

PATRICIA HILL COLLINS: I chose this theme in part to investigate the ways in which the term “community” circulates throughout social policy, popular culture and everyday social interaction in ways that generate dynamic social and political identities. And I would encourage you, as you continue on in all of the program sessions, that you should have an ample opportunity to see the breadth of this particular theme.

Our meeting illustrates a variety of things. It illustrates how people understand community in diverse ways, from the face-to-face interactions of small group dynamics to the contested communities of schools, workplaces and other organizations to the large-scale imagined political communities of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nation state and diaspora and to new communities catalyzed by new communications technologies in which we are currently involved. These practices, among others, reveal how the idea of community constitutes an elastic social, political, and theoretical idea that holds a variety of contradictory meanings. They also show how notions of community remain central to diverse social practices.

Now, the election of Barack Obama presents us with an unprecedented opportunity. Before I say that, I do want to say a bit about the process of getting to this particular plenary and to this particular meeting. For many of you who are not familiar with this, the planning process for American Sociological Association’s (ASA) annual meeting is a 2-year process. You select a theme 2 years before your meeting, so we selected this theme in 2007, and we have been working with this theme since 2007. Now, in the summer of 2007, Barack Obama was not even a glint in anyone’s eye. We did not know that there would be a campaign. These events unfolded as we were planning this meeting. And the challenge that we faced, as went on with our wonderful program committee, was that each event shifted our thinking a little bit about how we would handle this particular theme. So, I remember the day when we sat there, and I said jokingly, “Well, you know he might win...such a.....he might win when he won Iowa...he might WIN, and if he wins, what would that mean? Would we have a plenary that was why Barack Obama won? And then we all laughed: “ha, ha, ha.” So, for me, the fact that this was almost then like watching a movie, all right, where you have these two reels going on; the 2-year very strenuous process of planning this program and the historic events that are unfolding around us have been quite significant. So, having said that, the new politics of community the theme turned out to be very interesting because the historic campaign and election of Barack Obama constitutes a compelling example of the program theme.

The 2009 program committee and I have organized a mini-symposium within the general meeting that is designed to examine how the historic election of Barack Obama might signal a new politics of community in action. The mini-symposium consists of a cluster of sessions that are scheduled throughout the meetings that collectively explore how the 2008 election of Obama engages the conference theme. Now, today’s plenary

session anchors this particular mini-symposium. Our title today is, “Why Obama Won and What That Says about Democracy and Change in America.”

Barack Obama’s election is often described as a defining moment, one marking some sort of fundamental change for American democracy. But, what exactly has changed, or might change, and why? This session explores how the election of Barack Obama catalyzes new thinking about the meaning of democracy and change and, perhaps, community in the United States and, perhaps, globally.

Our panelists examine some important factors associated with change such as new forms of political engagement by youth, new immigrant populations, women, and people of color, new ways of organizing democratic institutions themselves that reflect the changing heterogeneous American population as well as the seeming commitment to community service and similar values thought to be associated with the revitalization of democratic institutions. This session takes up broader questions of what this specific victory says about communities and change in contemporary American society.

Now, I want you all to be amazingly impressed by this particular panel, so I am going to tell you: not only do they look good, which they do, but they have quite a bit to say that is of interest around this particular theme. Let me introduce them to you. Our first panelist is Melissa Harris-Lacewell, Professor of Political Science at Princeton University, and an award-winning author of *Barbershops, Bibles and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Professor Harris-Lacewell has been a visible presence in diverse media venues during the Obama campaign, often commenting on the significance of Michelle Obama.

Peter Levine, our second panelist, is current director of Circle, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, which is part of Tufts University’s Jonathan Tisch’s College of Citizenship and Public Service. A philosopher, Levine is author of *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*, and is currently examining how the Obama campaign may signal a defining moment for youth and democracy.

Jose Calderon, a professor in sociology and Chicano studies at Pitzer College, has a long history of connecting his academic work with community organizing, student-based service learning, participatory action research, critical pedagogy, and multiethnic coalition building. He is the 2004 recipient of the Richard E. Cone Award for Excellence in Leadership in Cultivating Community Partnerships in Higher Education, presented by The California Campus Compact – Compact, sorry. The United Farm Worker’s Union has honored him with their “Si Se Puede!” award for his life-long contributions to the farm worker movement.

Lawrence Bobo, our final panelist, is the W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University and holds appointments in the Department of Sociology and the Department of African and African-American studies. His research focuses on the intersection of social inequality, politics and race. With Michael Dawson, he is the editor of the Du Bois Review, which recently published a special edition titled "Obama's Path" that many of you might want to take a look at.

So, with that introduction, if we are ready to go with our first panelist -- I am assuming everything is fine -- Melissa Harris-Lacewell.

MELISSA HARRIS-LACEWELL: Thank you. It is a complete honor to be here. Despite whatever media appearances I may ever do, my mother, who is a trained sociologist, actually only thinks that I have made it now that I have had an opportunity to be on a plenary at ASA. A good time to make her happy! My kid, who is 7, will only think I've made it if I get a spot with Elmo, so it is, just what it is.

What I want to do today is actually talk a little bit in the ways the sister president was just talking about; how it felt like watching a movie, to experience the 2008 presidential campaign season, in part because -- for those of us who were Hyde Parkers before Barack Obama became president -- it was really odd to sort of watch this local, not even local, celebrity, just local office holder, go from a person of local interest, to a person, obviously to the president. So for me, part of what was fun about that was that I had started doing research on him really early when he was less important. So, I have some fun data that I don't often get an opportunity to share, but will share a little bit today.

What I want to talk about is the Obama election and what it might tell us about African-American politics. So I am going to avoid talking about sort of what it tells us about American politics more broadly, and try to focus a little bit more specifically on what it tells us about African-American politics. This is with the recognition that I don't actually know who Black people are or what that category represents, and I recognize it as complicated, but let's just pretend we knew who Black people were and that they have a politics. It helps, just to have a few... the economists have lots of assumptions -- that's going to be ours for now. So, the question is whether or not Barack Obama's win changes everything. It certainly was part of how media thought about it. Clearly I am not of the viewpoint that his election changed everything, but I am also probably not of the more pessimistic viewpoint that it changed nothing, or that it represented a change of nothing. In fact, I think there are actually three important things that it does.

One, it is touted as a shift in America's racial history. So, whether or not we see structural changes emerge in the Obama era and afterward, even sort of the moment of thinking about race in a very public, crystallized way and thinking about this as a watershed moment I think is relevant. I do believe that the election of Barack Obama counters an important trend in ethnic balkanization around economic questions. Let me just say this quickly that, again, the media pretty quickly said that part of the reason that Barack Obama won the election was because of the economic downturn, which was just becoming very clear by October, early November. It was an odd sort of explanation from my viewpoint because it is not clear to me that, typically, Americans, in the context of economic downturn, form multiracial coalitions behind a Black candidate. So, although I really do get that he is obviously a member of the out party and that McCain never developed a really good language for talking about the economic downturn, there was still something particularly interesting about how Americans dealt with the question of race relative to the economy with Obama's election. And then, finally, there is a huge shift in partisan power balance. It is hard to tell whether or not the Democrats have recognized that there has been a shift in partisan power balance, but there actually was one.

What I want to know is what do we learn about African American politics in the context of thinking about Obama's win? Here are the four main ideas that I will try to do pretty quickly in this talk. One is that there is a series of demographic shifts around African-American partisanship leading up to this election that I think are important. Second is that there is a set of racial responses in response to Hurricane Katrina, which become a turning point for the 2006 and, therefore, 2008 election cycle. I want to talk a little bit about new media forms and particularly the way in which Black youth culture is centrally important to media forms. And then, finally, how this may open up some questions on African American citizenship.

