

**BARACK OBAMA
EXPOSED!**

Barack Obama: EXPOSED!

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Cover Photo: AP Photo/Seth Wenig

Published by:

Eagle Publishing, Inc.

One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20001

1-888-467-4448

Website: www.humanevents.com

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Obama More Pro-Choice Than NARAL

Sen. Barack Obama (D.-Ill.) portrays himself as a thoughtful Democrat who carefully considers both sides of controversial issues, but his radical stance on abortion puts him further left on that issue than even NARAL Pro-Choice America.

In 2002, as an Illinois legislator, Obama voted against the Induced Infant Liability Act, which would have protected babies that survived late-term abortions. That same year a similar federal law, the Born Alive Infant Protection Act, was signed by President Bush. Only 15 members of the U.S. House opposed it, and it passed the Senate unanimously on a voice vote.

Both the Illinois and the federal bill sought equal treatment for babies who survived premature inducement for the purpose of abortion and wanted babies who were born prematurely and given life-saving medical attention.

When the federal bill was being debated, NARAL Pro-Choice America released a statement that said, “Consistent with our position last year, NARAL does not oppose passage of the Born Alive Infants Protection Act... floor debate served to clarify the bill’s intent and assure us that it is not targeted at Roe v. Wade or a woman’s right to choose.”

But Obama voted against this bill in the Illinois senate and killed it in committee. Twice, the Induced Infant Liability Act came up in the Judiciary Committee on which he served. At its first reading he voted “present.” At the second he voted “no.”

The bill was then referred to the senate’s Health and Human Services Committee, which Obama chaired after the Illinois Senate went Democratic in 2003. As chairman, he never called the bill up for a vote.

Jill Stanek, a registered delivery-ward nurse who was the prime mover behind the legislation after she witnessed aborted babies’ being born alive and left to die, testified twice before Obama in support of the Induced Infant Liability Act bills. She also testified before the U.S. Congress in support of the Born Alive Infant Protection Act.

Stanek told me her testimony “did not faze” Obama.

In the second hearing, Stanek said, “I brought pictures in and presented them to the committee of very premature babies from my neonatal resuscitation book from the American Pediatric Association, trying to show them unwanted babies were being cast aside. Babies the same age were being treated if they were wanted!”

“And those pictures didn’t faze him [Obama] at all,” she said.

At the end of the hearing, according to the official records of the Illinois State senate, Obama thanked Stanek for being “very clear and forthright,” but said his concern was that Stanek had suggested “doctors really don’t care about children who are being born with a reasonable prospect of life because they are so locked into their pro-abortion views that they would watch an infant that is viable die.” He told her, “That may be your assessment, and I don’t see any evidence of that. What we are doing here is to create one more burden on a woman and I can’t support that.”

As a senator, Obama has opposed measures to criminalize those who transport minors across state lines for the purpose of obtaining an abortion.

At a townhall meeting in Ottawa, Ill., Joanne Resendiz, a teacher and mother of five, asked him: “How are you going to vote on this, keeping in mind that 10, 15 years down the line your daughters, God forbid, could be transported across state lines?”

Obama said: “The decision generally is one that a woman should make.”

Miss Carpenter is former Assistant Editor for HUMAN EVENTS. She is the author of The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy’s Dossier on Hillary Rodham Clinton, published by Regnery (a HUMAN EVENTS sister company).

Jonathan Livingston Obama

I've caught Obama fever! Obamamania, Obamarama, Obama, Obama, Obama. (I just pray to God this is clean, renewable electricity I'm feeling.)

Only white guilt could explain the insanely hyperbolic descriptions of Obama's "eloquence." His speeches are a run-on string of embarrassing, sophomoric Hallmark bromides.

In announcing his candidacy, Obama confirmed that he believes in "the basic decency of the American people." And let the chips fall where they may!

Obama forthrightly decried "a smallness of our politics" — deftly slipping a sword into the sides of the smallness-in-politics advocates. (To his credit, he somehow avoided saying, "My fellow Americans, size does matter.")

He took a strong stand against the anti-hope crowd, saying: "There are those who don't believe in talking about hope." Take that, Hillary!

Most weirdly, he said: "I recognize there is a certain presumptuousness in this — a certain audacity — to this announcement."

What is so audacious about announcing that you're running for president? Any idiot can run for president. Dennis Kucinich is running for president. Until he was imprisoned, Lyndon LaRouche used to run for president constantly. John Kerry ran for president. Today, all you have to do is suggest a date by which U.S. forces in Iraq should surrender, and you're officially a Democratic candidate for president.

