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## **Barack Obama's Books**

There are about 6.75 billion (6,750,000,000) people on earth and Barack Obama is now arguably the most powerful of them. His decisions affect them all in one way or another. Thousands of millions of us are hoping he can bring about changes in the world order. With these hopes go fears: that the old ways may be too entrenched, that the social, political and cultural environment in which he operates may be too hard to change.

Obama has written two books – *Dreams of My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006). This paper considers these texts to see what and how Obama has written about himself, his aspirations and political philosophy. The paper does not go beyond the 250,000 words of the two texts to speculate about what may happen now that Obama is in office; but by a close reading of his words, the paper opens up discussion of what deal his writing makes with the reader. What assumptions does Obama make about the readers of his books and what does he expect of them? What distance does he maintain between himself and his readers? Conversely, what is he willing to share? What grace notes, flourishes and stylistic gestures are displayed in his writing and what can be learned from them? What can we safely say we know about him from a close reading of his books?

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### **Self Criticism**

page	quotation
4	I spent more time at home, and watched my daughters grow., and properly cherished my wife, and thought about my long-term financial obligations. I exercised , and read novels, and came to appreciate how the earth rotated around the sun and the seasons came and went without any particular exertions on my part.
20	I found myself casting my first vote, along with seventy-three of the seventy-four others voting that day, to install George W. Bush for a second term as president of the United States.
30	Eventually, my rejection of authority spilled into self-indulgence and self-destructiveness, and by the time I enrolled in college, i'd begun to see how any challenge to convention harboured within it the possibility of its own excesses and its own orthodoxy.
67	With certain talent for rhetoric, as well as an absolute certainty about the merits of my own views, I found that I could generally win these arguments, in the narrow sense of leaving my grandfather flustered, angry, and sounding unreasonable. But at some point, perhaps in my senior years, such victories started to feel less satisfying.
105	I still burn, for example, with the thought of my one loss in politics, a drubbing in 2000 at the hands of incumbent Democratic Congressman Bobby Rush. It was a race in which everything that could go wrong did go wrong, in which my own mistakes were compounded by tragedy and farce. Two weeks after announcing my candidacy, with a few thousand dollars raised, I commissioned my first poll and discovered that Mr.Rush's name recognition stood at about 90 percent, while mine stood at 11 percent. His approval rating hovered around 70 percent- mine at 8.

134	I find comfort in the fact that the longer I'm in politics the less nourishing popularity becomes, that a striving for power and rank and fame seems to betray a poverty of ambition, and that I am answerable mainly to the steady gaze of my own conscience.
361	That's what satisfies me now, I think-being useful to my family and the people who elected me, leaving behind a legacy that will make our children's lives more hopeful than our own. Sometimes, working in Washington, I feel I am meeting that goal. At other times, it seems as if the goal recedes from me, and all the activity I engage in-the hearings and speeches and press conferences and position papers-are an exercise in vanity, useful to no one.

**Rhetoric, style, wit, humour, high-flying words, lies, intelligence, range and sweep of knowledge**

Rhetoric	96	How can I, with the blood of Africa coursing through my veins, choose sides in such a dispute? I can't. I love America too much, am too invested in what this country has become, too committed to its institutions, its beauty, and even its ugliness, to focus entirely on the circumstances of its birth. But neither can I brush aside the magnitude of the injustice done, or erase the ghosts of generations past, or ignore the open wounds, the aching spirit, that ails this country still.
	322	I wonder, sometimes, whether men and women in fact are capable of learning from history – whether we progress from one stage to the next in an upward course or whether we just ride the cycles of boom and bust, war and peace, ascent and decline. On through Israel and the West Bank, meeting with officials from both sides, mapping in my own mind the site of so much strife. I talked to Jews who'd lost parents in the Holocaust and brothers in suicide bombings; I heard Palestinians talk of the indignities of checkpoints and reminisce about the land they had lost. I flew by helicopter across the line separating the two peoples and found myself unable to distinguish Jewish towns from Arab towns, all of them like fragile outposts against the green stony hills. From the promenade above Jerusalem, I looked down at the Old City, the Dome of the Rock, the Western Wall, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, considered the two thousand years of war and rumours of war that this small plot of land had come to represent, and pondered the possible futility of believing that this conflict might somehow end in our time, or that America, for all its power, might have any lasting say over the course of the world. I don't linger on such thoughts, though-they are the thoughts of an old man
Witty, cool, urbane	38	In fact, I know very few elected Democrats who neatly fit the liberal caricature; the last I checked, John Kerry believes in maintaining the superiority of the U.S. military, Hilary Clinton believes in the virtues of capitalism, and just about every member of the Congressional Black Caucus believes Jesus Christ dies for his or her sins.

