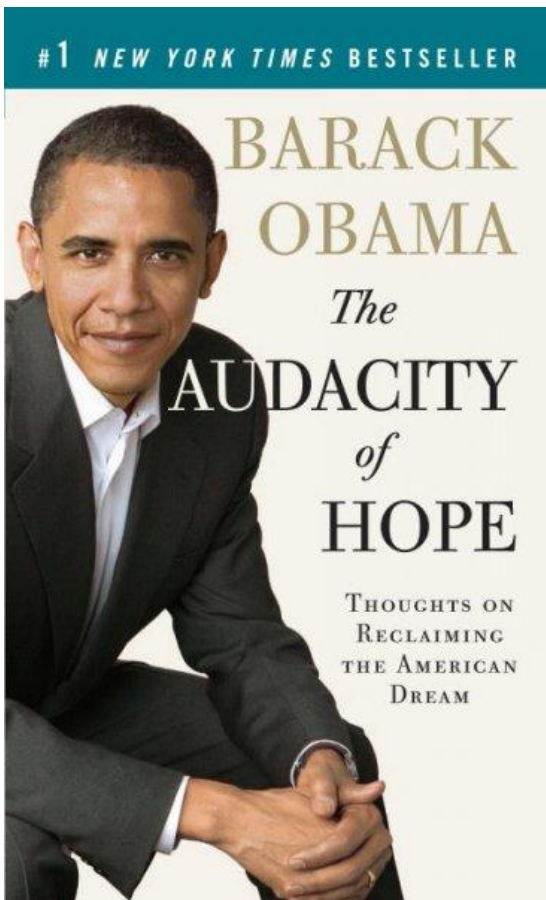


About the book...



In July, 2004, then Senator Barack Obama spoke at the Democratic National Convention. There was one phrase that he used that struck a chord when he reminded people that, despite the struggles found in our nation's history, the American people have always been guided by an optimism that the Senator called 'the audacity of hope.'

This book is Obama's second and he says that it "paralleled the work that I do every day--trying to give shape to all the issues that we face as a country, and providing my own personal stamp on them." In this book he is calling for a different brand of politics and an end to the bitter partisanship that we see in Congress and on the campaign trail. He explores the forces that can hinder even the best politicians and he writes about how to balance the demands of public service, family and religious commitment.

He also examines the growing economic insecurity of American families, the racial and religious tensions within the nation, and the transnational threats beyond our shores. He relates stories about family, friends, members of the Senate, and former President Bush and weaves them with his hopes for a political consensus. Obama suggests that only by returning to the principles that gave birth to our Constitution, can Americans repair a political process that is broken and restore to working order a government that has fallen out of touch with ordinary Americans.

About the author...

With a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas, President Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. Obama's parents separated when he was two years old and later divorced. Obama's father went to Harvard to pursue Ph. D. studies and then returned to Kenya. His mother then married Lolo Soetoro, another student from Indonesia. In 1967, the family moved to Jakarta, where Obama's half-sister Maya Soetoro-Ng was born. Obama attended schools in Jakarta, where classes were taught in the Indonesian language.

Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, grew up in Wichita, Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs during the Depression. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he signed up for service in World War II and marched across Europe in Patton's army. Dunham's mother went to work on a bomber assembly line. After the war, they studied on the G. I. Bill, bought a house through the Federal Housing Program, and moved to Hawaii. He was raised with help from his grandfather and his grandmother. His mother died of ovarian cancer in 1995.

After high school, Obama studied at Occidental College in Los Angeles for two years. He then transferred to Columbia University in New York, graduating in 1983 with a degree in political science. After working his way through college with the help of scholarships and student loans,

President Obama moved to Chicago, where he worked with a group of churches to help rebuild communities devastated by the closure of local steel plants.

He went on to attend law school, where he became the first African—American president of the Harvard Law Review. After law school, Obama returned to Chicago and practiced as a civil rights lawyer and also taught at the University of Chicago Law School. He helped organize voter registration drives during the 1992 presidential campaign. Obama met his wife, Michelle, in 1988 when he was a summer associate at a Chicago law firm. They were married in October 1992 and lived in Kenwood on Chicago's South Side with their daughters.

