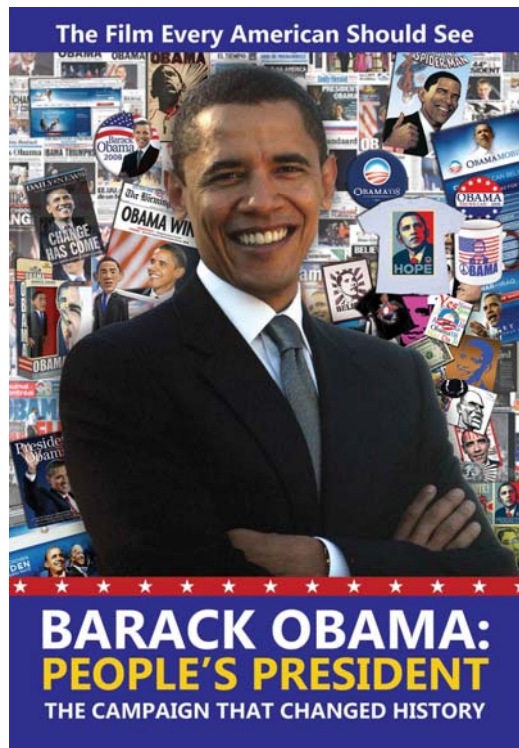




INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

BARACK OBAMA: PEOPLE'S PRESIDENT



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Interview with Jonathan Alter, Newsweek

12.29.08

0:16

D: How did he do it? Barack Obama came from nowhere now he's President of the United States. JA: He did it because in his bones and in his own resume he's an organizer and a planner and he thinks long and hard a few steps ahead of where most other people would. And so I think you could even argue he's a genius organizer. I don't think he's a genius all together, but when it comes to this, just take one example that has not been commented on at all either by Obama or people writing about him.

0:57

JA: In 1992 he ran a voter registration drive the registered more than 100,000 African Americans in Chicago which help elect the first African American to the Senate from Illinois, Carolyn Mosby Braun and help Bill Clinton carry Illinois that year. I'm not sure why they didn't want to talk about it, but maybe because it had some association to ACORN and because they were all black. But that was an astonishing feat of organization. So he managed Bill Clinton basically did it.....

1:34

JA: Barack Obama basically did it because he a genius organizer, developed himself into a highly inspirational speaker and motivator and because he had some good fortune. So organization, motivation and luck.

1:54

D: What about the grassroots campaign? I don't think we seen anything like that ever really, the number of people involved and the degree in a way of it being decentralized. People were out there doing their own thing, but doing it under the guidance of the campaign.

2:10

JA: You had a perfect meeting in 2008 of man and moment and technology. A lot of changes take place in life because technology ripens at a particular time. In the same that Roosevelt understood the potential of radio, Barack Obama understood the potential of the internet and social networking to create a much more decentralized and yet potent organization. And he also trusted younger people with great responsibility. He trusted his own ability to convey the kind of person that he wanted what they call and No Drama Obama person who is not on any kind of ego trip. That filtered all the way down through the organization so if you had empire builders and ego trippers they were quickly flushed out. And then he also, starting with Camp Obama in 2007, where they would train organizers they created an, almost an Amway type of approach were you went to try to convince someone else to either work for Obama or support Obama. You bore witness; you tell your story about how you had come to Obama and why he can be meaningful in this other person's life as well. So they used....Let me take the Amway comparison back. What they did was use almost a quozzy religious, but not in a scary way approach of baring witness to why Obama was meaningful. And so when they would have meetings or when you'd go to the door or when you would create what they called your MyB.O. page online, you would be explaining what it meant to you personally and that would then unleash interest on the part of other people.

4:25

D: There was a lot of focus on neighbor-to-neighbor activity. Phone banks, they made a million phone calls in Iowa alone.

4:32

JA: One of the things that is fascinating about their phone banks is that they did no in-state phone bank work at all in the general election. They wanted all of their people in state, who lived in state to do door to door canvassing and the phone banking was all outsourced. So for instance California residence who were not particularly relevant because everybody knew it was a blue state, they made millions of telephone calls in the fall of 2008. They have these massive phone bank, banking operations, most of which could be done from home and they had all sort of new technological ways of making more calls per hour then under the old system. They

were extraordinarily well organized the way they would tee up their lists and keep very careful lists of who had been contacted.

5:28

D: Where they getting instructions from websites, from Barack Obama websites?

5:25

JA: They were...It was a lot of instruction from the Obama website. There would be webcast with advice, but none of that was proprietary, in other words anyone that went onto the site could get this. So they had quite a high level of transparency. Although if you were a reporter they were much more closed about decisions that were not online. But online they created an enormous sense of community that you could easily join. They when some people would kind of go rouge a little bit and build a successful organization a local Obama organization, instead of saying oh you didn't listen to us from Chicago Headquarters, they would say great join us. And they would bring them into the fold. And they were very inclusive that way as long as you were delivering results.

6:27

D: In a sense do you think that he understood that the major media could be positive or negative toward him and it was better to build his own media his own media system that could build his base?

6:39

JA: Well online I think they posted something like 1,500 different Obama videos and they created their own content and their own communication channels both to their supporters and to the American public, but then they also worked traditional media as well. So they two pronged approach, but they definitely widened what the definition of media means and how to interact with the American public. And what's going to fascinating to see how that plays out in his administration.

7:16

D: What about the reaction of the other campaign to all this? The McCain campaign, the Clinton campaign.

7:20

JA: Well everybody had a website and they had for years, but they were just way behind in understanding the full potential of the internet.

They were organized for the basically still organized for the pre-internet era, the way they had cylos in their campaign. The Obama campaign, yeah there would be a fundraising department and there would be a field organization on the traditional...But they interacted with each other and they reinforced each other much than any other campaign. So they...really from the very beginning partly as a result of Obama's old friends who came out of the tech world. They understood much better than the other campaigns the potential of technology to change the outcome.

8:11

D: What I saw on TV was a lot more punditry, experts commenting on polls and campaign advertising, not doing very much reporting on the ground.

What's your sense of it?

8:23

JA: Well I think what's happened is since you have 24 hour chatter, and unfortunately or rather fortunately for me, you know I'm a part of that, it does detract from one's ability to go out and report. Also the whole structure of the media business now has changed. And I would summarize it this way. Talk is cheap and reporting is expensive. In other words if my new organization or any other news organization wants to have me chattering either in print or online or on TV, I can do that from home.

If I'm going to go to Baghdad or even out to Iowa and meet, that's expensive. So if talk is cheap and reporting is expensive as the profits from news gathering kind of evaporate and dead tree media starts to move off stage with very very serious economic consequences (newspapers) yeah start to move into America's past they'll still be around but not as dominate. And once print recedes and you have this new model, it's very alarming because if talk is cheap and reporting is expensive, who's going to gather the news that everybody else just chews over all the time.

Somehow we have to create models that allow people to go out and continue to gather the news.

There's actually going to be fewer reporters covering the Obama administration, with all the news that's going to be coming out of Washington; fewer reporters and that's a very alarming thing.

10:11

D: Do you think Obama's people knew what was happening in the media and in a sense didn't get caught up in satisfying the mau sort of speak? You know pumping stuff into it, but creating their own way of doing it.

Fewer press conferences events that were not big debate type events.

10:29

JA: The Obama folks thought through the new media environment in a way in ways that the other candidates did not. But that was true not just for media across the board. The Obama campaign was thinking strategically. The other campaign whether it was Hilary's or McCain's or any of the others were thinking tactically and ultimately if you have a strategy and it's the right strategy you stick to it you're going to be in better shape than going back and forth. And part of that strategy was a very new kind of media strategy, which sometimes would rely on press conferences and traditional media and interviews with traditional media.

And other times would go around or over the heads of the traditional media.

11:18

D: Ironically McCain attacked him for not knowing what a strategy was.

In a sense he denied he had a strategy, but pursued one.

11:26

JA: I don't think Obama ever denied he had a strategy. If you look at what he said at the beginning of the campaign and what he said at the end of the campaign it's almost boringly consistent. So he had what lawyers call a theory of the case. And I remember interviewing him in 2006 and he already had a theory of what kind of election 2008 would be.

It would be a change election people were tired of what he called re-litigating the 1960's. Didn't care about the old fights that people like you and me were engaged in. He wanted to move past that and tap into the idealism of a new generation of Americans. And restore our reputation in the world, which a lot of Americans realized that was causing us problems. And so he understood at a deeper level what the election was all about. So he didn't have Hilary Clinton's problem of one day it's experience is her theme the next day she's a populist and back and forth and that to the Obama folks, that reeked of old politics and they thought the country was ready for new politics. So organizing, the new media strategy, even the speaking ability it wouldn't have gotten him elected to President if he hadn't properly thought what the underlining themes of the 2008 elections were all about.

13:02

D: The Republicans threw everything at him the fear, the Bill Ayres, he's a terrorist, he's a Muslim, communist whatever and it didn't seem to stick. The whole fear campaign didn't seem to work against him. And he didn't respond to it in a way.

13:19

JA: I think that Obama understood, he's said this to me and to others in various interviews that, that was fighting the last war. That the whole fear card had sort of played itself out and it made much more sense to appeal to people's hopes than their fears. And generally in politics, it does specially at the Presidential level. The more optimistic, hopeful candidate wins, not always, but most of the time. And I think a lot of the Democrats go spooked by the idea, these fear tactics worked in the past and they just assumed it would work again. And they under estimated the intelligence of the American people and at some level Americans were tired of it and could see past a lot...For instance 2004 election, everyone assumes that well the only reason why Bush won what because of swift votes and slamming John Kerry. He won cause that was fundamentally a fear election. It was the first election after 9/11. 2008 was fundamentally a change election. So if you use fear tactics in a change election, you're going to have diminishing returns. It'll work some of the time but it's not going to be a transformative theme for a republican.

14:37

D: There were Republicans even Wall Street people who didn't like necessarily Obama's program, but they liked his ability to restore confidence which they felt was essential if our economy is to recover.

His confidence stirring ability seemed to be something people saw in a non-partisan way.

14:59

JA: There was a key moment in the campaign when McCain's fate was sealed and it was in the third week of September of 2008 when the two pictures were Barack Obama surrounded by Paul Volker who particularly a lot of older voters remember help to save, at a considerable cost, help to save the American economy in the late 70's and 80's and Warren Buffet the great investor of all time. So that's the Obama picture. The McCain picture is he's running pillar to post. He's saying one thing then another thing the next day, not inspiring confidence. So you had a lot of people who were not traditional democrats but business people who saw that and say you know what this Obama guy is more confidence inspiring.

And I think that was extremely helpful to him.

15:44

D: You've written the book of Franklin Elenor Roosevelt I want to just get to that and a lot of people sort of saying that Obama has to emulate FDR and the New Deal. We need a new New Deal. What are the challenges here in that area that from what you know about FDR's work?

16:02

JA: Well my book about Franklin Roosevelt is called the defining moment and Obama election night in Chicago and in several other speeches he said we're in a new defining moment where we are about to redraw again the American social contract what we owe each other as a people. I think Obama has been very very smart in what he is barrowing from FDR. He's not barrowing every particular of every program even some particular ideology. The most important words in that famous first inaugural were not the only thing we have to fear is fear itself its action and action now. He understood that the American people require you to move and act when there's a crisis, particularly in economic crisis. And you have to work the problem and you have to dent the problem you have to cease the moment. And just to give you one example. Herbert Hoover thought it was none of the government's business people were loosing their homes.

George W. Bush, no home foreclosure program. Franklin Roosevelt, Barack Obama, they take a different view about what the government owes us as a people and what we owe the government. So there's going to be a lot of call to service over the next few years and have already started to hear. You can see so many parallels, the civilian conservation core under FDR that was the beginning of service national service. The idea of not moving too far left or right, which a lot of people don't realize about Roosevelt. In many ways he was a centrist and pragmatist. And the ideology is not particularly helpful that's another thing that Obama feels very strongly about.

17:55

D: But yet a lot of the young people that responded to Obama's call were people who were fed up with Bush, fed up with the war who want to see real change and are they likely to get disillusion now?

18:09

JA: I don't know whether people will get disillusion there's going to be some people disillusioned. Some people all it took was the Rick Warren business, they were disillusioned. As Abraham Lincoln said you can't fool all the people all the time. You also can't please all the people all the time. So the same way that Roosevelt's sky-high popularity at the time he took office lessened considerably, that will happen to Obama. But Roosevelt stayed relatively popular by modern standards all the way through his presidency by keeping faith at a basic level. Even when people didn't like certain things certain liberals thought the social security for instance didn't go nearly as far enough. And the labor movement hated the civil union conservation core. I can give you a hundred other examples of how people on the left were disappointed in Franklin Roosevelt. But they knew that at some fundamental level he was with them and that he was getting up everyday worrying about trying to serve the people not certain interest. As long as Obama can continue to convey that he's on the side of the people and not the interest he's going to be just fine.

19:23

D: Final question. I know you have to run. I know you've covered a lot of political. Did you like this guy?

19:23

JA: You know I met Barack Obama about 10 years ago. I'm from Chicago originally I've always liked him personally. I've always thought he was very smart and a very serious person and unlike many politicians he's a fairly normal person. In other words many of these folks, when you get to

know them like I have over 25 years of covering politicians, I can really like them, but there's something kind of messed up about them and I think we know some of those more than some people expect. Obama is psychologically pretty healthy. He had some issues that related to his identity and he worked them out in the writing of that terrific book, *Dreams from my Father*. So he's pretty much at piece with himself a lot of that comes through both when you deal with him directly and on television as well. But you can't underestimate the pressures he's going to be under. Every President is a blind date and we really do not know in any true sense how he will turn out. But the signs are quite positive. And out of all these guys that I've covered over the years, I have the most hope in him than any of them.

20:44

D: And his smile

20:45

JA: His smile, is it real or fake? There's no politician where it's real all the time, but I think yeah....On a relative scale of fake to real he's more on the real side although he can do with a little more of a public sense of humor and take a few more risks in showing a sense of humor in public. He might be a little too cautious on that score substituting a smile for a actual witty remark.

Interview with Jesse Jackson

(00:00:00)

Interviewer: Are you going to be in Washington for the inauguration?

Jesse Jackson: Yeah....yeah. I'm going to some part of it.

Danny: Okay. Everybody shut off their phones? I did. Okay. How're we doing, do you want to do a test voice...? [*quick microphone volume level test*]

Danny: Okay, here we go. This is for after the Obama takes over, so it's not new, so we're not talking about looking forward to the inauguration, we're talking about it as if it already happened. Okay, Reverend, there's a picture of you in Grant Park with a tear in your eye as Barack Obama gave his victory speech to who knows how many hundreds of thousands of people. What was, what were you thinking, what was behind that tear?

JJ: Really, it was two things. It was the draw of the moment. In my mind's eye, I saw martyrs, whose caskets I walked behind, and friends with whom I worked whoa are somewhere in poverty or dead. Children in villages of Kenya, Haiti island, who could not afford a television. Somewhere around some radio, hoping that there'd be this great redemptive, transformative breakthrough. So it was the draw of that moment, and most of the people I knew who live down in the Alabama or Mississippi who made this moment happen couldn't afford to be there. And I felt them. And it was also a journey, the journey to get us there. You know, there's these big, big defining moments. You know, it's Jesse Owens winning the race, and Hitler turning his back, just little ones, and [*indistinct*] it took us [*indistinct*], it's Jackie Robinson breaking into baseball, each of these steps change our consciousness. [*indistinct*] the Supreme Court [*indistinct*] are those guys who really did it, perhaps only Doctor General Prankton and Jack Leeberger [*sp*] are still alive, General Franklin and Doctor Clock, and Thurgood Marshall, Julie Round, Jack Greenberg—they made it happen. Then the [*indistinct*]—just, kind all these basic people, I just kind of saw them, you know. Then I thought about the sixty four public condemnation bill, we were jailed trying to get that bill. It seems so similar, in retrospect. And then the right to vote. So it leaves this kind of, I call it a marathon race and President Barack ran the last lap like a strong finisher, strong acumen, he ran the last lap, but it was really along race.

D: So you see it against this background of history of struggle, really, for a recognition for changing America.

JJ: In my lifetime, my father came from WWII, and lots of POWs, had more rights in the trade basis than black soldiers did. That's part of my experience. I was jailed trying to use a public library along with seven of my classmates. We couldn't take a picture in the state capitol, but dogs could. Many of us kill about the right to vote. James Meredith shot Walker James Thea in Mississippi. [*Indistinct*] Two Jews were killed because they were seen as meddling in Mississippi politics. Reverend James Reeve, Jimmy Lee Jackson, these people, these mostly nameless, faceless maters, they made the big part of it possible. And often those who make the big part possible, are not invited to the party. They can't afford to come to the party. And I wept again for them, because I wanted them to be there and I thought that if Doctor came, Chavez maybe just be there for a moment in time, and I just kept thinking about Martin Luther King, just like...if they were just there for a moment in time, my whole life would have been fulfilled. So I was thinking about the joy and the journey. That kind of took me to a level of ecstasy and joy.

(00:05:01)

D: Now, you're seeing this in the context of a civil rights struggle, of a freedom struggle that's been a long time coming, but a lot of other commentators saw this as a post-racial victory, that a man was not judged on the basis of his race nor elected on the basis of his race, that Barack Obama is somehow leaving a racial history and baggage behind.

JJ: Normals [?] cannot run on DNA. Nor the DNA of our society. We are getting better, we no longer punish people because of their race or religion, we're getting better. As walls have come down...not that long ago I could see signs in South Carolina, "No blacks, Negroes, or Jews allowed." Today we're embarrassed by those signs, we don't do it quite that way anymore. The idea of a woman running for Congress, a woman's place is the house, cooking, not in the house representing making the decisions. We've...so walls have come down. We got the right to vote in 1965. It was not just blacks. Women couldn't serve on juries in Alabama, they got liberated there too. Farmers who couldn't pay polls taxes, they got the right that day too. Eighteen year olds in 1970, they got their right to vote validated too. Or in '74, students got the right to vote when they go to campus, that too. And so I've walked those dusty roads, and I tell you we never realized in the South, how globalized our marches were. We were just like fighting local battles. But they were filmed, so people end up singing "We Shall Overcome" in Poland. In Tiananmen Square, China. Or in [indistinct] South Africa. Because our struggle helped to redeem America's soul and help to change the world.

(00:07:09)

D: At the same time Barack Obama seemed to stay away, if you will, from race, in a way, until he was forced maybe to deal with it because of the Reverend Wright controversy and spoke about race. But it seemed as if we're trying to contrast the Obama campaign with your campaign. You were sort of the racial, you know, civil rights person, and he was somebody who was beyond that.