We are always pretty far behind the curve as academics on what's going on in the world and sometimes so far behind it that by the time we get our papers together, the world has changed. This is very true of this particular paper that I was working on in 2004, which suggested that there were these big changes in African-American partisan attachment. And, these changes suggested that African-Americans were less attached to the Democratic Party than they had previously been, and that there was sort of a secular shift that we could see happening from a peak in the early 1960s down to 2000.

My colleague, Jeff Grynviski, and I (both of us at time on tenure) started working hard on this piece. And what we showed was that there was all this American National Election Studies (ANES) data that show a rise in the number of African-Americans unwilling to call themselves either Democrat or Republican, or even call themselves leaning Democrat or Republican. I don't want to overstate this -- African-American voting behavior has been very strongly in the Democratic Party. But the claim that we were trying to make is, that even though the voting behavior was still 90% and above for

the Democratic Party, that the actual emotional affective attachment of African-Americans to the Democratic Party was on the wane. Not only that, but when we looked at what appeared to be behind it, what we saw was that African-Americans increasingly said that they saw no difference between Democrats and Republicans on questions of race. So again, from about '84 forward, you really start to see this trend occurring. What we noticed, particularly because this is the work of my co-author, Jeff Grynviski, is that the secular trends in loosening attachments, loosening emotional ties to the party and a sense that the parties weren't very different on race, looked very much like Catholics and like White Southerners just before they realigned in terms of actual voting behavior. So, here it is, early 2005 – two junior faculty members and we've got a piece and we are going to predict that there is a possible realignment coming among African-American voters. Just so you know that we are not crazy, here's what these data look like. Again, you have decreasing - increasing independence among African-Americans. Then this one, I think, is the really key one: African-Americans they are the pink line, and they are even less than the general American population, less likely to see differences, meaningful and important differences, between the parties.

So, the question is, were they really ready? And I mean, the answer is maybe. It is certainly not as though Black folks were jumping over to the GOP but, again, this notion that African-American attachment was rooted in the questions of how the Democratic Party was responding to race, and the Democratic Party seemed to be doing less on race. And, in certain ways, the Republican Party under Bush – remember, this is 2004 – with high-level appointees with big-tent outreach appeared to be at least coming up on the Democrats given that the Democrats were declining and the Republicans were coming up. In fact, it turns out that there is some data to support this. So what we did was that we looked at National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) positions on issues, and then we looked at Democrat and Republican Party platforms, and this is the difference between Democrat and Republican Party platforms based on what the NAACP says is a Black issue. What you will see is a precipitous decline in that difference in 2004, right? That mostly actually has to do with George W. Bush and Africa – his work in Africa. So it looks like the parties are not very different. And then, Katrina. Right? So, here we are, we are all ready to say there's a possible realignment. We've got these loosening attachments, and then Katrina. Katrina, overnight, reverses the trend in Black partisan identification's loosening attachment to the Democratic Party and especially changes overnight their sense that the republicans are just about the same as the Democrats. So these massive televised failures of the GOP administration, Kanye West describing for us those failures as racial issues, and therefore, this kind of renewal of racial inequality as a national political issue for discussion. So, again, this is all happening, remember, in 2005.

Along with Michael Dawson and Kathy Cohen, we go into the field just to take a look at what African-Americans and whites -- those who are not actually in New Orleans, nor those who are directly impacted by the storm -- think about what they have seen on television. What we see is a predictable and yet enormous gap in public

opinion around the racial meaning of Hurricane Katrina. So what I want to be clear about here is that both African-American citizens and white citizens are angry about what is happening in the context of Hurricane Katrina, but African-Americans are reading what's happening as primarily about race. Right? So you have African-Americans overwhelmingly saying that Kanye West's comments are justified, that people who are trapped are trapped there because they have too few resources, that the government would have responded had the citizens who were there been white, and that Katrina teaches us important lessons about race. Whereas, again, although you have white Americans saying this is a terrible bureaucratic failure, they're not saying that this is about race. So we have this kind of opening divide, and this divide is happening a great deal around partisanship; just so you see this has meaningful policy consequences, so quickly we embedded an experimental manipulation in this study. This will look very clear to you; either you get this image of Black evacuees with the language *Americans being displaced from their homes* or you get this same image with *Refugees*, or you get this image with *Americans or Refugees*. You're sociologists, so you catch this, right? So it's just Black with American, Black with refugee, white with American, and white with refugee. And then we ask a pretty soft dependent variable, which just says: choose one of the following. Should we do whatever is necessary regardless of cost or should we wait to see how much it costs before we decide to do something about it?

Now, again, interestingly, we think about the mirroring. I think there are some things we could say about the healthcare debate as well here. So, everybody sees it as a problem, but you see this huge racial divide between blacks and whites where African-Americans are overwhelmingly saying we should spend whatever is necessary, whereas Whites are for the most part saying we should wait and see how much it costs before we commit to rebuilding. The one framework that makes a statistically significant difference is the framework of Black image and the word refugee, which makes White Americans less likely to support the position of spending whatever is necessary.

Okay, so, what does all of that have to do with the election of Barack Obama? I actually think that the politics of Katrina tell us everything about the elections of 2006 – the mid-term elections – because from September 11, 2001, until Hurricane Katrina, you could not, either as a member of the Democratic Party or a member of the major media, mount a substantial discussion against the government in Washington without being labeled as unpatriotic. All of that changes in the context of Hurricane Katrina when these New York media sources go, “Aaayyy, wait a minute, you can't seem to handle a disaster. If you can't get water to an American city for four days, you can't prosecute a foreign war.” So, Hurricane Katrina actually becomes the wedge through which a conversation about the failures of Bush's administration finally becomes possible. Although we don't talk much about race, it is, in fact, these racialized differences and this notion of the failure of the GOP that moves African-Americans back to the Democratic Party, opening up the possibility of big turnout in the 2006 mid terms, which you would have been less likely to expect given those weakening ties, and opens up for

the Democrats an opportunity to finally talk about – in an important way – their criticisms of the Bush Administration. And, just in case you don't believe me, this is what 2003, what Black folks looked like and White folks on the question of whether or not protesting the war was unpatriotic, and what you will see is that African-Americans are the opinion leaders here. From 2003, African-Americans think that it is necessary and important to protest the wars; whites overwhelmingly don't think that, but by the time we get to the 2006 mid terms, white people are black people on this question. It doesn't happen very often.

Okay, then you might say, "Why Obama?" If African-Americans are going in with this renewed sense of the importance of race – you know, Obama is actually kind of a quirky race candidate – why would Obama be the candidate who would be someone who would be able to take advantage of this particular historical moment? So, just a little bit of evidence from the 2004 Senate race; this is my work with my colleague at Rutgers, Jane Junn. What we saw is – it is a little bit out of context – but very quickly, it is simply to say we looked at whether or not framing Barack Obama as a black candidate versus framing Barack Obama as a multiracial candidate made him more or less acceptable and likeable among both Black and White voters. It turns out that White voters – this actually doesn't surprise me – White voters don't really care whether you call him Black or multiracial because, you know.....okay, thank God he was running against Alan Keyes! But, African-American voters actually like him better in the context of being Senate material, in other words, has the qualities I look for in a senator, when he is framed as multiracial. Again, so we do these framings either talking about him as this multiracial or race-neutral candidate versus black, Michelle, South Side... And what we see is that, again, overall, African-Americans actually think that on the multiracial prop he is more likely to have the qualities I look for in an elected official.