Obama made his announcement surrounded by hundreds of adoring Democratic voters. And those were just the reporters. There were about 400 more reporters at Obama's announcement than Mitt Romney's, who, by the way, is more likely to be sworn in as our next president than B. Hussein Obama.

Obama has locked up the Hollywood money. Even Miss America has endorsed Obama. (John "Two Americas" Edwards is still hoping for the other Miss America to endorse him.)

But Obama tells us he's brave for announcing that he's running for president. And if life gives you

lemons, make lemonade!

I don't want to say that Obama didn't say anything in his announcement, but afterward, even Jesse Jackson was asking, "What did he say?" There was one refreshing aspect to Obama's announcement: It was nice to see a man call a press conference to announce something other than he was the father of Anna Nicole Smith's baby.

B. Hussein Obama's announcement also included this gem: "I know that I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change." As long as Obama insists on using Hallmark card greetings in his speeches, he could at least get Jesse Jackson to help him with the rhyming.

If Obama's biggest asset is his inexperience, then if by the slightest chance he were elected and were to run for a second term, he will have to claim he didn't learn anything the first four years.

There was also this inspirational nugget: "Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what's needed to be done. Today we are called once more, and it is time for our generation to answer that call." Is this guy running for president or trying to get people to switch to a new long-distance provider?

He said that "we learned to disagree without being disagreeable." (There goes Howard Dean's endorsement.) This was an improvement on the first draft, which read, "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice."

This guy's like the ANWR of trite political aphorisms. There's no telling exactly how many he's sitting on, but it could be in the billions.

Obama's famed eloquence reminds me of a book of platitudes I read about once called "Life Lessons." The book contained such inspiring thoughts as:

"When was the last time you really looked at the sea? Or smelled the morning? Touched a baby's hair? Really tasted and enjoyed food? Walked bare-

foot in the grass? Looked in the blue sky?” (When was the last time you fantasized about dismembering the authors of a book of platitudes?)

I can't wait for Obama's inaugural address when he reveals that he loves long walks in the rain, sunsets, and fresh-baked cookies shaped like puppies.

The guy I feel sorry for is Harold Ford. The former representative from Tennessee is also black, a Democrat, about the same age as Obama, and is every bit as attractive. The difference is, when he talks, you don't fantasize about plunging knitting needles into your ears to stop the gusher of meaningless platitudes.

Ford ran as a Democrat in Republican Tennessee and almost won — and the press didn't knock out his opponent for him by unsealing sealed divorce records, as it did for B. Hussein Obama. Yet no one ever talks about Ford as the second coming of Cary Grant and Albert Einstein.

Maybe liberals aren't secret racists expunging vast stores of white guilt by hyperventilating over B. Hussein Obama. Maybe they're just running out of greeting card inscriptions.

Ann Coulter is Legal Affairs Correspondent for HUMAN EVENTS and author of High Crimes and Misdemeanors, Slander, How to Talk to a Liberal (If You Must), and most recently, Godless.

Barack Obama's Whitewater?

Washington pundits are excited for a potential battle for the Democratic nomination for president between the “fresh-faced” freshman senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, and the consummate political insider, New York Sen. Hillary Clinton. However, new revelations about a corruption scandal involving Obama suggest he may have more in common with Hillary than he would like to admit.

As you may recall, in November, press reports surfaced regarding a questionable land deal between Obama and Antoin “Tony” Rezko, an indicted political fundraiser. The long and the short of it is that Obama approached Rezko with the idea to simultaneously purchase adjoining lots in Southside Chicago. Rezko obliged. Obama obtained his lot for a reduced price. Rezko later sold a portion of his property to Obama. All of this took place while Rezko was the subject of a federal corruption investigation.

Political handicappers have begun to assess what these revelations might mean to Obama's presidential aspirations, but personally, I'm not interested in the political fallout. The salient question ought to be what do Obama's dealings with Rezko tell us, if anything, about Obama's ethics.

First, Obama's dealings with Rezko reveal a politician oblivious to the expectations of at least the appearance of integrity for those in public office. At the time Obama entered into his dubious land deal, it was widely known that Rezko was the subject of a federal investigation for allegedly trying to collect nearly \$6 million in kickbacks from government deals. Obama and Rezko have been “friends” since 1990. Obama knew about Rezko's shady reputation and ought to have avoided the appearance of impropriety.

