

SELECTED SPEECHES

Complete Text of the

Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009

Extended Excerpts from

Election Night Remarks, November 4, 2008

Remarks in Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008

A New Strategy for a New World
July 15, 2008

The America We Love, June 30, 2008

A More Perfect Union, March 18, 2008

Announcement for President
February 10, 2007

Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic
National Convention, July 27, 2004

Remarks Against Going to War with Iraq
October 2, 2002



United States Department of State / Bureau of International Information Programs

President Barack **OBAMA** In His Own **WORDS**



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When Barack Obama in February, 2007 announced his candidacy for the U.S. presidency, he cited the 16th president. Abraham Lincoln, Obama said, “tells us there is power in words.” During the two years that followed, Obama proved the truth of Lincoln’s vision. As he addressed crowds gathered at sites from Lincoln’s own Springfield, Illinois, to Berlin, Germany, the young Senator was compared to Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, and other great Americans whose words earned them the respect, affection, and loyalty of their countrymen.

These pages share President Obama’s words with our global readership. This book includes the complete text of the 44th President’s Inaugural Address. Also featured are extended excerpts from eight other significant campaign and pre-presidential speeches. It is our hope that while the book itself is small, readers will discover that the vision captured in its pages is large.

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At the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, President Barack Obama delivers his Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009.

The Remaking of America

*The Inaugural Address, complete text
Washington, DC, January 20, 2009*

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you've bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land — a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our

enduring spirit, to choose our better history, to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted, for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things — some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor — who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life.

For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sanh.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of

our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions, that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act — not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions,



President Barack Obama makes a point during his Inaugural Address.

who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage.

What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them — that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply. The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works — whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account — to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day — because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched, but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control — that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our Gross Domestic Product, but on the reach of our prosperity, on the ability to extend opportunity to every

willing heart — not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers ... Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. And so to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: Know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even

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greater effort — even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet. We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass, that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve, that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself, and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West: Know that your people will judge you on what

you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow, to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service, a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet, at this moment — a moment that will define a generation — it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger

when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job, which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence — the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant

can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath. So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world ... that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive ... that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. And God Bless the United States of America.



Vast crowds fill the National Mall in Washington, DC, to hear President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, January 20, 2009.



At the Obama victory rally in Chicago a supporter holds a sign reading, "Yes We Can!"

Change Has Come to America

Election night remarks

Chicago, Illinois, November 4, 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 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.

...

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 to 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.

...

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 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 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.

“Tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from 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.”



Berliners greet Barack Obama after his speech July 24, 2008.

A World That Stands As One

*Exploring the responsibilities of global citizenship
Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008*

People of the world - look at Berlin! Look at Berlin, where Germans and Americans learned to work together and trust each other less than three years after facing each other on the field of battle.

Look at Berlin, where the determination of a people met the generosity of the Marshall Plan and created a German miracle; where a victory over tyranny gave rise to NATO, the greatest alliance ever formed to defend our common security.

Look at Berlin, where the bullet holes in the buildings and the somber stones and pillars near the Brandenburg Gate insist

that we never forget our common humanity.

People of the world — look at Berlin, where a wall came down, a continent came together, and history proved that there is no challenge too great for a world that stands as one.

Sixty years after the airlift, we are called upon again. History has led us to a new crossroad, with new promise and new peril.

The fall of the Berlin Wall brought new hope. But that very closeness has given rise to new dangers - dangers that cannot be contained within the borders of a country or by the distance of an ocean.

...

In this new world, such dangerous currents have swept along faster than our efforts to contain them. That is why we cannot afford to be divided. No one nation, no matter how large or powerful, can defeat such challenges alone. None of us can deny these threats, or escape responsibility in meeting them. Yet, in the absence of Soviet tanks and a terrible wall, it has become easy to forget this truth. And if we're honest with each other, we know that sometimes, on both sides of the Atlantic, we have drifted apart, and forgotten our shared destiny.

In Europe, the view that America is part of what has gone wrong in our world, rather than a force to help make it right, has become all too common. In America, there are voices that

deride and deny the importance of Europe's role in our security and our future. Both views miss the truth—that Europeans today are bearing new burdens and taking more responsibility in critical parts of the world; and that just as American bases built in the last century still help to defend the security of this continent, so does our country still sacrifice greatly for freedom around the globe.

Yes, there have been differences between America and Europe. No doubt, there will be differences in the future. But the burdens of global citizenship continue to bind us together. A change of leadership in Washington will not lift this burden. In this new century, Americans and Europeans alike will be required to do more - not less. Partnership and cooperation among nations is not a choice; it is the one way, the only way, to protect our common security and advance our common humanity.

That is why the greatest danger of all is to allow new walls to divide us from one another.

The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand. The walls between the countries with the most and those with the least cannot stand. The walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down.

...

