me who would come after them.

But for all those who scratched and clawed their way to get a piece of the American Dream, there were many who didn't make it - those who were ultimately defeated, in one way or another, by discrimination. That legacy of defeat was passed on to future generations - those young men and increasingly young women who we see standing on street corners or languishing in our prisons, without hope or prospects for the future. Even for those blacks who did make it, questions of race, and racism, continue to define their worldview in fundamental ways. For the men and women of Reverend Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years. That anger may not get expressed in public, in front of white co-workers or white friends. But it does find voice in the barbershop or around the kitchen table. At times, that anger is exploited by politicians, to gin up votes along racial lines, or to make up for a politician's own failings.

And occasionally it finds voice in the church on Sunday morning, in the pulpit and in the pews. The fact that so many people are surprised to hear that anger in some of Reverend Wright's sermons simply reminds us of the old truism that the most segregated hour in American life occurs on Sunday morning. That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity in our condition, and prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change. But the anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

In fact, a similar anger exists within segments of the white community. Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. Their experience is the immigrant experience - as far as they're concerned, no one's handed them anything, they've built it from scratch. They've worked hard all their lives, many times only to see their jobs shipped overseas or their pension dumped after a lifetime of labor. They are anxious about their futures, and feel their dreams slipping away; in an era of stagnant wages and global competition, opportunity comes to be seen as a zero sum game, in which your dreams come at my expense. So when they are told to bus their children to a school across town; when they hear that an African American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed; when they're told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudiced, resentment builds over time.

Like the anger within the black community, these resentments aren't always expressed in polite company. But they have helped shape the political landscape for at least a generation. Anger over welfare and affirmative action helped forge the Reagan Coalition. Politicians routinely exploited fears of crime for their own electoral ends. Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism.

Just as black anger often proved counterproductive, so have these white resentments distracted attention from the real culprits of the middle class squeeze - a

corporate culture rife with inside dealing, questionable accounting practices, and short-term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many. And yet, to wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns - this too widens the racial divide, and blocks the path to understanding.

This is where we are right now. It's a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years. Contrary to the claims of some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naïve as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle, or with a single candidacy - particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own.

But I have asserted a firm conviction - a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my faith in the American people - that working together we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

For the African-American community, that path means embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past. It means continuing to insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life. But it also means binding our particular grievances - for better health care, and better schools, and better jobs - to the larger aspirations of all Americans—the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man whose been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family. And it means taking full responsibility for own lives - by demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children, and reading to them, and teaching them that while they may face challenges and discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or cynicism; they must always believe that they can write their own destiny.

Ironically, this quintessentially American - and yes, conservative - notion of self-help found frequent expression in Reverend Wright's sermons. But what my former pastor too often failed to understand is that embarking on a program of self-help also requires a belief that society can change.

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**Remarks of President-Elect Barack Obama: Election Night
Chicago, IL | November 04, 2008**

If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.

It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different; that their voice could be that difference.

It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled - Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America.

It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long by so many to be cynical, and fearful, and doubtful of what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day.

It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.

I just received a very gracious call from Senator McCain. He fought long and hard in this campaign, and he's fought even longer and harder for the country he loves. He has endured sacrifices for America that most of us cannot begin to imagine, and we are better off for the service rendered by this brave and selfless leader. I congratulate him and Governor Palin for all they have achieved, and I look forward to working with them to renew this nation's promise in the months ahead.

I want to thank my partner in this journey, a man who campaigned from his heart and spoke for the men and women he grew up with on the streets of Scranton and rode with on that train home to Delaware, the Vice President-elect of the United States, Joe Biden.

I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my best friend for the last sixteen years, the rock of our family and the love of my life, our nation's next First Lady, Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both so much, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us to the White House. And while she's no longer with us, I know my grandmother is watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and know that my debt to them is beyond measure.

To my campaign manager David Plouffe, my chief strategist David Axelrod, and the best campaign team ever assembled in the history of politics - you made this happen, and I am forever grateful for what you've sacrificed to get it done.

But above all, I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to - it belongs to you.

I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't start with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington - it began in the backyards of Des Moines and the living rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston.

It was built by working men and women who dug into what little savings they had to give five dollars and ten dollars and twenty dollars to this cause. It grew strength from the young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy; who left their homes and their families for jobs that offered little pay and less sleep; from the not-so-young people who braved the bitter cold and scorching heat to knock on the doors of perfect strangers; from the millions of Americans who volunteered, and organized, and proved that more than two centuries later, a government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished from this Earth. This is your victory.

I know you didn't do this just to win an election and I know you didn't do it for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. For even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime - two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century. Even as we stand here tonight, we know there are brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan to risk their lives for us. There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after their children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage, or pay their doctor's bills, or save enough for college. There is new energy to harness and new jobs to be created; new schools to build and threats to meet and alliances to repair.

The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America - I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you - we as a people will get there.

There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President, and we know that government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And above all, I will ask you join in the work of remaking this nation the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years - block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand.

What began twenty-one months ago in the depths of winter must not end on this autumn night. This victory alone is not the change we seek - it is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you.

So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism; of service and responsibility where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves, but each other. Let us remember that if this financial crisis taught us anything, it's that we cannot have a thriving Wall Street while Main Street suffers - in this country, we rise or fall as one nation; as one people.

Let us resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long. Let us remember that it was a man from this state who first carried the banner of the Republican Party to the White House - a party founded on the values of self-reliance, individual liberty, and national unity. Those are values we all share, and while the Democratic Party has won a great victory tonight, we do so with a measure of humility and determination to heal the divides that have held back our progress. As Lincoln said to a nation far more divided than ours, "We are not enemies, but friends... though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection." And to those Americans whose support I have yet to

earn - I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voices, I need your help, and I will be your President too.

And to all those watching tonight from beyond our shores, from parliaments and palaces to those who are huddled around radios in the forgotten corners of our world - our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared, and a new dawn of American leadership is at hand. To those who would tear this world down - we will defeat you. To those who seek peace and security - we support you. And to all those who have wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright - tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from our the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope.

For that is the true genius of America - that America can change. Our union can be perfected. And what we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.

This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations. But one that's on my mind tonight is about a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta. She's a lot like the millions of others who stood in line to make their voice heard in this election except for one thing - Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 years old.

She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons - because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America - the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can't, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we can.

At a time when women's voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes we can.

When there was despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land, she saw a nation conquer fear itself with a New Deal, new jobs and a new sense of common purpose. Yes we can.

When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved. Yes we can.

She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that "We Shall Overcome." Yes we can.

A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was connected by our own science and imagination. And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change. Yes we can.

America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves - if our children should live to see the next century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper, what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time - to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm

that fundamental truth - that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people:

Yes We Can. Thank you, God bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America.

Appendix B

Announcement Speech Media Coverage

The New York Times

**Obama Formally Enters Presidential Race With Calls for Generational Change
Sunday, February 11, 2007**

By Adam Nagourney and Jeff Zeleny

Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, standing before the Old State Capitol where Abraham Lincoln began his political career, announced his candidacy for the White House on Saturday by presenting himself as an agent of generational change who could transform a government hobbled by cynicism, petty corruption and "a smallness of our politics."

"The time for that politics is over," Mr. Obama said. "It is through. It's time to turn the page."

Wearing an overcoat but gloveless on a frigid morning, Mr. Obama invoked a speech Lincoln gave here in 1858 condemning slavery -- "a house divided against itself cannot stand" -- as he started his campaign to become the nation's first black president.

Speaking smoothly and comfortably, Mr. Obama offered a generational call to arms, portraying his campaign less as a candidacy and more as a movement. "Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what's needed to be done," he said. "Today we are called once more, and it is time for our generation to answer that call."

It was the latest step in a journey rich with historic possibilities and symbolism. Thousands of people packed the town square to witness it, shivering in the single-digit frostiness until Mr. Obama appeared, trailed by his wife, Michelle, and two young daughters. ("I wasn't too cold," Mr. Obama said later, grinning as he acknowledged a heating device had been positioned at his feet, out of the audience's view.)

Still, for all the excitement on display, Mr. Obama's speech also marked the start of a tough new phase in what until now has been a charmed introduction to national politics. Democrats and Mr. Obama's aides said they were girding for questions about his experience in national politics, his command of policy, a past that has gone largely unexamined by rivals and the news media, and a public persona defined more by his biography and charisma than by how he would seek to use the powers of the presidency.

"He's done impressively so far, but at some point he's really going to have to move to the next stage," said Walter Mondale, the former Democratic vice president who made the phrase "where's the beef" famous in his 1984 challenge to the credentials of a rival, Gary Hart, the former senator from Colorado.

The formal entry to the race framed a challenge that would seem daunting to even the most talented politician: whether Mr. Obama, with all his strengths and limitations, can win in a field dominated by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, who brings years of experience in presidential politics, a command of policy and political history, and an extraordinarily battle-tested network of fund-raisers and advisers.

Mr. Obama has told friends that he views Mrs. Clinton as his biggest obstacle, though his aides said they remained very wary as well of former Senator John Edwards, another rival for the Democratic nomination.

Mr. Obama hit the question of experience in the opening bars of his speech on Saturday, suggesting that he would seek to use his limited time in government as an asset

by casting himself as an agent of change who was free from the pull of special interests and politics as usual.

"I recognize there is a certain presumptuousness in this -- a certain audacity -- to this announcement," he said. "I know that I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change."

For Mr. Obama's campaign, struggling to put this unlikely organization together in just three months, the first focus is Mrs. Clinton. Mr. Obama's aides said they had spent weeks discussing how to derail what David Plouffe, Mr. Obama's campaign manager, described as "the dominant political organization in the Democratic Party."

Mr. Obama's decision to spend the first two days of his presidential campaign in Iowa, where he headed after his announcement, reflected one of the first important strategic decisions in that regard. His organization sees Iowa as a place where he could surprise Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Edwards with an early victory. The eastern part of the state, a critical region for Democrats to win and where Mr. Obama spent the rest of Saturday, shares a media market with neighboring Illinois. Mr. Obama has been a fixture in local news since winning his Senate primary nearly three years ago.

In trying to undercut Mrs. Clinton's claims of experience, Mr. Obama's campaign has decided to borrow techniques that Bill Clinton used to defeat the first President Bush in 1992. Mr. Obama, reprising the role of Mr. Clinton, on Saturday presented himself as a candidate of generational change running to oust entrenched symbols of Washington, an allusion to Mrs. Clinton, as he tried to turn her experience into a burden. Mr. Obama is 45; Mrs. Clinton is 59.