Finally, we get to this question of youth culture. My story is, simply, you've got these weakening attachments that should have meant possible defeat in '06 for the Democrats. Instead, Hurricane Katrina intervenes, brings race back to the table, gets black folks excited; you have these big wins and then Obama, as this quirky multiracial candidate, appears on the scene after the 2006 midterms to take advantage of this particular historical moment, and is met by a brand new set of political technologies. My final claim, and this will be my last thing here, is that part of why African-Americans become such relevant partners in the creation of the Barack Obama candidacy - and win - is, as there is an introduction of new technologies and youth culture. What we know is that African-American youth culture has a disproportionate influence within the context of youth culture overall than, for example, African-American culture might have in the U.S. context generally. All of that is just to say that young Americans helped to make Barack Obama blacker. This is actually young Americans of all kinds, but there is a real way in which the framing of Barack Obama is not happening exclusively through his campaign, which I think is where a lot of the criticisms about his race neutrality come from. But that is only one part of the campaign in the 2008 election. The other very important part was not coming from the David Axelrods but from the Will-i-ams, right?

And those creations of Barack Obama actually were deeply rooted in questions of race – like this one, for example. These cultural products are not controlled by the campaign, and this kind of supporter-created media was more organic, more compelling and more effective in many ways. It is what I call the blank-screen strategy, not to be confused with the green-screen strategy, which is what John McCain seemed to be employing constantly by putting a green screen behind his head and making himself look like some kind of odd lizard dude. The blank-screen strategy was a more effective use of new media technologies that said that part of what made Barack Obama so compelling was that he could, in certain ways, step out of any particular selfhood and allow supporters across a wide range of demographics to cast onto him and see in him what they hoped and expected to see. So, for Black voters, imagining that there are some, we have this capacity to sort of make Barack Obama into this. And, he is particularly fluent, by the way, in youth culture, right? He is fluent in Black culture, so whether or not he's always using it organically or not, his fluency in it leads to what I like to call political pleasure. It is the same political pleasure of dog-whistle politics that evangelicals had with W. It wasn't even that W had to be completely evangelical all the time – notice we went through eight years and abortion is still sort of legal in the United States – but that part of that pleasure of being represented in the White House by someone who speaks your language, listens to your music, can do your dances, right, was part of what became useful for Barack.

Just quickly, one thing about youth technology, things like Facebook, Twitter, hand-held computing resources is that there is a kind of intimacy to it. Even though it is global technology, it is global technology about local events; there is an immediacy and an instantaneousness to the information. There is a centrality to the identity, so unlike being, for example, a Fox News watcher or an MSNBC watcher, if you are a Twitterer, it is like part of your identity – it is part of who you actually are. You change your avatar. So people were, for example, changing their Facebook images to be Barack Obama. People would sometimes hit on me, and it was like “ooh, he's cute – oh, that's Barack Obama.” These things also allow for echo chambers and, in certain ways, they are more democratic – with a little “d” - relying less on external authority and more on these kinds of signalings. All of that is really key for a Black candidate, right? This sense of intimacy, identity, connectivity, these echo chambers that allow positivity, right? All of that was part of how a Black candidate gets elected. Again, the GOP just kept making a mess of it.

The very final thing I will say here – ‘cause you gotta end on Jay-Z; why not? – is that in the end this sort of transition, which I think in many ways may have been largely invisible, but which was going on underneath, disaffection with the Democratic Party, the kind of nadir that is Katrina and then a reassertion of the capacity to be equal partners in the creation of a Black presidential candidate is, I think, an important set of events occurring on the question of Black citizenship, right? So that even though we are clearly faced with a very serious structural reality of continuing racial inequality, part of what does matter – so, does the Obama election change everything? – of course not.

But what it does change, I think, or what at least it adds the possibility to, is this idea of – as Jay-Z says it – sort of *being fully American*. He says, “The world is watching, and the world will judge us. I am not voting for him simply because he is Black; the worst thing ever for Black people would be to put someone in who wasn’t capable. But what he represents to a little kid in Marcy Projects right now is to make him feel like he is part of America. We never feel like we are part of the American Dream.” So, for that moment, that kind of shift, the nadir, and then the reassertion through the Obama candidacy and through youth, innovation and technology, you get a sense of being part of the American Dream.

PETER LEVINE: Thanks, I really enjoyed that. That was great. I hope that there is some continuity from that Jay-Z quote to what I’m going to say, but what I am going to say won’t be as good. Thank you for inviting me; this is very fun for me.

I am probably going to talk a little less about youth than I was supposed to, and a little bit more about what I’d like to call civic empowerment or civic renewal or redefinition of citizenship theme in the Obama campaign -- whether that helped him win -- and what it means for America.

If you remember back to the announcement of his candidacy, way back in February of 2007 in Springfield, Illinois, Barack Obama said, “This campaign has to be about reclaiming the meaning of citizenship. That is our purpose today; that is why I am in this race – not just to hold an office but to gather with you to transform a nation.” I am only going to read one more quote because I don’t do him justice as a speaker, but in Iowa 10 months later, and right before the Iowa election, Barack Obama gave his long and interesting speech describing his experience as a community organizer. It’s quite a rich description, and part of it goes, “In church basements and around kitchen tables, block by block, we brought the community together, registered new voters, fought for new jobs and helped people live lives with some measure of dignity...I have no doubt that in the face of impossible odds people who love their country can change it, but I hold no illusions that one man or woman can do this alone. That is why I am reaching out to Democrats and also to Independents and Republicans, and that is why I won’t just ask for your vote as a candidate, I will ask for your service and your active citizenship when I am President of the United States. This will not be a call issued in one speech or program. This will be a central cause of my presidency.”

I gave you two quotes. I could have given you a lot more. I was fascinated by following this theme. It went all the way from the first speech of the campaign to Grant Park on November 5th when the responsibilities of the presidency settled on his shoulders. It was a rich theme with lots of detail. I read into it several kind of philosophical points, I guess. One, that positive change almost always comes from organized social movements, from groups of people from the bottom up not from the

government alone. Michelle Obama actually gave a pretty good speech on that topic about 4 or 5 weeks ago here in San Francisco.

Second point: Popular social movements should be broad-based not narrow interest groups, not interest-group mobilization. They should promote discussion and collaboration across lines of difference, including ideological difference and, hence, the need to build bridges to Republican citizens which he mentioned in the quote that I read.

To develop that, a sort of third point is there is a strong theme of deliberation and dialog with other citizens. There is a speech from May of 2007, which is actually fairly detailed on this, and Obama says that, "Politics are unpopular because it usually means shouting matches on TV or interest group games. When politics gets local, when the person talking is your neighbor standing on your front porch, things change." That was a quote. And he calls for dialog in every community on important issues because he says a lot of dialog is friendly and nice, but it's not about important issues, so he mentions Iraq, healthcare, climate change. That is sort of my third point.

Fourth, social change requires work by many people, tapping their skills, their energies, their networks, their local knowledge and their actual participation – not just their opinions and not just their vote. Government programs cannot substitute for public work, nor can rights. I presume that is and should be a somewhat controversial social theory in this room, but I think it is authentically an Obama position. Kind of a corollary of that, at the root of many of our worst problems today are fractured relationships – not just bad policies, not just bad leaders in Washington – but fractured relationships; relationships between and among Americans, relationships between Americans and their government.

Finally, there is a strong normative or moral dimension in all of this. Here is a speech from... I quoted you from Iowa right before the election – in New Hampshire right before the election, "We are going to reengage our democracy in a way we haven't done for some time now. We are going to take hold of our collective lives together and reassert our values and our ideals." So, there is a strong, explicit moral commitment that is connected to the participation theme. This, of course -- I'm partly interpreting these speeches based on what they say and face value -- but partly knowing some things that we all know about both Barack and Michelle Obama, that Barack Obama's biggest political education was as a broad-based, and a faith-based community organizer working in Chicago, trying to build broad coalitions with a lot of dialog and discussion, less sort of about mobilizing people for specific causes, more about listening and discussing. He is also wearing a different hat, member of the Saguro seminar, the social capital in America seminar that Robert Putnam organized, one of only two politicians on that.