History reminds us that walls can be torn down. But the task is never easy. True partnership and true progress requires constant work and sustained sacrifice. They require sharing the burdens of development and diplomacy; of progress and peace. They require allies who will listen to each other, learn from each other and, most of all, trust each other.

That is why America cannot turn inward. That is why Europe cannot turn inward. America has no better partner than Europe. Now is the time to build new bridges across the globe as strong as the one that bound us across the Atlantic. Now is the time to join together, through constant cooperation, strong institutions, shared sacrifice, and a global commitment to progress, to meet the challenges of the 21st century. And this is the moment when our nations - and all nations - must summon that spirit anew.

This is the moment when we must defeat terror and dry up the well of extremism that supports it. This threat is real and we cannot shrink from our responsibility to combat it. If we could create NATO to face down the Soviet Union, we can join in a new and global partnership to dismantle the networks that have struck in Madrid and Amman; in London and Bali; in Washington and New York. If we could win a battle of ideas against the communists, we can stand with the vast majority of Muslims who reject the extremism that leads to hate instead of hope. This is the moment when we must renew our resolve to rout

“The walls between old allies on either side of the Atlantic cannot stand ... The walls between races and tribes; natives and immigrants; Christian and Muslim and Jew cannot stand. These now are the walls we must tear down...”

the terrorists who threaten our security in Afghanistan, and the traffickers who sell drugs on your streets. No one welcomes war. I recognize the enormous difficulties in Afghanistan. But my country and yours have a stake in seeing that NATO's first mission beyond Europe's borders is a success. For the people of Afghanistan, and for our shared security, the work must be done. America cannot do this alone. The Afghan people need our troops and your troops; our support and your support to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda, to develop their economy, and to help them rebuild their nation. We have too much at stake to turn back now.

This is the moment when we must renew the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It is time to secure all loose nuclear materials; to stop the spread of nuclear weapons; and to reduce the arsenals from another era. This is the moment to begin the work of seeking the peace of a world without nuclear weapons.

This is the moment when every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose its own tomorrow free from the shadows of yesterday. In this century, we need a strong European Union that deepens the security and prosperity of this continent, while extending a hand abroad. In this century - in this city of all cities - we must reject the Cold War mind-set of the past, and resolve to work with Russia when we can, to stand up for our values when we must, and to seek a partnership

that extends across this entire continent.

This is the moment when we must build on the wealth that open markets have created, and share its benefits more equitably. Trade has been a cornerstone of our growth and global development. But we will not be able to sustain this growth if it favors the few, and not the many. Together, we must forge trade that truly rewards the work that creates wealth, with meaningful protections for our people and our planet. This is the moment for trade that is free and fair for all.

This is the moment we must help answer the call for a new dawn in the Middle East. My country must stand with yours and with Europe in sending a direct message to Iran that it must abandon its nuclear ambitions. We must support the Lebanese who have marched and bled for democracy, and the Israelis and Palestinians who seek a secure and lasting peace. And despite past differences, this is the moment when the world should support the millions of Iraqis who seek to rebuild their lives, even as we pass responsibility to the Iraqi government and finally bring this war to a close.

This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands. Let us resolve that all nations — including my own — will act with the same seriousness of

purpose as has your nation, and reduce the carbon we send into our atmosphere. This is the moment to give our children back their future. This is the moment to stand as one.

...

People of Berlin—and people of the world—the scale of our challenge is great. The road ahead will be long. But I come before you to say that we are heirs to a struggle for freedom. We are a people of improbable hope. With an eye toward the future, with resolve in our hearts, let us remember this history, and answer our destiny, and remake the world once again.



Barack Obama speaks in Berlin, Germany, July 24, 2008.



A transfer ceremony in Hilla, Iraq, October 23, 2008.

A New Strategy for a New World

Rebuilding Our Alliances, Washington, DC, July 15, 2008

Sixty-one years ago, George Marshall announced the plan that would come to bear his name. Much of Europe lay in ruins. The United States faced a powerful and ideological enemy intent on world domination. This menace was magnified by the recently discovered capability to destroy life on an unimaginable scale. The Soviet Union didn't yet have an atomic bomb, but before long it would.

The challenge facing the greatest generation of Americans—the generation that had vanquished fascism on the battlefield—was how to contain this threat while extending freedom's frontiers. Leaders like Truman and Acheson, Kennan and Marshall, knew that there was no single decisive blow that could

be struck for freedom. We needed a new overarching strategy to meet the challenges of a new and dangerous world.

Such a strategy would join overwhelming military strength with sound judgment. It would shape events not just through military force, but through the force of our ideas; through economic power, intelligence and diplomacy. It would support strong allies that freely shared our ideals of liberty and democracy; open markets and the rule of law. It would foster new international institutions like the United Nations, NATO, and the World Bank, and focus on every corner of the globe. It was a strategy that saw clearly the world's dangers, while seizing its promise.