Second, Obama's dealings with Rezko suggest, at least, that Obama might be the kind of politician willing to peddle his influence. The Chicago Tribune reported that Obama purchased his land for \$300,000 less than the asking price, while Rezko's wife paid full price for the adjoining lot from the

same owner. Did Mrs. Rezko partially subsidize the purchase of Obama's new home? And what of the subsequent sale of a section of the Rezko property to Obama shortly thereafter?

Press reports suggest Rezko has raised as much as \$60,000 in campaign contributions for Obama. What has he received in return for his generosity? (Such relationships are never one-sided.) New revelations surfaced recently indicating that Rezko was successful in persuading Obama to award a coveted internship with his Senate office to a Rezko business associate. (Incidentally, the business associate, John Armanda, has donated \$11,500 to Obama's campaigns.) Is there more to this story?

Third, Obama's dealings with Rezko suggest that Obama may be willing to cast aside his professed sense of ethics for personal financial gain. Obama, through his dealings with an indicted political fundraiser, was able to purchase his luxurious home at a cut-rate price and expand his property. Obama acknowledged the deal was a mistake, but only after the media made hay of it.

In 1992, the Clintons came into the White House despite evidence of their shady real estate dealings in Arkansas, a scandal known as “Whitewater,” setting the tone for what would be the most corrupt presidency in our nation's history. Is this Rezko land deal Barack Obama's Whitewater? Let's find out sooner than later.

Mr. Fitton is the president of Judicial Watch, Inc., a conservative, non-partisan educational foundation, promotes transparency, accountability and integrity in government, politics and the law.

Obama's Voting Record Belies Moderate Image

In his televised response to President Bush's Iraq speech, Sen. Barack Obama (D.-Ill.) told Larry King he would be making his decision on a run for the White House "fairly soon."

Obama's decision today to seek the Democratic nomination will shine a spotlight on votes he made during his six years in the Illinois Senate—before coming to Washington, D.C., as a U.S. senator. Explaining these votes could be uncomfortable for Obama, who has never been made to answer for his controversial decisions there.

In his race for the U.S. Senate, not a single negative ad was run against him either during the seven-way Democratic primary or in the general election, in good part because Republican Jack Ryan unexpectedly dropped out of the race after a court unsealed embarrassing divorce documents that were highly publicized by the media. As a result, Obama faced weak Republican candidate Alan Keyes, who quickly came under attack from the media and was unable to act offensively in the campaign.

Now, basically untouched in these past political campaigns, Obama will likely flaunt his media-created image as a moderate Democrat capable of embracing both conservative and liberal ideals. But, as HUMAN EVENTS has shown in other articles, no matter what lip service Obama gives to conservative principles, at the end of the day he reliably comes down on the liberal side.

Below are some votes Obama made as a state legislator that pierce his moderate façade.

ABORTION

NO **SB 230 (1997)**
To prohibit partial-birth abortion unless necessary to save the life of a mother and makes performance of the procedure a Class 4 felony for the physician.

NO **HB 709 (2000)**
To prohibit state funding of abortion and induced miscarriages except when necessary to save the life of the moth-

er. Excludes premature births from funding except to produce a viable child when necessary to save the life of a mother. Would permit funding in cases of rape or incest when payment is authorized under federal law.

NO **SB 1661 (2002)**
A part of the Born Alive Infant Protection Package. Would create a cause of action if a child is born alive after an abortion and the child is then neglected through failure to provide medical care after birth.

CRIME

NO **SB 381 (1997)**
To require prisoners to pay court costs for frivolous lawsuits against the state.

NO **SB 485 (1999)**
To give no offer of "good time" for sex offenders sentenced to the County Jail.
*Obama was the only vote against this measure

UNIONS

YES **HB 3396 (2003)**
To make unionization easier by not requiring a secret ballot to organize if 50% of the eligible workers publicly sign a card of support for unionization.

YES **SB 230 (2003)**
Entitles a teacher who is elected as an officer of the state or national teacher's union to be granted a leave of absence for up to six years, or the period of time the teacher is serving.

YES **SB 1070 (2003)**
Allows college graduate assistants who teach college courses be eligible to join a union.

CHILD PROTECTION

PRESENT **SB 609 (2001)**
To restrict the location of buildings with "adult" uses (meaning pornographic video stores, strip clubs, etc.) within 1,000 feet of any public or private elementary or second-

ary school, public park, place or worship, preschool, day-care facility, mobile park or residential area.

NO **HB 1812 (1999)**

To require school boards to install software on public computers accessible to minors to block sexually explicit material.

TAXES

NO **SB 1075 (1999)**

To create an income tax credit for all full-time K-12 pupils in an amount equal to 25% of qualified education expenses up to a maximum of \$500 per family.