Obama published an autobiography in 1995: *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. Obama's advocacy work led him to run for the Illinois State Senate as a Democrat. He was elected in 1996 from the south side neighborhood of Hyde Park.

President Obama's years of public service are based around his unwavering belief in the ability to unite people around a politics of purpose. In the Illinois State Senate, he passed the first major ethics reform in 25 years, cut taxes for working families, and expanded health care for children and their parents. During these years, Obama worked with both Democrats and Republicans in drafting legislation on ethics, expanded health care services and early childhood education programs for the poor. He also created a state earned-income tax credit for the working poor. And after a number of inmates on death row were found innocent, Obama worked with law enforcement officials to require the videotaping of interrogations and confessions in all capital cases. In 2000, Obama made an unsuccessful Democratic primary run for the U. S. House of Representatives seat held by by four-term incumbent candidate Bobby Rush.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Obama was an early opponent of President George W. Bush's push to war with Iraq. Obama was still a state senator when he spoke against a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq during a rally at Chicago's Federal Plaza in October 2002. "I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars," he said. The war with Iraq began in 2003 and Obama decided to run for the U.S. Senate open seat vacated by Republican Peter Fitzgerald. In the 2004 Democratic primary, he won 52 percent of the vote, defeating multimillionaire businessman Blair Hull and Illinois Comptroller Daniel Hynes.

That summer, he was invited to deliver the keynote speech in support of John Kerry at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston. Obama emphasized the importance of unity, and made veiled jabs at the Bush administration and the diversionary use of wedge issues.

As a United States Senator, he reached across the aisle to pass groundbreaking lobbying reform, lock up the world's most dangerous weapons, and bring transparency to government by putting federal spending online. Obama was also the first to raise the threat of avian flu on the Senate floor, spoke out for victims of Hurricane Katrina, pushed for alternative energy development and championed improved veterans' benefits. He also worked with Democrat Russ Feingold of Wisconsin to eliminate gifts of travel on corporate jets by lobbyists to members of Congress.

He was elected the 44th President of the United States on November 4, 2008, and sworn in on January 20, 2009. He and his wife, Michelle, are the proud parents of two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7. They have a dog, a Portuguese Water Spaniel, named Bo.

20 Second Interview: A Few Words with Barack Obama

(<http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?ie=UTF8&docId=1000327751>)

Q: How did writing a book that you knew would be read so closely by so many compare to writing your first book, when few people knew who you were?

A: In many ways, *Dreams from My Father* was harder to write. At that point, I wasn't even sure that I could write a book. And writing the first book really was a process of self-discovery, since it touched on my family and my childhood in a much more intimate way. On the other hand, writing *The Audacity of Hope* paralleled the work that I do every day--trying to give shape to all the issues that we face as a country, and providing my own personal stamp on them.

Q: What is your writing process like? You have such a busy schedule, how did you find time to write?

A: I'm a night owl, so I usually wrote at night after my Senate day was over, and after my family was asleep--from 9:30 p.m. or so until 1 a.m. I would work off an outline--certain themes or stories that I wanted to tell--and get them down in longhand on a yellow pad. Then I'd edit while typing in what I'd written.

Q: If readers are to come away from *The Audacity of Hope* with one action item (a New Year's Resolution for 2007, perhaps?), what should it be?

A: Get involved in an issue that you're passionate about. It almost doesn't matter what it is--improving the school system, developing strategies to wean ourselves off foreign oil, expanding health care for kids. We give too much of our power away, to the professional politicians, to the lobbyists, to cynicism. And our democracy suffers as a result.

Q: You're known for being able to work with people across ideological lines. Is that possible in today's polarized Washington?

A: It is possible. There are a lot of well-meaning people in both political parties. Unfortunately, the political culture tends to emphasize conflict, the media emphasizes conflict, and the structure of our campaigns rewards the negative. I write about these obstacles in chapter 4 of my book, "Politics." When you focus on solving problems instead of scoring political points, and emphasize common sense over ideology, you'd be surprised what can be accomplished. It also helps if you're willing to give other people credit--something politicians have a hard time doing sometimes.