Michelle Obama had run an AmeriCorps program, Public Allies in Chicago, and worked on community partnerships with the University of Chicago, so, and both of them are civic educators with their own children, very well, I think, and also of students. So, they had a long resume on this stuff.

I have tried to sketch a little bit what the civic themes were. We are supposed to be talking about why Obama won, so... Well, I would like to think he won because of those themes because I endorse them, but obviously there's a – and then we'd have a mandate – but there are obviously pros and cons to that hypothesis, that he won because of a civic theme. In fact, I don't believe he won because of it. Let me lay out some arguments for why it might have helped him. But first, why it might not have helped him, so this is sort of the negative.

One thing – and I think this interesting – the press and also the liberal blogosphere, but also the press, absolutely did not cover these civic themes. Several of the quotes that I read to you I actually transcribed off YouTube videos because... and I've checked in Google Search and they are not in any printed newspaper. I think that reporters – hardboiled reporters – regard statements about renewing citizenship or redefining citizenship or working together as throat clearing by a politician. It's like when they say, 'I'm so glad to be here in Iowa on a January morning.' It is just something you're supposed to say, and they paid absolutely no attention to that. They go through a whole long speech, and then he said something that could be regarded as a critique of Hillary and that's what they covered. That's a general problem, but I really think the civic message fell through. You could say, "Well, he said it but it wasn't covered, so how could it affect anybody. How could it affect the election?" Also, I think a lot of the policy experts in the campaign and around the administration didn't pay any more attention to those speeches than the press did. So, the detailed policy proposals of the campaign did not have anything to do with those civic messages. I think a lot of people around the Obama campaign and in the Obama Administration basically have a fairly technocratic approach to policy whereby really smart people can figure out really great laws, and those laws will help disadvantaged people and that's what you need to do. By the way, in order to get support for those good policies, you need to mobilize organized interest groups and demobilize enemies. So, given that a lot of people around Obama I don't think even get what I just quoted to you, maybe because it's not important or maybe because they just don't get it, you could argue that it couldn't have affected the election.

But, here are a few reasons why it might have affected the election, especially the primary election, because I think the general is over determined by green background screens and bad economic policies and so on. First of all, people got direct unmediated access to Obama's books and speeches, face-to-face in huge crowds and on YouTube. And I know for a fact that they really like those civics lines because those

were applause lines because I was busy transcribing them – those were popular lines. I think that people may have gotten it in a way the press didn't. There was also a connection to, which I have already kind of mentioned, his biography and to Michelle Obama's biography. So, that created an organized overall narrative that was about them, their past and their future, about the country, about you and me if we wanted to support them. So, there was an overall structure, which I think was very important.

Third, the civic themes may not have affected the policy proposals – you know, the healthcare proposal or the education proposal – but the civic theme did arise in some important debates. One was Barack Obama v. Hillary Clinton on the meaning of the civil rights movement. Remember that battle, er little tempest? It started with her saying hope is all very well, but what we need is someone who can deliver change. He went right at her on the question of whether the Civil Rights Movement had been delivered by somebody in Washington or had it not been delivered by a grassroots popular movement. That back and forth was quite instructive. It was an attack on technocratic liberalism.

Also, take Barack Obama versus Paul Krugman in the *New York Times*. Now, he didn't reply, the candidate didn't reply. I think that was probably smart, but there was a pretty sharp debate, and Krugman's been on his case all along. I think the difference is this: that Krugman is basically saying – forgive me if I'm mis-summarizing – but I think he is saying the problem with America is conservatism. Conservatism is on the ropes because of George W. Bush; it needs to be knocked out once and for all. He, we, the party, something like that – not assuming we are all Democrats at all – needs to sort of make the case that it's their fault and finish 'em off. Obama said all along the problem was relationships, including relationships between the Democrats and Republicans, and so polarizing in that way would not help.

Finally, one more reason why the civic theme might have helped is that it was embodied in the way the campaign was run. I think this has been noticed. So, there are the powerful relational organizing techniques used and developed by sociologist Marshall Ganz and a lot of other people around the campaign, which involved not just trying to get out as many phone calls or drive volunteers to deliver scripts in huge numbers, but a lot of people meeting, talking, learning about each other's stories and developing civic skills. There was all the discussion of policy issues, especially on the web on "mybarackobama.org" but elsewhere as well, which was really encouraged. And then -- what I'm supposed to be talking about, youth – the fact that the candidate made a deliberate effort to get young people to vote, which itself was civic education, and also, that he tapped into, I think, a millennial culture which is favorable to the civic themes. That's why, in part, he got an enormous level of support by young people.

What I want to end with is what happens next. What's happened so far with this civic agenda and what do we need? What's happened so far as I would report it is the following. First of all, the Congress passed and the President signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which triples – if it's fully funded – AmeriCorps. It dedicates all the, a lot of the service, you know, the year-long service – paid service – to three big social issues: climate change, health disparities and high school dropouts. So, it is an interesting experiment because Congress says in the legislation that volunteer service is a way of dealing with these issues; so, we will see.

Secondly, on the President's very first day in office, the day he was inaugurated, he issued a memorandum on transparency participation and collaboration, and particularly, and so this is an unenforceable executive order, an official statement. It needs to be worked out and will be worked out as executive orders, but the statements about participation and collaboration are pretty strong philosophically. And then the Office of Public Liaison, which has been in the White House since the 1970s, was renamed the Office of Public Engagement and has been stocked with some interesting people mostly from the technology world and from sort of the interactivity and the interactive website world.

That should all be noted with some respect, but I think this is not nearly enough to come anywhere close to the language about citizenship, active citizenship and redefining citizenship that the President used before he was the President. It's strong on service, but not strong at all on active citizenship yet. Service, as we know, can be very anti-political, very narrow, very marginal; it can reinforce dependency of those served and sort of noblesse oblige of those who do the serving. The online dialogs which they are doing are interesting experiments, and they take some guts actually to roll them out, but they don't define citizenship as anything more than offering advice. Basically citizens are able to offer advice to the government.

The online dialogs and the service part, I think, so far are the noncontroversial, relatively inexpensive, relatively easy parts of the civic agenda. The core of citizenship should not be serving others or offering free advice to the government. It should be something like public work. We should think of important national projects like the economic recovery or universal healthcare as public work, as work for us as a society. For instance, in the recovery some will be literally working building roads and bridges often paid directly by the private secular firms but with government money. Some will be monitoring spending on federal websites. Some can be advocating for priorities and organizing politically. Some can volunteer labor, for example, in the schools. Some should be able to deliberate and vote actually on local spending priorities. There is a little bit of participatory budgeting going on in the U.S. today where people are actually given the right to allocate money, but it's very, very small. All of this should be called public work or active citizenship put together. The people building the roads, the people monitoring spending, it should all be active citizenship, and it should be connected so

that we are actually listening to the people building the roads and the people who are expressing views are actually doing some work, perhaps they're volunteering, and so it is the same people. I don't think that's happened at all so far. It seems to me that both the healthcare plan and the economic recovery plan have almost nothing to do with these civic themes, and it would partly be a rhetorical framing in which all of the work that went on under these bills was seen as public work. If all of this seems kind of abstract or maybe even utopian, it is important to recognize there actually are good programs in the federal government already that involve serious commitments, active citizenship. An example, which is very well described in the sociologist Carmen Sirianni's book, *Investing in Democracy*, which is a new book (2009), is in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There is a program called CARE – Community Action for Renewed Environment. It is quite old now, 10 to 15 years old. It involves collaboration with grassroots groups. It was supported by and developed out of the environmental justice movement. It involves partnerships between the government and community groups. It involves training of community leaders and citizens in civic skills, and it has changed the internal culture of the EPA. So, it is not aimed at citizenship, it is aimed at things like restoring watersheds, but it has a very strong commitment to renewed citizenship. As I understand it, however, CARE was actually cut by the Obama Administration in the first six months, which, I don't know the full story, but I suspect is part of a kind of silent struggle that is going on between technocratic regulators of a progressive type and promoters of civic renewal and citizenship because CARE is a highly untechnocratic approach to environmental problem solving; it is not a regulatory approach. I think there is really a struggle going on over this.