YES **SB 1725 (2003)**

To restore the Illinois Estate Tax.

YES **SB 1733 (2003)**

To impose a Gas Use Tax on the purchase of natural gas from outside the state of Illinois for use or consumption in Illinois. Forces the delivering supplier to pay 2.4 cents per therm of gas, or the customer can elect to become a "self-assessing" purchaser and pay 5% of the purchase price or 2.4 cents per therm.

ELECTIONS

YES **SB 1415 (2003)**

To create public funding for supreme court races.

GAY RIGHTS

NOT VOTING **HB 581 (2003)**

Allows domestic partners to be allowed to assume the rights of a spouse or survivor with regards to pension benefits under the Chicago Teacher's pension system.

NO **SB 228 (1997)**

Changes the "Illinois Equal Opportunity Act of 1997" to stipulate, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, any unit of government or school district that gives benefits to same-sex couples under any criteria must give equal benefits to heterosexual couples.

DRUGS

YES **SB 880 (2003)**

To allow the purchase of 10 hypodermic needles from a pharmacy without a prescription.

PRESENT **HB 2000 (4659)**

To establish a zero-tolerance drug-testing policy for Department of Corrections Employees

BUSINESS

NO **SB 777 (1999)**

To end the unemployment insurance fund building tax.

NO **SB 879 (1999)**

To end the minimum contribution tax rate for the unemployment system.

NO **SB 795 (2001)**

To reduce employers' minimum contribution insurance rate.

YES **SB 796 (2003)**

To increase the Illinois minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$6.50 per hour.

Miss Carpenter is former Assistant Editor for HUMAN EVENTS. She is the author of The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy's Dossier on Hillary Rodham Clinton, published by Regnery (a HUMAN EVENTS sister company).

Barack Obama and the Pertinent Precedents

Is America ready for a black president? That's like asking if country music is ready for Carrie Underwood. If you make it on "American Idol," you've got it made in America, and if you can have not one but two different black presidents on "24," ditto. Most citizens would probably breathe a sigh of relief if they woke up tomorrow to find that David Palmer, assassinated last season, had been resurrected and installed in the real Oval Office.

As it happens, art is following public inclinations rather than leading them. The truth is, America was ready for an African-American president more than a decade ago, when Colin Powell was raising pulse rates across the political spectrum. A poll in the fall of 1995 had him beating President Clinton by a margin of 51 percent to 41 percent. When he decided not to run, it wasn't because experts didn't think he could win.

Barack Obama is the Colin Powell of 2008—a charismatic leader with a quintessentially American backstory and an appeal that transcends traditional divisions. That a Hawaiian-born son of a Kenyan father and a white mother, who grew up in Indonesia and has a name on loan from al Qaeda, could generate such broad excitement proves something Powell already demonstrated: Americans can surprise you.

It is a cliché to note that many of our most beloved celebrities—Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey and Tiger Woods—are black. But clichés sometimes develop only because they tell important truths: In this case, that white (and Hispanic and Asian) Americans have no trouble revering and identifying with successful members of a group that most whites once regarded as fundamentally alien, not to mention inferior.

The resemblance between Obama and Powell is unmistakable. Both rose in the world without the racially conscious approach of many African-American leaders, and without any particular debt to black interest groups. Both excelled in white-

dominated institutions—Powell in the U.S. Army, Obama at Harvard Law School, where he was the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review.

Both have the knack of appealing to whites without evoking the slightest twinge of guilt. In fact, both do just the opposite, by demonstrating the enduring reality of the American dream—that here, someone with talent and drive can overcome obstacles that in other societies would be impassable. Both possess a quality of relaxed gravity and wisdom that is rare among political aspirants, even as they embody the can-do optimism Americans prize in their leaders.

The principal difference, however, is a big one: Powell, at the time he considered running, had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—or, as he put it, "the No. 1 person in the armed forces of the most powerful nation on earth." He had directed one of the most stunningly successful wars in history, when we evicted the Iraqi army from Kuwait.

Obama's achievements, on the other hand, are mostly in his future. With eight years in the Illinois legislature and two years in the U.S. Senate, he's not a political novice. Having been a faculty member of the University of Chicago Law School, where debate is a contact sport, he's not untutored in weighty issues. But far more than Powell—or any of his potential rivals for the presidency—he is an unknown quantity.

The way in which he resembles George W. Bush—his thin resume—is not one that will help him. It may be cancelled out, though, by the ways in which he conspicuously contrasts with the outgoing president—notably, being thoughtful, articulate and seemingly open to opposing views. Bush is the commander in chief. But it's Obama who gives the effortless impression of command.