Q: How do you make people passionate about moderate and complex ideas?

A: I think the country recognizes that the challenges we face aren't amenable to sound-bite solutions. People are looking for serious solutions to complex problems. I don't think we need more moderation per se--I think we should be bolder in promoting universal health care, or dealing with global warming. We just need to understand that actually solving these problems won't be easy, and that whatever solutions we come up with will require consensus among groups with divergent interests. That means everybody has to listen, and everybody has to give a little. That's not easy to do.

Q: What has surprised you most about the way Washington works?

A: How little serious debate and deliberation takes place on the floor of the House or the Senate.

Q: You talk about how we have a personal responsibility to educate our children. What small thing can the average parent (or person) do to help improve the educational system in America? What small thing can make a big impact?

A: Nothing has a bigger impact than reading to children early in life. Obviously we all have a personal obligation to turn off the TV and read to our own children; but beyond that, participating in a literacy program, working with parents who themselves may have difficulty reading, helping their children with their literacy skills, can make a huge difference in a child's life.

Q: Do you ever find time to read? What kinds of books do you try to make time for? What is on your nightstand now?

A: Unfortunately, I had very little time to read while I was writing. I'm trying to make up for lost time now. My tastes are pretty eclectic. I just finished Marilynne Robinson's [Gilead](#), a wonderful book. The language just shimmers. I've started [Team of Rivals](#) by Doris Kearns Goodwin, which is a great study of Lincoln as a political strategist. I read just about anything by [Toni Morrison](#), [E.L. Doctorow](#), or [Philip Roth](#). And I've got a soft spot for [John le Carre](#).

Q: What inspires you? How do you stay motivated?

A: I'm inspired by the people I meet in my travels--hearing their stories, seeing the hardships they overcome, their fundamental optimism and decency. I'm inspired by the love people have for their children. And I'm inspired by my own children, how full they make my heart. They make me want to work to make the world a little bit better. And they make me want to be a better man.

A: It is possible. There are a lot of well-meaning people in both political parties. Unfortunately, the political culture tends to emphasize conflict, the media emphasizes conflict, and the structure of our campaigns rewards the negative. I write about these obstacles in chapter 4 of my book, "Politics." When you focus on solving problems instead of scoring political points, and emphasize common sense over ideology, you'd be surprised what can be accomplished. It also helps if you're willing to give other people credit--something politicians have a hard time doing sometimes.

Awards

Grammy Award, 2007 Best Spoken Word Album: *The audacity of Hope*

REVIEWS

Publishers Weekly

Illinois' Democratic senator illuminates the constraints of mainstream politics all too well in this sonorous manifesto. Obama (*Dreams from My Father*) castigates divisive partisanship (especially the Republican brand) and calls for a centrist politics based on broad American values. His own cautious liberalism is a model: he's skeptical of big government and of Republican tax cuts for the rich and Social Security privatization; he's pro-choice, but respectful of pro-lifers; supportive of religion, but not of imposing it. The policy result is a tepid Clintonism, featuring tax credits for the poor, a host of small-bore programs to address everything from worker retraining to teen pregnancy, and a health-care program that resembles Clinton's Hillary-care proposals. On Iraq, he floats a phased but open-ended troop withdrawal. His triangulated positions can seem conflicted: he supports free trade, while

deploring its effects on American workers (he opposed the Central American Free Trade Agreement), in the end hoping halfheartedly that more support for education, science and renewable energy will see the economy through the dilemmas of globalization. Obama writes insightfully, with vivid firsthand observations, about politics and the compromises forced on politicians by fund-raising, interest groups, the media and legislative horse-trading. Alas, his muddled, uninspiring proposals bear the stamp of those compromises.