Let me end by just saying Carmen Sirianni's book is great, and the title of it is *Investing in Democracy*. The reason I mention that again is because it is going to take investment. You can't renew citizenship in America without actually putting some money and some political will into it. It's going to require building training programs, changing agency cultures, doing work. It costs money; it costs political capital, and I haven't seen any of that yet.

JOSE CALDERON: First of all I want to thank Patricia for inviting me to speak today - I am very honored - and also for being so inclusive of the new voices if you look at the program, "Advancing and Practice in ASA – The New Politics of Community." So, thank you, Patricia.

The victory by Barack Obama did represent change and, more importantly, for me, represented a social movement that transformed the electoral and political process. We all know that the Bush Administration had lost full legitimacy among all sectors of the American public, and as Piven and Cloward proposed in their book, and in their definition of social movement, ordinary people came together collectively to assert their rights to demand change. They came to believe whatever we believe, that a new administration could change their situation and their conditions.

What does this say about democracy? It does say that the ideal for equity and full participation in the life and direction of this country can take hold, and it can move the political process to new levels of visionary thinking and participatory involvement – the election of a community organizer, an African-American. It does not mean that there will necessarily be radical change right away, but that large numbers of people are seeking new answers to structural and systemic problems, and that this transformation can have dramatic consequences for the future, which will depend on the sustainability and capacity of such a movement. And today I speak not only as an academic, an individual who after graduating from the University of Colorado, went to work with Cesar Chavez for 13 - I came back home and I was a community organizer for 13 years before getting married and having children and trying to figure out that as a community organizer you have to work and make some funds, and ended up at UCLA and graduated, and then ended up at Pitzer College where it has allowed me to continue as a community organizer and as an academic.

Today I will also speak as a community organizer who very early on in the primary election along with some of my students and many other leaders in the Latino community developed over 22 “Viva Obama” clubs throughout California to ensure the election of Barack Obama. Some of us traveled to the states of Arizona, Nevada and Colorado like the old days to get out the vote. We were the first Latinos in the region where I’m at, the Inland Empire, had widely publicized press conferences in San Bernardino and Los Angeles to endorse Obama publicly. We did all this because Obama took a strong stand in supporting a just immigration policy, the support of a woman’s right to choose, the support of equal pay for equal work, for quality education, for quality healthcare, employment and rebuilding alliances and partnerships necessary to meet the many challenges of a global economy, including what he mentioned over and over, the need to curb global warming. We were united in the need for change around these issues and that the significance of this election went beyond the election of an individual to the rising of a new social movement that genuinely could unite people from diverse backgrounds and advancing a dialog on the way this country is run and whose interest it serves.

This movement gave rise to an advancement of hundreds of multiracial collective efforts on a local, regional and national level comprised of all ethnic, sexuality, class, gender groups hailing mostly from cities and suburbs, largely younger than 40 , and among all income classes. This army – you know, someone mentioned -- Marshall Ganz who also came out of the farm workers. He has written on this and was part of the Obama campaign, and actually used some of the strategies of Cesar Chavez, used the internet, cell phones, and most importantly -- which was one of the traditions of the United Farm Workers -- the use of house meetings and door-to-door eye contact with the voting public to find and train teams of community leaders. This was the foundation of an incredible voter registration and voter turnout statistics in the primary and on Election Day. In fact, Marshall Ganz writes that technology is important, but if you really

look at the foundation of this campaign, it was really the house-to-house meetings and this one-to-one work. Significantly, as part of this movement, a coalition of Blacks, Latinos and Asians accounted for unprecedented shares of the presidential votes in 2008. Overall, members of all three groups cast more votes in 2008 than in 2004. Two million more Blacks, two million more Latinos and 338,000 more Asian-Pacific Americans cast more votes in 2008.

In the primary, there was a question whether Obama could build the type of coalition that it would take to win. In terms of the Latino vote, Hillary got 63% of the Latino vote, including 67% of the vote in Arizona and California. Some journalists attributed this to the Black/Brown divide. As Latino immigrants moved into inner city neighborhoods and competing with African-Americans for jobs, housing, services and for positions in local government. We see the character of Compton, South Central: that entire region is now majority Latino with majority immigrant, and there are tremendous conflicts between African-Americans and Latinos. Others, citing the book *Neither Enemies nor Friends*, Latinos, Blacks and Afro-Latinos attributed the divide to prejudice shaped in Latin America where darker-skinned, indigenous people are looked down upon by those with lighter skin and a Spanish heritage.

Earl Hutchinson, author of the book *Ethnic Presidency – How Race Decides the Race to the White House*, wrote before the election that, “The tensions between Blacks and Latinos, the negative perceptions that have marred relations between these groups for so long unfortunately still resonate.” He shared his belief that, “There will still be reluctance among many Latinos to vote for an African-American candidate. When you’ve got competing ethnic groups at the bottom level, you’re going to have friction because of the jockeying just to preserve their niche.”

Although Hillary Clinton was more well known than Obama in the Latino community and receiving also a good percentage of women voters and supported by major Latino politicians, Obama was also able to increase the number of Latinos who voted for him by distinguishing himself from Clinton right before the primary in three key areas. In Los Angeles, he came out in support of driver’s licenses for undocumented workers. He promised to take up immigration reform in his first year of office and called for the legalization of the 12 million immigrants, and he began to really talk about his background as the son of an immigrant and a community organizer in Chicago. According to a poll and analysis by the C. William Velasquez Institute, “This shift in campaign strategy seemed to correlate with undecided voters choosing Obama as their candidate of choice in the last week of the primary campaign. After the primary, the question was whether Obama would get the Hillary vote or whether they would be alienated, and you read about this in the media. Clearly, Latinos went the direction of Obama and the Black/Brown division that the media and conservative pundits had advanced as a given never became a reality. At the same time, the coalition that had supported Clinton made up of Latinos, union households, low-income voters and White

women was united on election day. Obama won Latinos 66% to 31%, won union households 58% to 40%, and won low-income voters 60% to 38%. With Latinos turning out to vote for Obama, they shattered the myth of a Black-Latino divide. Two thirds of Latinos voted for Obama. More voted Democratic than in any presidential election since 1996. A Pew Hispanic study showed that 55% of Latino voters came to see the Democratic Party as having more concern for their community than the Republican Party. Like voters nationwide, the majority of Latino voters said they had one concern above all others – the economy. This went along with the data that broke down foreclosures by race. This is also true for African-Americans, but where Latinos were more than twice as likely as Whites had to get a high-cost loan, making them vulnerable to foreclosures. While the Republicans tried to advance the strategy of using morality issues, which Bush used very effectively in the election in 2004, and when I talk about these issues – morality issues – issues of same-sex marriage and abortion, trying to use these to influence the Latino vote, it didn't work. The use of these wedge issues was overshadowed by concerns over the economy, healthcare, education and immigration in the Latino community.