But more than anything, Mr. Obama's aides said, they believe the biggest advantage he has over Mrs. Clinton is his difference in position on the Iraq war. Mrs. Clinton supported the war authorization four years ago. Mr. Obama has opposed the war from the start, and has introduced a bill to begin withdrawing United States troops no later than May 1, with the goal of removing all combat brigades by March 31, 2008, taking a far more explicit stance than Mrs. Clinton on ending the conflict.

"America, it's time to start bringing our troops home," he said Saturday. "It's time to admit that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies at the heart of someone else's civil war."

Yet even on a day that pointed to Mr. Obama's strengths -- a big, excited crowd, a speech that in its composition and delivery demonstrated yet again why he is viewed as a singular talent in the Democratic Party -- it seems evident that Mr. Obama's easier days as a candidate have passed. Unlike Mrs. Clinton, or to a lesser extent Mr. Edwards, Mr. Obama has not gone through a full-scale audit that will now come from Republicans, Democrats, journalists and advocacy groups, eager to define him before he defines himself.

Some Democrats, including Mr. Obama's opponents, seem increasingly game to challenge him, particularly when it comes to the substance of an Obama candidacy. Mr. Edwards offered a hint of what Mr. Obama faced in an interview the other day, as he discussed national health care, when he was asked his reaction to Mr. Obama's views on providing national coverage.

"I haven't seen a plan from him," Mr. Edwards said. "Have you all?"

Mr. Obama has glided to his position in his party with a demeanor and series of eloquent speeches that have won him comparisons to the Kennedy brothers and put him in a position where his status as a black man with a chance to win the White House is only part of the excitement generated by his candidacy.

But with perhaps one major exception, his plan to disengage forces in Iraq, he has avoided offering the kind of specific ideas that his own advisers acknowledge could open him up to attack by opponents or alienate supporters initially drawn by his more thematic appeals.

Mr. Obama went so far as to tell Democrats in Washington last week that voters were looking for a message of hope, and disparaged the notion that a presidential campaign should be built on a foundation of position papers or details.

"There are those who don't believe in talking about hope: they say, well, we want specifics, we want details, we want white papers, we want plans," he said then. "We've had a lot of plans, Democrats. What we've had is a shortage of hope."

But some Democrats were scornful. "That's nonsense," Mr. Hart said. "It posits that it's either-or. Who's saying you can't talk about hope? I'm not talking about white papers: I'm talking about one big speech about 'How I view the world.' "

In an interview before he left for Illinois, Mr. Obama said he realized his powerful appeal as a campaigner would take him only so far. Other campaigns that have relied extensively on the life story of the candidate have typically foundered.

"If a campaign is premised on personality, then no, I don't think you can stay fresh for a year," he said. "But if the campaign is built from the ground up and there is a sense of ownership among people who want to see significant change, then absolutely. It can build and grow."

And in his speech here on Saturday, Mr. Obama, trying to offer himself as the grass-roots outsider in contrast to a member of a political family that has dominated Washington life for 15 years, presented his campaign as an effort "not just to hold an office, but to gather with you to transform a nation."

"That is why this campaign can't only be about me," Mr. Obama said. "It must be about us. It must be about what we can do together."

The New York Times

Stop Him Before He Gets More Experience

Sunday, February 11, 2007

By Frank Rich

As the official Barack Obama rollout reaches its planned climax on "60 Minutes" tonight, we'll learn if he has the star power to upstage Anna Nicole Smith. But at least one rap against him can promptly be laid to rest: his lack of experience. If time in the United States Senate is what counts for presidential seasoning, maybe his two years' worth is already too much. Better he get out now, before there's another embarrassing nonvote on a nonbinding measure about what will soon be a four-year-old war.

History is going to look back and laugh at last week's farce, with the Virginia Republican John Warner voting to kill a debate on his own anti-surge resolution and the West Virginia Democrat Robert Byrd seizing the occasion for an hourlong soliloquy on coal mining. As the Senate pleased itself with parliamentary one-upmanship, the rate of American casualties in Iraq reached a new high.

The day after the resolution debacle, I spoke with Senator Obama about the war and about his candidacy. Since we talked by phone, I can't swear he was clean, but he was definitely articulate. He doesn't yet sound as completely scripted as his opponents -- though some talking-point-itis is creeping in -- and he isn't remotely defensive as he shrugs off the race contretemps du jour prompted by his White House run. Not that he's all sweetness and light. "If the criterion is how long you've been in Washington, then we should just go ahead and assign Joe Biden or Chris Dodd the nomination," he said. "What people are looking for is judgment."

What Mr. Obama did not have to say is that he had the judgment about Iraq that his rivals lacked. As an Illinois state senator with no access to intelligence reports, he recognized in October 2002 that administration claims of Saddam's "imminent and direct threat to the United States" were hype and foresaw that an American occupation of Iraq would be of "undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences." Nor can he be pilloried as soft on terrorism by the Cheney-Lieberman axis of neo-McCarthyism. "I don't oppose all wars," he said in the same Chicago speech. "What I am opposed to is a dumb war."

Now that Mr. Obama has passed through Men's Vogue, among other stations of a best-selling author's cross of hype, he wants to move past the dumb phase of Obamamania. He has begun to realize "how difficult it is to break through the interest in me on the beach or that my wife's made me stop sneaking cigarettes." He doesn't expect to be elected the leader of the free world because he "can tell a good joke on Jay Leno." It is "an open question and a legitimate question," he says, whether he can channel his early boomlet into an electoral victory.

No one can answer that question at this absurdly early stage of an absurdly long presidential race. But Mr. Obama is well aware of the serious criticisms he engenders, including the charge that he is conciliatory to a fault. He argues that he is "not interested in just splitting the difference" when he habitually seeks a consensus on tough issues. "There are some times where we need to be less bipartisan," he says. "I'm not interested in

cheap bipartisanship. We should have been less bipartisan in asking tough questions about entering into this Iraq war."

He has introduced his own end-the-war plan that goes beyond a split-the-difference condemnation of the current escalation. His bill sets a beginning (May) and an end (March 31, 2008) for the phased withdrawal of combat troops, along with certain caveats to allow American military flexibility as "a big, difficult, messy situation" plays out during the endgame. Unlike the more timid Senate war critics, including Hillary Clinton, Mr. Obama has no qualms about embracing a plan with what he unabashedly labels "a timeline."

But he has no messianic pretensions and is enough of a realist to own up to the fact that his proposal has no present chance of becoming law. Nor do any of the other end-the-war plans offered by Congressional Democrats -- some overlapping his, some calling for a faster exit than his. If a nonbinding resolution expressing mild criticism of President Bush's policy can't even come to a vote in the Senate, legislation demanding actual action is a nonstarter. All the Democrats' parrying about troop caps, timelines, benchmarks, the cutting off of war funding, whatever, is academic except as an index to the postures being struck by the various presidential hopefuls as they compete for their party's base. There simply aren't 60 votes in the Senate to force the hand of a president who, in Mr. Obama's words, "is hellbent on doing what he's been doing for the last four years."

Unless, of course, Republicans join in. The real point of every Iraq proposal, Mr. Obama observes, is to crank up the political heat until "enough pressure builds within the Republican Party that they essentially revolt." He argues that last week's refusal to act on a nonbinding resolution revealed just how quickly that pressure is building. If the resolution didn't matter, he asks, "why were they going through so many hoops to avoid the vote?" He seconds Chuck Hagel's celebrated explosion before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, when "he pointed at folks" and demanded that all 100 senators be held accountable for their votes on what Senator Hagel called "the most divisive issue in this country since Vietnam."

That's why Mr. Obama is right when he says that the individual 2008 contests for the Senate and the House are at least as important as the presidential race when it comes to winding down the war: "Ultimately what's going to make the biggest difference is the American people, particularly in swing districts and in Republican districts, sending a message to their representatives: This is intolerable to us."

That message was already sent by many American voters on Election Day in 2006. Rahm Emanuel, the Illinois congressman who, with his Senate counterpart, Chuck Schumer, oversaw that Democratic takeover, smells the blood of more Republicans in "marginal districts" in 2008. His party is now in the hunt for fresh candidates, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Such is the sense of impending doom among House Republicans that their leader, John Boehner, told CNN on Jan. 23 that he could render a verdict on whether the latest Bush Iraq strategy is "working" in a mere "60 to 90 days."

In the Senate, even the rumor of a tough opponent is proving enough to make some incumbents flip overnight from rubber-stamp support of the White House's war policy to criticism of the surge. Norm Coleman of Minnesota started running away from his own record the moment he saw the whites of Al Franken's eyes. Another endangered Republican up for re-election in 2008, John Sununu of New Hampshire, literally sprinted

away from the press, The Washington Post reported, rather than field questions about his vote on the nonbinding resolution last week.

My own guess is that the Republican revolt will be hastened more by the harsh reality in Iraq than any pressure applied by Democratic maneuvers in Congress. Events are just moving too fast. While senators played their partisan games on Capitol Hill, they did so against the backdrop of chopper after chopper going down on the evening news. The juxtaposition made Washington's aura of unreality look obscene. Senator Warner looked like such a fool voting against his own principles ("No matter how strongly I feel about my resolution," he said, "I shall vote with my leader") that by week's end he abruptly released a letter asserting that he and six Republican colleagues did want a debate on an anti-surge resolution after all. (Of the seven signatories, five are up for re-election in 2008, Mr. Warner among them.)

What anyone in Congress with half a brain knows is that the surge was sabotaged before it began. The latest National Intelligence Estimate said as much when it posited that "even if violence is diminished," Iraq's "absence of unifying leaders" makes political reconciliation doubtful. Not enough capable Iraqi troops are showing up and, as Gen. Peter Pace told the Senate last week, not enough armored vehicles are available to protect the new American deployments. The State Department can't recruit enough civilian officials to manage the latest push to turn on Baghdad's electricity and is engaged in its own sectarian hostilities with the Pentagon. Revealingly enough, the surge's cheerleaders are already searching for post-Rumsfeld scapegoats. William Kristol attacked the new defense secretary, Robert Gates, for "letting the Joint Chiefs slow-walk the brigades in."

Washington's conventional wisdom has it that the worse things go in the war, the more voters will want to stick with the tried and true: Clinton, McCain, Giuliani. But as Mr. Obama reminds us, "Nobody had better Washington resumes than Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld." In the wake of the catastrophe they and their enablers in both parties have made, the inexperienced should have a crack at inheriting the earth, especially if they're clean.

The Washington Post

**Obama Joins Race With Goals Set High; Now-Official Presidential Candidate Talks
of Universal Health Care, Leaving Iraq**

Sunday, February 11, 2007

By: Dan Balz and Anne E. Kornblut

Illinois Sen. Barack Obama formally opened his campaign for president here Saturday, invoking memories of Abraham Lincoln and challenging a new generation to help him transform the nation.