...

What is needed? What can best be done? What must be done?

Today's dangers are different, though no less grave. The power to destroy life on a catastrophic scale now risks falling into the hands of terrorists. The future of our security - and our planet - is held hostage to our dependence on foreign oil and gas. From the cave-spotted mountains of northwest Pakistan, to the centrifuges spinning beneath Iranian soil, we know that the American people cannot be protected by oceans or the sheer might of our military alone.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought this new reality into a terrible and ominous focus. On that bright and beautiful

day, the world of peace and prosperity that was the legacy of our Cold War victory seemed to suddenly vanish under rubble, and twisted steel, and clouds of smoke.

But the depth of this tragedy also drew out the decency and determination of our nation. At blood banks and vigils; in schools and in the United States Congress, Americans were united - more united, even, than we were at the dawn of the Cold War. The world, too, was united against the perpetrators of this evil act, as old allies, new friends, and even long-time adversaries stood by our side. It was time — once again — for America's might and moral persuasion to be harnessed; it was time to once again shape a new security strategy for an ever-changing world.

Imagine, for a moment, what we could have done in those days, and months, and years after 9/11.

We could have deployed the full force of American power to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and all of the terrorists responsible for 9/11, while supporting real security in Afghanistan.

We could have secured loose nuclear materials around the world, and updated a 20th century non-proliferation framework

to meet the challenges of the 21st.

We could have invested hundreds of billions of dollars in alternative sources of energy to grow our economy, save our planet, and end the tyranny of oil.

We could have strengthened old alliances, formed new partnerships, and renewed international institutions to advance peace and prosperity.

We could have called on a new generation to step into the strong currents of history, and to serve their country as troops and teachers, Peace Corps volunteers and police officers.

We could have secured our homeland—investing in sophisticated new protection for our ports, our trains and our power plants.

We could have rebuilt our roads and bridges, laid down new rail and broadband and electricity systems, and made college affordable for every American to strengthen our ability to compete.

We could have done that.

Instead, we have lost thousands of American lives, spent nearly a trillion dollars, alienated allies and neglected emerging threats - all in the cause of fighting a war for well over five years in a country that had absolutely nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks.

Our men and women in uniform have accomplished every mission we have given them. What's missing in our debate about Iraq — what has been missing since before the war began — is a discussion of the strategic consequences of Iraq and its dominance of our foreign policy.

This war distracts us from every threat that we face and so many opportunities we could seize. This war diminishes our security, our standing in the world, our military, our economy, and the resources that we need to confront the challenges of the 21st century. By any measure, our single-minded and open-ended focus on Iraq is not a sound strategy for keeping America safe.

I am running for President of the United States to lead this country in a new direction—to seize this moment's promise. Instead of being distracted from the most pressing threats that we face, I want to overcome them. Instead of pushing the entire burden of our foreign policy on to the brave men and women of our military, I want to use all elements of American power to keep us safe, and prosperous, and free. Instead of alienating ourselves from the world, I want America — once again — to lead.

As President, I will pursue a tough, smart and principled national security strategy— one that recognizes that we have interests not just in Baghdad, but in Kandahar and Karachi,

“I will focus this strategy on five goals: ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding our alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”

in Tokyo and London, in Beijing and Berlin. I will focus this strategy on five goals essential to making America safer: ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding our alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

...

That's why I strongly stand by my plan to end this war. Now, Prime Minister Maliki's call for a timetable for the removal of U.S. forces presents a real opportunity. It comes at a time when the American general in charge of training Iraq's Security Forces has testified that Iraq's Army and Police will be ready to assume responsibility for Iraq's security in 2009. Now is the time for a responsible redeployment of our combat troops that pushes Iraq's leaders toward a political solution, rebuilds our military, and refocuses on Afghanistan and our broader security interests.

...

At some point, a judgment must be made. Iraq is not going to be a perfect place, and we don't have unlimited resources to try to make it one. We are not going to kill every al Qaeda sympathizer, eliminate every trace of Iranian influence, or stand up a flawless democracy before we leave. ... In fact, true success in Iraq — victory in Iraq — will not take place in a surrender ceremony where an enemy lays down their arms. True

success will take place when we leave Iraq to a government that is taking responsibility for its future — a government that prevents sectarian conflict, and ensures that the al Qaeda threat which has been beaten back by our troops does not reemerge. That is an achievable goal if we pursue a comprehensive plan to press the Iraqis stand up.

This is the future that Iraqis want. This is the future that the American people want. And this is what our common interests demand.

And this is the future we need for our military. We cannot tolerate this strain on our forces to fight a war that hasn't made us safer. I will restore our strength by ending this war, completing the increase of our ground forces by 65,000 soldiers and 27,000 marines, and investing in the capabilities we need to defeat conventional foes and meet the unconventional challenges of our time.