JJ: The phases of struggle are different. One phase we had to tear down the walls. I think if Reagan in Berlin said, "Tear down that wall," you could not have reconciliation with the walls up, you didn't know each other with the walls up, you couldn't go to school together with the walls up, so somebody had to tear down—Thurgood Marshall tore down those legal walls. Rosa Parks tore down those bus rule laws, Doctor King tore down those walls and so, as long as we have walls between us, we cannot see each other and free our bounds, and the walls up there—fear, ignorance, hatred, violence, so we had to tear down the walls. And so—I wish I didn't have to go to jail to use a public library. We had to tear down the walls. I wish we didn't have to march for the right to vote or go to jail, Mandela getting freed. Now in this era, in this phase of the race, the walls are basically down, now we can talk about "Build that bridge, build that bridge," because somebody tore down that wall., so there's still continuity between those who tore down walls and those who walk across the bridge freed by the demolition crew.

(00:08:55)

D: Now, you know Barack Obama, you supported Barack Obama, there were people who were trying to pit him against you in the campaign. What can you tell us about him? I mean, you've had experience with him, you're from Chicago, obviously you're in a way, an elder in the struggle now. He's sort of a newbie, if you will. How do you see that? How do you see him? What should we know about him?

JJ: Brigham Young Scholar, and I suppose there may be 3 or 4 words that characterize him. One, he had a broad vision, not limited by race or [indistinct] outside of town. And maybe the [indistinct] growing up in him, Hawaiian, Indonesia...he could see America in the west or east, not just south or north. He could see America with walls down, without any scars from tearing those walls down, so he has broad vision and definitely sees the world not through a keyhole. That's a big deal. Secondly, he represents a kind of hope. So many people become kind of cynical about matters of race and gender and peace. And somehow young America, people around the world, got caught up in this hope. Hope is very fascinating and very powerful. He also represents redemption. To many Americans, white Americans, who had never crossed that line before, to vote for black ball players, pull for black entertainers, never crossed that line to empower us to make big decisions. It was a big redeeming moment for them. I remember one time in 1984 on the cornfields in Iowa of our campaigning, and they had never seen a black campaigned in Iowa before. I'm out there shucking corn and milking cows, it was a real fascinating journey. And places would be packed because it was kind of a spectacle to see a black speaking to all these

all-white audiences about foreign policy and labor policy and global policy and stuff. They were cheering. So two farmers came near the door with their children and said, "Reverend, can we see you a minute?" And I talked to the Secret Service and said, "Yes, let me talk to them." And so, they said, "We were hearing what you were saying tonight but you didn't quite mention race explicitly." "I see it as self-evident and I said to you that you look at blacks in Chicago unemployed on the corners. You think they're lazy. You're looking at them through a keyhole. They see you through a television keyhole, they see you not working and getting a subsidy, thinking you were cheating the government 'cause you're getting a subsidy without growing a product. So you don't know each other. If I can convince you who are urban farms who lost you a family farm, and urban workers who lost their corporate jobs, it's the same corporation. That's outsourcing jobs and globalizing capital. The same ones who took their farms took their jobs. You guys got everything in common." So one of them looked at me and said, "Reverend, we get it. But we're not quite there yet. Don't give up on us." And I laughed. And then I took pictures with their children and we kind of laughed about it. I knew what they were saying. "We're not quite—you make sense to us, but we can't quite vote for you yet." But twenty years later their children were quite there. Because they'd gone to more football games, [indistinct] playing Illinois, Dennis Hart, white versus yellow and white, gone to more basketball games, March Madness to the Mets, had more classmates—and so twenty years of interrelated living has elevated their children's consciousness, so now a generation emerges who can go beyond historical lines and vote for friends who are friends, neighbors, and classmates.

(00:13:09)

D: Your campaign back in '84 and '88, Run Jesse Run, in a way paved the way for this seismic change in our politics. What are your reflections about that, about that campaign, tell us about that, I mean, you won a lot of primaries, I think a lot of people forget that.

JJ: Well the very first idea of breaking out of our place was, it had shock value. We ran on the proposition of leadership must mold opinion not just follow opinion polls. And so some thing as basic as "Free Mandela," most folk didn't know his name at that time, but it was our standing in the world was affected by our kinship with South Africa. We must have a new Middle East policy, a let's talk policy, rather than a no-talk policy. We had to have a two-state solution. At that time that was a very threatening idea and now it's the rule of the day. I argued at that time that we should have a foreign policy built around international law, human rights, determination and economic justice. And we should honor those [indistinct] where we are. And it began to change things. Well [?] argued that if a woman can go the American [indistinct] Israel in time of war, if Thatcher got Britain, if [indistinct] got India, [indistinct] going to be on the ticket. We kept arguing that rather vociferously. Even when [indistinct] supporters didn't like that idea, it's the fact that Gerald Ford didn't get the ticket. So we kept arguing the counter-culture arguments, trying to expand the tent to redefine our relationships, so when I look back now and see us with the Middle East, two-state solution, those intentions remain, look at Mandela freed, and I looked at Arafat and Perez and that group studying with Clinton, signing a new deal on the White House lawn, I look at us now and recognize that drug flow is a big problem and was then, and I see President Barack talking about a new urban policy. We're going [indistinct], we're going to rebuild bridges, roads, sewers, re-invest in America, right, that was our policy twenty years ago! So to see the maturing of the American consciousness, you can accept these ideas, that's a good feeling.

(00:15:56)

D: But aside from policy, your campaign ignited this rainbow concept, this was a grassroots movement in many ways. The campaign that you launched was something nobody had ever seen before in our politics and we are seeing it perhaps grown up within this past year.

JJ: Well you know, Danny, what I saw was I go to different conventions there'd be Native Americans over here marching, saying all of the treaties, [indistinct] the need for immigration policy, and you had Jews arguing for the state of Israel security and fighting Anti-Semitism and Arab-Americans, don't just stereotype us and labor wages and [indistinct] outside the convention and inside, they were a rainbow of faces, they represent the rainbow of hope. But these were

people born of the civil rights struggle to get their rights as women, and workers, and people of color and Asian-Americans. I remember when they were out there in San Francisco, Union Square, five thousand Asians rallying to vote and all those getting together made for a new premise and I tell you, over a twenty-year period, their children matured into this year's campaigners. America is more mature, less fearful of each other, and I cannot help but think I was—at a football game, the Bears played the Colts in the Superbowl, and on Collins Avenue on Sunday morning I saw these two white women walking down the street pushing baby carriages with their husbands wearing [indistinct] jerseys, the black coachman in Indianapolis. I saw two black kids jogging down the street wearing two jerseys of a white linebacker from the Bears. And there they were choosing uniform color over skin color, and the direction of a complexion. They were maturing beyond their fears and so Barack tapped into that, because now we have a prevailing wind that says we must live together, there's still a countervailing wind, tries to undercut and bludgeon that wind, they use every moment to try to exploit it, but between hope and fear, hope must win this campaign. Between courage and cowardice, courage must win this campaign. And so enough Americans said that this time to make Barack Obama our 45th President.

(00:18:41)

D: Did you ever have a conversation about your experience as a political organizer **[00:18:47
END OF TAPE 1]**

(00:00:00) START OF TAPE 2

D:--background we're coming to, we're rolling, okay, just to return to this issue of race, what role did it play in Obama's election? How did you see that—many people felt he couldn't win because he was black, others felt he wasn't black enough.

JJ: Others voted for him because he was black and saw it as a chance to break out of an old paradigm. I mean, I am not a racist, I will vote for a black man who makes sense to me. I have classmates who are black. I have Married interracial couples on my block, and I have grandchildren who are interracial and so, there are those saying, I will vote for a woman. When President Barack and Secretary Clinton were campaigning in Mississippi, the state where [indistinct] was killed and [indistinct] was lynched, and to see a governor say, "There'll be an open, free, fair election here!" As opposed to a governor putting a block on your door, and to see why [indistinct] to vote Barack, President Barack, and to see men voting for Hillary Clinton, I said, "Ha! They have become the conduits through which a new and better America is right before our eyes." I saw the debate up in New Hampshire that was Richardson and Hillary and Barack and Edwards. And my TV was on mute. To see a Southern white man from South Carolina not in the Strom Thurmond mode, to see a Latino American, a black and a female, competing on issues of economic justice, war and peace, that is a growing up and developing America. And we saw it hit its crescendo this year. Can we stop a minute please.

(00:01:58) END TAPE 2

(00:00:00) START OF TAPE 3

D: The beginning of the campaign somehow, Barack was not black enough, you heard that.

JJ: I just miss that. You know, because I remember when Dr. King was alive, he was too intellectual, he used too many big words. Malcolm was the grassroots guy. Dr. King was the intellectual guy. The fact is Dr. King was a revolutionary; Malcolm was a conservative, by comparison. Because Malcolm augured for dignity, and self race and pride. The king augured we should change the whole society. and that we could be the minority in the whole majority opinion and majority visions and so I sort of hit him in that way. And the fact is the people, the masses loved his words. And they gained thread from his inspiring way of of interpreting history. Um, And so we've always kind of had that. My concern at one point was after he won Iowa, those who

worked with him, wanted to take the same model to South Carolina, that they became rich trying to get the white vote, and I said that South Carolina was 50% black and 50% white. At that time Hilary was the leading 7 to the third in the black community because they knew her. I said you cannot, you must get to Allen and Benedict, and Morris Brown College, that you cannot run a mainstream campaign in South Carolina. And he changed the campaign; to broaden to go to the barbershops, and beauty shops and churches. And it worked for him. And the whites who supported him did not stop supporting him for that reason because what is that coalition except a commitment to racial justice, the real morals of our society, gender equality, worker's rights, children's rights, economic security. I mean these are the great things that make up the heart and soul of the thrust of our coalition of conscious. (00:02:02)

D: Just to take us to the present day, in terms of this financial crisis, you've been crusading on it, you've been concerned about it, you appeared at rallies on Wallstreet. Uh, you know, you've been challenging the Bailout. Now the Bailout has happened, what's your sense of where we are and where we're going?

(00:02:23)

JJ: Well we, we made cheating and stealing an art that was legal. And at some point in time, the bankers got all they wanted and then didn't want what they wanted. Didn't want what they got. And in part it's because of globalizing capital without globalizing human rights and workers rights and children's rights and environmental security. So if you globalize capital alone then those up top and they kind of want to find some cheaper labor and some richer raw materials. And when you let that (inaudible) becomes legal then plants close and jobs leave looking for a cheaper labor market. So a few people get very rich. Many more get insecure and others simply are trapped in poverty. And so they when they go to these markets they are looking for cheap labor and unenforced environmental laws, unenforced gender laws, unenforced human rights laws so you just have wholesale exploitation. At some point that ran its course. (00:03:31) With the energy industry you had the farce of an energy crisis. It was no supply and demand issue. It was speculation. Four dollars a gallon of gas got back to a dollar. Nothing, oil didn't change. Speculation changed. That was just rampant exploitation by the oil industry. Then the housing crisis where people were out, they went from reinforcement, from reinforcing the community reinvestment act. Say uh-huh, we'll make loans and then we'll adjust the rate. And we found in that case, the banks helped to package deals without congressional oversight, without following any laws, without, without the –with the fraud squad not enforcing fraud. So when the, without the oversight, without fair lending, without the fraud investigators you had only one thing standing in that thing collapsed one day and the bankers went down with it. The housing market went down with it. And the credit Market went down with it and then we got ideological choosing to make, give gifts to global insurance companies and not make loans to all the width of industry. So this whole thing come tumbling down because it was a house built on sand and cards. (00:04:56) Maybe the best expression of it than it is um, Detroit. 20 years ago the biggest employer was General Motors. \$18 an hour, unemployment benefits and a retirement plan. Now the biggest employer is Wal-Mart. \$7 an hour without those benefits. What a gap from General Motors to Wal-Mart. The big three was GM, Ford and Chrysler. There were people who left the South from picking cotton to go to making cars and they were able to get a grip on life really for the first time. (Inaudible), the big three now is not GM Ford and Chrysler. The big three now is three gambling casinos. To go from building cars to rolling dice? I mean our house of cards has fallen. So it's going to take President Barack to do something big like restructure the economy's foundation. (00:05:53) Right now we're still trying to adjust the roof, a little stimulus here which is important, a loan here. All of these are kind of rooftop measures. Our foundation is in crisis. We must redefine what is fair trade, fair manufacturing policy, fair trade policy - begin to have a sense of global justice not just global capital, global healthcare, global housing, a commitment to wipe out the hunger no wipe, wipe out the hunger not wipe out the hungry. That must be the redefining moment and that is going to take some restructuring of manufacturing policy, trade policy and appreciating that we live in a world order not just a, a national order.

(00:06:43)

Danny: Just for you to see you know so many neighborhoods across America where a black middle class began to develop, where people had homes and now they're losing those homes, they're losing their jobs.

JJ: Will the black factor may have attributed but California is facing bankruptcy -1/10 of our America. New York is facing bankruptcy. Whole states and cities are coming down You could say that the Titanic began to sink, water came in at the bottom on the black or brown side but that water kept rising. Now we are all affected by those cracks in the back. But the good news I think that more and more Americans are now willing to learn to live together. You know living, we learned to survive apart. We never learned to live together. That's the big lesson. And ironically the irony is that we're learning it on the ball field. On any given Sunday when you know Philadelphia plays Carolina and New Orleans plays Atlanta and Atlanta plays New York there is uniform calling our (inaudible) by them (inaudible) we're callapping something beyond our ancient fears about race you know? March madness you know UCLA plays Georgetown and Virginia plays Mississippi and here we are in that arena you know forgetting, forgetting our fears and choosing our hopes, our ambitions, our drives, our desires. I think that has reconditioned us. Without, it's clear to us with race as a distinction, race is not going to make a free throw. You know race does not make you a better coach does help you be a better block or run faster. You know race as a tool is losing and its power is diminishing because we're becoming less worshipful of skin color. Now many of us are still idolatrous in that way but I know that we are changing.

D: Are you-

JJ: and we are changing for the better.

D: Are you worried about her depression?

(00:08:44)

JJ: No but I know we're already in one. And when the, when the official word comes out that there is a depression, it's upon us. When you go neighborhood to neighborhood and plants close and jobs leaving I was with some children, I mean I told you. Englewood Chicago when Jennifer Hudson's mother and brother were killed and nephew. And about 11 o'clock at night I was praying with these people of the community and about 30 odd men came out of nowhere seemed very dark at night. They were gang bangers basically and one of them said to me 'Reverend I'm sick. I want to get well.' He began to cry. They're closing detox centers. Then two more came and said Reverend we really just got the drum. We can't find a job there's no reentry program. As I embrace them and prayed with them with nothing to offer them I thought about down the street if you are poor and in school 85% of kids in Chicago qualify for free lunches. I mean the parents are below the poverty level. You get five meals a week. You put them in jail you get 21 meals a week. Many of those kids jail becomes a jail hotel, becomes a home, become a homeless shelter. (00:10:01) I was on a shipping cruise not long ago for a couple of days and in the middle of the ocean here this big cruise ship and you can, it's rocking and you can only go to the perimeter you can't go any further. So in a sense were imprisoned on that boat in our freedom. Well these kids have a cruise boat on land. It's a big building has limits but other than those limits you eat and you recreation and no drive-by shootings. It's tragic when you have to jump up and touch the basement. For many of our youths going to jail is a step up. Poverty must hit that crowd. For those who've lost a basic human right to survive without fear and with education and health care and that they can dream again.

(00:10:49)

D: Finally Barack Obama is taking office. There are already been people we know they're uncomfortable with some of his appointments, are feeling that he's doing the safe thing not the brave thing etc. and so forth. What if the grounds as you look forward to an Obama administration, what are your hopes here? Do you feel we have grounds for hope?

(00:11:11)

JJ: Give him an opportunity. It's too early to be making harsh judgments. Judge him by principles, priorities, direction and success. We should not try to mini-manage him in these early days. You take uh, flowers out of a vase, a multicolored vase and you keep raising up to see is it growing? and you put it back. You kill the flower. Give the flower a chance to blossom and you can determine just whether or not it will or not in due season. Barack has overcome tremendous odds as a human being, legacy of a great bulk of Americans who now find joy in his success. So let us work for his success. Let us be actives and not just, and not just critics. But on the other hand every act, every analysis must not be seen as an attack. We must be free to share, to challenge, to take different positions. We must be free to do that and I think that Barack is, is bright enough and tough enough to hear and together we can change America and the world for the better.

D: Thank you. Great.

End of tape

(00:12:34)

Interview with Virginia Montague

(00:00:00)

Danny: could we just have for purposes of transcription introduce yourself to your last name and tell us we have your permission to use your interview in the film.

Virginia: Virginia Montague. And I do gladly give you my consent to use this in any way you deem fit.

Danny: So as we begin Virginia if you could just look over your right shoulder and show us what you have up here on the wall okay?

Virginia: Okay great. I think all start with they had a national volunteer registration date that was held at my church, the Mother A Zion Church. And I finally saw just how many thousands of people came just to volunteer to register people to vote. But I still- this was -this and I always kept his volunteer registration card because this is where we really got out into the streets and encourage people who had never voted before to register to vote. I'll take it back even farther and that's just, this picture this is me with Obama and this was taken at the Apollo theater in 19 -- I'm sorry to thousand seven when he came his first trip to Harlem and I was able to meet him. Found him to be a wonderful man and then he gladly took the picture and then I went to a fundraising, fundraiser for him that women for Obama posted at the Sheraton I'm sorry the Hilton this summer last summer 2007 or 2008 now and I was able to speak to Reggie love whose his body person and ask Reggie if he he would get the senator at the time it was Senator to sign the picture Andy did gladly. So this is one of the most treasured photos and that's an actual um, endorsed -- I'm sorry an actual signature of fun, President elect Obama. This one I met him again at an event that Reverend Al Sharpton had in the heartland had his national convention that he holds every year. Again Senator at the time Senator Obama was so gracious. I was with Senator Bill Perkins who is one of the first elected officials in Manhattan. The only one as a matter of fact to endorse President elect Obama at that time and he was able to get a signature in this book and this is an original signature and it says in Virginia all the best.

(00:02:14)

Danny: So these are prized possessions.

Virginia: These are truly prized possessions and this one even more so because his wife um, Michelle also signed a book.

Danny: Yet when you first met him he didn't have any bodyguards around. He didn't have anybody around. Tell me about that.

(00:02:27)

Virginia: That, that was so amazing. Again this was at the Apollo and that time the theater they were charging \$50 at the time for people to get him. And I wasn't part of the planning committee but again, having worked with Senator- State Senator Bill Perkins when he called he said listening were trying to get people to come out to hear Senator at the time Obama. So um, we were there and we went downstairs in the basement -- they call the green room the parlor where they hold the celebrities you know. Cornell West was down there and Chris rock was on stage that night and I'm standing talking to my pastor and Bill Perkins which is the picture of us there where we're at the Apollo, um, there were some people down there there were two young men and there was another singing group, a gospel group was there. (00:03:09) And the next thing I see, by himself, Senator Obama comes bounding down the steps by himself. And he claps his hands and said hey how's everybody doing. And he has sort of a Southern Midwestern drawl when he talks. And he went over to the choir and somebody said Senator get a picture with you? And he said sure. And he went over to, we found out subsequently that these were relatives of his wife of Michelle's crew were there. So was talking in he was relaxed and is not formal and his whole body language was just like, I'm here. And me being the kind of person I was called and I said Senator can I get a picture with you? And what was so amazing, he didn't ask me to come to him. He came over to me and just stood, you can tell from the picture he started leaning on my shoulder and he said yeah let's do it. And this was just so -- I mean there was no bodyguards, no Secret Service, nobody. And then we went upstairs and he came on stage and he spoke.