His immediate challenge is to simultaneously assure Democratic partisans that he is liberal enough for them while convincing everyone else he is conser-

vative enough for them. Being opposed to the Iraq war from the outset will give him latitude to depart from party orthodoxy on other issues, if he has the vision and nerve—make that audacity—to do so.

In the end, Obama could be another John Kerry, whose military biography was not quite enough to counter his merciless depiction as another out-of-touch liberal. Or he could be another Ronald Reagan, who had to overcome demonization on his way to proving that Americans will take a chance on a philosophy they don't entirely share, if it comes with the right leader.

Mr. Chapman is a columnist and editorial writer for the Chicago Tribune.

Will GOP Be Ready for Obama Onslaught?

If Illinois Sen. Barack Obama becomes either the presidential or vice-presidential nominee for the Democrat Party, expect left-wing racial demagoguery against the Republican Party to be unleashed as never before.

The Democrat Party and the mainstream press will launch an effort unprecedented in its intensity to secure a victory for a ticket featuring Obama. Not only is Obama the most charismatic “main-event level” liberal figure since Bill Clinton, he offers the Democrats an opportunity to once and for all destroy any chance the GOP has of appealing to black voters.

As the press has frequently noted, Obama is the first African-American presidential candidate with a legitimate chance of being on a winning ticket. The Democrats see in Obama a man who can not only keep loyal Democrats on board, but also someone who can reach out to politically apathetic Americans, particularly Americans of color.

There are many non-whites in America who aren't particularly interested in politics, but who would love to see a candidate of color break through what they view as the ultimate “glass ceiling.” Much like Massachusetts Democrat Deval Patrick, who received the support of thousands of previously unregistered nonwhite voters in his successful bid to become the state's first black governor, Obama could encourage millions of previously nonvoting minorities to help him make history.

In addition, Obama, like Patrick, could capture the imagination of white voters who feel that it is long overdue for candidates of color to have “a place at the table.” There are many non-ideological whites who happen to believe that America's racial wounds will never be healed until nonwhites have a presence at the highest levels of the private and public sector. So many “glass ceilings” have been broken in the American corporate realm that it's no longer news. A person of color becoming either president or vice president would not only be news, it will also be a confirmation in the minds of these non-ideological white voters of America's fundamental fairness.

The left and the press will do whatever it takes to ensure an Obama victory. Reporters will write stories implying that an Obama victory is an essential step on the road to racial equality. Major newspapers will write editorials pointing out that, if Obama wins during the year marking the 40th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, it will be a sign that his dream is finally becoming reality. The nightly news broadcasts will run features about Republicans who have decided to cross party lines to back Obama.

In addition, every race-based controversy involving the GOP will be dredged up, highlighted, recycled and replayed. The media and the left will pound the electorate over the head with every action that can be characterized as red-state racial hate—from Barry Goldwater's libertarian objection to the 1964 Civil Rights Act to Trent Lott's “botched joke” about Strom Thurmond. The GOP will be characterized as the largest hate group in the United States, the party of Katrina, the party of oppression, the party of the water hose and the police dog. The Republican Party will be depicted as a demon-possessed entity—and the electorate will be told that the only way to exorcise those demons is by affirming their faith in the supposed savior, Barack Obama.

The GOP must be prepared for this obnoxious onslaught. The party must stand ready to defend its record on race. The Republicans must remind the electorate of its accomplishments: the appointment of the first black Secretary of State and the first black female Secretary of State, the selection of the most diverse Cabinet in U.S. history, the empowerment of communities of color through faith-based initiatives, the greatest movement of blacks into the middle class (during Ronald Reagan's two terms). In 2008, the Republicans cannot let the mainstream press and the Democrat Party rewrite history—because if they do, the GOP will be history.

Mr. Tucker is a Massachusetts-based freelance writer. He operates a blog called Notes from D.R.

Barack Obama Is Just Another Liberal

As Sen. Barack Obama (D.-Ill.) gathers increasing attention as a potential rival to Sen. Hillary Clinton (D.-N.Y.) for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, remarkably little attention has been paid to his record, which reveals him to be at least as liberal as Hillary.

While Obama has a knack for portraying himself as an even-handed politician, who is inspired by traditional religious values, he has earned 100% ratings from Americans for Democratic Action, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the National Organization of Women, the NAACP and the NEA.

HEDGED RHETORIC

To drum up support for his Senate bid in 2004, Obama wrote a letter to the *Windy City Times*, a publication targeted to Chicago's gay community. "I opposed DOMA [the Defense of Marriage Act] in 1996. It should be repealed, and I will vote for its repeal on the Senate floor," he vowed. "I will also oppose any proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban gays and lesbians from marrying."

