

The Historic Election of 2008: Hope vs. Fear. Unity vs. Division. Success vs. Failure.

**An OpEdNews.com Article, a My.BarackObama.com Blog Entry, and
An E-Mail to Progressive Activists**

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In the future days which we seek to
make secure, we look forward to a world
founded upon four essential human
freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and
expression. ...

The second is freedom of every person
to worship God in his own way. ...

The third is freedom from want. ...

The fourth is freedom from fear.

Those Four Freedoms were enshrined in the
State of the Union speech by President Franklin
D. Roosevelt in January 1941, just months before
Pearl Harbor, the most devastating attack on
America to that date. Today, seven years after
another horrific shock to our collective system,
we are embroiled in an election that the entire
world recognizes is of truly historic proportions
—and not just because of the amount of pigment
in one candidate's skin, or even the centuries of
slavery and discrimination with which his race
has been burdened. Simply put, the election of
2008 is no less than an epic contest between
hope and fear: hope that can set us free, and fear
that can be—and is—exploited to keep us divided
and to some degree conquered, by powers-that-
be, both foreign and domestic.

**Government, Though Imperfect,
Is Not the Enemy. It Is Us!**

We the people of the United States, in
order to form a more perfect union,
establish justice, insure domestic
tranquility, provide for the common
defense, promote the general welfare,
and secure the blessings of liberty to
ourselves and our posterity, do ordain
and establish this Constitution for the
United States of America.

—Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

Surely unrecognizable to Abraham Lincoln—who
gave his all to preserve the federal government
of the United States—the Republican Party today
has as its bottom line the mantra that
government is part of the problem, not part of
the solution. But government, of course, even as
imperfect as it is, is the one and only body
constituted for we citizens to secure our liberties,
as by reigning in those who would—intentionally
or inadvertently—oppress us.

That truth has come down through history to
our challenging modern times, when
corporations exert more control over the lives of
ordinary individuals than any government ever

did at the time of our revolution. There is nothing inherently evil about a corporation; it is, of course, a truly remarkable creation for turning a profit. But by the same token, there is nothing inherently benevolent about a corporation; it exists in law for the enrichment of its shareholders, not necessarily the benefit of society at large. It is, thus, a legitimate and vital role of government to regulate the commerce of corporations, so that the rights of all are protected.

Indeed, even the security of corporations themselves is enhanced by prudent government action. The severe financial crisis we are experiencing today is a direct result of the deregulation—not the regulation—of business in recent years. New Deal reforms saved the banking system—and thus American capitalism itself—during the Great Depression; it will take likewise wise and far-reaching action by our government to quell the current crisis and restore confidence in our historically debt-ridden public and private sectors.

For the GOP to continually attack government as the enemy is tantamount to attacking whatever we as a people can and must do together in order to survive and thrive, as it has necessarily been since the dawn of civilization.

[T]hat the strong may not oppress the weak.

—*From The Code of Hammurabi*

Obama: Uniting Our States

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

—*Abraham Lincoln,
Paraphrasing Jesus Christ*

This year, as four years ago, the electoral map of the United States is eerily reminiscent of the Free State / Slave State map of the Civil War. Moreover, that pattern of Blue States and Red States is repeated throughout the country as "blue counties" and "red counties"—the former more urban, the latter more rural, the swing votes mainly in the suburban and exurban regions.

That divide seems at times to be as unbreachable as it is untenable: No nation can long survive as a nation if its people are permanently balkanized along lines of race, creed, religion, or any other difference. Looking at it another way—and that is how a democracy is supposed to function, isn't it?—it is easy to tell a nation's enemies from its allies: Your foes want to divide you; your friends want to unite you.

[T]he end of the U.S. as united states
—*The Stated Goal of Usama bin Laden*

We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

—*Benjamin Franklin*

Most remarkable to me in the current election—and emblematic of why this is indeed a historic contest for the spirit of America—is that when Sen. Barack Obama's poll numbers go up, that divide between Red States and Blue States

becomes more "violet": Such swing states as Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, Virginia, and Florida break up the monolith of Red States with patches of blue, representing millions of Americans responding to the senator's inspiring calls for unity and hope, appealing to the better angels of our nature.

But when Sen. John McCain's poll numbers go up, those newly Blue States return to the big Red block, as he and his ruthless running mate play politics with personalities while calling for more of the same economic and foreign policies that under the current administration have led our nation to the brink of economic and military ruin. And none of that would have been possible without the support of Republican lawmakers, 90% of the time including the hypocritically self-proclaimed "maverick" McCain.

Nothing is more terrible than ignorance in action.

—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Reject Fear, Embrace Hope!

America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand.

—*President Harry S. Truman*

Fear comes easy. Vincent Price, master horror moviemaker, said fear is the most primal emotion. In contrast, hope takes courage. Whether it is taking your first steps alone as an infant, saying wedding vows with your spouse, putting your confidence in others on the job,

volunteering with a church or other group in your community, or supporting candidates and initiatives—yes, by our government—that will restore our nation to greatness, putting your faith in something that entails real risks as well as potential rewards takes not only courage but also sound judgment.

And it takes cooperation between great numbers of us "little people" to stand up as necessary to the powers-that-be, both foreign and domestic, who profit by purveying terror and other forms of fear or hatred and other forms of divisiveness.

The great constitutional corrective in the hands of the people against usurpation of power, or corruption by their agents is the right of suffrage; and this when used with calmness and deliberation will prove strong enough.

—*President Andrew Jackson*

The greatest things this nation has ever accomplished—from winning world wars and establishing Social Security and Medicare to putting men on the moon—have come about only through teamwork: popular movements supporting and led by bold, bright leaders.

Likewise, the greatest things this nation will next achieve—re-establishing stability in the financial markets, restoring equity to our tax system and fiscal responsibility to our budgets, fixing the broken health care system, inventing new Green technologies and American jobs to counter Global Warming, and yes, even bringing justice to those who actually did attack us seven years ago today and who are still undoubtedly plotting

against us in regions where Bush and McCain have not concentrated our forces—will require vast efforts and inevitably some sacrifices from our citizenry as well as intelligent, ethical, effective action from our leaders.

America has succeeded. America can succeed. And America will succeed, but only if we work with each other, not against ourselves, through the much-maligned auspices of the government of the United States—the duly constituted power of the people.

Now even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us—the spin masters, the negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of "anything goes." Well, I say to them tonight, there is not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America.

—*Sen. Barack Obama,*
From The Audacity of Hope,
His Keynote Address at the
2004 Democratic National Convention