	210	Moreover, that self-assuredness disabled in him the instincts for self-censorship that allow most people to navigate the world without getting into constant fist fights. Mr. Keyes said whatever popped into his mind, and with dogged logic would follow over a cliff just about any idea that came to him.
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	320	For years, conservatives in the United States have been making political hay over problems at the UN: the hypocrisy of resolutions singling out Israel for condemnation, the Kafkaesque election of nations like Zimbabwe and Libya to the UN Commission on Human Rights, and most recently the kickbacks that plagued the oil-for-food programme
	335	Beyond that, I have no interest in seeing the president, Congress, or government bureaucracy regulating what goes on in America's bedrooms.
intelligence	32	I suppose it also highlights the fact that the flash-point issues of the sixties were never fully resolved. The fury of the counter-culture may have dissipated into consumerism, lifestyle choices, and musical preferences rather than political commitments, but the problems of race, war, poverty, and relations between the sexes did not go away.
	35	And they understood the threat Clinton posed to their vision of a long-term conservative majority, which helps explain the vehemence with which they went after him. It also explains why they invested so much time attacking Clinton's morality, for if Clinton's policies were hardly radical, his biography (the draft letter saga, the marijuana puffing, the Ivy League intellectualism, the professional wife who didn't bake cookies, and most of all the sex) proved perfect grist for the conservative base. With enough repetition, a looseness with the facts, and the ultimately undeniable evidence of the President's own personal lapses, Clinton could be made to embody the very traits of sixties liberalism that had helped spur the conservative movement in the first place.
	36	This telling of the story is too neat, I know
	39	Mainly, though, the Democratic Party has become the party of reaction. In reaction to 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 over-reach, 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 courts and wait for a White House scandal.
	51	Identities are scrambling, and then cohering in new ways. Beliefs keep slipping through the noose of predictability. facile expectations and simple explanations are being constantly upended. Spend time actually talking to Americans, and you discover that most evangelicals are more tolerant than the media would have us believe, most secularists more spiritual, Most rich people want the poor to succeed, and most of the poor are both more self-critical and hold higher aspirations than the popular culture allows.

	124	The spin works, though, precisely because the media itself is hospitable to spin. Every reporter in Washington is working under pressures imposed by editors and producers, who in turn are answering to publishers or network executives, who in turn are poring over last week's ratings or last year's circulation figures and trying to survive the growing preference for PlayStation and reality TV. To make the deadline, to maintain market share and feed the cable news beast, reporters start to move in packs, working off the same news releases, the same set pieces, the same stock figures. Meanwhile, for busy therefore casual news consumers, a well-worn narrative is not entirely unwelcome. It makes few demands on our thought or time; its quick and easy to digest. Accepting spin is easier on everybody.
	222	For many practicing Christians, the same inability to compromise may apply to gay marriage. I find such position trouble-some, particularly in a society in which Christian men and women have been know to engage in adultery or other violations of their faith without civil penalty. All too often I have sat in a church and heard a pastor use gay bashing as a cheap parlor trick – “It was Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve, he will shout , usually when the sermon is not going so well. I believe that American society can choose to carve out a special place for the union of a man and a woman as the unit of child rearing most common to every culture. I am not willing to have the state deny American citizens a civil union that confers equivalent rights on such basic matters as hospital visitation or health insurance coverage simply because the people they love are of the same sex – nor am I willing to accept a reading of the Bible that considers an obscure line in Romans to be more defining of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount.
	316f	But there are few examples in history in which the freedom men and women crave is delivered through outside intervention. In almost every successful movement of the last century, from Gandhi's campaign against British rule to the Solidarity movement in Poland to the antiapartheid movement in South Africa, democracy was the result of a local awakening.
	31	Eventually, my rejection of authority spilled into self-indulgence and self-destructiveness, and by the time I enrolled in college, I'd begun to see how any challenge to convention harboured within it the possibility of its own excesses and its own orthodoxy.
	92	What the framework of our Constitution can do is organize the way by which we argue about our future. All of its elaborate machinery – its separation of powers and checks and balances and federalist principles and Bill of Rights – are designed to force us into a conversation, a “deliberative democracy” in which all citizens are required to engage in a process of testing their ideas against an external reality, persuading others of their point of view, and building shifting alliances of consent.