Obama told the paper that constitutional marriage amendment proposals were merely "an effort to demonize people for political advantage." At the same time, he pledged to work to "expand adoption rights" for same-sex couples.

In 2006, he followed through by voting against the Federal Marriage Amendment. "Personally, I do believe that marriage is between a man and a woman," he said, as he voted against defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

Obama has similarly hedged his pro-choice rhetoric, while consistently supporting the pro-choice cause. As a state senator in Illinois he twice voted "present" on an Illinois ban on partial-birth abortion and was "absent" on a third vote. In 2001, he voted "present" on a parental notification bill for minors and in 2002 he voted against a bill to protect babies that survived failed abortions.

In his 2004 race Senate, Obama accepted \$41,750

in campaign contributions from pro-choice interest groups.

These positions contrast with the Christian faith to which he frequently refers in public appearances. Obama's father, a Muslim who abandoned his faith for atheism, divorced Barack's mother when Barack was two. In his 2004 keynote address to the Democratic National Convention, Barack said that his mother's parents were a non-practicing Baptist and a non-practicing Methodist. She "grew up with a healthy skepticism of organized religion herself," he said. "As a consequence so did I."

After his mother remarried, Obama lived in Indonesia with his stepfather, who was conscripted into the Indonesian Army. He first attended a Catholic school there, then a Muslim school.

"In both cases," he writes in his new book, *The Audacity of Hope*, "my mother was less concerned with me learning the catechism or puzzling out the meaning of the muezzin's call to evening prayer than she was with whether I was properly learning my multiplication tables."

SUPPORTING SOCIALISM

As an Illinois senator, Obama introduced the "Bernardin Amendment," which would have inserted language from a pastoral letter by the late Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Bernardin into a universal health care program. The amendment contained Bernardin's line: "Health care is an essential safeguard of human life and dignity, and there is an obligation for society to ensure that every person is able to realize that right." The bill, which did not pass, was to be funded with money taken from tobacco companies.

Obama spoke of his faith in his keynote address at the 2006 Call to Renewal's "Building a Covenant for a New America" conference. He said that if it wasn't for the "particular attributes" of the black church, he may have never have become part of it. "Because of its past, the black church understands in

an intimate way the Biblical call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and challenge powers and principles,” he said.

In the same speech, he asked Christians, Jews and Muslims to convene on Capitol Hill and give an “injection of morality” by opposing a repeal of the estate tax.

When speaking out against various tax cuts, Obama has likened the “Ownership Society” — which entails such things as personalized Social Security accounts, health savings accounts and school choice — to “social Darwinism.” In a November 2005 speech to the National Women’s Law Center, he said: “The idea here is to give everyone one big refund on their government — divvy it up into some tax breaks, hand them out, and encourage everyone to use their share to go buy their own health care, their own retirement plan, their own unemployment insurance, education, and so forth.”

“In Washington, they call this the Ownership Society,” Obama explained. “But in our past there has been another term for it — social Darwinism, every man and woman for him or herself.”

As an Illinois state legislator, Obama also supported raising taxes on insurance premiums and on casino patrons, retaining the state death tax and levying a new tax on businesses.

He voted against a bill that would add penalties for crimes committed as a part of gang activity and against a bill that would make it a criminal offense for accused gang members, free on bond or probation, to associate with other gang members. In 1999, he was the only state senator to oppose a bill that prohibited early prison release for criminal sexual offenders.

In 2001, he voted “present” on a measure to keep pornographic books and video stores 1,000 feet away from schools and churches, and in 1999, he voted against a requirement to make schools filter internet pornography from school computers.

Obama has spoken against the Iraq War since its inception, beginning with an October 2002 speech he gave alongside the Rev. Jesse Jackson. He went so far as to suggest that the war was a ploy to distract voters from domestic issues impacting minorities.

“What I am opposed to is the attempt by potential hacks like Karl Rove to distract us from a rise in the uninsured, a rise in the poverty state, a drop in the medium income, to distract us from corporate scandals and a stock market that has just gone thor-

ough the worst month since the Great Depression,” he said. “That’s what I am opposed to.”

Obama wrote in *The Audacity of Hope* that although he believed Saddam had chemical and biological weapons, coveted nuclear arms, scoffed at UN resolutions and butchered his own people, he sensed “the threat Saddam posed was not imminent” and “the administration’s rationales for war were flimsy and ideologically driven.”