Danny: How is it that you, kind of spotted Obama and became supportive of Obama when so many politicians in Harlem were supporting Hillary?

(00:04:12)

Virginia: Well, I think he came about because I work with politicians for about 15 close to 20 years, and no disrespect to all my local elected officials, I love them dearly but quite often they get things wrong. Also because I'd run for office myself I'm in the streets every day talking to people in the streets and what I was hearing were some things I'd never heard before. The level of involvement, commitment the level of wonderment um, and I, I guess I sort of um, and became mesmerized by this guy they could do that. When I first heard them again it was a Reverend Sharpton's when I heard him speak myself and his national convention in 2007 and I watched the audience. Most of the people that follow Reverend Sharpton are sort of, I call them old-line revolutionaries. Old-line guys who don't like the system, why change the system when it do some things to the system. And I watched them as they watched this man, one old man I know his name is Munk - he's been a revolutionary and the guy is sitting there looking at him like he's just uh waiting for him to say something wrong so he could say I got you. I knew I was right and you were wrong. It never happened. And as I watch the people in the room and then he just sort of took me just sort of said this can happen. Maybe it was his confidence, maybe it was his sense of authenticity that that sort of came through because a lot of the politicians I know, I know stuff that's not accurate when I hear it it's something that's just a visceral kind of thing. And I saw this guy and that it wasn't about catering and playing to people pandering it was just him speaking. And this is something that's very hard to describe. Either you get it or you don't. And um,

Danny: Well, you got it

(00:05:41)

Virginia: I got it. I got it. Against all odds he was saying you know they were interviewing I remember the New York Times I was sitting with um uh John- one of the guys at rights for not New York Times but um Time magazine. He Ran a thing for Hillary as a matter of fact. And he came up to our table. The table of black women and he was asking us well why are you guys with um, well who are you guys with? Well it was interesting with 10 of us at the table I think four or five were with Hillary um, myself and maybe two other women and others said that they didn't

know. But he mentioned that they had been going to South Carolina interviewing these women in beauty parlors. And the women were saying you know the reasons that they were supporting Hillary and most of the reasons were not anti-Barack it was more fear for him, more concerned, more -- 1 woman said even said well we don't want him to embarrass us. I mean all of these kind of just petty needling ideas that was driving me mad. You know what I'm saying that, and this is what the media was picking up. So I just said, and said listening know, no no no. I'm supporting this brother because for two reasons. Because I think he's the best in the field and I believe he can win. So that's always been my, my reasoning. You know notwithstanding all the other things that ...

Danny: But there were people here in Harlem and in black communities around America who said he's not black enough.

(00:06:52)

Virginia: Sure. Yeah well

Danny: What's that about?

Virginia: You know you have to go to the source. Who's saying this? Who's quoting this? I mean how many said this? We do know the media tends to isolate incidents that, that's newsworthy according to them. I've not heard anybody in Harlem, as I said I walk these streets every day, who has said that. Most things they've said is they're not going to let him win. They're going to twist it so he can't win. But never have I've heard the issue being he's not black enough. Because you look at us, you look at black people. We come every shade every hue. So certainly for a black person to say it I know they mean. They don't mean skin color they mean mindset. And again it goes back to this issue of intellect. This dumbing down you see. So if he's that smart he can't be black and I think that's what they were really saying. It wasn't about his complexion it wasn't about his heritage. It was about his intellect that he couldn't be if he was that smart.

(00:07:40)

Danny: And yet, people really didn't believe he could win. A lot of people didn't. Because he was black, because he was young, because he was different.

Virginia: Sure. Well again, you know one of the things that I've shared with groups that I've spoken with is that I think a lot of it was because of his difference that I believed he could win. And I'll tell you why. I'm from North Carolina. Grew up a child of the 60s with the marchers and you know the segregation and the water fountain that there, the black water fountains were low on the white water fountains were high and I went through all of that. But I say one of the things I think that also gives him the confidence is that he didn't have that experience in his soul that black men in America have. By him being raised as he was in Hawaii and Indonesia, Kansas different places I think he, he was not privileged -- privilege is not the word - he wasn't exposed to this kind of thing that eats at a black person's soul that you have to be black to really feel that, that sense of tightening up because it's just part of the, it's always been part of the internal system of America. And I think that's what gave him -- I think that difference is one of the things I loved about this man was that he didn't have that baggage, he didn't have that, that sense of inferiority and that defiance that comes a lot of times from our leaders.

(00:08:55)

Danny: Do you believe that he is part of this sort of tradition however, despite that of Martin of Jesse's campaign in the 80s. You know tell me about that, about how, you know we all say we're on the shoulders of giants. You know nothing, you know nobody originates this it's part of a process. How do you see that?

Virginia: Again I go back to looking at this man's background. I think he's a reader. I think in his read -- I think he's very introspective and his readings. I mean this is just from things that I've read about him than just what he speaks and how he embraces people, embraces ideas. And I believe he recognizes truly that, that he is part, that where he is now is because of a lot of the groundwork I call it - the Fanny Lou Hamers (?), and the Jesse Jackson's and Martin and all of the ones that we don't know about Jim Farmer, all the ones who came before him. But I think what makes him unique or is the, the top of the cake let's say is this. Is that he also studied Abraham Lincoln -- I think he studied their pains and how they did things which I think taken in the sum total is what made him be so unique. And so, and to me to be so successful through the campaign, the styles he chose, the avenues he took I think we're unique. I think they didn't necessarily just build on the past. I think a lot of the stuff was just him.

(00:10:14)

Danny: You know here in politics in Harlem going back to Malcolm and you know there's been a tradition of kind of race politics, race man.

Virginia: Yes.

Danny: Here's a guy who has young white people going crazy about him.

Virginia: Yeah.

Danny: How do you see that? Is this part of the change in America?

Virginia: one of I think it is. Again um, most of the people in my church -- my church is the oldest black church and state. I always like to plug that because Paul Robeson was a member of Frederick Douglass was a member, Harriet Tru -- Harriet Truman -- uh, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth they all came out of AME Zion Church community. So I was saying so a lot of us were as Reverend Wright was sort of locked into what was. And because of this it's very difficult to trust what will be. And again I think because this young man didn't come out of that background necessarily. But I mean his, his in-laws I mean they, they are products of the 40s and 50s.

(00:11:06) But I think the way I saw him when I saw when I saw him at Reverend Sharpton's see all these young white people running after wanting to clasp him, wanting to touch him. I'm telling you it's almost, I mean I, I, I try not to get um, religious about it you know but I do believe that -- and I do believe in ordination. I do believe that certain things are ordained. I do. And I'm saying if you watch how this young man has been able to turn the corner and bring all these people with him, the older generation a little more reluctantly I think out of fear, the younger generation because this is the way it should be. Um, I think a word that is passed round in the black communities, the N-word, uh which curdles my spirit - but I talk to young people, they don't have a problem with it because it doesn't have the same resonance, it doesn't have the same meaning for kids that were born in the 80s and 90s, or let's say the 80s and on. So don't have the same experiences and they're ready to move on. So I think when you get the young blacks, the young whites, Asians all of these who don't have that history it's very easy for them to, to, to gravitate to someone like him.

(00:12:00)

Danny: What do you, what do you think about that Ryan?

(Laughing)

Virginia: (over Danny) See they're part of the younger generation.

Danny: You're speaking you know that this whole generation now. What about Michelle? You met his wife. You know she's sort burst on the scene at first they thought, they were picturing her

as some kind of crazed militant, remember? You know 'Michelle hates white people' that sort of thing. What was your sense of her?

Virginia: Well, we love her. We love her. I think women in general love her because I think she, and to me again she, she does two things to me. She, she represents the true woman of African descent because all of us I mean I'm not black you're not black we are blends. I mean all of us got something a little of everything – Asian - look at -- we're all part of something else. Well when I saw her what I really liked about her, and this is personal, just what I felt, is that she represents black women. I'm president of an organization called the New York coalition of 100 Black women and what this organization does is it advances and encourages Canada lifts Black women because for the most part we've been sort of left behind. So when I look at her she looks like me. She doesn't look like Vanessa Williams. She looks like me. So this sends a message to black women that, it lends, how do I say this, it lends, I shouldn't say cr- it lends value, value to us as dark skinned, nappy haired black women without all the artifices that we have to use often. Plus she's extremely smart. I think she stands on her own. I think she, she represents women.

Danny: And taller than you.

(00:13:33)

Virginia: Yes she is. I'm 5'10" and I met her, she had on some little heels and she, she dresses elegantly but she seems to be very comfortable in her skin. She seems to be very comfortable with who she is. So that, I work with young, young women, young African-American girls and I tell them that this is what you need. This is what -- This is the kind of role model they need. Not an entertainer. You know and not the ones that are bouncing a ball. There's nothing wrong with women who are doing that. But they need to see the black woman who is an intellect. You know who's a mother who's a wife, who all the attributes that the world says we should have but we are not part of so many of us, the younger women, the ones who are willing to wear the word bitch around her neck. Another thing is we have to realize that she, we say she's more than, we say boobs and a butt. She's a brain. She's more than- so we see her as affirming that this is what we can be so I love her. I love her.

Danny: Now just, just back to Harlem for a moment. Tell me about the effort that you are part of in heartland, that grassroots effort. If you could just give me a little summary of how that you know here comes, Obama coming in a way out of nowhere. Nobody thought he could win. Now suddenly it looks like he can win. Did Harlem respond? Did Harlem come out?

(00:14:43)

Virginia: Yes. Yes. I give Bill -- State Senator Bill Perkins a lot of credit for this and his office because he was going against the grain here. He was going against all the other electors. A lot of the clergy were reluctant to take a stand again because of their relationship with our elected officials in Harlem. But Bill reached out to those underground, the grassroots people who didn't owe anybody. Who could do it because they felt a reason for it. So he had come to us and asked us, as we said we held rallies at our church. We did volunteer voter registration where we had a think about 2500 people show, black and white come to take their, their clipboards and go out and register people. My organization because it's not for profit with a 501(c)3 we can't endorse or give funding but I also reached out to them stepping aside putting off my hat as presidents but we had a women for Obama, we hosted A women for Obama -- not just me a lot of women did because we want to raise money. We wanted to show that black people also would raise money. But it's not, that we, obviously we don't have the money like, like the big financiers. We can't bundle the kind of monies they can. We wanted to show that we could so the tickets were \$250 and we put together a couple of tables for women to come and show their support you know financially.

(00:15:58)

Danny: What was it like on election night in Harlem? Tell me about that.

Virginia: Well, um, first um, there were parties all over. I went to a restaurant called Rindell's (?) restaurant and they were all over but I went there because um, I was invited. It was, it was open to the public place it was small but one of the things I'll tell you that really impressed me the most, because this was during the buildup was that he'd invited one, Kenyan um, Ambassador from Kenya to come to Harlem to be with us to witness this night. And if you know anything about how Kenyans talk their voices are sonorous. They're deep. They are full-bodied. And he said, and this and everybody's had all these men and everybody's just you know, the whole, the whole- I cried all summer. I don't think a day went by that I didn't cry about something. But when this man said that to consider to realize a man like Barack, a man named Barack Hussein Obama, a man of the soil of um, he said the soil of Africa. I mean just the way he talked - just since you know -so everybody's boo-hooing and I mean even the men are wiping, you know men don't like to show tears but um, but when the action came in people were all out in the street because all the press, and the media was everywhere that night. And if you all remember it was so electrifying because just before they actually announced we were watching NBC because they were the ones that were doing most of the, the um, the viewing that night, or the interviewing that night there was like a period there that of silence when they kept saying John, John McCain his numbers are coming in. (00:17:24) And the next thing we knew was, there was a blue screen background that said, the next, they announced the 44th president of the United States. I mean we never did hear California's numbers until later. And actually the place just erupted. Now you have to, I just have to set the scene. These were not cheering kids. These were not um, these were not the kind of people who are very demonstrative. They never - these are the more staid secured um, bourgeois of Harlem that were there. And to see these guys man I mean to get up and just, they're hugging and they're crying and, and I mean it's was just, it's, it was pandemonium. I mean then it all just went out in the streets. And then we rode down to um, I mean down the street you see kids running. (00:18:07) You see black kids and white kids hugging each other and skipping like kids. I mean these are the guys, a lot of these guys if you saw them on the street you'd want to cross the street. And this is the God's honest truth. But they were hugging. So we went down to Obama's campaign office. I hit one on 8th Ave and 134th St. And they were just jumping for joy and then we're rolling down 125th St. and this is right after it happened so the streets were beginning to clog. And you'd see the police in their cars tooting their horns and when we tried to turn on 125th St. we couldn't just for the sheer volume of people. So the cars were stopping, they would say you to get out of your cars. Cars just couldn't get through. And just to hear, I mean to see the people's fa- to see the people crying. And the thing I guess because I'm so concerned about young people, young black people you know. To see these guys it makes you teary. It does. Um, to see these um, these young men just walking down the street just shouting. (Breaking down crying) You know it's just so awesome. It's just awesome.

Danny: Even now just thinking about it.

(00:19:00)

Virginia: It does. It does. You know it's just um, because they were saying things like hope is come. And we're talking about young people who never felt that hope had anything to do with them. One of the guys said the um, 'Yeah I know brother hope,' this was sort of a rap. He said 'I know brother hope. And it passed me by.' So to hear them saying that was just um, tissue back there (motions for tissue) it just -

Danny: Stay here.

Virginia: awesome. It was just awesome. So it wasn't so much for me but um, for these people I see, the young people I see in the streets. That's what it's about. I hope you're not going to do this.

Danny: So this is, so this is a moment of really passionate emotion.

Virginia: It is. It is.

Danny: Not just a moment of intellectual achievement.

Virginia: No it's not. You know and this is not like me. I mean you know just, this is, it's just... I had to give a speech, and after he won the Democratic nomination I was walking down, and the paper's had you know that he won, and I see these women with their children going to school and I'm yelling at, I don't know these people and I'm saying cats the papers. That's why I have the magazines. (00:20:10) Get everything you can not for you, but for your children. And I'm shouting at this, this lady. The lady - we have a large African um, community up here. And the lady doesn't speak English, she didn't have a clue what I was talking about. But I'm yelling and showing her the picture and she's say - and I'm saying you got to get these pictures. You got to save them for your children. This is a momentous day. This is just wonderful. So she goes, 'What?' And it just sort of threw me back a little bit. She didn't have a clue. She probably knew about it but she just didn't understand what I was saying. But I walked up Lennox Ave. from 125th St. here to 135th St this was just, this was just the nomination and just to see people you know just, it was just awesome. I mean you, the mood in the streets were just joyous I mean in Harlem. I mean I'm sure it was in other places too but it was just, it was just joyous. I've never seen -- and it was a cloudy day here in Harlem. It was, it was warm but it was a cloudy -- the sun wasn't out. But it was just I mean to see people just smiling at each other. Guys that sell, this is before they started with all the bling, all this stuff.

Danny: But, but people in Harlem and you know I wouldn't say are cynical but they've seen a lot. They don't let themselves get too carried away right? I mean, they can't, they don't have high expectations because they seem so much, you know so many people promised things and nothing ever happens. So what was it now that, that just locked, you know unlocked people suddenly.

(00:21:27)

Virginia: You know that, I think that's a question for the ages and for the historians. I'm not sure it's something to be put in words. I'm sure that me sitting here blubbering - because you know I'm one of the sophisticates. I'm one of the ones who's been in this game for a long time. I'm one of the one who's not cynical but understands the system. I'm one of the ones that, that know all the stuff, and it just amazes me when I talk to my family. My sister lives in Palo Alto in California and she and her husband are in their 70s and never gotten involved. They are, they are, they are um, volunteering for - when I went out to Christmases ago my brother in law who, who's on Stanford's um, um, you know how Stanford University is. You know what kind of system that is out there. But they were volunteering to work on the campaign office for Obama out there. And this, I'm saying so when I look at not just I mean just Harlem but black communities all over the country. I'm just saying black communities there's others too. But it was like um, people was quoting the Bible. (00:22:20) I have a picture in one of the magazines where you see the bishops in this, in the African-American Episcopal um, um, denomination where they're laying hands on Obama, where he has his head bowed, and it is so awesome that people started putting a religious, a spiritual context to it that they said it could not happen unless God intervened. It could not have. I mean if you look at how all the force from the time from the time that he ran for the Senate race when he ran the guy, the Republican guy had to drop out because of that, the scandal and they tried to bring that guy in, the black guy in, the one the Republicans stand up guy. But I'm saying if you look at his, if you look at his record, his history of how he came to this day it's like the walls just came tumbling down. All the, all the obstacles that were in his path just were moved to the side. And some of the things I think -- and this is just my thinking but some of these things were so severe that I'm telling you it had to take God to make a difference. I mean if it were easy then it would be 'hmm.' But I'm saying the obstacles in the things that have

happened that were, that would have sidetracked a lot of people, the right story and all the things that came out you now on, they could have just sidetracked his, his campaign and the people that were working for him. David Plough and Axelrod and all the people around him and to hear them talk. They were just as amazed when I've heard them speak as I am. I've been in a couple of events with, with um, not David Axelrod but some of his higher senior advisers and they're just as amazed by this campaign, and they are involved as we are in the streets. So I don't know if you can really describe it.

(00:23:47)

Danny: Woo! Talk to me Virginia. You were powerful. You were really powerful. You were really saying it and putting it out there. I really value that. Just one last little thing. I don't know if we'll use this or not. But you know of course, one of the things that happened in the campaign and tends to happen is, you know, Republicans pitting black people against black people. Pitting Obama and his minister, against his minister both of them. This became a big issue for a while. It looked like it was going to undermine his whole campaign didn't it?

(00:24:24)

Virginia: Yeah. Yeah it did for moment. But look at how he responded. That's why I'm saying listen guys I mean, I'm talking to the atheists. I'm talking to the cynics. Look at how, what he decided to do. He decided to have a speech on race. He didn't back- He took that as an opportunity and that's what I find he's done. When things like that happen he seizes it a challenge, as an opportunity to respond and I think that may have been the turning point as well as um, several things have happened but I, I think that was a turning –

Danny: But not just to respond, to elevate the terms of the discourse. In other words he didn't just respond and say yes or no. He tried to explain and put it in context. Didn't he?

(00:25:00)

Virginia: Yes he did. Um, you know this thing, I don't think it was just Republicans. I think that when they tried to decide I think that a lot of it had to do with playing on the fears. You know assuming that I think one of the problems that Hillary had as well as the Republican campaigns was that they were trying to lock in the campaign styles of the 60s and 70s. And Obama's campaign people were looking to 2000 and beyond. I mean to the next, to the next generation of technology and I think that played a lot in it because it brought about something I think that left all the others flat-footed. So they had to go back to the old way of how they worked you know remember Lee Atwater - Lee Atwood. The things he did you know to try and divide. And I think again they misread the country because they were talking to a generation of young people who didn't connect with that, had no relationship with that and were ready to move on from what their parents may have told them. So I think all that played into it a lot.