For those of us organizing in Latino communities, it proved what many of us have been saying all along. I was one of the organizers who helped organize the million people who marched in 2006 in Los Angeles against the Sensenberger Bill and against the criminalization of immigrants, and in support of legalization for the 12 million immigrants in this country. At that time, our call was today we march using Martin Luther King's strategy of "We vote by our feet, but tomorrow we vote." This resulted in the organizing of immigrants and resulted in their application for citizenship in record numbers. There was a strategy to this. In 2008, over 900,000 naturalization petitions were approved. In my region, we were part of three organized campaigns where a thousand immigrants were waiting at 5 in the morning who wanted to move from permanent residency to naturalization. So, not only did this movement advance citizenship drives that resulted in one million being naturalized, but it also spurred voter registration efforts that resulted in over 500,000 new citizen voters. The We are America Alliance alone registered over 83,000 new voters in Florida, 35,000 in Pennsylvania, 52,000 in Nevada, and nearly 40,000 in New Mexico. The large number of newly registered voters bypassed the record 64% of eligible voters which last turned out in the 1960 election. While there was a tendency to say that the immigration issue was placed on the back burner in this election, it was on the minds of our Latino communities and an NDN Bendixen poll right before the election that asked Latinos, "How important is the immigration issue to you and your family?" Between 74% and 86% of Latinos in the states of Florida, Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada responded that it was very important. It was no accident that the Obama people understood this reality and flooded Latino districts with Spanish language ads and campaign literature and phone calls and house-to-house meetings.

Let me just end with this. Today we see the limitations of the presidency and a system that is clouded by the power of capital, the multinational corporations, and the

elected representatives whose decision-making is often influenced by money interests rather than the social movement I am talking about. Hence we see the dialectal consequences of these contradictions and promises that are difficult to be advanced when there are corporate lobbies, when there are defense contractors, drug companies, and right wing interest including representatives standing in the doorway.

On the one hand, there is a promise of calling for steps to close down Guantanamo Bay and developing a task force to review existing detention policies and the lawful disposition of detainees in U.S. custody. On the other, there is the concern about the Obama Administration's position on state secrets doctrines and urging a federal judge to toss out a lawsuit by former C.I.A. detainees. Sort of what the Bush Administration did in using state secrets privilege to get courts to dismiss entire lawsuits before there could be any proceedings. There is the forward progress of the promise out of Iraq. On the other, the timeline is not the same one we were told before the election and there is the question of why there is the need to send thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan.

On the one hand, Obama's mortgage plan has promised to help millions of homeowners by creating incentives for lenders to renegotiate the terms of subprime loans. It also has promised to help millions of households by paying off their mortgages and by lifting restrictions on financing. On the other, the stimulus package has clearly helped various banks and mortgage lenders to survive with no guarantees that they will actively renegotiate those loans. In some cases, some of these companies using some of that stimulus money to pay their CEOs some bonuses, resulting in a situation also where no one who has lost their home can be helped. Homeowners are still waiting for the promise that Obama made of a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures by banks and companies that receive any kind of government aid. The promise that universal healthcare in America would become a reality, and this was Barack's quote, "It would become a reality by the end of my first term as President", is now being blocked by the power by the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries.

There are victories that represent the vision and I'm one who had tears in my eyes when Judge Sotomayor was named as only the third woman and the first Latina, the first Latina to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. On the other, during the election campaign, Obama proposed that immigration worker place raids were ineffective, and this is very dear to my heart because I came from Mexico as an immigrant. My parents were farm workers all their lives and passed away not knowing a word in English. So, when Obama said immigration raids were ineffective and that he would do away with them, it meant a lot. He called for the alternative of bringing the undocumented immigrants out of the shadow. I don't know if you know this, but since the election, although this administration has met with immigration rights leaders from throughout the country, and has promised to take up a comprehensive immigration proposal after the health issue, we have seen the implementation by Napolitano of enforcement policies that have resulted in increased immigration raids. Audits of employee paperwork that hundreds of businesses expanded a program to verify worker immigration status that has been widely criticized as flawed, bolstered a program of

cooperation between federal and local law enforcement agencies allowing local law enforcement agencies now to help the INS to pick up undocumented workers and rejected proposals for legally binding rules governing conditions in immigration detention centers, which that is beginning to change if you saw in the paper yesterday.

What is clear is that President Obama is facing the full brunt of the power structure and conservative networks. You know, the conservatives, and you hear them all recently, the Glen Becks, the Lou Dobbs, the Rush Limbaughs, were promoting race-based fear and division and the Palins, we just heard now branding Obama's proposal on a government sponsored healthcare plan as evil. So, although we've moved in this direction, we can't leave out that we still have a system that has a lot of power and that regardless of what color we are, that often if we can't change that, that when we get into those positions, often we end up being controlled by them. Phillip Thompson has written a book about this called *Double Trouble*, about the election of African Americans throughout the United States, but it's not just African Americans, it's Latinos, and they have good heart just like Obama, once they get into that, you know the positions, they find often that the power is so big that by the end of their term unless there's an entire movement to help them move the changes forward we end up in the same place where we were.

There is the potential then of an increase with the economic crisis of what happened during the Depression. During the Depression there were 500,000 Mexican immigrants placed on trains and shipped back to Mexico. That's history - blamed for the Depression. There's the potential now that the scapegoat, not only would be the immigrant, the LGBT communities, women, people of color and working people being blamed for the problems in this country. To keep this from happening and to sustain the gains made in this election would take the type of organizing and advancement of a social movement that took place during the election. There are new movements developing for regional equity, green initiatives and new thinking for how to build sustainable communities, I think there's a panel on that this afternoon, Manuel Pastor has written a book, *This Could be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity are Reshaping Metropolitan America*, and they cite some of the examples that go all the way back to Obama when he was organizing in Chicago. So, there are new movements that can affect equity issues and really bring about transformational change locally and globally.

So, in conclusion the significance the election of Barack Obama was not just in the individual, but in the rising of a new social movement that united people from all diverse backgrounds - I was one of those people - in advancing a vision for change in this country and to give us the opportunity to maybe be able to run it and serve our interests. It was a movement for jobs, for health, for education, for security and equality. It was about the very foundations of local, national, and international democracy. This is participatory democracy. With a vision of ensuring the resource capacity of diverse communities to survive, a capacity that is necessary for local and global communities to be engaged in.

Whether the vision of this social movement becomes a reality will take the consistent effort of all of you and all of us who made the election of Barack Obama possible. Whether the promises made before the election can become realities will continue to depend on whether these organized efforts can shift the power of capital and multinationals back to the people. The state of the economy moved people. The social movement and the process of the last election resulted in beautiful coalitions across race, class, sexual orientation, and gender lines. The issues are still there after the election, but in spite of their collective impact, the question is whether a social movement can continue to build sustainable alliances, to ensure that the promises that Obama made four years from now or eight years from now are a reality and with a common ground in defending the right of all people, whether they are immigrant or non-immigrant, whether they are gay, whether they are women to be treated as real citizens with dignity and equality and to ensure that the promises made during the election are not just about hope, not just about dreams, but they are about policy making that really changes our lives and our communities. Thank you.

LAWRENCE BOBO: Good afternoon, everyone. President Collins wrote and asked each of us in a way to think about the answers to several questions and I'm delighted to join this very distinguished and provocative panel. There is a PowerPoint presentation, ta da, there it is, which I'll leap into in a moment.

These questions were why did Obama win? What import does his victory have for the racial divide in the U.S.? (Or maybe that's my question.) What implications do the answers to these questions have for the health of American democracy?

I'm going to try to sketch some answers to each of these questions by the best of my lights, it'll rehearse some of what you've already heard in these fine presentations, but maybe add a couple different twists. On election night 2008 Barack Obama opened his victory speech by declaring, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer. It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America." This was as emotionally powerful a declaration as it was an accurate statement. Much less clear, however, is what this change actually will mean and mean for the long run. For this purpose this afternoon I argue that Obama's success is a clear cut validation, in a sense, of the triumphant positive change in racial attitudes and relations that has occurred in the U.S., on the one hand, and is an achievement both defined and constrained by the obdurate tenacity of racial prejudice and specifically black/white inequality, on the other hand.