In November 2003, he told the Chicago Sun-Times that if he were in the Senate he would not have voted for the President’s \$87.5 billion supplemental appropriations package for Iraq and Afghanistan. “I think it enables the Bush Administration to continue on a flawed policy without being accountable to the American people or to the troops who are making sacrifices,” he said.

His opposition to the war carries through today in his support for the call by Sen. Carl Levin (D.-Mich.) to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq four to six months after its enactment.

Miss Carpenter is former Assistant Editor for HUMAN EVENTS. She is the author of The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy’s Dossier on Hillary Rodham Clinton, published by Regnery (a HUMAN EVENTS sister company).

Youth Double Standard: Obama vs. Dubya

Hillary has to be nervous. At this juncture in the campaign, she's being edged out in the Goo Primary. Her natural allies in the media suddenly are more adulatory toward Barack Obama—and more defensive of anyone who would dare question his exotic biography.

Insight magazine, a longstanding publication of The Washington Times Co., published a gossipy item with anonymous “Democratic Party” sources (they claimed some of them came from Hillary's camp) that Obama had attended a madrassa—a radical Islamic school—in Indonesia as a child. The story was unproven and should not have been published in its sorry condition.

The most obvious media outlet coming to the rescue was CNN, which now might be the Obama News Network, and not just the Clinton News Network. “DEBUNKING A SMEAR,” screamed the headline on CNN. Reporter John Vause reported from the scene in Indonesia that Obama was actually educated in a state-run school that touched on religion only once a week, “in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Jakarta.”

Wolf Blitzer repeatedly described CNN as doing “serious journalism” and that “CNN did what any serious news organization is supposed to do in this kind of a situation. We actually conducted an exclusive firsthand investigation.”

Further to the point, CNN President Jon Klein milked the issue to savage the competition, telling The New York Times it was irresponsible for Fox News to mention the Insight tale “without bothering to—or being able to—ascertain the facts.”

Earth to CNN: Facts are important, but you might want to save the lecturing for someone who didn't hire Peter Arnett to shovel Saddam's horse manure on your airwaves. Or outrageously aired a “news documentary” that falsely accused America of gassing its own soldiers in Laos. Factually challenged smears? CNN has a record unchallenged on cable.

Let's be clear about this. The liberal media don't

care what Democratic love objects do when they're in grade school, even in Indonesia, just as they didn't care what Bill Clinton was doing touring Russia and the Soviet bloc in his 20s, just as they didn't care how he dodged the draft or whether he inhaled, just as they didn't even want to know if Clinton raped a woman when he was 32.

But Obama ought to thank his lucky liberal stars that he's not a Republican. This is not the standard the media had for George W. Bush in 1999, when the entire liberal media ran in a pack suggesting Bush was a cokehead.

How did CNN, that oasis of “serious journalism” which always attacks a story facts-first, approach the Bush-cocaine flap in August 1999? First, in early August, the network teased the reader with talk of “rumors” about Bush on “Larry King Live.” Then, it surfaced on several weekends as rumor-floating on “The Capital Gang” and as a media ethics discussion on “Reliable Sources.”

Then it arrived on the news shows, but always presented in play-dumb terms as an unmanned missile, a question anonymously “dogging” Bush. (What rich irony!) CNN only had a candidate who refused to answer a question, beyond saying he'd pass a government background check. Wolf Blitzer and the president of CNN didn't send reporters anywhere to investigate. There were no lectures about getting ahead of the facts. The dominant expectation of CNN for days and days was that Bush must answer the charge. He had to deny something no one had credibly accused him of doing.

How low could it go? On its old all-female chat show, “CNN & Company,” Chicago Tribune reporter Ellen Warren upped the ante, speculating that Bush was into heroin, not just cocaine: “No, the questions aren't going to go away. And if George Bush used cocaine or mainlined heroin, somebody did it with him, somebody saw it, and reporters will find out about it.”

CNN not only presented and fed the rumors, it then accused others of having done it. Blitzer report-

ed that while Democrats were “not going to out and start making those kinds of accusations” of cocaine use directly, they’re happy “that at least some of the Republicans on the far right, some of the more right-wing Republicans, are doing in effect their work for them.” He said this without giggling.

But the richest irony in the contrast is this: Obama has admitted in his biography to using cocaine in high school and college. CNN doesn’t care. While they scour the globe to rebut madrassa stories, they’re not asking him about this settled truth. Serious journalism, indeed.

As usual, CNN devotes its “serious” journalism to very partisan goals: defeating Republicans and making the path straight and flowery for Democrats. Now that’s just reporting the facts.