Standing on the grounds of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln delivered his famous "House Divided" speech against slavery in 1858, the Democratic first-term senator began a bid for the White House that barely seemed possible just a few months ago but could make him the first black president. "I recognize there is a certain presumptuousness -- a certain audacity -- to this announcement," he said. "I know I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change."

Thousands of supporters, some of whom had driven long distances to be here, braved freezing temperatures to join Obama at an event described by many as history in the making. Long before the candidate arrived with his wife, Michelle, and two young daughters shortly after 10 a.m. Central time, the Old Capitol grounds and surrounding areas were packed to capacity.

Against the morning cold, Obama wore an overcoat and a scarf, but no hat or gloves. In his speech, he presented an ambitious agenda that includes bringing an end to the Iraq war, eliminating poverty, ensuring universal health care and creating energy independence. But he seemed to be trying to transcend traditional political debate by arguing that what the country lacks is not good ideas.

"What's stopped us from meeting these challenges is not the absence of sound policies and sensible plans," he said. "What's stopped us is the failure of leadership, the smallness of our politics -- the ease with which we're distracted by the petty and trivial, our chronic avoidance of tough decisions, our preference for scoring cheap political points instead of rolling up our sleeves and building a working consensus to tackle big problems."

Recalling past periods of economic or political crisis, he said, "Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what's needed to be done. Today we are called once more -- and it is time for our generation to answer that call."

The story of Obama's rise has captivated political insiders and ordinary Americans alike. The months ahead will test whether he now can transform himself from political phenomenon into the kind of candidate who can withstand the rigors of the marathon ahead.

Obama will be asked to demonstrate that his dearth of experience is not the liability that some of his rivals suggest, and he will be challenged to fill in the blanks of a policy agenda that is longer on goals than details.

He begins as one of the principal challengers to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.), the early favorite for the Democratic nomination. But he must also contend with former North Carolina senator John Edwards, whose progressive agenda and grass-roots

campaign threatens to occupy some of the same space Obama aims to seize for his own candidacy. Other more experienced candidates hope to profit if he falters.

For all the enthusiasm that surrounds his candidacy, Obama still faces the reality that Clinton begins with a political machine that is far deeper and broader than his. Obama advisers said their campaign for the nomination may be more unconventional than hers.

"I think that the path to get there has to do with our ability to inspire a lot of people to get involved in this process who have not been involved, or who may have been involved once but lost heart," said David Axelrod, the campaign's chief strategist. "We have to give people a real sense of investment so that the electorate will maybe look a little different."

Obama's sharpest difference with both Clinton and Edwards is his early opposition to the Iraq war; they voted for the 2002 resolution authorizing President Bush to invade Iraq. Edwards has since apologized for his vote, and Clinton has said she would not have voted that way had she known then what she knows now.

But Obama can point to remarks he made in the fall of 2002 in which he not only called the war "dumb" but also predicted the dangers of the long occupation that followed the successful invasion. In his announcement speech, he described the war as a "tragic mistake."

"It's time to admit that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies at the heart of someone else's civil war," he said Saturday. "That's why I have a plan that will bring our combat troops home by March of 2008. Letting the Iraqis know that we will not be there forever is our last, best hope to pressure the Sunni and Shia to come to the table and find peace."

Beyond the setting itself, Obama invoked Lincoln throughout the speech, even to the point where the tall, thin Obama recalled a "tall, gangly, self-made Springfield lawyer" who ended slavery and led the nation through one of its darkest moments.

"He had his doubts," Obama said of Lincoln. "He had his defeats. He had his setbacks. But through his will and his words, he moved a nation and helped free a people."

But in issuing a call for a new generation to take its place at the center of public life, Obama summoned up memories of President John F. Kennedy and his 1960 campaign.

Obama, 45 and the son of a black Kenyan man and a white Kansas woman, worked as a community organizer in Chicago before graduating from Harvard Law School and returning to the city to become a civil rights lawyer. He ran for the state Senate in 1996 and served four terms there before launching what seemed a long-shot campaign for the U.S. Senate. Even before he won the seat and became the only African American in the Senate, Obama was seen as a rising star in his party because of the keynote speech he gave at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. His two best-selling books -- and his appearances on "Oprah," on ESPN's "Monday Night Football" and in the pages of People magazine -- have spread his appeal widely over the past few months, even as his name recognition across the electorate remains relatively low.

In his announcement speech Saturday and in interviews leading up to it, Obama began the process of both laying out his professional experience and arguing that experience in Washington is not a requirement for becoming president.

Critical of Bush's presidency and what he said are the nation's unmet challenges, Obama decried the cynicism that he said pervades the political process and called on those disillusioned by a culture of special interests and gridlocked politics to join him in his campaign.

"The time for that politics is over. It is through. It is time to turn the page, right here, right now," he said, and the crowd responded with chants of "Obama, Obama, Obama."

Although his campaign infrastructure is still being built -- his advisers moved into their Chicago headquarters only last week -- Obama's launch had the trappings of a campaign that has been building for months. That included a new Web site launched in conjunction with the announcement and a new campaign logo, a blue "O" that evokes a rising sun and that appeared on buttons, placards and T-shirts.

The crowd was filled with committed Obama supporters who lifted signs -- "Barack the Vote" was among the more creative -- and cheered in waves as the candidate spoke.

From Illinois, Obama flew to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and a town hall meeting with more than 2,000 people. Obama spent an hour fielding questions about Iraq, North Korea, the No Child Left Behind Act and the cost of college tuition.

He said he believes many Americans feel that something has been lost since the promise of the Kennedy era.

"What's been lost is that our politics feels very much like an insider's game," he said. "People feel like you've got the two parties splitting the pot, and ordinary voters are left out of the process."

Opening the session, Obama talked about the challenges facing the country and his own ambitions to be president.

"I want to win," he said, "but I don't just want to win. I want to transform this country."

The Washington Post

**A Rusty Toyota, a Mean Jump Shot, Good Ears
Sunday, February 11, 2007 Sunday**

In law school, Barack drove an old mustard-yellow Toyota Tercel that was pockmarked with rust. It was the kind of car you would imagine a struggling community organizer driving. And while the car appeared to be on its last legs, it had a reliable engine that took him from Chicago to Cambridge without incident. Barack was attached to the car. Each time I saw the Tercel it reminded me of one of Barack's favorite songs growing up, William DeVaughn's "Be Thankful for What You Got," and I could hear him enthusiastically singing it:

Though you may not drive a great big Cadillac/ Gangsta whitewalls TV antennas in the back/ You may not have a car at all/ But remember, brothers and sisters/ You can still stand tall. . . .

One evening after dinner with a group of friends, those of us who rode with Barack came out of the restaurant to find his car missing. We immediately concluded that it had not been stolen, because who would want it other than Barack? After some scrutiny and the application of our finely honed analytical skills, we determined that the car had been towed. We used the handy phone number on the "No Parking" sign to find the impound lot. We arrived at the lot after midnight and found the car looking quite at home in a parking space bordering on the junkyard. A relieved Barack paid the fine -- \$75, no joke for a poor law student -- and the car was recovered. We ribbed him that the fine was probably half the car's value, but he was content to have it back, flaws and all.

Barack's connection to the car symbolized in its own way his loyalty, his humility and, yes, his frugality. I've always believed that one of the appeals to him of joining the Harvard Law Review and becoming its first black president was that the position came with a parking space. I think the car finally gave out on him when he went back to Chicago after law school, but like any good community organizer, Barack had never given up on it.

-- Cassandra Butts, senior vice president for domestic policy at the Center for American Progress and Obama's Harvard Law School classmate

I was a basketball teammate of Barack's in high school. He was two grades ahead of me, the same class as my brother. I remember him as a charismatic guy who loved to play basketball. There were a number of courts on campus and if class schedules and time permitted, we would play pick-up ball when we could. He was a lefty with a great double pump shot in the lane. I remember him as a fierce competitor who could break intense situations (arguments over scores and fouls) with a flash of his smile and a voice of reason. Anyone who has ever played pick-up ball knows that such arguments are common. It's fair to say that Barack would never shy away from them but would somehow come out with his desired result. I did like to be on his team, even though he was not shy about shooting every time he touched the ball. I was a good rebounder. As a member of the varsity team, he was very encouraging to his fellow players and particularly to me. When we won the state tournament that year, all of us pick-up players felt justified, even though we were a little sweaty going to class.

-- Dan Hale was Obama's teammate on the championship 1979 basketball team at Punahou School in Hawaii. Hale is now the head coach of Punahou's Varsity I basketball team.

Barry (the name Barack used then) played a small forward, or "three man," in our system. I would define him as a "slasher," very good driving to the basket off the dribble. But with limited shooting range, although fairly accurate from 12 feet in. Very athletic, fast, good jumper. He had a long, lean body and was a very good defender. He was a starter who scored about 10 points and six or seven rebounds per game. We would put him on the best forward of the opposing team, regardless of their height. His athletic ability, jumping ability, etc., allowed him to guard bigger or smaller players. We pressed a lot and Barry was an integral part of the press with his quickness and speed.

Barry was the same in victory or defeat -- even-tempered. You could sense that the sport and competition were important, but once the season was over, it was time to focus again on academic issues.

-- Mike Zinn, a basketball coach at Occidental College in Los Angeles when Obama was a student there in 1980-81.

On St. Patrick's Day in Chicago there are two parades: the one downtown, for the tourists, and the one in the 19th Ward, in the southwest corner of the city. That's the home of the real St. Patrick's Day Parade. More than 200,000 people show up and in 2000, when he was running against Bobby Rush in the Democratic congressional primary, Barack Obama marched in that parade. I remember he passed out a surprising piece of literature touting the important civil rights litigation he handled. On St. Patrick's Day, you don't hand out campaign literature to solicit law business. Perhaps that wasn't his intention, but his brochures were littering the sidewalks of the entire parade route, from 103rd Street to 115th. He was either very brash or naive in the way he was introducing himself to parade-goers. Whether he meant it or not, it came off as an attempt to sell that litigation background to an Irish Catholic crowd on the South Side of Chicago.

-- Patrick O'Malley, a Republican who served as an Illinois state senator from 1993 to 2003

I'd like to say I knew in law school that Barack would be a presidential candidate. But I didn't. Like many of my colleagues, I knew he was different -- more mature, intellectually rigorous, politically adept and capable of demonstrating real leadership -- than your average law student.

And we all had our suspicions that he would do something interesting in politics, but few if any of us had the foresight to predict that he would become the sort of national figure he is today.

Fast-forward to August 2004, sitting in one of the last rows, near the ceiling, of the Fleet Center in Boston, in the moments leading up to Barack's speech to the Democratic National Convention. The crowd was electric. We were surrounded by dozens of young volunteers, frantically waving Obama placards. He hadn't said a word yet, but the anticipation was palpable. By the time he was done, the crowd had exploded. My wife and I looked at each other, frankly amazed. This was the guy we ate doughnuts with at midnight?