Empirical studies of race and race politics had rightly foreseen a growing openness to a serious African American contender for the Presidency, and I'm going to try and go through a little bit of an empirically grounded assessment of these claims and what I'm going to say, but I want to emphasize three things; that the victory is a unique mix of an exceptional candidate, the demands of a particular sociopolitical context and

the rigors of a long, hard political campaign. How we doing? Candidate, context, campaign, and then at the end I may try to say a few things to spark a little discussion about the potential meaning of Obama's success.

Let's put some adversaries out there for a moment. Conventional wisdom says that Obama essentially evaded race during the campaign and proved that it is possible to transcend race, in effect, by his victory. I don't quite think that's an accurate read of what happened or why and how he won. The real deal from my point of view is that Obama's success is as much an achievement defined by race as it is an achievement that signals a potential for the transcendence of race. The conventional wisdom says, "If we're not yet post racial, Obama's election signals the end of race as we have known it." The real deal, ain't nothing post racial about the United States of America. From the cultural embeddedness of a new form of racism that I call *laissez faire racism* to the persistence of racial residential segregation to the deeply ingrained patterns of ghetto poverty and sharp wealth inequality that our colleagues Melvin Oliver and Tom Shapiro have documented and to the rising scourge of mass incarceration that bedevils especially the black and Latino populations, we know there's still a serious racial divide in America. There's enormous complexity here about the very concept of race itself and I'm going to invoke Melissa Harris-Lacewell rule, just assume these things are out there.

Let me talk for a moment then about footnote to Herbert Ganz and Frank Bean on the census data. On the candidate himself, you have to confess it, Barack Obama is a truly extraordinary figure. He's not born to wealth, not born to status, not born to power. But he was perhaps, almost certainly, born to be President of the United States. He's not a Bush and he's not a Kennedy, but the man was on his way. Let's think about his background experience. You could regard him as the ultimate cosmopolite. Someone born to be just a worldly, intensely sensitive person to the disadvantages and experiences and identities of all kinds of people, black Kenyan father, white American mother, highly educated parents, upbringing in diverse Hawaii and Indonesia, exposure to extreme inequality, particularly in Indonesia, and yet from the earliest stage of his life, he's had the veil dropped before his eyes and someone says, "You know, you black."

I want to identify four other early things about Obama that set him on a trajectory that we often forget. This man was the first African American elected President of the Harvard Law Review. Now, this was big news in 1990, alright? Almost 20 years ago. This was covered in the *New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Vanity Fair*, numerous other places. They set out certain early themes. Let me quote one of these *New York Times* stories from February, 1990. This is a quote from Obama himself, "But it is important that stories like mine aren't used to say that everything is okay for blacks. You have to remember that for every one of me there are hundreds or thousands of black students with at least equal talent who don't get a chance." He also says in that *New York Times* story in 1990, "I personally am interested in pushing a strong minority perspective. I'm fairly opinionated about this, but as President.....of the Law Review, I have a limited role as only a first among equals."

A friend of his was quoted in the *Boston Globe* article in 1990, this is a telling quote from his friend John Owens, "I thought, this guy sounds like he's President of the country already. I've never met anyone who could leave that impression after only five minutes." And an even more telling quote, which in a way could be the final quote from my talk this afternoon is from legal scholar Derrick Bell quoted in the *L.A. Times* in 1990, "While I applaud Obama's achievement, I guess I'm not as hopeful for what this will mean for other blacks at Harvard. With America today, there is a strange character to this black achievement, you have someone that reaches this high level, you find that he's just deemed exceptional and it does not change society's view of all of the rest." Fascinating!

Then we get *Dreams From my Father*, his biography, and again, it's worth recalling. This was not written in advance of launching the Presidential campaign, this is not Jimmy Carter's biography, this is not John Kerry's, this is not your standard one year before the campaign biography, it's written in 1995. But, again it's reviewed in the *New York Times*, *L.A. Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, it has blurbs on the cover from Charlayne Hunter-Gault, Derrick Bell and Marion Wright Edelman, and he lays out the history of being a community organizer. Okay? He's an exceptional figure. Then of course we get his 2004 Democratic Convention speech and his Senate candidacy in Illinois. This immediately raises talk of him as a serious Presidential contender and he hadn't even been elected to the Senate yet, by the way, at the time he gives this speech.

Secondly, what's significant here, is he's also declared American, not black. Let me read to you from the *New York Times* front page, first paragraph, 2004, the *New York Times* declares Obama American not black. "Barack Obama took the dais as the keynote speaker of the Democratic Convention here on Tuesday and told a classic American story of immigration, hope, striving, and opportunity. He did not speak of race or civil rights or a struggle for equality. He did not speak as the Reverend Jesse Jackson did so passionately in 1996 of the legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King and a Black America still in despair." All right? So, the media's got its own new narrative on who and what Barack Obama's going to be. I just did all that to underscore an exceptional candidate.

Let's shift to the sociopolitical context, quickly. Part of what I want to argue is that there's a whole new configuration of racial attitudes. We know from plenty of work that there's been a steady repudiation of Jim Crow racial etiology in the U.S. actively endorsed in the '40s and '50s, gone largely by the '70s and '80s and steadily in decline. However, specifically an increase willingness to vote for a black presidential candidate and the crystallization of what I will call *laissez faire* racism. Persistence of negative stereotypes, deep belief that the government has NO strong positive obligation to undo racial inequality and a general collective resentment of the idea that blacks or any other minority group should make special demands on government. Here's a figure that proves one of those things. Let me say something more about it.

This is the figure on willingness to vote for a black candidate. In 1958 when Gallup first asked this question about willingness to vote for a black candidate for President, almost 60% said, "Heck no!" Mind you the wording of the question is, if he's qualified and nominated by your party. Folks in 1958 were, "Uh Uh, I don't think so! Not today." By 2008, it's a whole new world and only 2 or 3% say they would reject a black candidate. However, negative stereotypes of African Americans remain common. In 1990, 65% of white American rated African Americans as less hard working as them and 58% of them rated them as less intelligent. Those numbers declined to 50% and 35% by 2008, but those are nontrivial numbers and these are only two traits. If you want to paint a picture of total stereotyping it ain't hard to do with about three or four more questions. I just want to make the point.

Then there is this thing I will call collective resentments or the David O. Sears and colleagues once called "symbolic racism". The idea that blacks should overcome prejudice without any special favors. Stop whining, stop complaining, just somehow bootstrap yourself out of it. This is a figure that has been stuck at $\frac{3}{4}$ of the white American population since the mid '90s. There's been no movement in this. And this is important, because this is a real central belief. You saw what happened in the Gates-Crowley affair when Obama does anything that touches this. This is why I mean he had to navigate race. This is something you got to be real careful with. Because, it's correlated with basic party identification and how people slice themselves up as to whether they're Democrats or Republicans and it's even more increasingly correlated with how people actually vote. Alright? This is a racial sensitivity that matters for politics.

Let me continue my racial context thing and to echo Melissa here: Katrina, Katrina, Katrina. This was important in at least three ways I would argue. It exposed the scar of centuries, the problem of race and did it in the way that embarrassed and humbled Americans. We weren't supposed to let the world see this sort of dirty laundry in such a quite horrific, vivid, debasing way. And as she indicated, it exposed incompetence on the part of the Bush Administration and implied deep fundamental basic human indifference. It was finally possible to, shall we say, open the flood gates of criticism and declare this a failed presidency. It was the equivalent of the Tet Offensive that ultimately brought down the Johnson Administration. And, as Melissa described in far greater detail than I need, it mobilized youth, both black, white, Latino, Asian around the country to get involved and become kind of troops in a way for Obama several years later.