	295	And now, three years later – as the number of American deaths passed two thousand and the number of wounded passes sixteen thousand; after \$250 billion in direct spending and hundreds of billions more in future years to pay off the resulting debt and care for the disabled veterans; after two Iraqi national elections, one Iraqi constitutional referendum, and tens of thousands of Iraqi deaths; after watching anti-American sentiment rise to record levels around the world and Afghanistan begin to slip back into chaos – I was flying into Baghdad as a member of the Senate, partially responsible for trying to figure out just what to do with this mess.
	198f	Our President routinely remarks on how Christ changed his heart, and football players point to the heavens after every touchdown, as if God were calling plays from the celestial sidelines.
phrases, punch lines	15	The speaker will finish. A blue uniformed page will silently gather the statement for the official record. Another senator may enter as the first one departs, and she will stand at her desk, seek recognition, and deliver her statement, repeating the ritual. “In the world’s greatest deliberative body, no one is listening.
	269	And when they are tested in that way, I hope Cristina and my daughters will have all read about the history of this country, and will recognise they have been given something precious. America is big enough to accommodate all their dreams.
	16	With the rest of the public, I had watched campaign culture metastasize throughout the body politic, as an entire industry of insult – both perpetual and somehow profitable – emerged to dominate cable television, talk radio, and the New York Times best-seller list.
	60	I am convinced – although I have no statistical evidence to back it up – that antitax, antigovernment, antiunion sentiments from anytime people find themselves standing in line at a government office with only one window open and three or four workers chatting among themselves in full view.
	68	After all, if they are like us, then their struggles are our own, If we fail to help, we diminish ourselves.
	210	There was no doubt that the man could talk. At the drop of a hat Mr.Keyes could deliver a grammatically flawless disquisition on virtually any topic. On the stump, he could wind himself up into a fiery intensity, his body rocking, his brow running with sweat, his fingers jabbing the air, his high-pitched voice trembling with emotion as he called the faithful to do battle against the forces of evil. Unfortunately for him, neither his intellect nor his eloquence could overcome certain defects as a candidate.  Unlike most politicians, for example, Mr.Keyes made no effort to conceal what he clearly considered to be his moral and intellectual superiority.
	8	Most of us are wise to the ways of admen, pollsters, speechwriters, and pundits. We know how high-flying words can be deployed in the service of cynical aims, and how the noblest sentiments can be subverted in the name of power, expedience, greed, or intolerance.

	17	The voters wanted something different; that they were tired of distortion, name-calling, and sound-bite solutions to complicated problems; that if I could reach those voters directly, frame the issues as I felt them , explain the choices in as truthful a fashion as I knew how, then the people’s instincts for fair play and common sense would bring them around.
	91	Some historians and legal theorists take the argument against strict construction one step further. They conclude that the Constitution itself was largely a happy accident, a document cobbled together not as the result of principle but as the result of power and passion; that we can never hope to discern the Founders’ “original intentions” since the intentions of Jefferson were never those of Hamilton, and those of Hamilton differed greatly from those of Adams ; that because the “rules” of the Constitution were contingent on time and place and the ambition of the men who drafted them, our interpretation of the rules will necessarily reflect the same contingency, the same raw competition, the same imperatives – cloaked in the high-minded phrasing – of those factions that ultimately prevail.
	41	We paint our faces red or blue and cheer our side and boo their side, and if it takes a late hit or cheap shot to beat the other team, so be it, for winning is all that matters. But I don’t think so. They are out there, I think to myself, those ordinary citizens who have grown up in the midst of all the political and cultural battles, but who have found a way – in their own lives, at least – to make peace with their neighbours, and themselves
	289	The more I studied nuclear arms policy, the more I found Star Wars to be ill conceived; the chasm between Reagan’s soaring rhetoric and the tawdry Iran-Contra deal left me speechless.