And yet, in retrospect, one could see the seeds of his strengths today in his days at the Law Review: his ability to lead, to guide a group of politically diverse -- and divisive -- people toward a common goal, to wrestle intellectually with some of the most

difficult and complex problems of the day, understand different perspectives and take a position based on principle but made all the more sound by his appreciation of alternative points of view.

-- Michael Froman, Obama's Harvard Law School classmate

I feel about Barack the way I do about my sons. He worked with us on Mayor Harold Washington's election, and on important issues such as job-training programs and getting asbestos out of the projects.

No matter what Barack did, he was thorough. When he brought plans to us, they were all laid out. He told us who we were supposed to see and who we were supposed to talk to. We had no expertise. We were just basically housewives and ministers. But when we had town hall meetings, Barack always stayed in the background. He would say: "It's not my community, you're the ones who have to be out there. The first thing people will say if they see me is, 'Who is he?' I have to empower you so that you will be able to express yourself well."

He kept us so energized. When we found a cause, he never said, "Well, you can't do that." He said, "I'll look into it, I'll bring you all the material you need." He has a way of making you want to follow him, and failing is not a part of anything you feel. Because if he said it was going to work, it was going to work.

It wasn't like he was bossing us around, though. If anything, we bossed him around. He was in Chicago without a family, so we made sure that he would eat right. He usually stuck to just sandwiches. We would go out to dinner with him sometimes and we would ask him, "Have you eaten today?" and he would laugh and say, "Yes, I did, I had breakfast."

He talked to everybody. He was right in the middle of us. The older people love a respectful young man, and he certainly was that. We hated to see him go. When he came to us and told us that he had decided to go to Harvard, it was very sad, but we knew he wanted to go.

Now when I look at him with his family, and I see him with those little girls, I think it's just fantastic. That's something I didn't know whether I'd live long enough to see, because when I first knew him he was just so into his work. We always had an idea that he was going into politics. One of the women in the organization said, "Well, when you make it to Washington..." And he just started laughing and said, "Yes, of course you'll be at my inauguration."

-- Yvonne Lloyd, was on the board of the Developing Communities Project in Chicago when Obama became its director in 1985

The month after the 2004 Democratic convention, the Obamas visited my family in Martha's Vineyard for a much-needed vacation. Barack is an avid jogger, and one morning he went out for a run by himself in our secluded neighborhood. When he returned to the house an hour later, Michelle, our children and I were eating breakfast. As he entered the kitchen he had a look of complete disbelief on his face. "You aren't going to believe what happened to me," he said. "A guy took my picture as I jogged by!" He was completely mystified that somebody would be interested in a picture of him. Michelle just rolled her eyes and the girls ignored him completely. So now people take his picture all the time and he is still often surprised by the attention. As for the recent paparazzi shots of him on a beach, I called him the day I saw them and said teasingly,

"I've seen you in a swimsuit and I don't remember you looking so buff." He was absolutely mortified.

-- Valerie Jarrett, former finance chair of Obama's Senate campaign

I was in my office in the church and he just walked up to the door. My church sits in the neighborhood, way off the main thoroughfare, so you had to be coming here to get here. And Barack just walked up and rang the bell. He said he was going through the neighborhood trying to talk to pastors about community organizing. My first impression was: Who is this skinny guy and what is he selling? But he wasn't selling anything. He just asked me what was important to me. I was really impressed with the fact that he spent more time listening to me and trying to hear what I thought was important in the neighborhood, rather than my experience of people coming in and telling me what I ought to do. He was more concerned about listening and hearing my ideas and asking: How can we get this done together?

The biggest lasting thing that Barack brought to this neighborhood is that he got a bunch of African American Protestant pastors to sit down at a table with white Catholic priests to say all of us are in the community, let's find a way to work together and get it done.

-- The Rev. Alvin Love of Lilydale First Baptist Church in Chicago, who worked with Obama on the Developing Communities Project

The Wall Street Journal

**Obama's 'Improbable Quest'; After Official Entry, His Task Is to Conquer
Questions of Experience**

February 12, 2007

By: Jackie Calmes

Illinois Sen. Barack Obama formally opened what he calls his "improbable quest" for the presidency, styling his campaign as a crusade in which Americans' biggest enemy is cynicism -- "the belief that we can't change things anymore."

His own challenge is battling cynicism that he has the experience and ideas to make such change.

After two years in the U.S. Senate, and eight in the Illinois senate, the 45-year-old Mr. Obama remains relatively untested as he seeks to make history as the first African-American president. His sudden fame owes to his charismatic style and eloquence in two best-selling books and a memorable address at the 2004 Democratic Convention. So now, perhaps more than any other candidate in the crowded 2008 race, he is under pressure to show some policy substance as well.

Mr. Obama knows that. In a weekend tour of Iowa, site of the first presidential contest, after announcing his candidacy Saturday in Abraham Lincoln's Springfield, Ill., the senator offered a few specifics. To Iowans' questions, he said he opposed defense-spending cuts, for example, and called for direct U.S. talks with North Korea on nuclear weapons.

Mostly he kept up an audience-stirring diagnosis of the nation's ills and offered promises -- chiefly to provide universal health care by the end of a first term -- but no specific remedies. By yesterday, sensitive to critics calling for details, he took the offensive during a news conference at the University of Iowa.

One of the narratives that's established itself in the mainstream media is this notion that, 'Well, you know, Obama has a pretty good style. He can deliver a pretty good speech, but he seems to prioritize rhetoric over substance.' Now, factually that's incorrect," Mr. Obama said.

He said he has "the most specific plan" on leaving Iraq, gave major speeches on health, education and energy in the two years before he decided to run for president, and has two books giving more "insights into how I think and how I feel about the issues facing America than any candidate in the field." As for the press, he teased, "you've been reporting how I look in a bathing suit" -- referring to a photo taken while he visited Hawaii over the holidays.

He and top campaign aides promised specifics will come, noting that the campaign has only begun. Meanwhile, as Mr. Obama's announcement confirmed, he will seek to turn his inexperience to advantage, positioning himself as a Washington outsider.

"I recognize that there is a certain presumptuousness -- a certain audacity -- to this announcement," he told the thousands braving frigid temperatures for his announcement in the square before Illinois' Old State Capitol in Springfield. "I know that I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change."

By that message, he separates himself from New York Sen. Hillary Clinton, though he remains significantly behind her in polls, organization and money. But among the rest of the Democratic field, he is a top competitor for what amounts to a spot as the Clinton alternative, against former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards.

While Mr. Edwards is ahead in Iowa polls, Mr. Obama poses a fresh- faced challenge. After Mr. Obama's packed townhall meeting Saturday in Cedar Rapids, 80-year-old Bonnie Young of Marion, Iowa, and her 60- year-old daughter Claudia Young, both of whom worked for Mr. Edwards' 2004 presidential bid, said they have been torn between the two men. The mother left favoring Mr. Obama.

Mr. Edwards added to the pressure on Mr. Obama to be more specific with his recent unveiling of a health plan. But Democrats say Mr. Obama provoked the style-versus-substance talk himself, by his recent address to local Democratic Party leaders meeting in Washington, in which he seemed dismissive of "white papers" of policy specifics: "We've had a lot of plans, Democrats. What we've had is a shortage of hope."

As a committee chairman in the Illinois Senate, Mr. Obama tried to get consensus for universal health care, but could only pass a measure calling for a study of coverage options. Now, at each campaign stop, he calls not only for universal health care, but more resources for education and an effort akin to the Apollo Project to develop alternative fuels to end U.S. reliance on Mideast oil and help arrest global warming.

But no such progress is possible, he adds, "until we bring this ill- conceived war in Iraq to a close."

The applause for that line from the mostly Democratic crowds made plain that the war is the issue most on voters' minds. Mr. Obama reminds them, to more applause, "I was against this war from the start" -- which distinguishes him, as many Iowa Democrats know, from Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Edwards. And he outlines his Iraq plan: a phased withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops starting in May and ending by the end of March next year, allowing for enough U.S. forces to keep training Iraqi forces.

Mr. Obama didn't always give the answers his inquisitors may have liked. In Cedar Rapids, to a question from a man associated with a group that espouses reduced military spending, the senator said that because the Iraq war "has depleted our military . . . there's probably going to be a bump under an Obama presidency in initial spending just to get back to where we were."

To a public school teacher, he reiterated his call for teachers to be paid significantly more. "I have to say, though, there's got to be a bargain," he added, in which teachers in turn accept greater accountability for performance.

Appendix C

Race Speech Media Coverage

The New York Times

A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation Over Rancor

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

By: Janny Scott

In a speech whose frankness about race many historians said could be likened only to speeches by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln, Senator Barack Obama, speaking across the street from where the Constitution was written, traced the country's race problem back to not simply the country's "original sin of slavery" but the protections for it embedded in the Constitution.

Yet the speech was also hopeful, patriotic, quintessentially American -- delivered against a blue backdrop and a phalanx of stars and stripes. Mr. Obama invoked the fundamental values of equality of opportunity, fairness, social justice. He confronted race head-on, then reached beyond it to talk sympathetically about the experiences of the white working class and the plight of workers stripped of jobs and pensions.

"As far as I know, he's the first politician since the Civil War to recognize how deeply embedded slavery and race have been in our Constitution," said Paul Finkelman, a professor at Albany Law School who has written extensively about slavery, race and the Constitution. "That's a profoundly important thing to say. But what's important about the way he said it is he doesn't use this as a springboard for anger or for frustration. He doesn't say, 'O.K., slavery was bad, therefore people are owed something.' This is not a reparations speech. This is a speech about saying it's time for the nation to do better, to form a more perfect union."

Mr. Obama's address came more than a year into a campaign conceived and conducted to appear to transcend the issue of race, to try to build a broad coalition of racial and ethnic groups favoring change. In the issues he has emphasized and the language he has used, as well as in the way he has presented himself, he has worked to elude pigeonholing as a black politician.

He has been criticized as "not black enough" and "too black," he acknowledged Tuesday. In recent months, the issue of race has stirred up the smooth surface of his campaign and become a source of tension between him and his opponent, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. In the past week, videotaped snippets of the incendiary race rhetoric of Mr. Obama's longtime pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., seemed on the verge of tainting Mr. Obama with the stereotype he had carefully avoided: angry black politician.

He faced a choice: Having already denounced Mr. Wright's ferocious charges about white America, he could try to distance himself from the man who drew him to Christianity, married him and baptized his two children. Or he could try to explain what appeared to many to be the contradiction between Mr. Wright's world view and the one Mr. Obama had professed as his own.