Washington Post

Why, just two years after being elected to the Senate, has Barack Obama set so many Democratic -- and some Republican -- imaginations on fire? The Illinois Democrat is certainly a magnetic speaker who delivers original phrases in composed yet passionate tones. His life, as told in the powerful memoir *Dreams From My Father*, seems a model for the globalized future: The only child of a biracial, bicontinental union, he grew up in Hawaii and Indonesia, then went on to become a community organizer in Chicago and the first black editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. And his athletic good looks have landed him on the cover of a major fashion magazine, with a spread by Annie Leibovitz. Not since John F. Kennedy has a junior senator so quickly become a national celebrity and a possible candidate for the White House.

But what's most impressive about Obama, 45, is an intelligence that his new book displays in abundance. He articulates a mode of liberalism that sounds both highly pragmatic and deeply moral. The *Audacity of Hope* -- the title comes from a sermon by his Chicago pastor -- trumpets no unifying theme or grand theory about how the American dream will be reclaimed and by whom. Chapters bear such prosaic titles as "Values," "Opportunity" and "Faith." But in a disarmingly modest way, Obama offers a more sensible perspective on "how we might begin the process of changing our politics and our civic life" than his more seasoned Capitol Hill colleagues have provided.

Obama's knack for mixing stirring rhetoric about good and evil with practical policy ideas is rare in the modern history of U.S. politics. At times, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Kennedy and Reagan managed the feat. But none of these men wrote his own presidential speeches. Nor did Kennedy or Reagan really write the books that carry their names. In contrast, *The Audacity of Hope* is clearly Obama's own creation; the rhythms, the self-deprecating humor and the graceful transitions all resemble those in his memoir.

The sentimentality does, too. His book concludes with a vignette that could be entitled "Mr. Obama Goes to Washington." On fine evenings, the senator likes to take a run down the Mall and end up inside the Lincoln Memorial. He reads the two greatest, and perhaps shortest, speeches ever written and delivered by an American president and reflects on Martin Luther King Jr.'s "mighty cadence" that thrilled a massive crowd a century later. "My heart is filled," Obama writes, "with love for this country." The story, like the original by Frank Capra, is a bit hard to believe. (Does the senator really pore over the words of the Second Inaugural and the Gettysburg Address on every visit?) Of course, the policies Obama favors are far less audacious than Lincoln's destruction of the slave system or King's crusade to abolish the Jim Crow order that replaced it. Still, in our lowdown, dispiriting era, Obama's talent for proposing humane, sensible solutions with uplifting, elegant prose does fill one with hope. Someday, it may even help him get elected president.

New York Times

Barack Obama, the junior senator from Illinois and the Democratic Party's new rock star, is that rare politician who can actually write — and write movingly and genuinely about himself. His 1995 memoir, "Dreams From My Father," written before Mr. Obama entered politics, provided a revealing, introspective account of his efforts to trace his family's tangled roots and his attempts to come to terms with his absent father, who left home when he was still a toddler. That book did an evocative job of conjuring the author's multicultural childhood: his father was from Kenya, his mother was from Kansas, and the young Mr. Obama grew up in Hawaii and Indonesia.

And it was equally candid about his youthful struggles: pot, booze and "maybe a little blow," he wrote, could "push questions of who I was out of my mind," flatten "out the landscape of my heart, blur the edges of my memory." Most memorably, the book gave the reader a heartfelt sense of what it was like to grow up in the 1960's and 70's, straddling America's color lines: the sense of knowing two worlds and belonging to neither, the sense of having to forge an identity of his own.

Mr. Obama's new book, "The Audacity of Hope" — the phrase comes from his 2004 Democratic Convention keynote address, which made him the party's rising young hope — is much more of a political document. Portions of the volume read like outtakes from a stump speech, and the bulk of it is devoted to laying out Mr. Obama's policy positions on a host of issues, from education to health care to the war in Iraq.

But while Mr. Obama occasionally slips into the flabby platitudes favored by politicians, enough of the narrative voice in this volume is recognizably similar to the one in "Dreams From My Father," an elastic, personable voice that is capable of accommodating everything from dense discussions of foreign policy to streetwise reminiscences, incisive comments on constitutional law to New-Agey personal asides. The reader comes away with a feeling that Mr. Obama has not reinvented himself as he has moved from job to job (community organizer in Chicago, editor of *The Harvard Law Review*, professor of constitutional law, civil rights lawyer, state senator) but has instead internalized all those roles, embracing rather than shrugging off whatever contradictions they might have produced.