**Good and Evil, fundamentalism, absolute truth, scepticism, Christian, religion, cynicism, ethics and values**

ethics, values, ideals	8	Not only did my encounters with voters confirm the fundamental decency of the American people, they also reminded me that 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; a running thread of hope that makes our improbable experiment in democracy work.
	9	Whether we’re from red states or blue states, we feel in our gut the lack of honesty, rigor, and common sense in our policy debates, and dislike what appears to be a continuous menu of false or cramped choices. 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 more fractured America than the one we inherited. Perhaps more than any other time in our recent history, we need a new kind of politics, one that can excavate and build upon those shared understandings that pull us together as Americans.
	11	Our values and spiritual life matter at least as much as our GDP.
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	29	The civil rights movement, in particular, inspired her reverence; whenever the opportunity presented itself, she would drill in to me the values that she saw there: tolerance, equality, standing up for the disadvantaged.
	52	The broader question of shared values – the standards and principles that the majority of Americans deem important in their lives, and in the life of the country – should be the heart of our politics, the cornerstone of any meaningful debate about budgets and projects, regulations and policies.
	54	All those homespun virtues that Benjamin Franklin first popularized in Poor Richard’s Almanack and that have continued to inspire our allegiance through successive generations. The values of self-reliance and self-improvement and risk taking. The values of drive, discipline, temperance, and hard work. The values of thrift and personal responsibility
	62	What accounts for the change in CEO pay is not any market imperative. It’s cultural. At a time when average workers are experiencing little or no income growth, many of America’s CEOs have lost any sense of shame about grabbing whatever their pliant, handpicked corporate boards will allow. Americans understand the damage such an ethic of greed has on our collective lives; in a recent survey, they ranked corruption in government and business, and greed and materialism, as two of the three most important moral challenges facing the nation (“raising kids with the right values” ranked first). Conservatives may be right when they argue that the government should not try to determine executive pay packages. But conservatives should at least be willing to speak out against unseemly behavior in corporate boardrooms with the same moral force, the same sense of out-rage, that they direct against dirty rap lyrics.
	69	And yet a part of us knows better. we hang on to our values, even if they seem at times tarnished and worn; even if, as a nation and in our own lives, we have betrayed them more often than we care to remember. What else is there to guide us? Those values are our inheritance, what makes us who we are as a people. And although we recognize that they are subject to challenge, can be poled and prodded and debunked and turned inside out by intellectuals and cultural critics, they have proven to be both surprisingly durable and surprisingly constant across classes, and races, and faiths, and generations. We can make claims on their behalf, so long as we understand that our values must be tested against fact and experience, so long as we recall that they demand deeds and not just words. To do otherwise would be to relinquish our best selves.

	205	But it was my mother’s fundamental faith – in the goodness of people and in the ultimate value of this brief life we’ve each been given – that channelled those ambitions. It was in search of confirmation of her values that I studied political philosophy, looking for both a language and systems of action that could help build community and make justice real. And it was in search of some practical application of those values that I accepted work after college as a community organizer for a group of churches in Chicago that were trying to cope with joblessness, drugs, and hopelessness in their midst.
	346	It was women, then, who provided the ballast in my life – my grandmother, whose dogged practicality kept the family afloat, and my mother whose love and clarity of spirit kept my sister’s and my world centered. Because of them I never wanted for anything important. From them I would absorb the values that guide me to this day.
	45	The President ‘s eyes became fixed; his voice took on the agitated, rapid tone of someone neither accustomed to nor welcoming interruption; his easy affability was replaced by an almost messianic certainty. As I watched my mostly Republican Senate colleagues hang on to his every word, I was reminded of the dangerous isolation that power can bring, and appreciated the founders’ wisdom in designing a system to keep power in check.
	93	It’s not just absolute power that the Founders sought to prevent. Implicit in its structure, in the very idea of ordered liberty, was a rejection of absolute truth, the infallibility of any idea or ideology or theology or “ism”, any tyrannical consistency that might lock future generations in to a single, unalterable course, or drive both majorities and minorities into the cruelties of the Inquisition, the pogrom, the gulag, or the jilhad.
	97	I can’t summarily dismiss those possessed of similar certainty today – the antiabortion activist who raids a laboratory – no matter how deeply I disagree with their views. I am robbed even of the certainty of uncertainty – for sometimes absolute truth may well be absolute.
	66	Perhaps this explains why we long for that most elusive quality in our leaders – the quality of authenticity, of being who you say you are, of possessing a truthfulness that goes beyond words.
Scepticism, religion, Christianity, cynicism	40	
	356	It wasn’t just the struggles of these men and women that had me moved. Rather, it was their determination, their self-reliance, a relentless optimism in the face of hardship. It brought to mind a phrase that my pastor, Rev.Jerimiah A.Wright Jr., had once used in a sermon.