To some extent, he did both.

In a setting that bespoke the presidential, he began with the personal: He invoked his own biography as the son of a black Kenyan man and a white American woman, grandson of a World War II veteran and a bomber assembly line worker, husband of a black American who carries "the blood of slaves and slave owners." Seared into his

genetic makeup, he said, is "the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts -- that out of many, we are truly one."

He condemned Mr. Wright's remarks as divisive but at the same time embraced him as family, "as imperfect as he may be." He traced the roots of black church preaching deep into "the bitterness and bias" of the black experience. He offered a primer on the link between today's racial disparities and the system of legalized discrimination that prevented blacks from owning property, joining unions, becoming police officers and firefighters, and accumulating wealth to pass on to future generations.

"For the men and women of Reverend Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away," Mr. Obama said. "Nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years. That anger may not get expressed in public, in front of white co-workers or white friends. But it does find voice in the barbershop or around the kitchen table." And occasionally, he said, "in the church on Sunday morning, in the pulpit and in the pews."

He acknowledged white anger, too -- over things like affirmative action and forced school busing -- but urged both sides to address the subject to find a way forward.

"Race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now," Mr. Obama said. He said the controversies over the past couple of weeks "reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through -- a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American."

Historians and others described the speech's candidness on race as almost without precedent. John Hope Franklin, a Duke University historian who led an advisory commission on race relations set up by President Bill Clinton, said Mr. Obama pointed out how easily the question of race can be distorted in this country, "which has three centuries of experience with it and yet we act like this is something new."

Julian Bond, the longtime civil rights activist, said the speech moved him to tears. Orlando Patterson, a professor of sociology at Harvard, said he believed the speech would "go down as one of the great, magnificent and moving speeches in the American political tradition."

"I hear so many people saying we want a national conversation on race but it's never quite worked," he said. "He was able to do this in one speech. But he was able to do it in a nonpartisan way in that he saw both sides."

The New York Times

Black, White & Gray
Wednesday, March 19, 2008
By Maureen Dowd

In many ways, Barack Obama's speech on race was momentous and edifying.

You could tell it was personal, that he had worked hard on it, all weekend and into the wee hours Tuesday. Overriding aides who objected to putting race center stage, he addressed a painful, difficult subject straightforwardly with a subtlety and decency rare in American politics.

Certainly, Senator Obama was exercising sophisticated damage-control on his problem with Jeremiad Wright. But he did not pander as Mitt Romney did with his very challenging speech about Mormonism, or market-test his own convictions, as most politicians do.

Unlike what the Clintons did to Lani Guinier, responding to her radical racial ideas by throwing her under the bus, Obama went to great pains to honor the human dimension of his relationship with his politically threatening "old uncle," as he calls him.

Displaying his multihued, crazy-quilted DNA, he talked about cringing when he heard the white grandmother who raised him use racial stereotypes and confess her fear of passing black men on the street.

He tried to shine a light on that clannish place where grudges and grievances flourish. After racing from race for a year, he plowed in and took a stab at showing blacks what white resentment felt like and whites what black resentment felt like.

(He was spot-on about my tribe of working-class Irish, the ones who have helped break his winning streak in New Hampshire and Ohio, and may do so in Pennsylvania.)

He rightly struck back at right-wing hysteria-mongers. "Talk-show hosts and conservative commentators built entire careers unmasking bogus claims of racism," he said, "while dismissing legitimate discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or reverse racism."

Obama's warning about race in America was redolent of Eugene O'Neill's observation about Ireland: "There is no present or future," O'Neill said, "only the past happening over and over again."

His speech was pitched to superdelegates queasy about his spiritual guide's Malcolm X-ism, the virulent racial pride, the separatism, the deep suspicion of America and the white man -- the very things that Obama's "post-racial" identity was supposed to have transcended.

The candidate may have staunched the bleeding, but he did not heal the wounds. His naive and willful refusal to come to terms earlier with the Rev. Wright's anti-American, anti-white and pro-Farrakhan sentiments -- echoing his naive and willful refusal to come to terms earlier with the ramifications of his friendship with sleazy fundraiser Tony Rezko -- will not be forgotten because of one unforgettable speech.

But then, the most intriguing thing about the speech in the National Constitution Center here, near the statues of the founding fathers who signed the document declaring that "all men are created equal," was not even the part about black and white. It was the new color that Obama unexpectedly wore: gray.

The black and white plaguing the Obama camp was not only about skin color. Facing up to his dubious behavior toward his explosive friends, he had his first rude introduction in his political career to ambivalence, ambiguity and complexity.

Obama did not surrender his pedestal willingly. But he was finally confronted by a problem that neither his charm nor his grandiosity would solve.

He now admits that he had heard the Rev. Wright make "controversial" remarks in church, and that he had a "lapse of judgment" when he let the much-investigated Rezko curry favor by buying the plot of land next to his and selling a slice back so Obama could have a bigger yard. Newly alert to the perils of not seeming patriotic enough, he ended a speech in Pennsylvania the other morning with "God bless America!"

A little disenchantment with Obama could turn out to be a good thing. Too much idealism can blind a leader to reality as surely as too much ideology can.

Up until now, Obama and his worshipers have set it up so that he must be so admirable and ideal and perfect and everything we've ever wanted that any kind of blemish -- even a parking ticket -- was regarded as a major failing.

With the Clintons, we expect them to be cheesy on ethics, so no one is ever surprised when they are.

But Saint Obama played the politics of character to an absurd extent. For 14 months, his argument for leading the world has been himself -- his exquisitely globalized self.

He should be congratulated on the disappearance of the pedestal. Leaders don't need to be messiahs.

Gray is a welcome relief from black and white.

The Washington Post

Will the Answer Outlive Questions?; Obama's Speech Driven by Necessity

Thursday, March 20, 2008

By: Dan Balz

The pattern in Campaign 2008 is that nothing lasts; nothing has a shelf life of more than half a day. Cable and the Internet simply churn information too quickly. In this age of the continuous news cycle, the new pushes out the old regardless of significance or importance.

In that context, it is worth returning to Sen. Barack Obama's Tuesday speech on race and the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., a speech and a subject not likely to disappear anytime soon. The question is which will last longer -- Obama's eloquent words about racial divisions and reconciliation or questions about his relationship with a man whose words have shocked the country.

In so many ways, Obama's speech was remarkable: ambitious, lofty, gritty, honest and unnerving. In tone and substance, and in the challenge he laid down to the country about the need to somehow move beyond the racial stalemate, it was the kind of speech Americans should expect of a presidential candidate or a president.

Obama (Ill.) was uniquely equipped to give this speech. As the child of a mixed-race couple -- a black Kenyan father who abandoned his wife and young son, and a white American mother who raised him with the help of her Kansas parents -- he has struggled with this topic his entire life. His emergence in this presidential campaign is in no small measure the result of successfully making that journey.

Obama has lived in black and white throughout his life, and it seemed as if everything he had seen and absorbed and internalized about the divisions between the races went into what he said on Tuesday at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. As he has shown at other moments in the campaign, his gifts of intelligence, of reasoning and of language are considerable. Both what he said about race and the way in which he said it showed political and intellectual heft. Which is why the address has drawn considerable praise, as a model of what political rhetoric should seek to attain.

But, at heart, this was a speech designed for a political purpose, and Obama may have received more credit than he deserves for taking up the subject. Sitting in the small auditorium on Tuesday, watching Obama speak in what seemed like deliberately flat and unemotional tones, there was no way to think about the address as other than a political rescue mission. And on that there is no simple verdict, only lingering questions.

Obama said that the politically easy thing would be to hope that the firestorm triggered by video excerpts from Wright's sermons would somehow fade away. Instead, he said, the Wright controversy provided the pretext for -- even demanded! -- a more honest confrontation of the racial divisions that persist and a more open-minded understanding by whites and blacks of why bitterness and anger exist on each side of that divide.

Obama obviously knew better than to pretend that the ugly controversy would somehow disappear. Wright, in fact, had created the most serious crisis Obama has faced in this campaign, and no amount of wishing would change that fact. The candidate rightly

understood the threat to his candidacy and immediately told his advisers that he wanted to deliver a major speech on the subject. By enlarging the discussion, he hoped to defuse what was most dangerous to his political aspirations: his long association with a prominent figure who has said things that many Americans -- white and black -- find repulsive.

Democratic strategists see the dangers ahead for Obama. While not lethal to his hopes of winning the Democratic nomination or the presidency, they say, the damage could be lasting. "This has tarnished Obama's image, though certainly not in a fatal way, and we will see it used by the GOP repeatedly if he is the nominee," one strategist said in an e-mail on Wednesday. "At the end of the day, I believe whoever the Democratic nominee is will win, but those who think that, if Obama is the nominee, he won't have Clinton-like negatives by Election Day are naive. This whole episode underlines that point."

Another Democratic strategist offered this thought late Tuesday. The speech was one of the best ever given on the topic of race in America, he noted, but the controversy over Wright will dog Obama in a general election campaign and could hurt him in the nomination battle, depending on how superdelegates react to it and weigh whether Obama or Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (N.Y.) would be the stronger nominee against Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Still another simply noted that Obama and his campaign team will need to return to this problem, as good as the speech may have been. In other words, it is not going away.

What cannot be known at this point is how the episode is resonating around the country among independents or those who were once called Reagan Democrats. Has Obama reached them in a way that inspires their confidence that he is perhaps uniquely equipped not just to start a conversation but to lead the country to a new, if still imperfect, place in racial relations? Or has he simply raised doubts among them about who he is?

What made Tuesday's speech so difficult for Obama was the challenge of trying to speak through the anger -- the anger of Wright's words and the anger among those now first exposed to them -- and move the country and the conversation to a different level. That was doubly difficult because his relationship with Wright is so personal that trying to explain Wright was not enough; he also had to explain something about himself. Rhetorically, he accomplished it, but it is not certain by any means that he did the same politically.

Obama's hope is that what would be lasting from this experience would be a renewed effort by the country to speak with honesty and goodwill about the state of race relations. History suggests it may quickly tire of taking on something that arduous. The danger is that what might last are the images of his Chicago pastor -- edited and reedited into television ads, YouTube videos and an endless stream of e-mails delivered quietly into the computers of millions of Americans. That would be good neither for Obama nor for the goals he talked about on Tuesday.

The Washington Post

The Real Value Of Obama's Speech

Sunday, March 23, 2008

By: David S. Broder

In the days following Barack Obama's address on race last week in Philadelphia, there was broad agreement among politicians and journalists that "A More Perfect Union," as he titled his speech, was the most important he has delivered since his keynote at the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

It was much more than that. It was a politically ambitious, intellectually impressive and emotionally compelling argument -- ironically, one that may fall short of achieving two of its objectives but still be of great benefit to Obama and the country.