Reporters and politicians continually use the word authenticity to describe Mr. Obama, pointing to his ability to come across to voters as a regular person, not a prepackaged pol. And in these pages he often speaks to the reader as if he were an old friend from back in the day, salting policy recommendations with colorful asides about the absurdities of political life. He recalls a meet-and-greet encounter at the White House with George W. Bush, who warmly shook his hand, then "turned to an aide nearby, who squirted a big dollop of hand sanitizer in the president's hand." ("Good stuff," he quotes the president as saying, as he offered his guest some. "Keeps you from getting colds.") And he recounts a trip he took through Illinois with an aide, who scolded him for asking for Dijon mustard at a T.G.I. Friday's, worried the senator would come across as an elitist; the confused waitress, he adds, simply said: "We got Dijon if you want it."

Mr. Obama writes that "conservatives — and Bill Clinton — were right about welfare as it was previously structured: By detaching income from work and by making no demands on welfare recipients other than a tolerance for intrusive bureaucracy and an assurance that no man lived in the same house as the mother of his children, the old A.F.D.C. program sapped people of their initiative and eroded their self respect."

He uses the Bush administration's tough language to talk about national security in the age of terrorism ("if we have to go it alone, the American people stand ready to pay any price and bear any burden to protect our country") but adds, crucially, that "once we get beyond matters of self-defense," he is "convinced that it will almost always be in our strategic interest to act multilaterally rather than unilaterally when we use force around the world."

He assails President Bush for waging an unnecessary and misguided war in Iraq and for promoting an "Ownership Society" that "magnifies the uneven risks and rewards of today's winner-take-all economy." Yet he also takes the Democrats to task for becoming "the party of reaction": "In reaction to a war that is ill-conceived, we appear suspicious of all military action. In reaction to those who proclaim the market can cure all ills, we resist efforts to use market principles to tackle pressing problems. In reaction to religious overreach, we equate tolerance with secularism and forfeit the moral language that would help infuse our policies with a larger meaning. We lose elections and hope for the courts to foil Republican plans. We lose the courts and wait for a White House scandal."

This volume does not possess the searching candor of the author's first book. But Mr. Obama strives in these pages to ground his policy thinking in simple common sense — be it "growing the size of our armed forces to maintain reasonable rotation schedules" or reining in spending and rethinking tax policy to bring down the nation's huge deficit — while articulating these ideas in level-headed, nonpartisan prose. That, in itself, is something unusual, not only in these venomous pre-election days, but also in these increasingly polarized and polarizing times.

Literary Criticism

Title: More Than a Resume

Author(s): James H. Duffy

Publication Details: Commonweal 134.6 (Mar. 23, 2007): p24-25.

Source: **Contemporary Literary Criticism**. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 272. Detroit: Gale. From *Literature Resource Center*.

Document Type: Critical essay

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[(review date 23 March 2007) *In the following review of Barack Obama's Audacity of Hope, Duffy notes the book's meteoric popularity as Obama ascended to the Democratic Party's presidential nomination and speculates that, based on the candidate's consistency to date, "a close reading should offer insight into his coming campaign."*]

There hasn't been a book by an active politician as popular as *The Audacity of Hope* since John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1956). It has been at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list and others since its publication last October.

This appeal is not surprising. Barack Obama has attracted extraordinary attention since his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic national convention and subsequent victory in the race for a Senate seat in Illinois. This interest has of course become even more intense now that he has become a contender for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination. Time will tell if *Audacity* will help his candidacy, as *Profiles* helped Kennedy's.

Obama's personal history is by now pretty well known: born in Hawaii in 1961 to a white American mother and a black Kenyan father; raised by his mother and Indonesian step-father

in Jakarta and then in Hawaii by white grandparents originally from Kansas (family gatherings, he writes, take on "the appearance of a UN General Assembly meeting"). He went to Columbia University, then worked for a nonprofit church-related service group in Chicago before attending Harvard Law School (where he was president of the Harvard Law Review and graduated magna cum laude). He practiced civil-rights law and taught at the University of Chicago Law School, and later served three terms in the Illinois State Legislature.