I want Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future, and to reach the political accommodation necessary for long-term stability. That's victory. That's success. That's what's best for Iraq, that's what's best for America, and that's why I will end this war as President.

The central front in the war on terror is not Iraq, and it never was. That's why the second goal of my new strat-

egy will be taking the fight to al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It is unacceptable that almost seven years after nearly 3,000 Americans were killed on our soil, the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 are still at large. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahari are recording messages to their followers and plotting more terror. The Taliban controls parts of Afghanistan. Al Qaeda has an expanding base in Pakistan that is probably no farther from their old Afghan sanctuary than a train ride from Washington to Philadelphia. If another attack on our homeland comes, it will likely come from the same region where 9/11 was planned. And yet today, we have five times more troops in Iraq than Afghanistan.

...

I will send at least two additional combat brigades to Afghanistan, and use this commitment to seek greater contributions - with fewer restrictions - from NATO allies. I will focus on training Afghan security forces and supporting an Afghan judiciary, with more resources and incentives for American officers who perform these missions. Just as we succeeded in the Cold War by supporting allies who could sustain their own security, we must realize that the 21st century's frontlines are not only on the field of battle—they are found in the training exer-

cise near Kabul, in the police station in Kandahar, and in the rule of law in Herat.

Moreover, lasting security will only come if we heed Marshall's lesson, and help Afghans grow their economy from the bottom up. That's why I've proposed an additional \$1 billion in non-military assistance each year, with meaningful safeguards to prevent corruption and to make sure investments are made — not just in Kabul — but out in Afghanistan's provinces. As a part of this program, we'll invest in alternative livelihoods to poppy-growing for Afghan farmers, just as we crack down on heroin trafficking. We cannot lose Afghanistan to a future of narco-terrorism. The Afghan people must know that our commitment to their future is enduring, because the security of Afghanistan and the United States is shared.

The greatest threat to that security lies in the tribal regions of Pakistan, where terrorists train and insurgents strike into Afghanistan. We cannot tolerate a terrorist sanctuary, and as President, I won't. We need a stronger and sustained partnership between Afghanistan, Pakistan and NATO to secure the border, to take out terrorist camps, and to crack down on cross-border insurgents. And we must make it clear that if Pakistan cannot or will not act, we will take out high-level terrorist targets like bin Laden if we have them in our sights.

Make no mistake: we can't succeed in Afghanistan or secure

our homeland unless we change our Pakistan policy.

...

Only a strong Pakistani democracy can help us move toward my third goal - securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states.

...

In those years after World War II, we worried about the deadly atom falling into the hands of the Kremlin. Now, we worry about 50 tons of highly enriched uranium — some of it poorly secured—at civilian nuclear facilities in over forty countries. Now, we worry about the breakdown of a non-proliferation framework that was designed for the bipolar world of the Cold War. Now, we worry — most of all — about a rogue state or nuclear scientist transferring the world's deadliest weapons to the world's most dangerous people: terrorists who won't think twice about killing themselves and hundreds of thousands in Tel Aviv or Moscow, in London or New York.

...

Beyond taking these immediate, urgent steps, it's time to send a clear message: America seeks a world with no nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, we must retain a strong deterrent. But instead of threatening to kick them out of the G-8, we need to work with Russia to take U.S. and Russian ballistic missiles off hair-trigger alert; to dramatically reduce the stockpiles of our nuclear weapons and material; to seek a global ban on the production of fissile material for weapons; and to expand the U.S.-Russian ban on intermediate-range

missiles so that the agreement is global. By keeping our commitment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we'll be in a better position to press nations like North Korea and Iran to keep theirs. In particular, it will give us more credibility and leverage in dealing with Iran.

We cannot tolerate nuclear weapons in the hands of nations that support terror. Preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons is a vital national security interest of the United States. No tool of statecraft should be taken off the table. I will use all elements of American power to pressure the Iranian regime, starting with aggressive, principled and direct diplomacy - diplomacy backed with strong sanctions and without preconditions.

That's why we must pursue these tough negotiations in full coordination with our allies, bringing to bear our full influence—including, if it will advance our interests, my meeting with the appropriate Iranian leader at a time and place of my choosing.

We will pursue this diplomacy with no illusions about the Iranian regime. Instead, we will present a clear choice. If you abandon your nuclear program, support for terror, and threats to Israel, there will be meaningful incentives. If you refuse, then we will ratchet up the pressure, with stronger unilateral sanctions; stronger multilateral sanctions in the Security

Council, and sustained action outside the UN to isolate the Iranian regime. That's the diplomacy we need. And the Iranians should negotiate now; by waiting, they will only face mounting pressure.

The surest way to increase our leverage against Iran in the long-run is to stop bankrolling its ambitions. That will depend on achieving my fourth goal: ending the tyranny of oil in our time.