The immediate purpose -- and the urgent need that prompted him to schedule the appearance -- was to douse the controversy that had erupted over the repeated TV and YouTube showings of inflammatory excerpts from the sermons of Obama's longtime friend, mentor and former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr.

Despite the praise for Obama's Philadelphia speech, the carnage that Wright started is likely to continue or recur, not only because some despise the candidate they call "Barack Hussein Obama" and are eager to use this against him but also because many others are deeply offended by his preacher shouting "God damn America!"

I was one of those, and even after hearing African American friends argue that the style of the black church and the reaction in that largely middle-class congregation in Chicago should alert us that Wright is hardly outside the mainstream of his community, he still seems a world away from the calm and considerate image that Obama himself presents.

But after Obama had thoroughly repudiated Wright's offensive comments as "not only wrong but divisive," he added this striking sentence: "I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community."

It reminded me of Shelby Steele's argument that Obama is a "bound man," trapped by his need to emphasize the black half of his mixed-race heritage for his own psychological security, but a man whose career and ambitions have taken him deep into the larger white world.

That inner tension would be a continuing challenge to Obama, even if Wright had never sounded off.

The second goal for Obama was to stimulate a healthier dialogue among all Americans on race. I went to San Diego in 1997, when Bill Clinton launched his ambitious effort "to lead the American people in a great and unprecedented [year-long] conversation about race." Clinton's intentions were honorable, but long before the year was up, both he and the public had been distracted by more immediate concerns, and the initiative dwindled to an academic exercise that produced only a quickly forgotten volume.

So if Philadelphia is unlikely to end the controversy over Obama's relationship with Wright or stimulate a new national dialogue on race, what is the real significance of what Obama did there? All year long, he has been writing and giving exceptionally effective addresses. But almost without exception, these speeches have been campaign

rhetoric. This, however, was largely a presidential address -- and on the touchiest issue in American life.

It compellingly contrasted the ugly history of slavery and segregation and its debilitating effects on black Americans to the inspirational saga of Obama's Kenyan-born father and Kansas-bred mother. It explained how that heritage, plus the opportunities only America could provide, enabled their son to achieve so much so fast.

It included a remarkably sensitive rendering of the frustrations not only of blacks but, equally, of working-class whites who "are anxious about their futures and . . . feel their dreams slipping away." Obama understands their opposition to busing and affirmative action, even as he urges them to look beyond their justifiable resentments and help end the "racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years."

It is rare that a president addresses racial issues with anything like the honesty Obama did. You might have to go back to Lyndon Johnson in his 1965 "we shall overcome" speech, urging Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act, or the same president 40 years ago, after the nation was rocked by riots following the murder of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In recent decades, few presidents other than Ronald Reagan have been able to lead the nation by the power of their words.

What Obama showed in Philadelphia is the potential similarly to inform, educate and inspire people, if he is allowed to fill "the bully pulpit" of the presidency. If that is what people sense, this will indeed make the Philadelphia speech a historic occasion.

The Wall Street Journal

Obama Puts Race Closer To Center Of Campaign

March 19, 2008

By: Jackie Calmes and Nick Timiraos

Facing a perilous moment in his campaign, Barack Obama took on the volatile question of race in America, and in the process may have changed the nature of his candidacy.

The speech came after a flood of negative publicity about racially charged remarks by his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr., threatened to erode his support among white voters and in turn among the remaining party delegates who will decide his close contest with Hillary Clinton.

After largely shying away from discussions of race during his 15-month campaign, Sen. Obama turned the spotlight on his identity as a biracial African-American candidate and embraced the idea that he is the vehicle for a dialogue about race.

"[R]ace is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now," he told an audience at Philadelphia's Constitution Center. "The issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through."

The speech went over some of the complexities, condemning Mr. Wright's remarks but saying they reflect how many African-Americans feel given the history of racial segregation and discrimination in the U.S. Sen. Obama also showed understanding for whites who feel victimized by affirmative action.

Sen. Obama's gamble comes as he tries to protect a narrow lead in delegates over Sen. Clinton and pick up the support of uncommitted party leaders. The critical Pennsylvania primary is five weeks away, and Sen. Clinton is leading in state polls.

Sen. Obama's relationship with Mr. Wright -- who presided at his wedding and baptized his two daughters -- is certain to be fodder in a general election if he is the Democratic nominee, Republicans say. Several declined to discuss the speech yesterday, reflecting the sensitivity of race and politics. But they indicated the Wright matter risks undercutting Sen. Obama's appeal not only to some white Democrats, but to the Republicans and independents he has promised to attract in a general-election contest.

While the speech was hailed by many Democrats, some conservative critics and others said the senator didn't -- and perhaps can't -- explain why he allied with a pastor of such views for two decades if he didn't agree.

"It wasn't until he was forced to take a stand against Wright's screed that he finally did," Republican strategist Tony Fabrizio wrote in an email. "Why didn't he denounce what he said when he said it? Why didn't he distance himself then? What Wright said was no one-time slip of the tongue."

Even Obama supporters have seen dangers in the senator addressing racial tensions so directly. "The more he has to talk about race, the blacker he becomes in the public imagination," said Randall Kennedy, a Harvard law professor and Obama backer, before the speech.

Sen. Clinton, also in Philadelphia to campaign yesterday, told reporters she hadn't seen or read the Obama speech. "Race and gender are difficult issues and therefore we

need to have more discussion about this," she said, adding: "Obviously the more Sen. Obama and I talk about it or put it into some context . . . that's good for the country."

Privately, Clinton supporters say the Wright controversy was flaring without their help, and to have Clinton campaign fingerprints on the controversy could enrage black Democrats, many of whom already fault the campaign's tactics toward Sen. Obama.

The speech was the Illinois senator's most dramatic bid to squelch the storm ignited days ago by videotapes of sermons from his longtime Chicago pastor. In one, Mr. Wright says that instead of "God Bless America," he would say "God d- America" because of injustices committed against African-Americans.

Aides said Sen. Obama told his staff on Saturday that he wanted to deliver a speech to address specifically the growing controversy over his pastor's comments. They said he wrote the speech himself Sunday and Monday, finishing early yesterday morning.

The speech's detailed exploration of race marked a break from the earlier tone of Sen. Obama's campaign. From his candidacy's start, Sen. Obama has sought to embody his message of national unity. In contrast to Jesse Jackson two decades ago, he hasn't emphasized issues of concern mainly to minorities, focusing instead on issues of broad interest such as health care, education and the Iraq war. The 46-year-old senator has cast himself as a representative of a post-civil-rights generation less angry than an older generation of African-Americans personified by Messrs. Wright and Jackson, who are both 66.

Sen. Obama, the son of a black Kenyan father and a white Kansas mother, once again criticized Mr. Wright's remarks, saying the minister used "incendiary language to express views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide, but views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation."

In some recent interviews, Sen. Obama said he wasn't in the pews for some of the sermons at issue, but he acknowledged yesterday that he was aware of the minister's views and had heard him "make remarks that could be considered controversial." Sen. Obama said he strongly disagreed with many of his pastor's political views, "just as I'm sure many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests or rabbis with which you strongly disagreed."

But, he added, "I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother . . . who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe."

Rather than hope the controversy "fades into the woodwork," Sen. Obama said, the nation must address the resentments and "real culprits" common to black and white problems, which he described as jobs being shipped overseas, bad schools and unaffordable health care. He said America should end the "racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years."

The speech immediately drew comparisons to candidate John F. Kennedy's famous 1960 speech to ministers in Houston that sought to dispel a predominantly Protestant nation's doubts about electing the first Catholic president.

Analysts cautioned that the true impact of the Obama speech will be difficult to gauge until voters respond in the voting booths and in conversations at home and at work. Late last year, Republican candidate Mitt Romney gave a similar address to assuage voters' concerns about his Mormon faith. It was generally well-received but conferred

little apparent advantage to his candidacy. Mr. Romney dropped out of the race last month.

Sen. Obama referred to former vice-presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro, the Clinton supporter who recently suggested Sen. Obama wouldn't be so successful a candidate if he weren't black.

"We can dismiss Reverend Wright as a crank or a demagogue, just as some have dismissed Geraldine Ferraro . . . as harboring some deep, deep-seated racial bias," he said. But he said Americans shouldn't "amplify the negative to the point that it distorts reality."

Sen. Obama noted that "the reality in which Rev. Wright and other African-Americans of his generation grew up" in the 1950s and 1960s was one of legal segregation, and discrimination even afterward. For many, he said, "the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away, nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years." It still finds expression, he said, in black barbershops and kitchens, and in black churches.

For blacks' part, Sen. Obama said, they have to be aware of similar anger among whites. "Most working- and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race," he said. Resentment builds, he said, when whites "hear that an African-American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed."

Sen. Obama accused politicians, talk-show hosts and conservative pundits of exploiting these racial tensions.

Sen. Obama also had to reassure Jewish Americans, an influential segment of the Democratic Party. Mr. Wright has lambasted Israel, and its treatment of Palestinians, for problems in the Middle East. The senator defended Israel and said Mideast conflicts emanate "from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam."

Yesterday's address was critical for Sen. Obama in winning the support of still-uncommitted Democratic superdelegates -- the governors, members of Congress and other party officers who can vote for the nominee of their choice. As politicians, they are particularly swayed by calculations of which candidate is more electable in November. These superdelegates hold the key because neither Sen. Obama nor Sen. Clinton is likely to get a majority of pledged delegates in the primaries and caucuses.

One Obama supporter, former Democratic Party chairman David Wilhelm, saw a silver lining in the controversy for Sen. Obama: "Certainly now America knows he's not a Muslim," said Mr. Wilhelm, referring to a falsehood that has circulated on the Internet.

Appendix D

Election Night Speech Media Coverage

The New York Times

Obama: racial Barrier Falls in Decisive Victory

Wednesday, November 5, 2008

By: Adam Nagourney

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive.

The election of Mr. Obama amounted to a national catharsis -- a repudiation of a historically unpopular Republican president and his economic and foreign policies, and an embrace of Mr. Obama's call for a change in the direction and the tone of the country.

But it was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.

Mr. Obama, 47, a first-term senator from Illinois, defeated Senator John McCain of Arizona, 72, a former prisoner of war who was making his second bid for the presidency.

To the very end, Mr. McCain's campaign was eclipsed by an opponent who was nothing short of a phenomenon, drawing huge crowds epitomized by the tens of thousands of people who turned out to hear Mr. Obama's victory speech in Grant Park in Chicago.

Mr. McCain also fought the headwinds of a relentlessly hostile political environment, weighted down with the baggage left to him by President Bush and an economic collapse that took place in the middle of the general election campaign.