The views expressed in this volume were reflected in the statement Obama made in January when he entered the presidential race, and in a number of the major speeches he has made since becoming a senator. Thus a close reading should offer insight into his coming campaign. The personal anecdotes sprinkled throughout the text also reveal, unless he is badly fooling us, a warm, intelligent, and thoughtful man, one who is patient, compassionate--and a good listener. (I could have done without the sentimental description of his home life--busy politician struggling to meet family obligations to wife and young daughters--at the end of the book.)

Obama does not put forth a programmatic, detailed "platform," or what he calls "a manifesto for action, complete with charts and graphs, timetables, and ten-point programs." He is more interested in setting the parameters within which one can discuss broad, even abstract issues such as race, economic opportunity, and the role of religious faith in the political arena. What he offers the reader are

personal reflections on those values and ideals that have led me to public life, some thoughts on the ways that our current political discourse unnecessarily divides us, and my own best assessment--based on my experience as a senator and lawyer, husband and father, Christian and skeptic--of the ways we can ground our politics in the notion of a common good.

He delivers on this promise. His prose is accessible, precise, and clear--free of the usual and tiresome political cliches and leavened by a quiet sense of humor. It is refreshing to those of us inured to such impurities as "the axis of evil" and "the death tax." He reminds me of his fellow Chicagoan, Adlai Stevenson.

Obama's easy eloquence presents a problem for the reviewer. One simply has to quote him; paraphrases just don't do him justice. So here, in his own words, is how he describes the present political climate:

At the core of the American experience are a set of ideals that continue to stir our collective conscience; a common set of values that bind us together despite our differences. ... They remain alive in the hearts and minds of most Americans--and can inspire us to pride, duty, and sacrifice. I realize the risks of talking this way. In an era of globalization and dizzying technological change, cutthroat politics and unremitting cultural wars, we don't even seem to possess a shared language with which to discuss our ideals, much less the tools to arrive at some rough consensus about how, as a nation, we might work together to bring these ideals about. ... You don't need a poll to know that the vast majority of Americans ... are weary of the dead zone that politics has become, in which narrow interests vie for advantage and ideological minorities seek to impose their own versions of absolute truth. ... Religious or secular, black, white, or brown, we sense--correctly--that the nation's most significant challenges are being ignored, and that if we don't change course soon, we may be the first generation in a very long time that leaves behind a weaker and more fractured America than the one we inherited.

An example of the senator's approach is his treatment of the broad subject of "opportunity," under which he groups a set of issues that, taken individually, would provoke heated debate--trade policy for example, with free-traders on one side and protectionists on the other. Obama widens the focus, discussing not only the economic benefits of "globalization" but its effects on ordinary workers in businesses that are "automated, downsized, outsourced, and offshored." Asserting that he doesn't "pretend to have all the answers," he nonetheless touches on a broad range of policies that would enhance "opportunity," ranging from broad reforms in the educational system and energy independence down to the makeup of the National Labor Relations Board. Not bound by the usual shibboleths, he argues that in the end we should be "guided by what works."

It is refreshing to read a Democratic politician unafraid to invoke enthusiastically the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Obama has high praise for the New Deal--a social compact that was "a bargain between government, business, and workers that resulted in widespread prosperity and economic security for more than fifty years." He advocates a similar compact today, appropriately modified to reflect twenty-first-century circumstances, with government playing a positive role in supporting the market economy, rather than being denied participation in an every-man-for-himself "Ownership Society."

Obama's observations on "faith" should be of particular interest to Catholic readers. He writes movingly of his own religious development from doubter (following parental example) to membership in the United Church of Christ, to which he was drawn in part by "the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change." He terms it a "mistake" to "fail to acknowledge the power of faith in the lives of the American people." Problems of "poverty and racism, the uninsured and the unemployed" require not only technical economic solutions but "changes in hearts and minds. ... We need to take faith seriously not simply to block the Religious Right but to engage all persons of faith in the larger project of American renewal."