Danny: Well thank you. I think you know, that was brilliant and I really appreciated it and the fact that you were emotional -- No no. I think, I think the fact that you are emotional actually underscores the sincerity and the reality, the realness of this not, this is not something of just giving me sound bites. This was somebody expressing feelings and I really respect and I appreciate it so much.

(00:26:17)

Virginia: Danny could, and I don't care whether this is being recorded or not but, what I, again what I've been sharing with my friends and people is that we have to be careful. I heard a minister Ford Clayton (?) say, several Sundays ago, he says this and remember he's not the Messiah. He is not God. He's not Jesus. He is not mounted. He's a man. And I think sometimes what their opponents can do is elevate you to such a point that if you, any, like they're

doing now, every, every one of the, appears to be a new controversy. And I think a lot of that is playing so what I share with young people I talk to is this. I say, Barack Obama may be the first. I said he's like Jesse Robinson. He's like a lot of our first. He's not unique. He's not the only one. I think it's important that we let that be told. That we don't get locked down into he's the only one.

Danny: Don't you think this movement that he built has to also try to keep him on track, hold him accountable in a way and tried to push him to do the things that he wants to do?

(00:27:18)

Virginia: Yes, but I also realize that the forces of this world, you know just what happened with the meltdown on Wall Street and all these things are outside of his, I mean he can't control certain, certain forces of things that go on and what I'm sharing with people is listen you know, don't make in the savior. You know don't, don't think that he can say shazam and fix the world. And I believe that there are forces that want that that appearance to be so than when he stumbles, or the appearance of stumbles, it even the ones, even the reporters and the columnists and commentators and the, the people who support him. Listen. It's all about news. They will tear him apart just as quickly, just as easily. And I believe that. So I'm saying that, so it's all about the media. It's all about the coverage. It's all about the story. So I'm saying that I think that he has surrounded himself with people who are sophisticated enough who've been in the game long enough to anticipate this. But I'm saying that I was happy to hear (unintelligible) say that because we must not let look at him as, as the one in the only. Because the dis- after the disappointment comes in the cynicism. I told you so. I told you this can be like this. You know all of that coming. And I'm saying I think we have to be very levelheaded about who he is and what he's trying to do and give him support. But also - and it's not about being cautionary. It's about being real. This is just a man like you and like everybody else. You know that there are going to be some forces that are out of his control. We don't know what's to happen in the Middle East. We don't know what's Russia is going to do. All these things are to be tested as Joe Biden said. But I said, but I think if we take the news, we take the media, the news that's coming across with a grain of salt and realized that they're going to jump on every little thing because That's their job but people have to step back and look at it realistically and don't just get caught up in that, in the, we just call it the hype. Don't just get, don't just buy the hype. You know because that will make people become disillusioned and that works against us.

(00:29:00)

Danny: Woo! Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. That was the best interview we've had really. And really powerful and very insightful. Thank you so much. What I would like to do Ryan is get some close-ups of all those pictures over there and shoot these magazines here so we can have this visual material.

(00:29:25)

End of media.

Interview with Hendrick Hertzberg

(00:00:00)

Hendrick Hertzberg: Hendrik Hertzberg. I'm a senior editor of the New Yorker magazine you have my permission to use this to you.

Danny: Barack Obama. You seemed amazed in some respects as, as, as wise a political reporter you are and as skeptical as it may been by this man's victory. What accounts for it?

(00:00:42)

Hendrick: I've never been as emotionally involved a presidential election as I was in this one and that includes when I was working for President Carter and writing his speeches when he was running for reelection. Um, this, this guy just has such extraordinary qualities that, that he's somebody- he's a sort of person I never dreamed to be president of the United States.

Danny: Because?

Hendrick: Because he's such a good writer. Because um, because he's so well rounded. He's such a human being. He's so intelligent. He seems so unspoiled, uncynical but incredibly aware and in touch with American society and culture.

Danny: You've met him a couple of times. Just tell me about that. What was your impression of Barack Obama live and in person?

Hendrick: Um, very much the same Barack Obama that you saw-

Danny: Try and incorporate my question.

(00:01:53)

Hendrick: Yeah okay yeah. Yet I've met him a couple of times and once was able to have, with a, a few other people are relatively long conversation and the qualities that I saw him on one or ten on one are the same ones the American public saw during the campaign. Thoughtful, calm, disciplined, well organized, human, um, strong.

Danny: There was a belief shared by if you will be prejudiced whites and active blacks that a black man could never get elected in America. Is there something about Obama that managed to kind of transcend this racial divide and racial gulf?

(00:02:50)

Hendrick: Yes um, yeah I am- I think most of us never dreamed we would see a, a black American elected president in our lifetime and it happened. And I think part of the reason it happened is that Obama was a kind of it controlled experiment in the power of color prejudice alone because yes he's an African-American but he's an African-American in the way that other people might be an Irish-American or an Italian-American. His father is African. His mother is American. He does not have any ancestors who were held in slavery in the Americas either in North America or the Caribbean. He was brought up pretty much entirely by a white family, by his mother's family. His mother and his maternal grandparents. He doesn't excite the complexes among white people that um, that it may give uh -- black American fully, whose fully a product of black American society excites. So I think um, I think that, that he was, he was a kind of um, special, a special kind of African-American who white people were able to look past color and

black people were able to both see color and to look past it. I mean this, this um, it's fascinating that when Barack Obama was born the relationship between his parents was a crime in most states and the trump card of racism was miscegenation. You know was black man coming to get your white daughter and, the, the selling point of Barack Obama was that he was biracial, was that he was a product of this thing that was regarded as so horrible 50 years ago. So there's been this um, there's been an incredible revolution in American consciousness about color.

Danny: Was there a way in which, and I think you wrote about this, that he was perceived as exotic and in a sense that very you know background, being in Indonesia, being in Hawaii which is very multicultural might have, might have distanced him personally from and others you know from this, the normal categories in which people are often placed, stereotypes.

(00:05:37)

Hendrick: Yeah. Yes he um, his exoticism as it was often referred to um, and which a lot of people mistook for a political weakness, you know they think all my God not only is he black but he's Indonesian and his middle name is Hussein and Europe in Hawaii and this guy is just too weird. Not all. Not at all. That exoticism was a kind of shield against the stereotypes that people normally bring to thinking about race and just kind of push them aside. It wasn't a- it wasn't a, it, it cleaned the window. People could see through and see him.

Danny: Do you think in um, way you know the kind of campaign he organized and ran was responsible for his, his triumph? Uniqueness of that campaign. Tell me about that.

(00:6:36)

Hendrick: Yeah I- if - if in this election um, the candidates have been -- if in this election the candidates had been everyone but Barack Obama, in other words to Hillary Clinton and a bunch of perfectly acceptable standard white guys, Hillary Clinton would've walked right into the nomination and the presidency. I don't have any doubt about that. It was, it was her bad luck that—

(Siren in background)

Danny: Can we just wait a second? Unfortunately there's some sirens you can't get over even on the 20th floor and we're on 22 so... okay lets try this again about the campaign and about the unique character of it

(00:07:37)

Hendrick: Well there's not much doubt in my mind that if Obama had not run such a beautifully organized, competent, farseeing campaign that he would not have been nominated. If he had run the campaign that Hillary Clinton ran and Hillary had run a campaign that he ran then Hillary would've been the nominee. But you really can't separate the campaign from the candidates. It's one of the very few virtues of our very long campaign that you get a real taste of how this person, would run a government. He ran a, he ran a campaign that was completely unprecedented. Well maybe not completely unprecedented. It borrowed some, certainly it was pioneered. A lot of it was pioneered by the Howard Dean campaign four years earlier but this all came into full flower with uh the Obama campaign. The massive fund-raising in small -- all in small donors or much of it in small donors so that it didn't carry the compromising effects of um, of the usual kinds of fund-raising. And then mobilizing people all over the country not just in battleground states but everywhere. And that had a lot of powerful effects.

Danny: The right wing is just promoting- the right wing but a conservative columnist and filmmaker if that's what he is, I'm not sure, has done a film -- is doing a film with a lot of youtube visibility because he interviewed Sarah Palin you know how Obama got elected. The arguments

says-the old uh, the old conservative argument it's the liberal bias of the media. Was the media, the liberal media was responsible for his election. Agree?

(00:09:34)

Hendrick: No. The idea that the liberal media was responsible for his election, where that falls down is that, that it doesn't explain what, how Bush got reelected. It doesn't explain how Reagan got reelected. If the liberal, if there is a liberal media, it's always there. It can't, it's not a variable. It can't explain why one election comes out differently from another election. So that's -- that theory uh, a theory that explains everything explains nothing.

Danny: And yet he created his own media didn't he in a way?

(00:10:13)

Hendrick: Um, well -- he, he and his own media kind of simultaneously created themselves. He, he of course didn't create the Internet or the notion of, of political mobilization via the Internet. He didn't create that. He'd used it. He developed it. He saw the, he saw the possibilities of it and it, it was a machine went of itself. It, it -- he really didn't have to tend it all that much. To the extent that he did I mean the Obama Web operation was like every aspect of his campaign was extremely competently run. But he, he, he was a, the wind was blowing and he put a sail up.

Danny: He seemed to trust his supporters in ways that few candidates do. He seemed to encourage them to do their own thing, do what they thought was best.

(00:11:13)

Hendrick: He did. He did trust his supporters and you can see that by looking at his website where um, where there are lots and lots of um, chat rooms and sites where, where supporters would dialogue with each other and they'd complain and they'd, they'd expressed alarm about some compromise he was making and he let those, he let a million flowers bloom and he recognized that this was not going to hurt him. That this, this upsurge, this flowering could only help him.

Danny: And now you know moving forward. He obviously -- let's start with this campaign. He had a, kind of a calculation or a strategy or an idea that drove it. What was that? I mean what did he see that others didn't about the possibilities of politics in 2008?

(00:12:06)

Hendrick: Yeah he saw -- -- the extraordinary thing about Obama was his farseeingness, his ability to, to go with the long arc, a long arc in time and to understand that the hysteria of the hourly news cycle uh, that you didn't have to be a slave to that. You didn't, you didn't have to organize your campaign around that. He had his eye on something that developed over time and that was uh, that was the public's understanding of his temperament and he was a, it was a kind of meta-campaign in that sense. And you saw it very clearly during the, the hysteria over the financial crisis when the financial crisis first broke. And where McCain's reaction was as choppy as, as watching CNN or Fox news for any given hour long period. You know he, he, he said I'm calling off my campaign. I'm rushing to Washington. I'm doing this. I'm doing that. And Obama just calmly said, very calmly said 'a president has to be able to deal to do more than one thing at a time' and with that the air just one out of, of McCain. The hot air just went out of him and the gentle wind that was blowing Obama to the white house wafted him further.

Danny: What does the campaign say to you about our country in a way? Because you know part of the implicit idea that an Obama could never get elected is that Americans as a whole are too stupid to make distinctions. They can't understand complicated ideas or can't believe that

somebody can do two things at once or be involved on many levels. What is it say to you about us?

(00:14:05)

Hendrick: That we are -- the campaign says that we are capable of learning. The, the cliché, often true in our history that Americans are too impatient, too stupid, they are-they have too much um, they have, attention deficit disorder so they can't pay attention to nuances. There was a lot of support for that in the last 20 or 25 years. But I think Obama benefited in many ways from following Bush. Bush was a eight year lesson in the perils of not thinking, not reflecting, not flying off the handle, being calm and looking at a bigger more important picture. So Obama, might have, his time had come. Eight years from now it might not be his time. Eight years earlier it might not have been his time. But the American public was ready for something different and something better because you couldn't really get worse.

(00:15:17)

Danny: What about you know um, you know in this, in his campaign his way of sort of handling issues by often elevating them to another level like for example race. Here he is he's being attacked. His own minister's making what is being pictured as anti-American statements even if the words. You know kind of quoted out of context or not. And Obama had to respond to this in a way that he did so with a lot of elegance of. What you think?

(0015:50)

Hendrick: Yeah that was the greatest crisis of his campaign was the Reverend Wright crisis. And um, I think it'll go down in history that he, he saved his campaign with the speech he gave in response to the crisis. And the, the interesting thing is that perhaps 1, 2, 3 million people actually saw or read that speech. Certainly however many did actually see or read it it was a small percentage of the number who went out and voted whether for him or against him. But he, it was an interest, it was an interesting exercise in um, the politics of the mass and the elite. The spee- what the, the people of the speech really really deeply impressed were the elite and their impression trickled down to the rest of the public. The rest of -- most, most voters know that he gave a wonderful speech about race and that it was a speech that showed real respect for the voters and real -- didn't treat them as children. Treated them as adults. That's what they know about the speech. They don't know what he said necessarily in the speech, but they know that much and that was uh, that was a case where in the way he almost shamed the elite's, shamed the mainstream media into, into treating what he said seriously and at least communicating to their voters that something serious and grown-up and nuanced had been said.

(00:17:36)

Danny: Well against the background of you know, kind of politics as a horserace, presented as a horserace, presented as soundbites, presented as uh, caricatures almost like a wrestling match, he somehow transcended the coverage of the political race in a away or at least he redefined it in some way. I think that was sort of important.

(00:17:58)

Hendrick: Yes he um, he didn't play along with the horserace narrative. He just, he just let it slide by. I think a lot of candidates because it's their business and it's also their hobby and they love the minutia of it fall into the trap of playing along with the horserace and talking about their strategy and how they're gonna do this in what state and Bill Clinton was certainly, had a huge weakness for that kind of talk. Whether Obama has a weakness for it or not I don't know but if he does he didn't show it. Again, he kept his eye on the long arc.

Danny: I mean was in New Hampshire. He lost. Coming out of Iowa and you know he was trying to build momentum. He goes into New Hampshire, he expects to win. He loses and yet he sees in his loss a sign of impending victory. How is that possible?

(00:19:03)

Hendrick: It was extraordinary though because coming out of Iowa -- well his strategy had called for him winning in Iowa. Winning in Iowa was absolute, an absolute must. And that that would carry him over the top in, in New Hampshire. Well it didn't. And that must, that was a huge shock and surprise to the press corps up there. I was up there for, for the New Hampshire primary and for those of us who uh, who had drunk the Kool-Aid, you know who, who had decided that Obama was somebody we were, somebody we'd never seen before, the likes of which we'd never seen in our lifetimes and were never going to see again, that that might be slipping away. That was a terrible night. But, Obama, I'm sure it, I'm sure that he was shaken by it but he didn't show it. And they had uh, they had a plan in reserve. They had a, they knew how to come back from it in this very systematic, calm way. And um, gee wouldn't it be great if he could behave as president like that?

Danny: Speaking of which, he's now, he's now president let's say.

Hendrick: Oh yeah of course.

(00:20:22)

Danny: What, what- what are your, what are your hopes, expectations here? I mean are we -- Are expectations too high for Obama? Are we expecting too much? Is he -- you know people see him as this messenger of change but everybody defines change their own way. I mean a lot of people and progressives are sort of disappointed by his appointments and his unwillingness to be, to look back and prosecute the crimes of the Bush administration etc.

(00:20:46)

Hendrick: Yeah. He um, he, he doesn't, he doesn't pick fights that he doesn't need to pick or that don't to him clearly point in a, in a direction. It's too early to say really what his attitude is for example toward uh, toward the crimes, the war crimes and illegalities of the Bush torture policy for example. He, he doesn't want his administration to be, to be gobbled up by it or to have to, to have to deal with the bitterness that would be brought out as part of the healing from that whole process but, but there's plenty can do short of himself kind of being the chief prosecutor at a Nuremberg trial of some sort. We don't know. I think that something will be done. I think that, that there will be some sort of move to, to get the truth out, to get the truth out in some official way.

(00:21:51)

Danny: You know, you, you said it before letting a thousand flowers bloom reminded me of Maoist China where you know they would say that uh, he moved right in order to left. I mean is it possible that Obama has to solidify the center first before initiating the kinds of reforms he hinted at making?

(00:22:20)

Hendrick: I don't think he's done anything particularly different from what he did during the campaign. He's always wanted -- he's always placed a very high premium on civility and a lot of the things he did in the, in the transition were aimed at solidifying that, solidifying a kind of feeling. They weren't really about backing off promises or things that he has, has determined to do as president. They were more about creating a, an atmosphere. And, yes there's been some

progressive disappointment in some of his appointments, some of them but uh, I think some of that is really pretty unwarranted. I think he is planning to use the, the clout and authority of a lot of these um, sorted establishmentarian characters that he's appointed to high positions to carry through uh, changes that weren't made during the Clinton administration mainly because they were politically impossible then. But they're- if they're not politically impossible now I think he's gonna, he's going to be able to do them and it will be easier for him to do them um, with, with this atmosphere that he's created and with the, with the coalition that he's created.

(00:23:49)

Danny: Finally I mean, I mean you have to go and I, there's a lot I'd like to explore. You know he, he goes through a two-year process of political campaigning enunciating his positions and suddenly, almost out of nowhere this financial crisis comes and socks him and everyone else in the head and suddenly a lot of the ideas, you know a lot of the things he wants to do there's no money to do them. He's in a disaster. He is in a crisis. He is in a depression potentially. Does that change the game?

(00:24:22)

Hendrick: Well, the financial crisis and, the incipient depression um, changes the game but not necessarily in the way that everyone seemed to assume the beginning. Remember when the crisis hit during the campaign, what the, what the establishment journalists, the question they were asking was always well 'what you going to give up now? Doesn't this mean you can't have uh-health-insurance? Doesn't it mean you can't do things your promising to do?' And actually that's not at all clear. It's as likely or even likelier that, that uh, the fact that there's nobody thinking now about, about trying to, trying to close the budget deficit. In fact a figure like oh 300 billion, 400 billion doesn't seem like so much given what's being spent on, on bailouts. So that opens the door to, to big change and then the simple fact of an extraordinary crisis -- you know the American political system is incredibly sluggish. We have, we have majorities in this country and always have for just the same kind, of um, of safety net programs that they have in Europe. But our political system is too sluggish to deliver them. The exception is when there's some huge emergency. So this is the, the New Deal happened in the midst of, of uh, of the last Great Depression and the new New Deal could happen in the midst of this one.

Danny: Just there is one other thought I just had for something important doing-

(Danny's hand appears in frame)

Eric: Be careful with your hand.

Danny: Are we out of time?

Eric: No. No we have time. Just your hand –

(00:26:00)

Danny: I've been working on the financial crisis and one of the things that puzzles me in a way is that very few media outlets warned us about this. It seems like there was more financial journalism and TV stations, CNBC and Bloomberg you know and etc. and so forth, but very little critical examinations of the practices that we're now learning about. The Bernie Madoffs, the derivatives the Ponzi schemes and the like. Why do you think it is? What does that say to you about our, our financial journalism, reporting?