This, I think are the key elements of the context. Let me turn quickly to the campaign. He gives his Springfield speech, which, many people declare as a nonracial speech, which is a curious thing. He declares himself a civil rights lawyer. He quotes Martin Luther King, contrary to the *New York Times* treatment of his 2004 Convention speech, and it's all about Lincoln and overcoming the wound of slavery. It's just weird to declare this a nonracial text. It is worth knowing to borrow a phrase from columnist E.J. Dion, "Obama ran the first great campaign of the 21st Century during the primary. Hillary Rodham Clinton ran the last great campaign of the 20th Century." I mean this in two ways. One: his successful use of new technologies of the internet for fund raising, for communication, for mobilizing just reached an extraordinary innovated level. Secondly,

he had the right message whereas Hillary started out on competence. Barack was like, "This ain't just about competence. These guys are not just incorrect, they are WRONG. Okay? What they have done is offensive. They have pointed us in the wrong direction. They have merely not done it well." Alright? He had the right message. I would also say he had to manage all those racial attitudes I just described to you a moment ago and now I'm going to race through some data because I got too much to do here.

That top line shows you the level of interest in the political campaign. The 2008 campaign reached record high levels of general public interest and stayed there from beginning to end. Ahead of every other Presidential election, basically. This is important for Obama. Why? Because he's got to overcome those stereotypes? He's got to prove he's not going to touch those negative resentments and hit that wire. Right? So, it's important to people who are paying this level of attention for black candidates to succeed. He won all of the debates. All of the major Presidential debates. He won by an average of 13 percentage point gap in ratings of the first Obama-McCain debate, 18 percentage points for the second Obama-McCain debate and 27 percentage points for the third Obama-McCain debate. Who's starting to look intelligent and presidential and confident by the end of this? The loser in front of the green screen or that mixed race kid from Hawaii? But, it's even more important than that.

If you look at that survey data carefully they ask people, especially after the first debate to give a quick one word characterization. Only one negative word was used in reference to Obama and that's inexperienced. Otherwise, he is rated as confident, intelligent, presidential, and good. In fact, he's the only one as described as presidential by a significant number of respondents. McCain gets described as old and you'll notice Palin at the end there, inexperienced and unqualified. Surprise, surprise, surprise. Then, the last thing to note about these debates and what they established, many people thought he was not yet prepared to be president prior to these debates, it always goes up afterwards, so the nearly 60% rate him as prepared to be presidential and by the time of the last debate fully 76% of the population rated him, as opposed to only 48% for McCain as someone who understands your needs and problems. He had effectively communicated to a broad range of Americans and he transcended all of the debilitating stereotypes and expectations.

Quickly, a little more thing on the campaign. Obviously, he faced a weak Republican opponent. McCain was saddled with defending a failed and unnecessary war, he was hemmed in by the far right wing of his own party, especially with regard to his immigration policy, which really cost him the Latino vote, and frankly, he gambled and gambled dangerously in selecting the former mayor of Wasilla as his running mate. The other thing I want to note: I call it the collapsing economy, but what I really mean is, God intervened. It was like, "If ya'll didn't get the message after Katrina, if ya'll didn't get the message after this war messed up, I want you to understand, I am done with Republicans. Watch this!" The bottom line, the black man with the Democratic nomination wins! Okay. And the other way of saying this is, is that if you take the arid statistical models that statisticians and economists run that have nothing to do with race, nothing to do with specific issues, just incumbent, economy doing well, turnout

from last election, Obama won by that exact margin. The other way to say this is interesting. He did not pay a race penalty. Obama was not penalized for being black, as many people would have expected, contrary to the standard expectations.

Now, what I do want to emphasize though, he got 53% versus 46% of the vote, a clear victory, no repeat of Florida, thank God! Secondly, he got well over 69 million votes for Obama, 9 million more than McCain received. He only needed 270 electoral college votes, he got 365. He won 28 of 50 states including nine states John Kerry, a white candidate' had lost in 2004. These include the key battleground states of Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia and even Florida. Can you say, booyaaa! However, it was a deeply racialized vote. He got a minority of the white vote. He only got 43% of the white vote. What he got was a supermajority of the Asian and Latino votes, roughly 2/3 of each and a hypermajority of the black vote -90%, 92%, and point in fact it was the highest black turnout on record 66.8%. Blacks were the highest percentage of the total turnout than ever before, 13% and fully 16.7 million African American cast votes. So, he had an unusual road to travel. He had to not push the race button of white America, but he had to keep black America, who still have real grievances and concerns under the Melissa Harris-Lacewell rule, not just content, not just interested, but mobilized on this guy's behalf, which he managed to do.

The next thing I want to say though, and this is really great for the future, Barack Obama got 85% of the young Latino vote. Latinos under the age of 30 voted for him at about the same rate as African Americans. So, so much for that media hype, Latinos not going to vote for the black candidate. Like I said before, booyaaa!! He got half the young white vote too. So, the prospects for the future are actually very good. Quickly, of course, Obama's victory is historic and transcendent achievement in so many ways it's hard for me to put it in terms. It was deeply personally moving for me, by the way, because some of you know that the 106 year old Atlanta woman who he mentioned in his election night speech is my grandmother, so I just, boom! I burst into tears when I heard him talk about her, so.

Secondly, Obama's victory was achieved not by an evasion of race, but in fact, by the very careful management of the modern racial divide. Thirdly, we have to concede that a number of people already touched on this, he was elected President of the United States, not of the ASA, with respect, or of black America. He will of necessity govern toward the center, but we presumably hope, and you've already had some examples, that he pursues a hidden agenda that helps many of those that are now most economically disadvantaged and closed out. Bill Wilson and others have started to talk about the things that his Department of Education, the targeted aspect of his recovery plan, Eric Holder and the Justice Department are doing to reverse the trend of the last, not just eight years, but 20 years. We are, perhaps, fortunate in a way that, Republicans for the moment are leaderless and, in fact, playing to their worst element, at present, with the Lou Dobbs, with the Rush Limbaughs, with the Glen Becks, and with this nut-job fringe birther group. But, it's interesting that that's where they go. That, you know, this can't possibly be our President, right? It's got to be that extreme a characterization.

There's some challenges here of course. Bush's eight years left behind a catastrophic mess, both domestically and internationally, so he faces some truly daunting challenges and the electorate, sadly, is going to hold him increasingly accountable for the extraordinary mess that the last eight years created and it's going to take incredible work to win. But, his victory obviously has profound symbolic implications. If you just think about that election night, when the First Family walked out onto the stage, wow! Michelle, the girls, his first lady, it transforms everything in terms of what people ought to aspire to and feel themselves capable of achieving if they work hard enough at it.

Lastly, si se puede, yes we can. But, it calls for continued mobilization, because we do have now a new growing and powerful multiracial, multiethnic coalition. And, I'll end this way. The notion that Obama has fundamentally transcended race and opened to post racial epoch in the American experience is of course easy to dismiss. To be sure Obama may well embody what he referred to throughout the campaign as the "Joshua Generation," that group ready to cross the river, but as New Yorker Magazine writer and editor David Remnick points out, "Race was inescapably central to the Obama phenomena and the path he's traveled." "A powerful thematic under current of his oratory and prose was race, not race as invoked by his predecessors in electoral politics or into civil rights movement, not race as an insistence on tribe or on redress. Rather, Obama made his biracial ancestry a metaphor for his ambition to create a broad coalition of support to rally Americans behind a narrative of moral and political progress. He was not its hero, but he just might be it's culmination." The challenge before us social scientists now I think is to carefully map that journey that Obama and the nation have taken and most of all to continue to chart in the days and years ahead and be a part of that all important work that lies in the future. Thank you very much.

PATRICIA HILL COLLINS: I know it hasn't all been said, but it seems like they said enough. So, I'd like to thank our panelists. I'd like you to joint with me to thank them one more time, we have no more time. Thank you.