One of the most dangerous weapons in the world today is the price of oil. We ship nearly \$700 million a day to unstable or hostile nations for their oil. It pays for terrorist bombs going off from Baghdad to Beirut. It funds petro-diplomacy in Caracas and radical madrasas from Karachi to Khartoum. It takes leverage away from America and shifts it to dictators.

This immediate danger is eclipsed only by the long-term threat from climate change, which will lead to devastating weather patterns, terrible storms, drought, and famine. That means people competing for food and water in the next fifty years in the very places that have known horrific violence in the last fifty: Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Most disastrously, that could mean destructive storms on our shores, and the disappearance of our coastline.

This is not just an economic issue or an environmental

concern — this is a national security crisis. For the sake of our security—and for every American family that is paying the price at the pump — we must end this dependence on foreign oil. And as President, that’s exactly what I’ll do. Small steps and political gimmickry just won’t do. I’ll invest \$150 billion over the next ten years to put America on the path to true energy security. This fund will fast track investments in a new green energy business sector that will end our addiction to oil and create up to 5 million jobs over the next two decades, and help secure the future of our country and our planet. We’ll invest in research and development of every form of alternative energy — solar, wind, and biofuels, as well as technologies that can make coal clean and nuclear power safe. And from the moment I take office, I will let it be known that the United States of America is ready to lead again.

Never again will we sit on the sidelines, or stand in the way of global action to tackle this global challenge. I will reach out to the leaders of the biggest carbon emitting nations and ask them to join a new Global Energy Forum that will lay the foundation for the next generation of climate protocols. We will also build an alliance of oil-importing nations and work together to reduce our demand, and to break the grip of OPEC on the global economy. We’ll set a goal of an 80% reduction in global emissions by 2050. And as we develop new forms of clean energy here at home, we will share our technology and our innovations with all the nations of the world.

That is the tradition of American leadership on behalf of the global good. And that will be my fifth goal — rebuilding our alliances to meet the common challenges of the 21st century.

For all of our power, America is strongest when we act alongside strong partners.

Now is the time for a new era of international cooperation. It’s time for America and Europe to renew our common commitment to face down the threats of the 21st century just as we did the challenges of the 20th. It’s time to strengthen our partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Australia and the world’s largest democracy - India - to create a stable and prosperous Asia. It’s time to engage China on common interests like climate change, even as we continue to encourage their shift to a more open and market-based society. It’s time to strengthen NATO by asking more of our allies, while always approaching them with the respect owed a partner. It’s time to reform the United Nations, so that this imperfect institution can become a more perfect forum to share burdens, strengthen our leverage, and promote our values. It’s time to deepen our engagement to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, so that we help our ally Israel achieve true and lasting security, while helping Palestinians achieve their legitimate aspirations for statehood.

And just as we renew longstanding efforts, so must we shape new ones to meet new challenges. That’s why I’ll create a

Shared Security Partnership Program — a new alliance of nations to strengthen cooperative efforts to take down global terrorist networks, while standing up against torture and brutality. That's why we'll work with the African Union to enhance its ability to keep the peace. That's why we'll build a new partnership to roll back the trafficking of drugs, and guns, and gangs in the Americas. That's what we can do if we are ready to engage the world.

We will have to provide meaningful resources to meet critical priorities. I know development assistance is not the most popular program, but as President, I will make the case to the American people that it can be our best investment in increasing the common security of the entire world. That was true with the Marshall Plan, and that must be true today. That's why I'll double our foreign assistance to \$50 billion by 2012, and use it to support a stable future in failing states, and sustainable growth in Africa; to halve global poverty and to roll back disease. To send once more a message to those yearning faces beyond our shores that says, "You matter to us. Your future is our future. And our moment is now."



Obama supporters in New Delhi, India, June 24, 2008.



A veteran of World War II is moved by emotion at a Veteran's Day ceremony in New York City, November 11, 2003.

The America We Love

Independence, Missouri, June 30, 2008

On a spring morning in April of 1775, a simple band of colonists – farmers and merchants, blacksmiths and printers, men and boys – left their homes and families in Lexington and Concord to take up arms against the tyranny of an Empire. The odds against them were long and the risks enormous – for even if they survived the battle, any ultimate failure would bring charges of treason, and death by hanging.

And yet they took that chance. They did so not on behalf of a particular tribe or lineage, but on behalf of a larger idea. The idea of liberty. The idea of God-given, inalienable rights. And with the first shot of that fateful day – a shot heard round the world – the American Revolution, and America's experiment with democracy, began.

Those men of Lexington and Concord were among our first patriots. And at the beginning of a week when we celebrate the birth of our nation, I think it is fitting to pause for a moment and reflect on the meaning of patriotism – theirs, and ours. We do so in part because we are in the midst of war – more than one and a half million of our finest young men and women have now fought in Iraq and Afghanistan; over 60,000 have been wounded, and over 4,600 have been laid to rest. The costs of war have been great, and the debate surrounding our mission in Iraq has been fierce. It is natural, in light of such sacrifice by so many, to think more deeply about the commitments that bind us to our nation, and to each other.