(00:26:31)

Hendrick: Well TV financial journalism particularly the um, the business networks um, are sort of like the sports networks. You know they're really there for, they're for, they're for a niche audience that is invested in more ways than one. And the idea that the stock market is a wonderful game and its, its gonna, you're going to win not lose when you play it. And so outliers who say, you know that everything looks great right now and the value of your house doubled last five years but, this is going, this is going, this is heading for the cliff. Unless you -- that's, that's an unwelcome opinion, an unwelcome view and when there is no -- when the numbers aren't there to prove it um, who pays attention? This was a, this was a case where everybody had an interest in, in um, in keeping the bubble going - either because they didn't know it was a bubble or because they knew damn well it was a bubble but um, but their quarterly earnings statements told them better stick with this, figure out, you know don't get out just yet. Get out a little bit later, a little bit later, a little bit later and um, so I think that's, that's what happened. (00:27:57) You can't rely on, you can't rely on um, on cable television as your guide to reality. If there was reporting that, that, if there was reporting that um, that pre-figured this collapse you're not going to find it on cable television. You might find it in a, in a long piece in the Wall Street Journal somewhere or in a, in a, in a piece in business week but though -- that kind of journalism by its nature cannot grab the public by the throat and grab the government by the throat and tell them you've got to change right now.

Danny: Big failure you know?

(00:28:37)

Hendrick: It is a big failure. I don't know what- it is a big failure and I don't know what can be done about it because it seems to be, it seems to be kind of built into the DNA of the way the news media operate and are organized not because they are owned by big corporate behemoths that somehow want to take us over the cliff. You know they don't, they don't want a depression either but the rewards and punishments, the daily rewards and punishments for doing some kinds of reporting are, are, the rewards are so much greater for this kind of reporting and the punishments for that kind of reporting. No wonder we only get a certain kind of reporting.

Danny: Could you say that...

(00:29:16)

(End of the segment 1)

Segment 2

(00:00:00)

Danny Schecter: --Like the war in Iraq they're embedded, but embedded in a kind of corporate culture in its assumptions, financial culture.

HH: Yeah, you could say that they were embedded in the institutions, like the embedded reporters in Vietnam, and that goes two ways. You could say that business journalism was in bed with, or embedded, in the institutions, the way that war correspondents were embedded in the units in Iraq, but you know, that can go both ways. You have a kind of Stockholm Syndrome, you adopt the point of view with whom you're embedded with on one hand, on the other hand, you are seeing it, it's coming before your eyes, the reality is coming before your eyes, whether you're reporting it or not, so you can get the kind of reporting we got in Iraq, early, and then you get the kind later, like in Dexter Filkin's book "The Forever War," and George Packard's book, lots of books.

(00:01:30)

So it's the way that the great reporting on the Iraq War has all been between hard covers, and maybe the odd magazine piece. But not TV and not...daily newspaper reporting, either.

DS: Okay, good, I don't want to keep you. Thank you very much, I think it looks great.

(00:01:35)
[*Interview ENDS*]

(00:01:30)
[*Tape ENDS*]

David Fenton Interview

(00:00:30)

David: You have your permission to use this interview anyway you like. I'm David Fenton and I run Fenton communications. We are a public interest communications firm in New York, Washington and San Francisco.

Danny: David you got a not either had to change her chair or you can't move around. And looking at me not the camera.

David: All right.

Danny: You've been part of move on. What role, tell us about move on. What is move on? You know explain the 727. Explained that it wasn't part of the Obama campaign but it mounted a major campaign for Obama.

(00:01:10)

David: Well I'm a consultant to move on. I'm not part of move on. But I've been involved in move on's strategy and growth for about six years. Move on is the largest progressive democracy organization in the country. It has 5 million online members. It's been growing very rapidly and it played a very major role as an independent organization in both endorsing Obama and delivering large amounts of money and volunteers to the campaign.

Danny: Did the Obama campaign control move on or did move on make its own decisions?

David: No it's fully independent. The Obama campaign had nothing to do with it and didn't even know what move on was doing and that's also the legal set up in this country. We were not even allowed to talk to them and we didn't.

Danny: What were some of the -- what was the impact do you think move on had in the election of 2008?

(00:02:10)

David: Well I think that the tactics online that move on pioneered in the Internet fundraising and organizing are, that those tactics and that growth of online activity is why Obama won. He couldn't have won without it. He took and his campaign took the methods that move on pioneered and utilize them in a major major way. Through their own e-mail and online activity. But move on specifically delivered, move on members delivered \$80 million in contributions to the Obama campaign and um, and many hundreds of thousands of volunteers to make phone calls to knock on doors to turn out the vote calls swing voters, all in a semiautomated online system that is quite unprecedented. I think that historically the main significance of the growth of the Internet in politics is that it has broken the grip of large dollar donors to the Democrats. (00:03:21) And now the Democratic party and its candidates have the potential of a massive grassroots truly Democratic fund-raising base and that has made all the difference and I think will make a continued difference going forward. Also and second to the money the ability to massively organize um, volunteers to go into the streets to knock on doors. I mean move on was having parties where people would get off their computers lists of voters to call in Ohio and use their phone, their cell phones at the party to call them and say you know you should turn out you should vote for Obama.

Danny: It's a new kind of community organizing.

(00:04:06)

David: Yeah it's an institutionalized mass level automated technological community organizing that has never existed before and um, it is very very powerful force and, the fact that the organization grew so much -- I think at the beginning of the campaign move on had about 3.2 million members and now has 5 million members. This force is incredibly important now to help Obama get accomplished what he wants to do.

Danny: Talk to me about that

(00:04:39)

David: But I just want to make that distinction one more time. It, it is primarily the tactics and technologies and methods that move on pioneered that elected Obama, not so much move on itself. That, they contributed a great deal directly in this campaign, but they were the predominant force.

Danny: Why is it important for this grassroots movement, the citizens movement, move on and all the other groups to stay active now that Obama's been elected? There would be a tendency among some to say okay we achieved our goal, we put Obama in the White House lets go back to sleep.

(00:05:21)

David: Well that would be a big mistake because the um, the health insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, the fossil fuel oil and coal companies, the financial industries, they are all going to be massively pressuring Obama not to do much of what he wants to do and they're going to be organizing public opinion and lobbying Congress and throwing as many obstacles in the way of his agenda as they possibly can. So if we leave it to them, the wonderful people Obama's hiring are to have a much harder time accomplishing what they wanted to. You know there's a famous story right after Franklin Roosevelt was elected for the first time a group of progressive leaders went to see him and said what they'd like him to do and Roosevelt turned to them and said I agree with you on everything now make me do it. So there has to be a continued, very strong grassroots lobbying campaign and I think that uh, Obama as a community organizer in the Olinsky mold knows this very well and it will be very interesting to see how the Obama campaign apparatus, um, how David Plouffe and them use their massive e-mail lists to mobilize people in support of their agenda. It will be very interesting because no one's ever tried to use that kind of effort to govern. It's always been to campaign or to oppose. And you know what will be the limits of that? There will certainly be a need for outside groups to do a whole lot because there are things that the president can't lead, that the president has to follow as well as things that the president has to lead.

Danny: Move on took a lot of flack from the right. I mean move on has sort of been demonized in some circles. Tell me about that.

(00:07:08)

David: Well if you're effective and get demonized by them. So, it's a good measure of effectiveness. I think that, the right used to being the dominant financial player in politics. And also um, accustomed to having in the last 40 years a great deal of dominance over the delivery of information to the public. So here their dominance has been broken. Um, one, Obama can go outside the public financing system and raise more money than Republicans and, and do it from 50, \$75 donors. Not exclusively but largely. And the um, move on and the other online groups can now engage in direct discussion with millions of people in the public sphere without the filter

of the media and can do it in a two-way fashion. They feel very threatened and I think they should.

Danny: Speaking of which, you know the media for the most part covered this campaign the way they've covered every campaign. Kind of in a confrontational you know a partisan way. You know....

David: Horserace

Danny: ...the Republicans say this. The horserace. They didn't seem to even recognize what was actually happening can you tell me about that? I mean you're a media observer as well. How did, how did all this happen and go undetected beneath the radar of all these media organizations?

(00:08:37)

David: Hey how did you know the financial crisis happen undetected -- all these media organizations. You you you you know, the information world is changing very rapidly. I mean take in 2004 um, when the Swift boats attacked John Kerry his media advisers told him he didn't need to worry because it was just coming from these bloggers. Well it turned out that those bloggers were very powerful and made that whole thing very effective and it didn't go away it dominated the campaign. So they are slow to recognize change. You know all entrenched systems are slow.

Danny: To say the media is slow to explain it to me.

David: The media is slow---

Danny: Start again with this sentence. Explain to me about the role of the media starting with incorporating my question in your response.

(00:09:25)

David: The media misses a lot until it becomes very well established. They're not good at spotting trends early in fact there are the very late to the party. Um, you know newspapers are dying because they haven't succeeded in creating the right online presence. That's a pretty good indicator of how behind everybody is. So, and I think also—

Danny: Can you tell me this again? I'm sorry. But I'm trying to shape a response that incorporates two things. This critique and the coverage of the 2008 campaign especially Obama campaign. In other words partly a missed all this activity and that's why I think you know why Obama won. I don't think they're really kind of understood that. So can you tell me that? Can you tell me about the role of the media and how it impacted the 2008 campaign, the Obama campaign?

(00:10:18)

David: I think the media missed what was the real story that was going to elect him, this grassroots empowerment over the Internet and they don't understand this and there are late to it and they just don't get it. They missed it. I, and you know there use to they're very centralized media system where the views of a few pundits basically create public opinion and that's no longer the way it operates. They're used to having the majority of the audience to themselves. Well their audience share has become very fractured and smaller. Um, and I think that there's a built-in elitism that distrusts the notion of real democratic grassroots action. That's not what these highly paid people tend to take seriously.

Danny: Excellent. Um, advertising. More money was spent on advertising in 2008 in political campaigns and probably in the history of the world. Okay? (Laughing) what, what, what worked, what didn't work you think? I mean Obama created in a way his own media. He didn't seem to trust the mainstream media or even the traditional, you know with his own longform programming and on, tell me about that. How did that shape up and move on's role in it?

(00:11:38)

David: Well I think that the, Obama's ability to go direct to what was it, a list of 12 million people with its own video messages his campaign directors own video messages, that that was very unprecedented. So there was a core group that was very large that was getting direct information from them and then replicating that through the population and that's never happened before. As for traditional advertising I think that, there were very few iconic images that really stood out through the campaign. I think Obama accomplished his media projection more through the debates. It was really at the moment in the financial crisis that he was projecting such an air of calmness and deliberateness and authority compared to this frankly very hotheaded opponent of his McCain who was all over the place and extremely emotional that I think that that's what clinched it for him. No question. But if you try to think about the Obama campaign's advertising, it's hard to remember anything that really stood out. There were some independent efforts that I think stood out. One that we were involved in was the so-called Alex ad. Have you seen it? Um, it's a mother with a baby talking as in a youtube video postcard to McCain saying this is Alex John McCain and you know he likes to chase the dog and uh, when you say that you're willing to stay in Iraq for a hundred years John McCain were you counting on Alex because if you are you can't have him. And so you know the ads that I think worked the best had a direct an emotional appeal. Um, there were ads in Ohio, um, that were, they were were looking at that were done in Michigan. But it's not like the kind of year in the 1980 Reagan campaign with the bear in the woods and it's morning again in America. They didn't have anything that good.

(00:13:42)

Danny: Just you know finally for Barack Obama. The man came out of virtually nowhere. I mean obviously he had a history, you know he was at the 2004, you know um, convention and he electrified it. He wasn't totally unknown but nobody gave him a chance at becoming President of the United States. He was dismissed. He was written off. How did this guy turn this around? What was it about him and about this moment and about this campaign that put Obama you know so far ahead?

(00:14:14)

David: Well he's a hell of a good organizer and he out-organized everybody in the caucus states. But I think primarily it was the combination of that and his ability to use the Internet to raise tons of money and communicate directly with his supporters and create his own image. If he had just been a good community organizer and he didn't acc- have access to the Internet he wouldn't have won. So it was a combination of both.

Danny: And also his narrative. I mean the man, I mean let's, whether or not he is, he's not a traditional black American. He comes from a blended type of family. But he's black. I mean most people including many blacks didn't think you know that he could make it. Some thought he wasn't black enough. Some thought he was, he was too black or that there was no way America was ready for a candidate like this huh? Wasn't that a big challenge?

(00:15:08)

David: Yeah I didn't, I still don't believe it. Um, I wasn't sure I would ever live to see a black president in the United States of America. I was very skeptical. Well I think that he's a rock star and he's brilliant and he say great organizer and he had the Internet but I think also the financial

crisis and his response to it was critical. I've heard somebody say, you know, I'm not sure these um, white people would have voted for them as much if they weren't so worried about their money. So when the financial crisis hit and people looked at McCain and they looked at Obama and they said well you know maybe we better get over this race thing. I think that's part of what happened.

Danny: Perfect. Thank you. That's great.

(00:15:53)

End of interview.

Interview with OBAMA GIRL (Amber Lee Ettinger) and Ben Wallace

(00:01:11)

Amber: Well it all happened last May of 2007. Ben Wallace had seen my website and some work I had done and shot me an e-mail randomly and said you know I have a funny project if you're interested in working on it and we met each other at a Starbucks and he played me the song which was written by himself and Lea Kaufman who is the singer. And I absolutely love the song. I loved the concept. And he said you know you're going to just be kind of having fun singing and dancing about this guy. Are you into it? And I said of course. So a few weeks later we shot the video.

Danny: And how was Obama doing then in the polls? How well was he known?

Amber: Obama was polling at about 11% when we did that video. So we shot it at the end of May and cannot the middle of June.

Danny: And then what happened?

(00:01:57)

(00:02:19)

Amber: Well people kind of couldn't put their finger on it. They didn't know, well did Obama put me up to this? Was I this crazy girl with this infatuation about the guy.

(00:02:19)

Amber: Well people kind of couldn't put their finger on it. They didn't know, well did Obama put me up to this? Was I this crazy girl with this infatuation about the guy. Like where did this come from? It kind of just 82 people out of the water. I didn't expect that to happen. I knew it was a cute idea. I need was really really excited for it to come out but I absolutely no idea it was going to become what it became.

Danny: Were you into Obama? Were you interested in this campaign? Were you wanting to help in a way? Were you part of the campaign?

Amber: I had known about him because I had seen them on OPRAH. And I had liked him. I thought he was very intelligent, very charismatic. He appreciated his work ethic and I thought of course I'll sing about them. I'll definitely sing about this guy. ...

We got so much positive feedback from Obama supporters. People just like loved it and were like writing us and e-mailing us nonstop about it. Obama had come on the news and said that his daughters had seen it and they were kind of confused. Who, you know what is this video? We didn't make the video for six or seven year old to understand but it was just him being kind of you know a good parent and just watching out for what his kids are watching and when Michelle saw it she pretty much just said whoever has a crush on my husband more power to them. You have to be like that.

Danny: She wasn't offended?

(00:04:18)

Amber: I don't think she was offended. I think she got were doing and I think they both liked it. I hope they both liked it. (Laughing)

And we just want to make people laugh and in turn we got people involved in politics because they were able to see the video and watch him in a different way and feel like this is something interesting and I want to get involved in. But they saw it because it was funny and that's why they it watched it.

but I don't see the video is being too sexy. I just don't. I'd felt like it was funny and dorky and I mean yeah I am in a bikini but I used to model swimsuits for years before this. I am so used to being in a bikini but I get it. I get what people say.

Danny: Come on Amber.

Amber: That it is –

Danny: You know you are sexy.

Amber: I just, I just feel like it's dorky sexy and you know there is, I think it's cool. I think it's funny. It got people's attention.

Danny: That's not dorky sexy.

Amber: I've had some of the people tell me that my video has helped him get elected and that just blows me away. It just blows me away because I do feel like I was part of this election just because I have made, we have made like 30 plus videos for him. I feel like I know him. And I've never even met him but I'm always in a video next to him so I feel like I know him. I feel like I was a part of this in that way but he had a great campaign on its own and he did amazing and he had a great team behind him

BEN—HOW BIG WAS IT

Ben: I mean the Obama video was big from the standpoint of being seeing a lot. It was seen online over 20 million times. When you add all the TV stations it was seen over 100 million times. I think even more than that it became significant because it became part of the story of this election. Particularly in the role that the Internet played so when people talk about how Obama one to talk about him using the Internet effectively but they also talk about how his supporters use the Internet effectively so it's just been crazy to see the video itself appear in museums. It's in music videos by Coldplay and other bands it's in Michael Moore's book. It's been discussed on everything from CNN to CNBC and MSNBC. And you know that to me has been something which I didn't anticipate.

Danny: do you think it's because sex sells in part?

(00:09:43)

Ben: I think with this video the thing that made it work was that it was user generated at a time when people were looking for ways that the Internet would affect this election. So the fact that it was different, that it was a girl singing about a presidential candidate to a pop song distributed online was I think what initially made it a story. But then what kind of kept it going actually was much more developing you know all these different Obama girl videos is where she battled against Giuliani girl and where she went up against you know McCain girl and eventually she did video with Mike Raverel and Ralph Nader and you know it gave us an opportunity to kind of create a character online which is something that you know sometimes can be more fun than doing it through mainstream media.

Danny: and no one paid you to this? The Obama campaign didn't come to you and commission this? They were as surprised as anyone else.

(00:10:41)

Ben: Right. Yeah, no. I paid for the video out of my own pocket and a lot of people when we first put out the video thought Obama pay for it. Some people thought Hillary Clinton campaign paid for it and thought it would be damaging to Obama and it eventually, you know became a big part of the website barelypolitical.com.

Danny: So Amber, you fell in love with Obama but have a lot of your viewers fallen in love with you?

(00:11:59)

Amber: (laughing) I think I have a lot of fans yeah. Yet I have a lot of fans. They're sweet and I love them.

Danny: Any proposals of marriage?

Amber: What's that?

Danny: Any proposals for marriage?

Amber: I got a few proposals for marriage definitely.

Ben: A lot.

Danny: Any appointments to the new administration?

Amber:No. I wish.

KEY POINT

(00:13:05)

Ben: Right well that's true. I mean we definitely get a lot of people that you know send us e-mails when is your next video coming out? Obama needs the help or stop making videos you're killing him. You know we got kind of both. But yeah it's something that I think looking back on it um, you know feels like it was part of a very big story of the 2008 election which is individuals can actually you know have an impact in small ways, in ways they couldn't before online video.

Interview with Nadine Hack

(00:00:00)

Danny: Can you introduce yourself to us and do we have your permission to use this interview for a film on Barack Obama?

Nadine Hack: Yes, I'm Nadine Hack and you have my permission to do this film on Barack Obama.

D: Ok. Barack Obama seems to have come out of nowhere in a way, you know almost like a hurricane out of the mid west. And he's now as we speak our president elect. But you met him early on. Can you tell us a little bit about that? When did you first meet him? What were your impressions?