Obama's view of religion in the public square would, I believe, have been approved by John Courtney Murray. For example, Obama writes:

What our deliberative, pluralistic democracy does demand is that the religiously motivated translate their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific, values. It requires that their proposals must be subject to argument and amenable to reason. If I am opposed to abortion for religious reasons and seek to pass a law banning the practice, I cannot simply point to the teachings of my church or invoke God's will and expect that argument to carry the day. If I want others to listen to me, then I have to explain why abortion violates some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths, including those with no faith at all.

The discussion of foreign policy in *Audacity* was recently dismissed by Jeffrey Goldberg in the *New Yorker*. He condescendingly wrote that "it reads like a tentative primer on the history of American foreign policy." It is indeed more than a little didactic, but with its enunciation of basic principles, it should be required reading for President George W. Bush and his colleagues. And anyone who could write the following before the Iraq war (in an October 2002 speech quoted in the text) deserves to be listened to:

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 the best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of Al Qaeda.

Those who campaign against Senator Obama on the basis of his "inexperience" may have a little trouble explaining away that quote.

At a minimum, Barack Obama has written a thought-provoking book on the state of American politics. We will see whether it will supply the framework for a successful presidential campaign in the next few months. Only then will we know whether the irreverent jingle going around Washington--"Don't tell Mama, I'm for Obama"--has traction.

Source Citation

Duffy, James H. "More Than a Resume." *Commonweal* 134.6 (23 Mar. 2007): 24-25. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. Vol. 272. Detroit: Gale, 2009. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. 19 July 2011.

Discussion questions

1. A New Yorker article asserts, "We have a real live human being running for president." The Audacity of Hope is a political and personal reflection that provides insights into Barack's character. After reading the book, what personal characteristics would you ascribe to him?
2. Who are his political heroes? How do these people serve to underscore the virtues he is espousing?
3. How is Barack's vision for politics different? Is it possible? In addition to the White House, what else must change for this to be realized?
4. What aspects of the book would be challenging to a conservative audience? To a progressive audience? How does this support Barack's new vision?
5. Barack describes what he calls the "empathy deficit" in our current society. How do you see this phenomenon manifesting itself in today's world? In your community? In yourself? Which perspectives are most challenging to view empathetically? What are the limitations of empathy?
6. Barack examines the idea of fixed narratives set by the media. What is the current narrative/stereotype of Democrats and Republicans? In campaigns? In office? How might this be changed? What productive results might a change produce?
7. Barack states, "It is a truism that we Americans are a religious people." Do you agree with this assertion? How is Barack defining faith? How might faith be reframed in the current political context?
8. Of the issues that Barack addresses--health care, immigration, foreign policy--which are most important to you? To the population at large?
9. Critics have accused Barack of having more style than substance. In what ways does the book serve to refute those claims?

10. Thomas L. Lieberman writes, "...many Americans have projected onto him their hunger for community." How does Barack fulfill this need?

11. Barack says at the end of the book, "My heart is filled with love for this country." How is this sentiment evidenced throughout the book? Do you share this feeling? To what degree?

Multimedia

An interview with Barack Obama at a book signing prior to his presidential campaign available through National Public Radio "Obama Shares Political Vision in 'Audacity of Hope'"

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6330677>

Barack Obama speaking about "The Audacity of Hope" at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum available on YouTube "Book TV: Sen. Barack Obama 'The Audacity of Hope'" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQC_BswzYUY

Read-alikes

Alter, Jonathan, *The Defining Moment: FDR's hundred days and the triumph of hope*, (2006)

Clinton, Hillary, *Living History*, (2003)

Goodwin, Doris Kearns, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, (2005)

Obama, Barack, *Dream From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, (2004)

Todd, Chuck, *How Barack Obama Won: A State-by-State Guide to the historic 2008 presidential election*, (2009)

Webb, Jim, *A Time to Fight: Reclaiming a Fair and Just America*, (2008)

The Choice, [DVD], (2008)

Barack Obama, [DVD], (2008)

Activity

After discussing the book have each person present discuss who their favorite American president was and why.



Ann Arbor District Library