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," said Mr. Obama, standing before a huge wooden lectern with a row of American flags at his back, casting his eyes to a crowd that stretched far into the Chicago night.

"It's been a long time coming," the president-elect added, "but tonight, because of what we did on this date in this election at this defining moment, change has come to America."

Mr. McCain delivered his concession speech under clear skies on the lush lawn of the Arizona Biltmore, in Phoenix, where he and his wife had held their wedding reception. The crowd reacted with scattered boos as he offered his congratulations to Mr. Obama and saluted the historical significance of the moment.

"This is a historic election, and I recognize the significance it has for African-Americans and for the special pride that must be theirs tonight," Mr. McCain said, adding, "We both realize that we have come a long way from the injustices that once stained our nation's reputation."

Not only did Mr. Obama capture the presidency, but he led his party to sharp gains in Congress. This puts Democrats in control of the House, the Senate and the White House for the first time since 1995, when Bill Clinton was in office.

The day shimmered with history as voters began lining up before dawn, hours before polls opened, to take part in the culmination of a campaign that over the course of two years commanded an extraordinary amount of attention from the American public.

As the returns became known, and Mr. Obama passed milestone after milestone -- Ohio, Florida, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Iowa and New Mexico -- people rolled spontaneously into the streets to celebrate what many described, with perhaps overstated if understandable exhilaration, a new era in a country where just 143 years ago, Mr. Obama, as a black man, could have been owned as a slave.

For Republicans, especially the conservatives who have dominated the party for nearly three decades, the night represented a bitter setback and left them contemplating where they now stand in American politics.

Mr. Obama and his expanded Democratic majority on Capitol Hill now face the task of governing the country through a difficult period: the likelihood of a deep and prolonged recession, and two wars. He took note of those circumstances in a speech that was notable for its sobriety and its absence of the triumphalism that he might understandably have displayed on a night when he won an Electoral College landslide.

"The road ahead will be long, our climb will be steep," said Mr. Obama, his audience hushed and attentive, with some, including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, wiping tears from their eyes. "We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you, we as a people will get there." The roster of defeated Republicans included some notable party moderates, like Senator John E. Sununu of New Hampshire and Representative Christopher Shays of Connecticut, and signaled that the Republican conference convening early next year in Washington will be not only smaller but more conservative.

Mr. Obama will come into office after an election in which he laid out a number of clear promises: to cut taxes for most Americans, to get the United States out of Iraq in a fast and orderly fashion, and to expand health care.

In a recognition of the difficult transition he faces, given the economic crisis, Mr. Obama is expected to begin filling White House jobs as early as this week.

Mr. Obama defeated Mr. McCain in Ohio, a central battleground in American politics, despite a huge effort that brought Mr. McCain and his running mate, Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska, back there repeatedly. Mr. Obama had lost the state decisively to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York in the Democratic primary.

Mr. McCain failed to take from Mr. Obama the two Democratic states that were at the top of his target list: New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. Mr. Obama also held on to Minnesota, the state that played host to the convention that nominated Mr. McCain; Wisconsin; and Michigan, a state Mr. McCain once had in his sights.

The apparent breadth of Mr. Obama's sweep left Republicans sobered, and his showing in states like Ohio and Pennsylvania stood out because officials in both parties had said that his struggles there in the primary campaign reflected the resistance of blue-collar voters to supporting a black candidate.

"I always thought there was a potential prejudice factor in the state," Senator Bob Casey, a Democrat of Pennsylvania who was an early Obama supporter, told reporters in Chicago. "I hope this means we washed that away."

Mr. McCain called Mr. Obama at 10 p.m., Central time, to offer his congratulations. In the call, Mr. Obama said he was eager to sit down and talk; in his

concession speech, Mr. McCain said he was ready to help Mr. Obama work through difficult times.

"I need your help," Mr. Obama told his rival, according to an Obama adviser, Robert Gibbs. "You're a leader on so many important issues."

Mr. Bush called Mr. Obama shortly after 10 p.m. to congratulate him on his victory.

"I promise to make this a smooth transition," the president said to Mr. Obama, according to a transcript provided by the White House. "You are about to go on one of the great journeys of life. Congratulations, and go enjoy yourself."

For most Americans, the news of Mr. Obama's election came at 11 p.m., Eastern time, when the networks, waiting for the close of polls in California, declared him the victor. A roar sounded from the 125,000 people gathered in Hutchison Field in Grant Park at the moment that they learned Mr. Obama had been projected the winner.

The scene in Phoenix was decidedly more sour. At several points, Mr. McCain, unsmiling, had to motion his crowd to quiet down -- he held out both hands, palms down -- when they responded to his words of tribute to Mr. Obama with boos.

Mr. Obama, who watched Mr. McCain's speech from his hotel room in Chicago, offered a hand to voters who had not supported him in this election, when he took the stage 15 minutes later. "To those Americans whose support I have yet to earn," he said, "I may not have won your vote, but I hear your voices, I need your help, and I will be your president, too."

Initial signs were that Mr. Obama benefited from a huge turnout of voters, but particularly among blacks. That group made up 13 percent of the electorate, according to surveys of people leaving the polls, compared with 11 percent in 2006.

In North Carolina, Republicans said that the huge surge of African-Americans was one of the big factors that led to Senator Elizabeth Dole, a Republican, losing her re-election bid.

Mr. Obama also did strikingly well among Hispanic voters; Mr. McCain did worse among those voters than Mr. Bush did in 2004. That suggests the damage the Republican Party has suffered among those voters over four years in which Republicans have been at the forefront on the effort to crack down on illegal immigrants.

The election ended what by any definition was one of the most remarkable contests in American political history, drawing what was by every appearance unparalleled public interest.

Throughout the day, people lined up at the polls for hours -- some showing up before dawn -- to cast their votes. Aides to both campaigns said that anecdotal evidence suggested record-high voter turnout.

Reflecting the intensity of the two candidates, Mr. McCain and Mr. Obama took a page from what Mr. Bush did in 2004 and continued to campaign after the polls opened.

Mr. McCain left his home in Arizona after voting early Tuesday to fly to Colorado and New Mexico, two states where Mr. Bush won four years ago but where Mr. Obama waged a spirited battle.

These were symbolically appropriate final campaign stops for Mr. McCain, reflecting the imperative he felt of trying to defend Republican states against a challenge from Mr. Obama.

"Get out there and vote," Mr. McCain said in Grand Junction, Colo. "I need your help. Volunteer, knock on doors, get your neighbors to the polls, drag them there if you need to."

By contrast, Mr. Obama flew from his home in Chicago to Indiana, a state that in many ways came to epitomize the audacity of his effort this year. Indiana has not voted for a Democrat since President Lyndon B. Johnson's landslide victory in 1964, and Mr. Obama made an intense bid for support there. He later returned home to Chicago play basketball, his election-day ritual.

The New York Times

Bring on the Puppy and the Rookie

Thursday, November 6, 2008

By: Maureen Dowd

I walked over to the White House Tuesday night and leaned against the fence. How can such a lovely house make so many of its inhabitants nuts?

There was no U-Haul in the driveway. I don't know if W. was inside talking to the portraits on the wall. Or if the portraits can vanish from their frames, as at Hogwarts Academy, to escape if W. is pestering them about his legacy.

The Obama girls, with their oodles of charm, will soon be moving in with their goldendoodle or some other fetching puppy, and they seem like the kind of kids who could have fun there, prowling around with their history-loving father.

I had been amazed during the campaign -- not by the covert racism about Barack Obama and not by Hillary Clinton's subtext when she insisted to superdelegates: "He can't win."

But I had been astonished by the overt willingness of some people who didn't mind being quoted by name in The New York Times saying vile stuff, that a President Obama would turn the Rose Garden into a watermelon patch, that he'd have barbeques on the front lawn, that he'd make the White House the Black House.

Actually, the elegant and disciplined Obama, who is not descended from the central African-American experience but who has nonetheless embraced it and been embraced by it, has the chance to make the White House pristine again.

I grew up here, and I love all the monuments filled with the capital's ghosts. I hate the thought that terrorists might target them again.

But the monuments have lost their luminescence in recent years.

How could the White House be classy when the Clintons were turning it into Motel 1600 for fund-raising, when Bill Clinton was using it for trysts with an intern and when he plunked a seven-seat hot tub with two Moto-Massager jets on the lawn?

How could the White House be inspiring when W. and Cheney were inside making torture and domestic spying legal, fooling Americans by cooking up warped evidence for war and scheming how to further enrich their buddies in the oil and gas industry?

How could the Lincoln Memorial -- "With malice toward none; with charity for all" -- be as moving if the black neighborhoods of a charming American city were left to drown while the president mountain-biked?

How can the National Archives, home of the Constitution, be as momentous if the president and vice president spend their days redacting the Constitution?

How can the black marble V of the Vietnam Memorial have power when those in power repeat the mistake of Vietnam?

How can the Capitol, where my dad proudly worked for so many years, hold its allure when the occupants have spent their days -- and years -- bickering and scoring petty political points instead of stopping White House chicanery and taking on risky big issues?

How can the F.D.R. Memorial along the Tidal Basin be an uplifting trip to the past when the bronze statue of five stooped men in a bread line and the words of F.D.R.'s second inaugural -- "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-nourished" -- evokes the depressing present?

Obama may be in over his head. Or he may be heading for his own monument one day.

His somber speech in the dark Chicago night was stark and simple and showed that he sees what he's up against. There was a heaviness in his demeanor, as if he already had taken on the isolation and "splendid misery," as Jefferson called it, of the office he'd won only moments before. Americans all over the place were jumping for joy, including the block I had been on in front of the White House, where they were singing: "Na, na, na, na. Hey, hey, hey. Goodbye."

In the midst of such a phenomenal, fizzy victory overcoming so many doubts and crazy attacks and even his own middle name, Obama stood alone.

He rejected the Democratic kumbaya moment of having your broad coalition on stage with you, as he talked about how everyone would have to pull together and "resist the temptation to fall back on the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long."

He professed "humility," but we'd heard that before from W., and look what happened there.

Promising to also be president for those who opposed him, Obama quoted Lincoln, his political idol and the man who ended slavery: "We are not enemies, but friends -- though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection."

There have been many awful mistakes made in this country. But now we have another chance.

As we start fresh with a constitutional law professor and senator from the Land of Lincoln, the Lincoln Memorial might be getting its gleam back.

I may have to celebrate by going over there and climbing up into Abe's lap. It's a \$50 fine. But it'd be worth it.

The Washington Post

Hard Choices And Challenges Follow Triumph

Wednesday, November 5, 2008

By: Dan Balz

After a victory of historic significance, Barack Obama will inherit problems of historic proportions. Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated at the depths of the Great Depression in 1933 has a new president been confronted with the challenges Obama will face as he starts his presidency.