NH: Hum first I wouldn't use the image of hurricane. (Danny: Ok well) Because I think everything about him is very grounding.

Danny: OK

NH: And I think of an important part of why he's drowned so many people to him.

But I met him when he first ran for, he was in a primary race, he was a state senator. He was in a primary race for the Senate seat that he currently occupies. And hum my husband, Jerry Dunphy and I have long been involved in supporting minority candidates, women's candidates, people who wouldn't typically get the type of support that white-male candidates easily can get for a wide range of reasons. And so we became involved in his, in supporting his candidacy for the US Senate. And in the process of doing so I had the opportunity to meet him several times. From then on it was just so obvious that this was not only a deeply intelligent human being with extraordinary charisma, but somehow it came through at the beginning and it sustains through out, I very rarely at the end of a campaign can say I feel as good about my candidate in fact I feel better about my candidate than I did at the beginning. And everything that Barack Obama did during his entire first Senate campaign and then presidential campaign made me feel reassured that he was who I sensed he was at the very beginning, which was honest. We've been involved in politics since the early 1960's; my husband is a little bit older than I am, so he's been involved in political campaigns dating back to Adlai Stevenson. I have a way of sensing person's authenticity and I really got the sense of what you see is what you get. It wasn't another person who emerged after the event, who treated his staff differently.

(00:03:30)

D: I think it's kind of hard almost for a politician to be him or herself given the pressures that they are under, the need to please media, find funders, different constituencies he seems to have been consisting throughout.

NH: Yeah, he really..That's why I chose the word grounded, which I think, hasn't been explored as much as the kind of "Wahoo the power that he has" that he really does. He excites people. Everytime the media would say something like he is exciting young people, he's exciting black people and I was going wait my husband is 73 and I'm just like a little over decade behind him, he's exciting all the white people. So there was that excitement factor but he's very grounded.

(00:04:27)

D: So in that period he had been in the State legislature in Illinois, now he's making a move for the Senate of the United State, he's a fresh man senator a kind of, you know he had been known because..but he wasn't known that widely, what was he like then? I mean what did you see back then that kind of got you attached to him in a way?

NH: Well that's the point somehow it was clear from the moment I met him and it never change: here is a remarkable transformational leader like... There was something about his capacity to connect. I'll just give you two very brief stories from during that campaign. While he was at..hum an event, an early event, where I was part of.. I was in a small room with people had help organize the event, before he went to the bigger room with the larger number of people, he was talking to me and there were other people in the room who were far wealthier, far more famous, had celebrity statues in one way or another. When he talked to me his eyes were not flitting

around like “ok I’m talking to you but like your not the most important person...” he really was like so with me when he spoke to me. And answering my questions, asking me questions. Jerry was not with me at that event and I had brought a copy of Dreams of My Father with me and I said could you sign it. And before I even had a chance to say “I’d like you to sign it to me and to Jerry” he said “Do you want me to write it to you and to Jerry?” and he had connected to me and stayed connected to me. And when he went up to the next person they had that same kind of feeling. And now fast-forward. Post the campaign. He did something so high classed, I’ve never seen it done in all the years that I’ve been involved in campaigns. He hosted a lunch for people who had helped him. It was a small lunch hum, it was in a high restaurant in a private room. He didn’t ask us to do a thing. It was not one of those “come to this lunch so I can thank you and” he just literally thanked us. And talk to each person.

(00:07:36)

D: Do you think he was as amazed by this as so many of his supporters? Not amazed that you know he pulled it off but that you know that this would be even possible. Or do you think he was more confident?

NH: Well you know those beautiful lines that Will.I.am took and create that magnificent video “Yes We Can”, which no matter how many times I watch it I still weep and hum one of so many home created. Well I guess Will.I.am’s one was not exactly home created, it was made a little bit more professionally but he takes Barack Obama’s words and the improbable journey of me being here, I don’t think that’s the exact wording, but he I believe always recognize this is highly improbable, and yet so what this is a moment to sees. And for me I think... and I think the same is true for Jerry coming from a time when we were activists and for the early 1960’s and throughout the 60’s and unlike many people who said “oh I did my stuff in the 60’s and then I made my money and now that I’m older I want to look for something more meaningful” happily Jerry and I have stayed engage very fully for that time but I’m thinking back to that time and I certainly was a very young woman – Jerry was a little bit older – there was an improbable belief that we actually could make an impact and Obama has resuscitated that kind of feeling among people of all ages and all sorts of life., that things can be better. We can make them better.

(00:09:47)

D: Now we should tell people a little bit about Jerry. He was too modest to be interviewed. I don’t do that. Speak to Nadine, he said.

NH: Yeah he always does that. He always stays in the back of the room.

D: But he comes from a very engaged Irish family, New Hampshire, hotel chain owner. And yet he played a role in the Kennedy campaign didn’t he?

NH: hum hum yeah

D: and with the Kennedy family and he seems to be somebody who everyone in that world respects tremendously.

NH: Yeah well it’s hard to talk about Jerry without talking about Jerry’s family. Jerry is number 11 of 12 children as her mother carried 15 children to term. She joked that she met her husband on Labor Day and labored ever since.

And Jerry and his siblings are a remarkable, remarkable family. The Dunphy family. Jerry is Irish-catholic. I’m Russian-Jewish. Our religious wedding ceremony was performed by Desmond Tutu an Anglican who performed it in (?) so whatever God believes in was covered. But when people would ask me was it hard for you as a Jew to marry a catholic. I said Jerry was a catholic and I was an ibrahim Jew. We both believed that our faith in God meant service to humanity.

(00:11:35)

D: Now Jerry you know is kind of a very canny despite his being self-offensing (???)

NH: Totally.

D: He’s a very canny political operative. In other words he has a sense, a six sense maybe about which political leaders are going to emerge and really make a difference. He was often early in supporting them, wasn’t he? Tell me about that because he was early in supporting Obama, wasn’t he?

NH: He was very early, I mean he was... before Obama decided to run for president, Jerry was sending out emails promoting Obama's presidency and every day since he was probably the recipient of those incredible messages that he was just sending. He was so excited. I gave him my entire database; my e- contacts to add to his e-contacts because he was just like pumping it out around the world. And it was fascinating because the responses that would come back. He would send out an email describing something Obama had just said or done, and he would get response. He got one from Harrison Wolford, when he was in North Vietnam with his grandson taking his grandson on a trip and said "this is so moving" and then he response to Jerry's for an incredible, with his own feeling of why he was so inspired by Obama and then Jerry would send that to the campaign and the campaign would say "could you find out, could we use the Wolford piece and distributed it?" Then Wolford would say yes and Ted's Harrison, and all kinds of people would response and actually in Ted Harrison case he had initiated his own endorsement and then Jerry like just took that and just broadcast it to everybody.

(00:13:23)

D: Jerry is like a New Englander. I mean he knows and knew every politicians and he knew the Kennedy's.

NH: Let me describe a little bit not just the Kennedy relationship, but the kind of whole democrat New England.

End of part 1.

Part 2

(00:00:00)

D: So we were talking about the Dunphy. The Dunphy are a New England democratic family.

NH: Yeah Jerry is 73. He's number 11 of 12, so his older siblings are no longer with us. If they were alive they would be like a 100. But his older brother Bud Dunphy formed the Young Democrats of New Hampshire in either the late 40's or the early 50's. Now forming the Young Democrats of New Hampshire at that time was really the equivalent of forming a chapter of the Young Trotsky of America. New Hampshire was such a red state, such a republican. William Laub the Manchester Union Leader used to run headlines where the cover headline print would be in red ink when they wrote about either doctor Martin Luther King or Bobby Kennedy. You know the red pink commy, and so, that's later when they were writing about Doctor King but at the time each of Jerry's brothers and so Bud was actually Jack Kennedy's North East region campaign manager, for his presidential race he had worked on his congregational race. Jack Kennedy announced his candidacy in a Dunphy hotel. Bob who is another one of Jerry's brothers played a role in Bobby Kennedy's campaign and at that time campaigns were not as sophisticated and complex in structures so that you have the kind of the sub-coordinate.. I mean they were covering the all New England region and it's not just with the Kennedy's I mean everybody who was either a senator, a governor, a congress member from anywhere in New England, the Dunphys at some point or another very early in their carrier...George Michel, Ken Curtis you could go through the list they were there at the jump start of all those people's political carriers.

(00:02:27)

D: and yet the Kennedy's, I mean Teddy Kennedy, embracing Barack Obama made a really big difference, didn't it? Tell me about that.

NH: It was huge and it was so exciting for us when Teddy came out and when Caroline came out hum...because they..hum...it was an affirmation of what we were seeing. I just have to say that Ted Kennedy is our champion senator on every social issues of the last 40 years, that he's been championing every worker's rights, human rights, everything and...so we so admire him and him coming out as passionately as he did and as early as he did was a real validation of the kinds of

issues that we believe in could be handled by this person, Barack Obama were the same kind of hope Jerry and his brothers had about Jack Kennedy and their involvement in that campaign.

(00:03:50)

D: You know and yet in a way it was kind of gutsy because you know at that time Hillary was the favorite...

NH: absolutely

D: the Clinton people were dominant, the media had already given the election or at least the nomination to Hillary and here you were pointing to somebody who was not taken seriously.

NH: Right. One of the things about supporting progressive candidates is that...I have a long history of supporting people who haven't necessarily won elections as Jerry. There was a certain point in my life where I thought maybe I shouldn't endorse presidential candidates it doesn't seem to help, hum...So we were never deterred by choosing a candidate who we thought really was the great person at that particular moment in history to have an effect. I think no matter who supported anyone during, on either side of the isle (?) republican-democrat during the entire primary season, anybody watching how the world reacted, how Americans of every race, age, social economic background across the nation and how our fellow global citizens and countries around the world reacted to Barack Obama's election that night. I don't think any other person could have achieved it. I know that was a unique moment in history that only Barack Obama winning could have achieved and somehow Jerry and I saw that from the beginning and knew this was the right person to support.

(00:05:43)

D: Now you know there has been a lot of speculation and discussion about his strategy, 50 states strategy, media campaign, blablabla...but there seems to be at its base a grassroots mobilization. They really never made it on the prime time TV. It was really you know kind of in a sense an extension of his experience as a community organizer.

NH: Totally.

D: He created a community. Tell me about that.

NH: It was so thrilling to experience; you know we did a lot of work in New Hampshire. We were based between New York and New Hampshire. We have a home in New Hampshire and an apartment in NY and we also did traveling on behalf of the campaign, we were in Main and we were in other places. But primarily our experience in New Hampshire seeing people organized on their own because the campaign using all of the cutting hedge social networking e-technology of communicating to people, and creating a cyber space of interaction but they gave people the autonomy and the authority and the directive to take what they were creating in their cyber space creative community and bring it out to their real life communities. And it was amazing to see... I can't tell you how tiny the town we live in New Hampshire is. Jerry actually is from New Hampshire. I'm from NY. Jerry still votes in New Hampshire. I still vote in NY. The town where Jerry votes, there are 231 voters, there was a campaign office, there were campaign activities, there was a campaign office in the next town, they were local organizers of every age and New Hampshire is a really white white white state. They were white people of every age and every background. The people who worked as road cleaners, and people who worked as teachers and lawyers. It was the full...we live in a area where there is a ? result, so there are very wealthy people and then just on the hedge of the ski (?) result there are people who live in trailers. And there were human beings from all these eco-social communities meeting together like for months and months and creating activities; come to my home, come to this meeting. It was breath taking.

(00:08:31)

D: And what about younger people? I mean sometimes people have been through the 60's you know kind of despaired because they don't feel younger people get it or they're active. They seem to have change this year. Tell me about that.

NH: Yeah, well I actually just disagree with a lot of the people from the 60's who are very down on younger people because since I continue to do social justice organizing work professionally and with all my time, I meet so many young people who are doing remarkable work, work that

inspires me, work that actually gets me to keep me doing what I'm doing and not feel depleted and demoralize. So I've never had the belief that young people are not doing anything. What the Obama campaign did was it gave all those young people, those who are ready for doing things. It gave them a really clear cut issue and activity to organize around and then it gave those who hadn't yet become involved a sense of hope and a reason to be engaged and a structure that they could easily tape into and also it was so brilliant all of the You tube you know the tools that young person use. I mean email is like the old fashion of communicating. Right from day 1 they were communicating in a way that made any young person feel like "wow I can do this".

D: And Barack understood this?

NH: Barack understood this. Something that I always say to people because I've been through a lot, I've been through every presidential campaign since 1964. I've been through a lot of other political campaigns since that same time frame and often I've heard people say things like "you know, his staff isn't really doing him a good service or her staff are saying things that she would never say or talking about different candidates over many decades and I've worked closely enough with enough campaigns to say it's always the candidate who sets the tone for the campaign. Whatever the staff are doing, however the staff are acting, it's because the candidate is that way, it's because the candidate wants it that way, if he candidate doesn't like that the candidate would stop that, the candidate would change that. The candidate would not allow people on their campaign... so don't moan the poor candidate who is sabotaged by their staff. The candidate sets the tone. So yeah he was really smart. I mean it was brilliant hiring one of the early campaign hirers to be someone who had basically designed the architecture I can't remember whether it is Facebook or Myspace.

D: Facebook.

NH: Facebook, that's what I thought. That was a brilliant move. But he understood it. This is a whole other reason why I'm excited about Barack Obama as our president is for...hum...beyond all the obvious reasons that people talk about, the history nature of his being our president elect, this is a real generational shift. This is a passing of the torch. This is a new generation. I'm thrilled by that. This is no longer us guys from the 60's.

(00:12:06)

D: Let's get back for a second to the world because I mean you've been very involved in South Africa, particularly in the liberation movements, president Mandela's election and all of the rest of this. How would you and Barack Obama went to South Africa. He went to Robert Island. How would you, what parallels would you draw there, what do you think he learn there? Did he ever talk about it?

NH: Well no I never had an opportunity to discuss that with him but I'm sure that he...let's take that back. Let's step back in history when...every single liberation leader or activists some of whom were leaders who I worked with and who Jerry worked with. Jerry and I each were involved in the anti-apartheid movement and other liberation movements throughout South Africa before we actually knew each other. We actually met through the anti-apartheid movement. But every person who I ever met told me stories about how when they were in prison, listening to the Ellen Jackson (?) tapes, reading the autobiography of Malcolm X, reading Martin Luther King's letters from a Birmingham Jail what kept them going and vice-versa when I would work as I did with civil rights leaders, Andy Young and other Reverend James orange people who surrounded Doctor King many many people those who are known...people from up north, they talk about how what was happening in South Africa motivated them. Harry brought Miriam Makeba and Humasikala, so there has been a synergy going on between the American civil rights movement and the black liberation movement in...throughout Africa for a very long time. And it reenact it itself once again during the Obama campaign. Particularly after that campaign, I mean Jerry and I chose at the moment when it hit 270, I said to him we have to get into a room where there aren't any other people, we need to be alone. This is like a sacred moment. So we were just the two of us together and when it hit 270 like so many other people both of us just started uncontrollably sobbing we were just holding each other alternatingly holding each other, and it was a better sweet sob. It was sobs of joy combined with sobs of all the people who hadn't been able to see this moment. All the people who gave so much of themselves, of their life for that moment and

while we were sobbing and holding each other my blackberry was going crazy. It was bipping every second and I chose not to look at it for about 45 minutes but when I finally got to my blackberry every form of emails, text message and voice mail was waiting for me and a large number of them came from South Africa. I think Desmond Tutu was one of the first. "Lea and I are here sobbing, thank you, thank you, thank you".

(00:15:47)

D: So people there saw in Obama in a way a continuity with their own struggle.

NH: Absolutely so many people said to me, South Africans, ?, several members of the Zulu family, of the Tutu family conveyed that this was our Mandela moment, they were reliving their Mandela moment.

D: Was it just a race thing, do you think?

NH: I think it's beyond race. I think obviously race is a central moment. You know when Jerry and I were working on the anti-apartheid movement we could never have a particularly...if you think back...and you did documentary work on what was happening there...if you think back on the horrific treatments of the apartheid government of black south Africans right through the late 80's. I mean horrific, horrible, we could never have imagined that we would be watching Nelson Mandela walk out of prison in 1991. It was just...if you had ask any of us in 1986-1987-1988 it just...it didn't seemed that we would see that, nor that we would see in 1994 an election where people got up at dawn and lines sneaked for miles and miles and miles for people to vote for the first time in their life and to not say that for...I think for everybody in South Africa it was an incredible moment of hope and liberation but certainly for black people in South Africa Desmond Tutu was 64 when he was casting his first vote of his life, a Nobel Peace Laureate. Nelson Mandela was casting his first vote and for black people in South Africa to be electing a black man as their president obviously that same pride and hope...it goes beyond being president. When we say in America anybody can be anything now there is none who can't believe that's true. For young black men, young black boys who have been hearing the same words that we've been saying for ever in America: "This is the land where you can achieve anything you have to see something to believe it and now there is something very profound to see. If you can be president you can be what you chose to be.

(00:19:05)

D: Nadine you've been around Barack and you've been around I assume Michelle as well.

NH: Yes, yes she is incredible. We love her.

D: Talk to me about them, about their kids.

NH: We are as excited about her to be first lady as we are about him being president because when we would meet and you have to remember this is an early primary season in New Hampshire when he was 36 points behind in the polls. So a Barack Obama event would be like 25 people in a hall in Littleton New Hampshire or 50 people. You know as it grew, it grew very fast. It grew like at lightning speed because the energy of these 25 people and those 40 people, the next time it was 400 people, the next time it was 4000 people. It was amazing. New Hampshire was driving crowds as the rest of the country was, that had never gathered. And it's cold in New Hampshire...well...hum...I mean...not in primary season so much but certainly by general election. But in those earlier days when they were slower numbers we actually did have an opportunity to talk to Michelle. Jerry had an opportunity to spend a whole...while Michelle was speaking at another rally, to spend a whole afternoon with Michelle's mother. He just came back so excited because the same word that I used about Barack Obama at the beginning "grounded" this is a really grounded family. She is a grounded woman. Her mother is a grounded woman. They are so down to earth, real! When you talk to Michelle and when you talk to Miss Robinson, they are completely authentic...they were so refreshing; they were so not the typical political spouse or typical political mother tried out for a photo open very consciously; they were just talking and they were talking so naturally, so comfortably and they were talking about very real things, what was happening to the girls. And what it was like to be traveling.

It was fantastic and it wasn't just that they were being real and authentic and grounded they were also really smart. Smart, smart, smart. It was great to...

(00:21:55)

D: But then there was a point I'm sure when you were in a hotel room, or an apartment or somewhere and you watch television...

NH: Yeah

D: And you saw Barack Obama diminished, you know accused of being a terrorist, a Muslim fanatic or whatever. What was your reaction to that? To the way the campaign...hum... what he had to deal with?

NH: Well I'm so glad that the campaign followed his directive of not responding, not dignifying it, not getting angry, not... because I certainly was getting angry. I was like "wait a minute, they can't say that about you" and a lot of us were really... Jerry who is the eternal optimist was never thrown by. Jerry was like Barack Obama. He was like don't worry, he's ok. Jerry never for one nano-second doubt it that Barack Obama was going to be the president.