We reflect on these questions as well because we are in the midst of a presidential election, perhaps the most consequential in generations; a contest that will determine the course of this nation for years, perhaps decades, to come. Not only is it a debate about big issues – health care, jobs, energy, education, and retirement security – but it is also a debate about values. How do we keep ourselves safe and secure while preserving our liberties? How do we restore trust in a government that seems increasingly removed from its people and dominated by special interests? How do we ensure that in an increasingly global economy, the winners maintain allegiance to the less fortunate? And how do we resolve our differences at a time of increasing diversity?

Finally, it is worth considering the meaning of patriotism because the question of who is – or is not – a patriot all too often poisons our political debates, in ways that divide us rather than bringing us together. I have come to know this from my own experience on the campaign trail. Throughout my life, I have always taken my deep and abiding love for this country as a given. It was how I was raised; it is what propelled me into public service; it is why I am running for President. And yet, at certain times over the last sixteen months, I have found, for the first time, my patriotism challenged – at times as a result of my own carelessness, more often as a result of the desire by some to score political points and raise fears about who I am and what I stand for.

So let me say at this outset of my remarks. I will never question the patriotism of others in this campaign. And I will not stand idly by when I hear others question mine.

...

The use of patriotism as a political sword or a political shield is as old as the Republic. Still, what is striking about today's patriotism debate is the degree to which it remains rooted in the culture wars of the 1960s – in arguments that go back forty years or more. In the early years of the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam War, defenders of the status quo often accused anybody who questioned the wisdom of government policies of being unpatriotic. Meanwhile, some

of those in the so-called counter-culture of the Sixties reacted not merely by criticizing particular government policies, but by attacking the symbols, and in extreme cases, the very idea, of America itself – by burning flags; by blaming America for all that was wrong with the world; and perhaps most tragically, by failing to honor those veterans coming home from Vietnam, something that remains a national shame to this day.

Most Americans never bought into these simplistic world-views – these caricatures of left and right. Most Americans understood that dissent does not make one unpatriotic, and that there is nothing smart or sophisticated about a cynical disregard for America's traditions and institutions. And yet the anger and turmoil of that period never entirely drained away. All too often our politics still seems trapped in these old, threadbare arguments – a fact most evident during our recent debates about the war in Iraq, when those who opposed administration policy were tagged by some as unpatriotic, and a general providing his best counsel on how to move forward in Iraq was accused of betrayal.

Given the enormous challenges that lie before us, we can no longer afford these sorts of divisions. None of us expect that arguments about patriotism will, or should, vanish entirely; after all, when we argue about patriotism, we are arguing about who we are as a country, and more importantly, who we should be. But surely we can agree that no party or political

philosophy has a monopoly on patriotism. And surely we can arrive at a definition of patriotism that, however rough and imperfect, captures the best of America's common spirit.

What would such a definition look like? For me, as for most Americans, patriotism starts as a gut instinct, a loyalty and love for country rooted in my earliest memories. I'm not just talking about the recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance or the Thanksgiving pageants at school or the fireworks on the Fourth of July, as wonderful as those things may be. Rather, I'm referring to the way the American ideal wove its way throughout the lessons my family taught me as a child.

...

For me, patriotism is always more than just loyalty to a place on a map or a certain kind of people. Instead, it is also loyalty to America's ideals – ideals for which anyone can sacrifice, or defend, or give their last full measure of devotion. I believe it is this loyalty that allows a country teeming with different races and ethnicities, religions and customs, to come together as one.

I believe those who attack America's flaws without acknowledging the singular greatness of our ideals, and their proven capacity to inspire a better world, do not truly understand America.

“For me, patriotism is always more than just loyalty to a place on a map or a certain kind of people. Instead, it is also loyalty to America’s ideals – ideals for which anyone can sacrifice, or defend, or give their last full measure of devotion.”

Of course, precisely because America isn’t perfect, precisely because our ideals constantly demand more from us, patriotism can never be defined as loyalty to any particular leader or government or policy. As Mark Twain, that greatest of American satirists and proud son of Missouri, once wrote, “Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it.” We may hope that our leaders and our government stand up for our ideals, and there are many times in our history when that’s occurred. But when our laws, our leaders or our government are out of alignment with our ideals, then the dissent of ordinary Americans may prove to be one of the truest expression of patriotism.

...

Beyond a loyalty to America’s ideals, beyond a willingness to dissent on behalf of those ideals, I also believe that patriotism must, if it is to mean anything, involve the willingness to sacrifice — to give up something we value on behalf of a larger cause. For those who have fought under the flag of this nation no further proof of such sacrifice is necessary. And let me also add that no one should ever devalue that service, especially for the sake of a political campaign, and that goes for supporters on both sides.