	100	We sat there for a moment, considering the gap of years and experience between us. “We all have regrets, Senator,” I said finally. “We just ask that in the end, God’s grace shines upon us”.
	206	The Christians with whom I worked recognized themselves in me; they saw that I knew their Book and shared their values and sang their songs. But they sensed that a part of me remained removed, detached, an observer among them.
	219	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.
	220	The story of Abraham and Isaac offers a simple but powerful example. According to the Bible, Abraham is ordered by God to offer up his” only son, Isaac, whom you love” as a burnt offering. Without argument, Abraham takes Isaac to the mountain top, binds him to an altar, and raises his knife, prepared to act as God had commanded.

#### 4. Politics, negative TV, Division in politics, division, money in politics

	19	They told me about their fallen leader, Tom Daschle of South Dakota, who had seen millions of dollars worth of negative ads rain down on his head – full page newspaper ads and television spots informing his neighbours day after day that he supported baby-killing and men in wedding gowns.
	24	And yet publicly it’s difficult to find much soul-searching or introspection on either side of the divide, or even the slightest admission of responsibility for the gridlock. What we hear instead, not only in campaigns but on editorial pages, on bookstands, or in the ever-expanding blog universe, are deflections of criticism and assignments of blame. Depending on your tastes, our condition is the natural result of radical conservatism or perverse liberalism, Tom DeLay or Nancy Pelosi, big oil greedy trial lawyers, religious zealots or gay activists, Fox News or the New York Times. How well these stories are told, the subtlety of the arguments and the quality of the evidence, will vary by author, and I won’t deny my preference for the story the Democrats tell, nor my belief that arguments of liberals are more often grounded in reason and fact. In distilled form, though, the explanations of both the right and the left have become mirror images of each other. They are stories of conspiracy, of America being hijacked by an evil cabal. Like all good conspiracy theories both tales contain just enough truth to satisfy those predisposed to believe in them, without admitting any contradictions that might shake up those assumptions. Their purpose is not to persuade the other side but to keep their bases agitated and assured of the rightness of their respective causes – and lure just enough new adherents to beat the other side in to submission.

	309	<p>Once we got beyond matters of self-defence, though, i'm convinced that it will almost always be in our strategic interest to act multilaterally rather than unilaterally when we use force around the world.</p> <p>We can't win converts to those rules if we act as if they apply to everyone but us. When the world's sole superpower willingly restrains its power and abides by internationally agreed upon standards of conduct, it sends a message that these are rules worth following, and robs terrorists and dictators of the argument that these rules are simply tools of American imperialism.</p>
negative TV	121	<p>Simple math tells the tale. In the thirty-nine town hall meetings I held during my first year in office, turnout at each meeting averaged four to five hundred people, which means that I was able to meet with maybe fifteen to twenty thousand people. Should I sustain this pace for the remainder of my term, I will have had direct, personal contact with maybe ninety-five to one hundred thousand of my constituents by the time Election Day rolls around. In contrast, a three-minute story on the lower-rated local news broadcast in the Chicago media market may reach two hundred thousand people. In other words, I like every politician at the federal level – am almost entirely dependent on the media to reach my constituents. It is the filter through which my votes are interpreted, my statements analyzed, my beliefs examined. For the broad public at least, I am who the media says I am. I say what they say I say. I become who they say I have become.</p>
Money in politics	109	<p>As for most politicians, money isn't about getting rich. In the Senate, at least, most members are already rich. It's about maintaining status and power; it's about scaring off challengers and fighting off the fear. Money can't guarantee victory – it can't buy passion, charisma, or the ability to tell a story. But without money the television ads that consume all the money, you are pretty much guaranteed to lose.</p>
	113	<p>So for me, at least, the lack of wealth or significant corporate support wasn't a barrier to victory. Still, I can't assume that the money chase didn't alter me in some ways. Certainly it eliminated any sense of shame I once had in asking strangers for large sums of money. By the end of the campaign, the banter and small talk that had once accompanied my solicitation calls were eliminated. I cut to the chase and tried not to take no for an answer.</p>