D: Oh come on!

NH: No, I swear!

D: Really?

NH: I swear, never!

D: And you?

NH: Me? I went through like, up and down the anxiety. Right through Election Day, I'll tell you my Election Day moment anxiety. We were covering a particular county that we had been assigned to and we were in each of the towns of this county. And within that county, in which most of the towns had always been like totally republican and yet there were Obama volunteers everywhere, Obama everywhere. But one of the towns Plymouth New Hampshire is a university town. And so it's like...university and there is a hi and coffee shop in the university town and there is a woman working behind the counter at the hi and coffee shop in the university town, and she's even wearing an Obama button. And when I go in this coffee shop, she says to me the patron who has come just before me has told her – and she's asking me "is it true, I just, he just told me that he's not really a citizen, that he doesn't, that they took his passport away and he is not a citizen" – and my heart felt to my feet. I thought if the woman wearing an Obama button in the hi and coffee shop in the university town is believing...and what she's saying is that "well we heard it on TV so it makes you wonder". And when she said that I just...I can't say it on the film what I said because it was. You'll have to bip it out but I really freaked. And then I went out to the motor home because Jerry has this motor home, that is...28 foot motor home that he covers with complete, every inch of it with Obama signs that he'd been taking all over New Hampshire from the pre-early primaries season. It was funny because people always, at the early time in the primaries, people thought, when this vehicle pull out, of course Obama was going to step out because whatever motor home was covered with Obama signs...I come back and I tell him this story and he goes "hum don't worry everything's fine, he's going to win". No he never for a second doubt it. I did.

(00:25:01)

D: Ok. Well I think it's a great story. (Interruption – Speaks with Eric)

Tell me about the grassroots.

NH: Absolutely incredible, everywhere. I'll tell you what the grassroots campaign was. That was that was everywhere. And my little nine years old grandson was part of it. On that last day, that day that I'm describing in the motor home, my grand daughter and my grandson came and our daughter came and Tatiana, Gordon, Jerry, me and one of Gordon's friends Gabriella. So another, she's maybe 10-12 I don't know. Or maybe 11. I don't know how old these children are. But I know what mine are. But these were little kids and they were so...they were wearing their Obama tee shirt, they were running around. We were giving out hot coffee and hot chocolate to people on the corners. And I was trying to teach them a lesson in civic engagement. And I told them listen we're going to go across the street and offer the hot coffee and the hot chocolate, and the apples and the doughnuts. We were ? up to the people who are holding the McCain sign because it's really cold out here and we went across the street and I said you can tell we're obviously Obama's supporters but you know I really appreciate when people exercise the wonderful rate of freedom of expression that we have in this country and I'm happy that you're out here. "Would you like a hot chocolate, a cup of coffee?". There was only one McCain person who

said to me “is there a razorblade in that apple?”. And I said “we just gave it to Obama people across the street” but the third time we passed this McCain person was waving to us! And, so those were my grandchildren who got to experience. But everywhere we went from that first meeting in Littleton that I’m just describing to you which was so early in the primary campaign. I mean it was like May of the year before the primary. There were young people standing outside saying, “ok put this little sticker on you, line up over there”. It was gorgeous. It was really gorgeous.

(00:27:45)

D: And yet you know Obama lost the big primary in New Hampshire.

NH: Yeah

D: And he was interviewed about it and said “that’s the turning point” for him in the campaign. That’s what hocked him think through the strategy that he will have to pursue in the rest of...so is that lost, although he lost the state he seemed to have gain the (?).

NH: Yeah I think this is, he is a man who I keep coming back to this point of being grounded. He learns, he observes, he listens. I know a lot of the people who are his close policy adviser in various different areas of domestic and global policy. And he, every single one of them described to me how he sets up every interaction about every issue that he’s thinking about. He surrounds himself by a circle of people who have really diverse opinions and he pushes people to tell him the argument that is the exact opposite of what he believes and to debate it to the end and not to give up in the debate, to try to convince him of the rightness of their position. And he is not satisfied in preparing himself until he has listen to, responded to and understood fully what the rational of the argument of the other side is. That’s the kind of person I want leading my country.

(00:29:32)

D: Question? (Sound is too low).

NH: That is a great question. That is such a great question because never, never did I see any tension. And I’ve never experienced a campaign where there’s never tension. There were such encouragements. All this little campaign officers that I was describing to you in Campton and Plymouth, you just have to go to New Hampshire to understand the sides of the towns I’m talking about. Littleton. As a New Yorker perhaps I’m sounding patronizing when I’m talking about these towns but these towns are really little towns and there were paid staff and there were volunteers and some of them were just ? by volunteers. Human power by volunteers. I’m actually thinking of the captain officer...hum...in a wonderful woman who ran the office there (??? Not clear). And there were just no friction. People were just...it was like going into a humming machine, and there would be signs up on the wall, these big boards, who is going where, people sitting around in circles, coming up with decisions on how they were doing things. It just really empowered local people to do their thing. There was not this heavy endedness of some senior persons coming in from Chicago and say no you can’t do that. People were really given free ? to organize in a way... I mean I’m sure that if somebody was doing something horrifically horrible – which didn’t happened in any of the offices I was in – I’m sure that if anywhere in the country someone was trashing any of the other candidates that probably someone from the campaign would come and say that’s not how we run our campaign, that would be my hum... (Interrupted)

(00:32:06)

D: You started earlier by saying something about candidate setting the tone. Do you think this could be a “no drama Obama”? It’s important to you that he avoided the kind of...you know in New York we have a fight about which coffee shop to go to.

NH: Exactly.

D: Here it seems like he set a tone of kind of a good vibe.

NH: He really, that’s a perfect way to say it. A kind of a good vibe. He really set a tone of “we’re going to walk the walk, not just talk to talk”. If we are talking about working across party lines, if we are talking about working across ideologies, if we’re talking about there not being a red America and a blue America, there is the United States of America, then that’s how we have to behave.

(00:33:02)

D: I guess one last thing for somebody who has been a progressive and you know has watch the ? you know this diverse group of people many of them coming out of the center of politics, the Clinton administration. I mean there are a lot of people who were activists, supporters who were really ready to if not write Obama off but sort of very disappointed. How do you understand this?

NH: I think that Obama is going about this and the very thoughtful way that he went about his entire campaign. He wants to be effective. He's not abandoning his progressive agenda; he's talking very clearly at this moment as he's talking about a stimulus package of major, completely transformational stimulus package, not like the different bailout that are kind of happening but a well thought out that she had talked about pre this economic decline, right through his campaign a major investment and infrastructure and changing into a new technology, into building into America...he's not abandoning that for a moment and he's choosing people who know how to get things done. I do not for a moment feel disappointed. I will say I'm hoping and I have convey through appropriate sources that while he does this economic stimulus, I very much hope that gender stays center stage because the types of jobs so far described the building bridges and highways are tempt to be still male jobs. I'd like to see in that economic stimulus package that part of what rebuilding America is is also included in that stimulus package day care and family needs and training for women and for each women who is being paid to be a health care provider or a family care taker it liberates an other woman to get trained, to get that construction job of which pays of a much higher rate so I, that's one of the issues as a progressive civil rights feminist activist I'd like to see and I'm going to through up my hands and say he hasn't appointed enough women yet I'm giving up on him, no that's ridiculous. I'd like to see him appoint more women. I'd like to make sure, and I don't think it's just appointing women into positions that will make the difference. I think keeping that agenda awareness, the poverty, the face of poverty in America and globally is women and children. So there are still issues has a progressive that I hope he will address. I have not given up on him at all. I have a lot of faith in him.

(00:36:28)

D: Well thank you!

Question from Ryan (no sound)

NH: Oh that's a great question. I so hope the campaign and the presidency keeps and maintains this kind of very active social networking that happens both in cyberspace and also real time life community engagement. I think that what was a ? during this campaign in term of citizen activism was something that our country so desperately needs, that any healthy democracy needs, people's voices and everything that the transition team has done so far, all of the communications that have come up so far which are encouraging people to stay engage, give their input, join the kinds of groups, people could join all kinds of groups. I mean there are so many...pick the issue you care about, pick the region you care about. They offer people an opportunity to really engage were the engagement would resigned and it appears to me that they are offering that through the transition and encouraging and it will be very interesting to watch how you do that from the White House. How an administration I think his choice of valor and his viewing of what he sees the public ? on office hum...continuing that process will be very interesting to watch that and see how fully they staff that and how much they are able to keep that going. It obviously can't come all one directional but I very much hope the type of excited citizen engagement that we saw from college students, high school students to retirees who were working for Obama and working really for change. And in Obama they saw an agent of change. I hope that all of these people somehow will stay engaged and continuing to work for change because all of these different initiatives that he's talked about require profound policy changes, which involve legislative changes, which involve tradition changes. There are so many areas that people will have to keep an involvement. And I certainly as a community organizer locally and globally hope that this community organizer keeps community-organizing going.

Interview with Ben Barber, DEMOS

What did you see that was new in the Obama campaign in terms of youth involvement?

In 1984 I wrote a book called *Strong Democracy*, which made a strong case that even in an age of representation, an age of large national societies, it's possible to have a great deal more participation, engagement, civic energy in the political process. (00:00:27)

I said you can't have participation all the time, everywhere, but you may have some participation, some of the time, some places. And in fact in recent years we've seen, first in 2004 with the Howard Dean campaign, and I worked closely with Howard Dean on that campaign, we saw the beginning of involvement of young people directly in the campaign, but also through the World Wide Web. Through the Internet, Howard Dean had these meet-ups, people got together. The whole point of the web, the architecture of the web is horizontal, this way, not vertical. Broadcast media, this thing, this camera, you know. One person makes a film, everybody looks at it. In the Internet, we all talk to one another, it's like the telephone. It's called a point-to-point technology because we can all talk to one another. And that happened with Howard Dean. (00:01:08)

So Howard Dean had these meet-ups and people actually were more interested in talking to one another than they were in talking to the campaign manager. In fact in Iowa they were more interested in talking to one another than coming to the caucuses and voting (laughs) so Howard Dean, it turns out, that a lot of the people that attended the meet ups, didn't actually vote, unfortunately, and that got him in trouble and all. But the great thing was that it also involved a lot of people. (00:01:26)

The beneficiary of that legacy has been Barack Obama because Barack Obama's campaign has, uh, has really redoubled efforts to utilize new technologies, utilize the web, the Internet, and to engage young people in ways that don't just make them his followers, his supporters, but create a community, a network, among them so that they sense each other, sense the power that together they share. (00:01:57)

One of the great things about the campaign, and one of the reasons I think it brought so much energy to young people is young people weren't just working for him; they were working for one another, they were working for themselves and they were using new technologies to do that. And he, in a sense, just as Howard Dean moved it, if you start at zero, and Howard Dean, on a scale of 20, moved it to 6, you could say Obama moved it to 15, you know, he moved it way way along, and that of course continues today. (00:02:24)

There are websites of young people who are deeply involved in the campaign who talk to one another, and now it would be very interesting because now that Obama's President, they will find that websites and some horizontal campaigns of young people involved with him, now looking at him critically. And using the web to challenge him, to live up to what these young people believed he promised them and so on. So there is no question that this is the first campaign that fully utilized the web and the Internet in a way that Howard Dean had begun to, it's true for money-raising, too. (00:02:59)

He raised a lot of big bucks, but he raised an awful lot of those big bucks through small donations. Over half of his incredible campaign just came from small, web-based donations. So the web suddenly became an extraordinary, uh, machine, so powerful in fact for raising funds, that those of us like myself, sitting on the National Governing Board of Common Costs, which is interested in getting money out of politics, had to rethink it a little bit because we want big money, concentrated money, monopoly money, corporate money out of politics. But do we really want \$10 bills coming through the Internet from millions of people out of politics? Or is that actually the democratization of money in politics? And that was, in a way, the challenge that he put, so this is

an extraordinary seat change in terms of how things work politically, who could run and how they run, and Obama, uh, certainly, uh, will be known for that. (00:03:50)

When Obama started he was down 30% in the polls, and nobody in New Hampshire had met him, and yet the organizers were told to do what they thought was best. They weren't following a rule book and there were no orders from Chicago, it wasn't a top-down effort; it was very decentralized. It was encouraging people to be creative and take initiative.

Part of what it means to run a web-based, technology-based, a participatorily-based campaign, is to turn over a fair amount of responsibility to participants, not simply to see them as tools and instruments of a professional campaign staff, which is usually how people are treated in campaigns, but to see them as actually the seminal fountain of energy, of creative ideas and of real political work. (00:04:55)

And that's of course what happened in the Obama campaign. People were, who were part of the campaign, didn't feel that they were simply small cogs in a large wheel that is the larger political engine. Instead, they felt they were the driving pistons, they were the ones making it happen, and they were in fact making it happen. And that's why, whether it was in New Hampshire, or in Iowa, places where most people would have thought a black candidate from Illinois was not among the most popular candidates initially, suddenly he did so well. He did well because he brought with him, this extraordinary beehive of activity of worker bees that saw themselves, not simply as subsidiary to a professional campaign, but the essence of that campaign. (00:05:39)

And that was an extraordinarily effective way, and it also opened up American politics to people, you know, who haven't run before. The good thing about that, I've talked about American Idol. The good thing about the American Idol idea is that anybody could audition for American Idol and if they can get people interested, they can make a run at it. It's a little bit the opposite of what happened in New York State with Caroline Kennedy, you know, where Mrs. Clinton's seat, now, you know, most likely has been taken by somebody who has name and money and zero political experience. That's the bad side of American Idol, but the other side is the political process does open up to everybody. (00:06:19)

How was it possible for Barack Obama, who was up against more experienced and in some ways more sophisticated and professional, to manage to outstrategize and out-organize them?

Barack Obama was up against a lot of professional politicians and these were professional politicians who, uh, you know, had experience raising money and in winning. And how did that happen? Well it happened in part because we live in a deeply anti-political age. (00:06:58)

In fact, the fact is that nobody in the last years, starting perhaps back as Jimmy Carter, has won without running against Washington, and without running against politics. Carter, Reagan, exclude the first Bush, Clinton, second Bush and now Barack Obama; all but the first Bush positioned themselves, whether or not it was true, outside Washington politics. The anti-political candidate against things as usual. "Change we can believe in" has, in a way, been the mantra all the way back to Jimmy Carter. (00:07:29)

So in that sense, Obama was very much in a recent tradition in exploiting deep American cynicism about their political process and their politicians. That's why, for him, the biggest challenge was actually to conceal just how politically experienced he was. A lot of critics on the Republican side and Democratic said, "you haven't really got experience" and he would say, "right, bring it on, bring it on, say that more, because that's what we need to hear." If I had to talk about my 6 years in the Illinois Senate and my year or two in Washington, I become just another politician. (00:08:03)

I'd much rather be known as the community organizer fresh to American politics than the old hand in the Illinois Senate. So he played this deep anti-political sentiment that has been so current in American for 30 years, very much to his advantage. He won the anti-political sweepstakes.

** Begin Part 2 **

What kind of feedback did you get, in your travels around the work, and the hopes that people have about Obama?

The world awaits Obama, there's no question about it. Everywhere I go, everyone I talk to, the expectations are just sky high. And the sense that this is going to be a new kind of American President, a new face, a multicultural, a black face, a diplomatic face, an internationalist face of America is ever, so much so that you will certainly be disappointed. (00:00:44)

Expectations are so high, there's no way even if God won the elections, some people think He did, there's no way he can make good on those expectations. But the fact is, those expectations are so high, as they have been in the United States in part because of where we have been in the last eight years. (00:01:02)

The fact is we have lived with an administration that has brought America's reputation to an all time low. We have lived with an administration that has failed over and over again, to make good on its ideology, nevermind whether you like it or don't like it. The fact is it's failed. His policies and his ideologies have failed. Whether we talk about Abu Ghraib, whether we talk about Guantanamo, whether we talk about Iraq, whether we talk about civil liberties, whether we talk about immigration, whether we talk about health care, or whether we talk about the subprime economy and housing market. (00:01:32)

This is an abysmal failure and no President has has such low ratings at the end of his second term as this President now has today. So part of it is, if my labrador retriever Daisy were made President, expectations would be high because it is such a change, and a lot of this is not just where we are going, but what we are getting away from, not just for us but for the world. The world wants to be finished with Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld and the neocons. (00:02:02)

America wants to be finished with it, but now add to that, you have not just someone who is going to change all that, get us away from all that, but somebody who on top of it represents the new face of multicultural America because here's the great paradox about America today. There is no nation on earth as international, as multicultural, as open to the world, as full of the world. The world is here! We don't have to go to the world, the world is here in our population: 161 languages are spoken in the Los Angeles school system! We are an extraordinary multicultural country, yet we act like the wasp country of a few white Protestants we were in the 18th century. You know we pretend, sort of like this insulated country, you know sort of like perhaps Japan, we act like a monoculture. (00:02:48)

But we're not! And what Barack Obama does is pull the reality of who we've become: this open, tolerant, multicultural society. We pull it into the world. You know, with him, we pull this into the

world, and that, I think is something that will not disappoint the expectations of the world because in that, he can only manifest what America has become. (00:03:10)

You've been in Morocco, in North Africa, you've talked to a lot of African people. There seems to be a lot of feeling of identification in Africa with Obama. Nelson Mandela sent Obama a congratulatory letter. What do people in Africa and in the third world see in Obama that are exciting them?

It shouldn't surprise us anymore than when a Polish cardinal becomes Pope, or an American Catholic like John Kennedy becomes President, that people in Poland or in Ireland can get very excited. It shouldn't surprise us that people in Africa and the Middle East get very excited about an African American who has had some upbringing in Indonesia and whose middle name is Hussein, it shouldn't surprise us that there is a kind of pride, a kind of identification with that new American President. And that's a very good thing indeed and they should feel pride because that's what America is. (00:04:18)

America has been a nation where people who have fled the burdens of history in their own cultures have found not just a new life with the possibility of not just money but of power and a democratic representation, so we now have an African American who *does* represent the African continent, whose middle name is Hussein, who does represent the Middle East and the northern, uh, uh, northern Africa that's Arab and not, not black African. (00:04:45)

We have a President for whom those people can say, he looks like us, he has our name! America is now being led by someone who is elected by the American people, who looks like us, who has our geneology, who has our history. That's a good thing for America and that's a good thing for the world. (00:05:04)

Professor Larry Tribe Interview

(00:00:00)

LT: ...He came into my office before he took my class, he introduced himself, he said he was interested in some of the work I was doing in Constitutional law and then we had a very long conversation in which he was so unbelievably impressive, so brilliant, mature thoughtful, and well informed that I did something I have not done, either before or since, offered him right then and there I offered him the position of being my principle research assistant. Even before he began to study Constitutional law with me. Because it was evident that he knew so much, and was such a quick study, and listened so well, and had so much to say, that I clearly learned from him as well as teaching him and from that point on we had a very good relationship. He was my research assistant for well over a year working on some very challenging work. An article I was doing on what lawyers can learn from modern physics (00:00:58)

A book that I was doing on the clash of absolute values in the abortion context, the clash between the woman's claim to bodily integrity, and the interest in unborn life. And I've never really had a research assistant more impressive, he was just amazing in every way.