We must always express our profound gratitude for the service of our men and women in uniform. Period. Indeed, one of the good things to emerge from the current conflict in Iraq

has been the widespread recognition that whether you support this war or oppose it, the sacrifice of our troops is always worthy of honor.

I have seen a new generation of Americans begin to take up the call. I meet them everywhere I go, young people involved in the project of American renewal; not only those who have signed up to fight for our country in distant lands, but those who are fighting for a better America here at home, by teaching in underserved schools, or caring for the sick in understaffed hospitals, or promoting more sustainable energy policies in their local communities.

I believe one of the tasks of the next Administration is to ensure that this movement towards service grows and sustains itself in the years to come. We should expand AmeriCorps and grow the Peace Corps. We should encourage national service by making it part of the requirement for a new college assistance program, even as we strengthen the benefits for those whose sense of duty has already led them to serve in our military.

...

As we begin our fourth century as a nation, it is easy to take the extraordinary nature of America for granted. But it is our responsibility as Americans and as parents to instill that history in our children, both at home and at school.

It is up to us to teach them. It is up to us to teach them that even though we have faced great challenges and made our share of mistakes, we have always been able to come together and make this nation stronger, and more prosperous, and more united, and more just. It is up to us to teach them that America has been a force for good in the world, and that other nations and other people have looked to us as the last, best hope of Earth. It is up to us to teach them that it is good to give back to one's community; that it is honorable to serve in the military; that it is vital to participate in our democracy and make our voices heard.

And it is up to us to teach our children a lesson that those of us in politics too often forget: that patriotism involves not only defending this country against external threat, but also working constantly to make America a better place for future generations.

...

In the end, it may be this quality that best describes patriotism in my mind – not just a love of America in the abstract, but a very particular love for, and faith in, the American people. That is why our heart swells with pride at the sight of our flag; why we shed a tear as the lonely notes of Taps sound. For we know that the greatness of this country – its victories in war, its enormous wealth, its scientific and cultural achievements – all result from the energy and imagination of the American people; their toil, drive, struggle, restlessness, humor and quiet heroism.

That is the liberty we defend – the liberty of each of us to pursue our own dreams. That is the equality we seek – not an equality of results, but the chance of every single one of us to make it if we try. That is the community we strive to build – one in which we trust in this sometimes messy democracy of ours, one in which we continue to insist that there is nothing we cannot do when we put our mind to it, one in which we see ourselves as part of a larger story, our own fates wrapped up in the fates of those who share allegiance to America's happy and singular creed.



A poll worker raises the flag before voters arrive at the Town Hall in Woodstock, New Hampshire, on Election Day 2008.



Civil rights marchers near Montgomery, Alabama, March 1965.

A More Perfect Union

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 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.

...

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 built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans.

...

“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.”

Race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. ... 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 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 [segregation laws known as] 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.

...

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.

...

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 our 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.

...

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.



A diverse audience listens to candidate Obama speak in Wallingford, Pennsylvania.

We have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism. . . . 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.

Our Past, Future & Vision for America

*Announcement for President
Springfield, Illinois, February 10, 2007*

...
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.



Barack Obama announces his candidacy for President at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, February 10, 2007.

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.

...

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 strug-

gling 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.

...

It's time to turn the page. We've made some progress already. 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 com-

pete 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.

“That is our unyielding faith – that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it.”

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 [September 11, 2001] and confront the terrorists with everything we've got. 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. 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.

...

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 [Abraham Lincoln] 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.



A longtime admirer of Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama attends the opening ceremonies of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois.

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.



Barack Obama speaks before the Democratic National Convention, July 27, 2004.

The Audacity of Hope

*Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention
Boston, Massachusetts, July 27, 2004*

On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln, let me express my deep gratitude for the privilege of addressing this convention. Tonight is a particular honor for me because, let's face it, my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student, born and raised in a small village in Kenya. He grew up herding goats, went to school in a tin-roof shack. His father, my grandfather, was a cook, a domestic servant.

But my grandfather had larger dreams for his son. Through hard work and perseverance my father got a scholarship to study in a magical place: America, which stood as a beacon of freedom and opportunity to so many who had come

before. While studying here, my father met my mother. She was born in a town on the other side of the world, in Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs and farms through most of the Depression. The day after Pearl Harbor he signed up for duty, joined Patton's army and marched across Europe. Back home, my grandmother raised their baby and went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the GI Bill, bought a house through FHA, and moved west in search of opportunity.

And they, too, had big dreams for their daughter, a common dream, born of two continents. My parents shared not only an improbable love; they shared an abiding faith in the possibilities of this nation. They would give me an African name, Barack, or "blessed," believing that in a tolerant America your name is no barrier to success. They imagined me going to the best schools in the land, even though they weren't rich, because in a generous America you don't have to be rich to achieve your potential. They are both passed away now. Yet, I know that, on this night, they look down on me with pride.