## 5. Black

10	I am a prisoner of my own biography: I can't help but view the American experience through the lens of a black man of mixed heritage, forever mindful of how
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	generations of people who looked like me were subjugated and stigmatized, and the subtle and not so subtle ways that race and class continue to shape our lives.
95ff	<p>The declaration of Independence may have been, in the words of historian Joseph Ellis, “a transformative moment in world history, when all laws and human relationships dependent on coercion would be swept away forever.” But the spirit of liberty didn’t extend, in the minds of the Founders, to the slaves who worked their fields, made their beds, and nursed their children.</p> <p>The Constitution’s exquisite machinery would secure the right of citizens, those deemed members of America’s political community. But it proved no protection to those outside the constitutional circle – the Native American who treaties proved worthless before the court of the conqueror, or the black man Dred Scott, who would walk into the Supreme Court a free man and leave a slave.</p>

**6. Honesty, America and Americans, he’s one of us, ordinary folk, listener, civility, collective**

	64	Partly, I think, it’s because those of us in public life have become so scripted, and the gestures that candidates use to signify their values have become so standardized (a stop at a black church, the hunting trip, the visit to a NASCAR track, the reading in the kindergarten classroom) that it becomes harder and harder for the public to distinguish between honest sentiment and political stagecraft.
America and Americans	53	“We hold these truths to be self –evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”
	55	If we Americans are individualistic at heart, if we instinctively chafe against a past of tribal allegiances, traditions, customs, and castes, it would be a mistake to assume that this is all we are. Our individualism has always been bound by a set of communal values, the glue upon every healthy society depends. We value imperatives of family implies. We value community, the neighbourliness that expresses itself through raising the barn or coaching the soccer team. We value patriotism and the obligations of citizenship, a sense of duty and sacrifice on behalf of our nation. We value faith in something bigger than ourselves, whether that something expresses itself in formal religion or ethical precepts. And we value the constellation of behaviors that express our mutual regard for one another: honesty, fairness, humility, kindness, courtesy, and compassion.

	231	<p>In a sense I have no choice but to believe in this vision of America. As a child of a black man and a white woman, someone who was born in the racial melting pot of Hawaii, with a sister who's half Indonesian but who's usually mistaken for Mexican or Puerto Rican, and a brother-in-law and niece of Chinese descent, with some blood relatives who resemble Margaret Thatcher and others who could pass for Bernie Mac, so that family get-togethers over Christmas take on the appearance of a UN General Assembly meeting, I've never had the option of restricting my loyalties on the basis of race, or measuring worth on the basis of tribe.</p>
	361f	<p>And in that place, I think about America and those who built it. This nation's founders, who somehow rose above petty ambitions and narrow calculations to imagine a nation unfurling across a continent. And those like Lincoln and King, who ultimately laid down their lives in the service of perfecting an imperfect union. And all the faceless, nameless men and women, slaves and soldiers and tailors and butchers, constructing lives for themselves and their children and grandchildren, brick by brick, rail by rail, calloused hand by calloused hand, to fill in the landscape of our collective dreams.</p> <p>It is that process I wish to be part of. My heart is filled with love for this country.</p>
He's one of us	359	<p>Standing behind the black curtain, listening to Dick Durbin introduce me, I thought about my mother and father and grandfather and what it might have been like for them to be in the audience. I thought about my grandmother watching the convention on TV because her back was too deteriorated for her to travel. I thought about all the volunteers and supporters back in Illinois who had worked so hard on my behalf.</p> <p>Lord, let me tell their stories right, I said to myself. Then I walked on stage.</p>
collective	37f	<p>There's the religious absolutism of the Christian right, a movement that gained traction on the undeniably difficult issue of abortion, but which soon flowered in to something much broader; a movement that insists not only that Christianity is America's dominant faith, but that a particular, fundamentalist brand of that faith should drive public policy, overriding any alternative source of understanding, whether the writings of liberal theologians, the findings of the National Academy of Sciences, or the words of Thomas Jefferson.</p>

	2	I understood the skepticism, but that there was- and always had been – another tradition to politics, a tradition that stretched from days of the country’s founding to the glory of the civil rights movement, a tradition based on the simple idea that we have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is greater than what drives us apart, and that if enough people believe in the truth that proposition and act on it, then we might not solve every problem, but we can get something meaningful done.
	25	A government that truly represents these Americans – that truly serves these Americans –will require a different kind of politics. That politics will have to be constructed from the best of our traditions and will have to account for the darker aspects of our past. We will need to understand just how we got to this place, this land of warring factions and tribal hatreds. And we will need to remind ourselves, despite all our differences, just how much we share; common hopes, common dreams, a bond that will not break.