At home, Obama must revive an economy experiencing some of the worst shocks in more than half a century. Abroad, he has pledged to end the war in Iraq and defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. He ran on a platform to change the country and its politics. Now he must begin to spell out exactly how.

Obama's winning percentage appears likely to be the largest of any Democrat since Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide and makes him the first since Jimmy Carter in 1976 to garner more than 50.1 percent. Like Johnson, he will govern with sizable congressional majorities. Democrats gained at least five seats in the Senate and looked to add significantly to their strength in the House.

But with those advantages come hard choices. Among them will be deciding how much he owes his victory to a popular rejection of President Bush and the Republicans and how much it represents an embrace of Democratic governance. Interpreting his mandate will be only one of several critical decisions Obama must make as he prepares to assume the presidency. Others include transforming his campaign promises on taxes, health care, energy and education into a set of legislative priorities for his first two years in office.

Obama's victory speech before 125,000 people at Chicago's Grant Park touched the themes of unity, reconciliation and hope that were at the heart of his candidacy. Asking for the help of all Americans to tackle the country's most serious challenges, he prepared supporters and opponents alike for setbacks, disappointments and the need for patience before they succeed.

"The road ahead will be long," he said. "Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America -- I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you -- we as a people will get there."

Obama's ability to manage relationships with Democratic congressional leaders, with Republicans and with impatient liberal constituencies with agendas of their own will have a lasting impact on his presidency. Can he, for example, fulfill his promise to govern in a unifying and inclusive way yet also push an ambitious progressive agenda?

The first African American elected to the presidency, Obama built his victory with a new Democratic coalition. To the party's base of African Americans, Latinos and women, Obama added younger voters and wealthier, better-educated ones. That helped him raise his support among white voters -- a traditional weakness of recent Democratic presidential candidates.

This new coalition helped redraw the electoral map, adding normally Republican states in the South, Midwest and Rocky Mountains to the states won by Al Gore in 2000

and John F. Kerry in 2004. How he retains their support and enthusiasm as he begins to govern will also influence how successful he may be.

William Galston of the Brookings Institution, who served as domestic policy adviser during President Bill Clinton's first term, predicted a battle over analogies among Democrats seeking to influence Obama.

Some, he said, will argue that conditions require a major infusion of government activism and intervention, as in 1933. Others will point to the start of Johnson's first full term in 1965, which ushered in the Great Society and an era of liberal governance. Still others may point to 1993, the start of Clinton's first term, when Democrats pushed another liberal agenda, only to find that the country was resistant. Within two years, Democrats lost their congressional majorities.

Galston argued that 1993 may be closest to the mark, although he noted that the economic problems are far worse than those Clinton faced. But he said there was little evidence heading into yesterday's balloting that the country had taken a sharp left turn. "It's hard to say substantively what mandate Obama and the Democrats have gotten," he said. "They've gotten a chance to make their case."

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich (R) said the senator from Illinois can claim a personal mandate but should not assume the results signified an ideological election.

"You have to distinguish between the Obama machine -- ACORN, labor unions, MoveOn.org -- and the personality, which is Oprah Winfrey, Paul Volcker, Warren Buffett and Colin Powell," he said. "One of the most important decisions Obama will make is which Obama will govern."

That tension may roil an Obama presidency, but throughout his campaign, Obama has shown an ability to ride above those contradictions and potential conflicts. Through his ability to inspire Americans of different backgrounds and with disciplined, mostly mistake-free campaigning, Obama outmaneuvered and outlasted his rivals. He will need to employ those same skills as president to expand the coalition that elected him.

Democratic pollster Geoff Garin said Obama's mandate, as put to the voters, was a mandate to be a different president than George W. Bush. "That covers a lot of ground," he said. "There's certainly a mandate in terms of leadership style to have a politics that is more inclusive."

Garin argued that Obama enjoys a mandate for a more activist government that can regulate the excesses of the private sector. "But having said that," Garin said, "the public still has a lot of skepticism about the efficiency and effectiveness of government."

Rep. Rahm Emanuel (Ill.), the fourth-ranking Democrat in the House, argued that "no crisis should go to waste," meaning that the depth of the country's problems create an opportunity for the next president to offer big solutions on issues like energy and health care.

Emanuel is under consideration to become White House chief of staff, but he said his comments represented his own view, not Obama's. Though arguing for a bold approach, Emanuel cautioned against attempting to do everything at once. Finding the balance between a big and ambitious agenda and a legislative strategy to reach those goals over time will be Obama's responsibility.

Obama advisers, who agreed to talk about the future only on the condition that they not be quoted, said they are well aware of the dangers of interpreting the results as a mandate for unabashed liberal government.

One top adviser recalled what happened after the Democrats regained control of the House and Senate in the midterm elections and suggested they were ready to end the war in Iraq and enact a bold Democratic agenda. "We're all wary of the lessons of 2006, when expectations were raised so high prematurely," he said.

This adviser said Obama knows that he must move strategically to balance his pledges to govern inclusively while promoting a progressive agenda. "It's up to him to educate people on a strategy to move forward." Part of that strategy, he added, will be persuading people to be patient about the pace of change.

Obama advisers take seriously the senator's rhetoric about governing in a bipartisan fashion. They are ready for potential conflict with some Democratic constituencies or with some liberal Democrats in Congress, whose pent-up demand for action may clash with Obama's priorities, and are prepared to say no.

Obama has yet to truly confront the realities of a domestic platform that calls for significant increases in federal spending and a fiscal problem that has worsened dramatically. Given the projected spending of \$700 billion for a financial rescue package and hundreds of billions more for an economic stimulus package that Democrats say is needed, the deficit could approach \$1 trillion or more next fiscal year, even without any of Obama's other priorities.

In the final stages of the campaign, Obama spoke in generalities about scrubbing the federal budget line by line, looking for cuts. He has yet to identify specific reductions, but soon after he is sworn in, his administration will have to present an alternative budget. At that point, Obama will reveal more of who he is.

If that budget appears pinched, he could face a revolt among congressional Democrats, especially in the House. "My own hunch is that Obama is smart enough not to want to govern as a liberal," said Peter Wehner, a former Bush administration official. "But he is going to have hydraulic pressure from the House and Senate to do that."

John Feehery, who was a top aide to former House speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), said House Democrats represent a political threat to an Obama presidency. "His real challenge is to understand that the House leadership does not necessarily lead you into a reelection," he said.

Clinton and Carter both had difficult relationships with Democratic leaders on Capitol Hill, but Galston said Obama may be able to negotiate a productive relationship because he did not challenge Democratic orthodoxy on his way to the White House.

An Obama adviser said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have given every indication of wanting to have a cooperative relationship with Obama. "The mistake executives make is setting an agenda and expecting others to follow along," the adviser said. "I think they are open and eager to be a partner with Barack in setting an agenda and executing it."

The Wall Street Journal

Wonder Land: Obama's Dour Vision

November, 6 2008

By: Daniel Henninger.

Barack Obama's victory speech Tuesday night had grace notes. He wants to pull away from the "partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics for so long." Well past due on that one.

He praised a party of Abraham Lincoln "founded on the values of self-reliance, individual liberty and national unity. Those are values we all share." And the way such values are kept alive is by a victor's thoughtful mention of them. His remarkable win was truly "not hatched in the halls of Washington," a fact that contributed much to his support from an electorate disillusioned with the federal institutions at both ends of Washington.

That said, it might be useful to ask at this early stage what, precisely, is President-elect Obama's understanding of the American idea? What I take away from the victory speech is that his vision of America is fairly depressing, a lot more dour than my sense of America in 2008.

Throughout the campaign, Barack Obama ran against the "failed" presidency of George Bush -- his "failed" economic policies, his "failed" war in Iraq and so on. In his victory speech, though, Mr. Obama appears to be describing a generalized failure of America itself.

It emerged in the first sentence: "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer."

He presumably is referring to the election of the first African- American president, an achievement. Is it true to say, though, that this alone proves that "the dream of our founders is still alive in our time?"

Many phrases and passages in the speech suggest an America in a kind of collapse. "It's been a long time coming." "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep." He believes his campaign volunteers "proved that more than two centuries later, a government of the people by the people and for the people has not perished from this Earth. This is your victory."

A benign explanation would be that either Mr. Obama's friend Ted Sorensen or his talented young speech writer needs a tutorial in the perils of over-writing. This untethered rhetoric is Sorensian overkill.

Harder to account for is the persistence of Mr. Obama's grim vision of where we stand now. This was nowhere more evident than in the speech's passages with "Yes we can," which he now equates with the "American creed." "Yes we can" was appropriate as a campaign punch line. Here, however, it punctuated points in U.S. history that Mr. Obama clearly sees as analogous to our current status and challenge: the "despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land," the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the day "a preacher from Atlanta" delivered his We Shall Overcome speech.

The overwhelming reason Barack Obama won this election is because voters, in their pedestrian way, want him to restart the stalled, damaged economy, which for all the

"Depression" talk is nowhere near the 20% unemployment rates and low living standards then. The election came his way the night of Sunday Sept. 14, when the financial crisis exploded. Before that, he and Sen. McCain were in a virtual tie, and the Democratic nominee should have been well ahead of a candidate tied to the out-of-favor Republicans. Doubts among undecideds were holding down Mr. Obama's numbers. The markets' disintegration and loss of confidence in the nation's economic stewards gave him his win.

In what way is this a mandate for "change" similar to the vast economic restructurings of the dust-bowl years and social legislation of the mid-1960s? Yet again in the speech: "I will ask you join in the work of remaking this nation the only way it's been done in America for two-hundred and twenty-one years -- block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand."

This takes us well past George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Remake this nation? Calloused hand by calloused hand?

Any nation is a work in progress, with problems worthy of public attention. None in the U.S. -- none -- tops the collapse of the urban public-school system. It is a little insulting, though, to imply that the America of people and institutions -- private enterprise and public officials -- who've worked the past 40 years to move the nation's living standards forward somehow don't measure up to "the founders' dream."

When in this context he asserts, "Our union can be perfected," one pauses. Efforts to achieve the abstraction of national perfectibility can prove a dicey proposition.

An alternative explanation for all this would be that Barack Obama is given to grandiosity such as the famous Greek columns in a Denver stadium. Among the Obama supporters who made his case to me the past year, I doubt many would say this level of grandiosity was what they had in mind amid constant assurance that he is a moderate, pragmatic man.

Mr. Obama's messianism may be setting him up for a fall. It might make sense between now and his Inaugural Address for the president-elect to lower his flight path. Among the images evoked by Greek columns is the myth of Icarus. The Founding Fathers' idea of "change" was in fact more modest than Mr. Obama's, a reality worth pondering lest he take his followers on a ride toward the sun.