I stand here today, grateful for the diversity of my heritage, aware that my parents' dreams live on in my precious daughters. I stand here knowing that my story is part of the larger American story, that I owe a debt to all of those who came before me, and that, in no other country on earth, is my story even possible. Tonight, we gather to affirm the greatness of

our nation, not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a very simple premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles. That we can tuck in our children at night and know they are fed and clothed and safe from harm. That we can say what we think, write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody's son. That we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution, and that our votes will be counted — or at least, most of the time.

This year, in this election, we are called to reaffirm our values and commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we are measuring up, to the legacy of our forbearers, and the promise of future generations. And fellow Americans : Democrats, Republicans, Independents — I say to you tonight: we have more work to do. More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs at the

“That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles.”

Maytag plant that’s moving to Mexico, and now are having to compete with their own children for jobs that pay seven bucks an hour. More to do for the father I met who was losing his job and choking back tears, wondering how he would pay \$4,500 a month for the drugs his son needs without the health benefits he counted on. More to do for the young woman in East St. Louis, and thousands more like her, who has the grades, has the drive, has the will, but doesn’t have the money to go to college.

Don’t get me wrong. The people I meet in small towns and big cities, in diners and office parks, they don’t expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead and they want to. Go into the collar counties around Chicago, and people will tell you they don’t want

their tax money wasted by a welfare agency or the Pentagon. Go into any inner city neighborhood, and folks will tell you that government alone can’t teach kids to learn. They know that parents have to parent, that children can’t achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets and eradicate the slander that says a black youth with a book is acting white. No, people don’t expect government to solve all their problems. But they sense, deep in their bones, that with just a change in priorities, we can make sure that every child in America has a decent shot at life, and that the doors of opportunity remain open to all. They know we can do better. And they want that choice.

...

Alongside our famous individualism, there’s another ingredient in the American saga. A belief that we are connected as one people. If there’s a child on the south side of Chicago who can’t read, that matters to me, even if it’s not my child. If there’s a senior citizen somewhere who can’t pay for her prescription and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it’s not my grandmother. If there’s an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties. It’s that fundamental belief—I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper—that makes this country work. It’s what allows us to pursue our individual dreams, yet still come together as a single American family. *E pluribus unum*. Out of many, one.

Yet even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. Well, I say to them to-night, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America —there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America. ... We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.

In the end, that's what this election is about. Do we participate in a politics of cynicism or a politics of hope? ... I'm not talking about blind optimism here - the almost willful ignorance that thinks unemployment will go away if we just don't talk about it, or the health care crisis will solve itself if we just ignore it. No, I'm talking about something more substantial. It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; the hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores; ... the hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. The audacity of hope!



Michelle Obama hugs her husband after his speech to the Democratic National Convention, July 27, 2004.



Barack Obama greets U.S. soldiers in Kuwait, July 18, 2008.

Dire Consequences, Immeasurable Sacrifices

*Remarks Against Going to War with Iraq
Chicago, Illinois, October 2, 2002*

I stand before you as someone who is not opposed to war in all circumstances. The Civil War was one of the bloodiest in history, and yet it was only through the crucible of the sword, the sacrifice of multitudes, that we could begin to perfect this union, and drive the scourge of slavery from our soil. I don't oppose all wars.

My grandfather signed up for a war the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, fought in Patton's army. He saw the dead and dying across the fields of Europe; he heard the stories of fellow troops who first entered Auschwitz and Treblinka. He

fought in the name of a larger freedom, part of that arsenal of democracy that triumphed over evil, and he did not fight in vain. I don't oppose all wars.

After September 11, after witnessing the carnage and destruction, the dust and the tears, I supported this administration's pledge to hunt down and root out those who would slaughter innocents in the name of intolerance, and I would willingly take up arms myself to prevent such tragedy from happening again. I don't oppose all wars. And I know that in this crowd today, there is no shortage of patriots, or of patriotism.

What I am opposed to is a dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics. Now let me be clear - I suffer no illusions about Saddam Hussein. He is a brutal man. A ruthless man. A man who butchers his own people to secure his own power. He's a bad guy. The world, and the Iraqi people, would be better off without him.

I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the

“What I am opposed to is a dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics.”

recruitment arm of Al Qaeda. I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars.

...

The consequences of war are dire, the sacrifices immeasurable. We may have occasion in our lifetime to once again rise up in defense of our freedom, and pay the wages of war. But we ought not—we will not—travel down that hellish path blindly. Nor should we allow those who would march off and pay the ultimate sacrifice, who would prove the full measure of devotion with their blood, to make such an awful sacrifice in vain.



President Barack Obama delivers his Inaugural Address from the West Front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, January 20, 2009.

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