Rory O'Connor: What characteristics did he exude so that the very first time you saw him, it seems almost spontaneously you were convinced, what are those characteristics?

(00:01:28)

LT: Well, he was obviously a lot more mature than other students he thought deeply about problems that had already developed. A very well organized frame of reference. It was a frame of reference that was very pragmatic, and permeable to new information. He was clearly someone who did not have his mind stuck on things. He had a frame of reference but not set of doctrinaire beliefs. And he was sort of amazingly quick on the uptake. I would describe to him some of the puzzles I was trying to work through on some pretty intractable and difficult legal problems and he had as much to say as a colleague might say and here was a first year law student. So there was no doubt about his brilliance, no doubt about the depth of his preparation, his familiarity with American history, with American law, with the place of America in the world. It was very much like meeting someone who is going to be a fellow teacher of Constitutional law this was when he was a first year law student, its not that he knew everything or pretended to, I don't know everything, you now no one does, but he understood in a serious way how to ask probing questions about the place of law in American society, how law can be used to change people's lives. And he had a very well focused sense of why he was at law school. He was not biding his time, building up a resume, learning what he needed to know to make a buck on Wall Street, make a real killing and then go off and do something. He had already been a very effective community organizer, realized that he needed to know more about the law to be more effective. He had an intrinsic interest in the law as well. He was interested in it not just as a tool for helping people, though that was what primarily drove him. (00:03:25)

But he had an interest in, and a reverence for the integrity of the legal system. The rule of law the way the Constitution reflects American aspirations and it's very rare, certainly it's been rare in my life even though I've met a lot of very brilliant students, its very rare that you meet someone with that combination of qualities and then on top of that there was this personal magnetism and charisma that he was able to get on very well with other students, with staff around the law school, not in the least filled with himself, he was a person of enormous confidence but nothing approaching the egos you sometimes find in some of the brightest students so he was a pretty unique package.

(00:04:16)

RO: Now, I understand some interviews with his fellow students, who of course are quite accomplished, not equally brilliant (certainly brilliant). Many of them said it was obvious to them at the time, that this man would be President one day. Did you have that feeling?

LT: You know I have a feeling there's a little bit of hindsight working there. I thought he would accomplish enormous things I had no sense that there were any limits to what he could accomplish. But anyone who says when meeting first year law student says, "This guy is gonna be President someday," doesn't know how much the accident of history and the rising and lowering of fortunes effect those things. I certainly thought he had the capacity to be anything. Because he was unlike many of the most brilliant people I've met; if you told me that person is gonna be President some day I'd say you're crazy. But, if someone had told me that Barack Obama was gonna be President some day, I'd say that doesn't surprise me at all, that is certainly within his capacity.(00:05:21)

RO: Despite the fact that he was partially black.

LT: Yeah, that was always an obvious fact about him but it was one he had come to terms with in a deep way. I mean he had engaged in a lot of soul searching, he's a very reflective person about his mixed race heritage, about the multi-national origins of his life. Some one obviously who loved being an American but also loved being a citizen of the world and had to draw on the experiences of having a black father who had abandoned him as a child and a white mother who was a brilliant anthropologist, but not always around so he was raised only in part by a single mother who was struggling, raised by his grandparents, kind of multiracial multi-heritage. All of those things were for many people a handicap, for him they were sources of strength. He could draw on that diversity to appreciate where people from enormous diversity were coming from. So that what one sensed from all of the people around him, people to his right and to his left, African American kids, Asian kids, and White kids was that he heard them all that he understood where they were coming from. He had an ability to speak across boundaries in a way that unified people, That was a characteristic that he had from the beginning, a kind of directness, self-confidence a capacity to understand people of very great differences.

RO: Many people have remarked on his openness his listening to everybody and his constantly trying to trying to bring people together, and we're seeing that even now, to Republicans, how much of that, do you think, is his personality, and how much do think was his life experience?

LT: I don't know how you separate personality from life experience. How much he was born with and how much evolved because of the experiences he had is something I don't know how to determine but he clearly came to law school with a combination of capacities all of which were very much what you see, now. What you see is what you get. He's not somehow a different figure now, than when he was a law student. He's the same serious guy who doesn't take himself too seriously but who is very serious about making a difference in the world. He listens wonderfully, and has an ability to focus his energies in way that is imperturbable. I mean one of the qualities that you can see now, that one could see when he was a law student, at a time in Harvard law school when some people called it the Beirut of legal education there was lots of division over what now may seem like smallish things, given the catastrophes that we now face in the economy and in the world but, at the time they seemed pretty overwhelming. The quality of him was that nobody could rock his boat. That he had a compass that pointed him to the true north all the time.
(0:02:43)

RO: You mentioned the community organizing, we have been told that he was very active while he was here on campus, we actually have some footage of him while he was in Harvard square while the students were on strike for greater diversity on campus. Did he do any community or grassroots kind of organizing while he was here? (0:03:05)

LT: Well, I don't know of any formal organizing that he did, he was a person that people from across the spectrum would turn to for advice, almost an elder statesman being a kid. Someone that people would listen to that would listen to them. But he certainly was not someone who kind of rallied groups for protest, or to resist protest. He was someone who kind of mediated among

the conflicting factions. And he did it in a way that was hard to describe. It was not finding a point along the line between the right and the left it was like finding something perpendicular to the axis. That is he would find some way of thinking about issues that would bring people together by raising them to another level, and so they would listen. When he was in my Constitutional law class, it was quite characteristic when you are teaching a class partly by lecture and partly by Socratic give and take that some students were trying to hog the microphone will always want to be heard, waving their hand in the air, will always try to make that clever remark, that wasn't Barack. He spoke with some frequency but only when he had something really interesting to say. When he spoke kids really listened he would build on the last person's remarks, he would add something that would show what he thought was positive in a comment that would otherwise sound like a throw away line. (0:04:33) That's how I think he dealt with students on these divisive issues like: racial diversity in faculty and so on. Although, I didn't hear some of his speeches at the time, I've seen some of the footage and it was very much like the way he was in class. He went to the heart of the matter and found a way of elevating the level of discourse.

RO: So clearly he was perceived as, and was a leader, but it sounds like he was a different kind of leader. (0:05:01) Not out front, not calling attention to himself, not saying I'm the leader but people were almost instinctively recognize it.

LT: Instinctively follow him. I mean it was right now the movie "Milk" and we see Sean Penn acting the role of Milk and we see him saying I'm here to recruit you. That wasn't Barack's style he wasn't out here to recruit you, he was there to kind of answer a call. People needed a sense of certitude, leadership, hope, and he provided it by just the intrinsic qualities of his mind and really of his soul and I think that is what we saw in the campaign and that's what we're seeing in the transition. It's a surefootedness certitude when people need the confidence of calm and competence, that's what he seems to provide. When they need inspiration that's what he seems to provide. I think we're in for quite a ride; with number 44 in the white house. (0:06:03)

RO: Of course some people who are already critical and saying, "He campaigned on change and if we look at his appointments already, how much change is that? It's Clinton redux why is he bringing in Republicans? This is what we were going to move away from.

LT: Well, people who think that what they see is too conventional looking; they really weren't really listening to him during the campaign. He made clear all along that he would reach across the spectrum that he would reach out to the Republicans. He was talking during the campaign about Obamacans, the Republicans for Obama. So it's not surprising that he kept Gates at defense that he has reached out to other Republicans. That he has brought the Clintons into the fold and other Clintonites. The change agent is Barack Obama but he needs people around him with competence and experience who know how to get things done in Washington. Anyone who expected him to roll in with a bunch of completely fresh faces of people who couldn't find their way to the restroom in Washington I think wasn't listening to the campaign. (0:07:18)

RO: Well, we've already had that experience too haven't we.

LT: We have certainly had that.

RO: But, I digress. What about his work ethic? I'm told its prodigious but, can you amplify if that's the case.

LT: I don't know that he ever gets much sleep. I mean the guy is an engine of productivity. When he was my research assistant he worked incessantly, he made himself familiar with really esoteric materials that he hadn't read before. He was very energetic about pursuing every lead. It was a wonderful experience, and he was doing this while doing brilliantly in his courses, and at the same time as he was building himself up to the Presidency of the Harvard Law Review. So clearly the guy is dedicated to getting

things done and has limitless energy. The campaign itself I think has made that plain. I did a little campaigning for him. Something I've not done for any other candidate. I went to Iowa, I went to New Hampshire as surrogate speaker talked to groups of people. After a day of that stuff you get pretty tired. Its true that I am considerably older than Barack but for anyone to be able to keep up that pace as he did and do it without missing a beat, I mean it was as flawless a Presidential campaign as we've seen in decades I think. Maybe the most perfectly put together Presidential campaign we've seen in modern times. Anyone who can do that is certainly one whose work ethic we can hardly question. (0:08:53)

RO: On that note I went to hear Axelrod, Plouff, and Rick Davis and Axelrod told a story about when Barack decided he had to give that speech on race

LT: I know that night

RO: Again this is in the midst of 14 sixteen-hour back to back campaigning days. He said, "I'm gonna give this speech. I'm gonna give it on Tuesday." and he said that on Friday.

LT: and then he holed himself up in a hotel, I think, and wrote around the clock. I actually was worried at that time exactly how Barack would handle the developing crisis. I sent an email to David Axelrod, I think about one in the morning, and at 2:30 or 3:00 I got an email back saying, "You can relax. I've read the speech Barack wrote it himself and it's a work of genius. So I heard contemporaneously from "Ax," as people called him then, what Barack had managed to put together. Then, of course when we heard his speech in Philadelphia, it was a masterpiece. It was probably the most important contemporary statement about the problem and possibilities of race and racial reconciliation in America. The most important we've heard certainly in my lifetime. (00:10:21)

RO: Simply to write and then deliver a speech on that topic, and have it be so important, as you say, for most people that would be enough, he's doing this in the midst of campaigning 16 hours a day, and all the other things, and never misses a beat. How does he do that?

LE: Well that's the great mystery; I mean he has enormous capacity. I suppose you might ask that about Abraham Lincoln, how did he deliver the poetic statements that he made at the same time as he was struggling with an existential crisis for America? It's a spark of genius, and I think Lincoln is the right point of comparison. It's not accidental that Barack draws so much of his inspiration from Lincoln. Not since Abraham Lincoln have we had a President as literate and literary an imagination, as deep a kind of insight into himself, as Barack, I think it's an amazing possibility that we are confronting. (00:11:21)

RO: Yeah this is has all been glowing, he's a genius, we never met anybody like him before, none of are perfect.

LE: I'm sure that Barack has faults, but I can't tell you what they are because I haven't seen them. I mean he's obviously not perfect but everything I've seen is entirely positive and hopeful. Some people say they wish he would show his emotion a little more, but I think he us what he is. A different kind of person or one who wears his emotion on his sleeve, might have a different kind of appeal but I think Barack is a unique package and of course he will make mistakes, all Presidents do, and because what he confronts globally and domestically is a set of problems, certainly more challenging than anyone has faced since FDR. Maybe more difficult even than those FDR managed to overcome, we're going to see missteps but, I don't think I've seen them yet. (00:12:23)

RO: Its hard even now to label him but I wonder if you could take a whack at it. For example do words like populist or centrist apply? If not or is there a word or a phrase...

LE: I would say he is a visionary pragmatist. That is he clearly is driven by very large aspirations for overcoming divisions in American society, for including people who have been excluded, for enabling people who have been disabled, for empowering people who have been disempowered in that sense he is favor of greater equality, greater equity. These are aspirational, but he realizes that you don't get there by simply hoping. It takes work, work from the center. Work by people who know how to get things done to get there and he is not doctrinaire about how you achieve these aspirations. He's willing to learn from experience. The experience on the ground in Iraq will determine the pace at which he manages to pull out. There will, because he is a pragmatist, because he his very reality based there will be people who are disappointed that he is not a firebrand, not a revolutionary, not someone who knocks over all the conventional wisdom but, someone who builds on it. That's unfortunate, I suppose, their disappointment is understandable, I suppose, but I think in the end what will make him a great President is that his visionary abilities are linked to a pragmatic sensibility about how to get things done, and an ability to sort of move with the punches. (00:14:34)

RO: Let's talk a bit about the Constitution, and Constitutional law a specialty of yours, and also of his. But we are also coming out of a time when that very issue of the Constitution and law has been put to a very severe challenge with a President who is saying, "I don't have to abide by all the laws that Congress has passed." (00:15:00)

Can you tell us first of all about him as a Constitutional law professor?

LE: Well Barack as both a professor and a student of Constitutional law has a deep faith that the Constitution, though not a perfect document, is a remarkable instrument for achieving national unity and for national aspiration. He sees it as an ongoing project. He often stresses the preamble of the Constitution, "In order to form a more perfect union," and his way of thinking about the Constitution is rather than being set of obstacles to be overcome in the case of the incumbent administration, obstacles to be overcome, and disregarded, and sort of knocked over in the name of coping with international terrorism. He sees the Constitution as source of guidance that represents the best of what America is. He believes very much in what I think President Clinton had said in his speech at the Democratic National Convention, that the power of our example is far stronger and more important than the example of our power. And the power of our example, for Barack, is the power of our adherence to the Constitution, to its' principles. Some expressly written some implicit and invisible. Of not torturing people the principle of separation of powers, the principle of obeying the rule of law. These things are ingrained in Barack Obama's view of the way American government should proceed. So that he's not going to see congress as simply an obstacle and Congress's laws things to be disregarded when he doesn't like them. Of course he will have a muscular view of Executive power as any President must but he believes in checks and balances as a source of wisdom and success, he doesn't think any one branch has all the wisdom and all the answers. So I think we are in a very refreshing period of fidelity to the Constitution that makes us strong, rather than disregard of the Constitution in the name of strength. (00:17:04)

RO: We can certainly hope. Now there is a school of thought that no President ever gives back power, and people are wondering now if he will now renounce some of those, perhaps extravagant claims that President Bush has made in terms of the uses your talking about. (00:17:56)

LE: I don't have much doubt that President Obama when he becomes President will take a position that is much more respectful of other branches of government in their role in restricting Executive power than the Bush/Cheney administration has ever been. If anyone thinks that power always goes to one's head, and that power once grabbed by the Executive always remains there, I think they'll be surprised. Some pleasantly, some unpleasantly. BY watching a much more power-sharing approach on the part of Barack Obama as President.

RO: You did mention that there were some people who are already disappointed, and clearly the left, as Paul Wellstone said the Democratic wing of the Democratic party, have said, "why doesn't he go for the jugular? Why doesn't he attack Hillary Clinton? Why doesn't he show his emotion?"

LE: I think he is quite accustomed to people expressing their misgivings. You can't please all of the people all of the time and he is no exception to that. (00:19:09)

RO: The beginning of his support was clearly over the issue of Iraq. He made a very clear delineation and the left said this is our candidate, we need to end this war. So right from the very beginning, rightly or wrongly they were filling in that screen. Mr Obama, himself has said, "people project what they want to see on to me." Is there anything that you can say to the people on the left to reassure them; to say that he really will be there for you? Because so far what I am hearing from those people is he is there for the Clintons he is there for everybody but us.

LE: The proof will have to be in the pudding. There is no way to make people believe in advance that they will be pleased with things. But it is clear that he hasn't shifted his position in any clear way. He has said from the beginning that we have to be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in. That the big difference between him and some of the others is that he saw from the start that it was a mistake to divert our resources away from the war on the Taliban, terrorism in places like Afghanistan to a place that has become a maelstrom of conflict and a possible place where terrorism can be nurtured anew but where we have the real justification to put our resources. He said he would pull out as soon as was logistically possible and militarily safe. That's exactly what he has been doing. Whether its 14 months, 16 months, or 18 months is less critical than the fact that this is not the kind of mistake that he will make as President. He's not going to start wars with countries that are not existential threats to us or serious mortal threats to the American people. Except where we can achieve a humanitarian objective with a tolerable cost. And it seems to me that his guiding principles will be one that progressives can be proud of. The techniques he uses in waging war will not include things like waterboarding the people we capture. I think people will be proud of that. I think that they will recognize that any more precipitous withdrawal could lead to more negative consequences. I think people will always imagine that they could have handled it better. I think that we are going to see something that is both responsible and inspiring.

RO: You mentioned this control of his emotions, somebody said this to me during the campaign and I'd like your perspective on this. They said, "I just wish that we would give him permission to become angry."

LE: He's not an angry man. He's a guy who feels deeply the wrongs that other people suffer. He doesn't easily lose his temper. I'm sure he has, in some meetings that I haven't personally attended. But he's not a guy who operates by punching. He in fact doesn't really have any enemies, what's interesting is he may have adversaries, and there are people with whom he disagrees. He says we have to find ways to disagree without being disagreeable, its not just a cliché with him its just the way he is. If people want to see him blow up and explode I'm afraid they need a different guy.

RO: So it wasn't a pragmatic decision, not to appear as the angry black man?

LE: No I don't think so. I think he was just being himself. I haven't seen different Barack Obamas. When he was my research assistant, when he was my student, when I was in a couple of meetings with him early in the primaries, when I've exchanged email messages with him, when I see him on television it's the same guy. The on difference I've noticed was that the evening he came out in Chicago to see the crowd after he had been declared the President elect and after he had been declared the President elect and after all the networks said that he had won. The victory speech, there was a sense of gravitas, a sense of seriousness, not quite the exhaltation, that sometimes he helped project, to large crowds. The weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders and you could see that I think he aged a few weeks in that one evening,

maybe a few months. I think a few wags have said that's when somebody wants to call for a recount. When he realizes this is what I've really won. There was that sort of seriousness that I had seen in the campaign but other than that the authenticity is really there it is not put on for some purpose it is really there. There isn't this inner broiling temper that he knows he's got to control going on, I think what you see is what you get.

RO: You said what he as said earlier Mr. Obama, himself, has said I am perceived as being a blank screen, that people can project what they want onto. A) do you agree and B) isn't there a danger in that?

LE: I think that was true early in the primaries, there was the beginning of a national groundswell of excitement. People did project all kinds of things onto that screen. But the picture was filled in pretty dramatically. He wouldn't have won the Presidency if he had seemed really a wild card blank slate. Its true that the McCain campaign did practically all it had within its power to lose. In the sense that they made Hail Mary passes that excited their base for a little while and then fizzled. Its true that we wee confronted by an economic crisis that was anything but encouraging. But Barack Obama would not have won 53% of the popular vote in a country like this with as many misgivings about the unknown if people had seen him as a blank slate. People came to sense what he was all about. His competence, his pragmatism, was something that they could rely on. The main people who have hesitations by and large people have come around.

RO: What's the worst thing you know about Barack Obama?

LE: You're not going to get me to say anything. I think he answered a reporter about that in a way that led people to have some (00:27:00)

END TAPE