Mr. Bozell is president of the Media Research Center.

Our First Muslim President?

The Los Angeles *Times* reported recently that Barack Obama's campaign seems to be modifying its earlier affirmation that "Senator Obama has never been a Muslim, was not raised a Muslim, and is a committed Christian who attends the United Church of Christ in Chicago."

In a statement to the *Times*, the campaign offered slightly different wording, saying: "Obama has never been a practicing Muslim." The statement added that as a child, Obama had spent time in the neighborhood's Islamic center.

His former Roman Catholic and Muslim teachers, along with two people who were identified by Obama's grade-school teacher as childhood friends, say Obama was registered by his family as a Muslim at both of the schools he attended.

If this is true, Obama could possibly be charged with being an apostate from Islam. This could give him a unique chance to speak out about the freedom of conscience and the human rights of those who leave Islam — for Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, ordered that apostates from Islam be put to death. Although this is frequently denied, his statement "Whoever changes his religion, kill him" appears in numerous authoritative Islamic sources.

So is Barack Obama under a death sentence? Probably not — particularly if he left Islam while still a child. This is a crucial point, for according to Islamic law an apostate male is not to be put to death if he has not reached puberty (cf. *Umdat al-Salik* o8.2; *Hidayah* vol. II p. 246). Some, however, hold that he should be imprisoned until he is of age and then "invited" to accept Islam, but officially the death penalty for youthful apostates is ruled out.

Nevertheless, if he was ever considered a Muslim at all and is now a Christian, Obama could still seize this opportunity to speak out for the plight of people like Abdul Rahman and other Muslim apostates who have been threatened with death for exercising their freedom of conscience. However, I think that Barack Obama's candidacy and religious history are more likely to work to the advantage of the Left and the jihadists, even if he

flames out a la Howard Dean in 2004. For if the Islamic death penalty for apostasy is even allowed to come up in the mainstream media, smiling Islamic spokesmen will deny that Islam teaches this. They can even be honest and simply affirm that it doesn't apply to Obama at all, since he left Islam while still very young.

It is most likely that the media and Obama's campaign will ignore the apostasy law altogether, and tar anyone who brings it up as a "bigot." The propagandists of CAIR, MPAC et al are quite savvy at portraying themselves as victims in response to presentations of uncomfortable aspects of Islam. And it is virtually inconceivable that there will be protests in the Islamic world over his apostasy, or calls for his execution. The Cartoon Rage and Pope Rage riots were orchestrated from above. The people who orchestrated them know enough not to shoot themselves in the foot. They (as well as Obama's campaign) have a chance here to portray Obama as someone who was raised as a Muslim and thus has a keen understanding of the Islamic world and the Islamic mind — rather like the positioning of Bill Clinton as our "first black President." Muslim leaders worldwide will not be saying, "He was raised a Muslim. Isn't that terrible?" They're more likely to say, "He was raised a Muslim. Isn't that wonderful? At last, someone who can see our point of view." Given Obama's politics, it will not be hard to present him internationally as someone who understands Islam and Muslims, and thus will be able to smooth over the hostility between the Islamic world and the West — our first Muslim President.

Barack Obama's Muslim upbringing could become the linchpin of an attempt to present him as *the only candidate who can end the war on terror*. We can only hope that, if he does become President, he won't propose to do this only by means of various varieties of appeasement.

Mr. Spencer is director of Jihad Watch and author of The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades) and The Truth About Muhammad (both from Regnery — a HUMAN EVENTS sister company).

Is Obama Black Enough?

It turns out that Barack Obama is black enough to be President after all.

For a while there it looked like he wasn't, at least among African Americans who said that he didn't share their heritage of American slavery, and therefore couldn't understand The Experience.

Many of these same African-Americans, however, called a white man — Bill Clinton — the “first black President” because he understood The Experience, even though he didn't actually live it. That sentiment apparently had rubbed off on Hilary Rodham Clinton who, by extension, presumably was the first black First Lady and looked like she would inherit the black vote in her presidential quest.

But wait. Recent polling shows that Obama is cutting into her popularity among black voters. A Zogby poll showed that Obama actually leads Clinton among black Democratic voters, 44% to 30%, compared with a January poll having her ahead of Obama 60% to 20%. A Washington *Post/ABC News* poll picked up the same trend, showing Obama closing in on Clinton.

This, of course, confounds certain black elites (activists and commentators) who obliquely questioned Obama's racial authenticity. They explained that blacks would stay with Clinton because here's a white person (Clinton) who has a better understanding of The Experience than a black person (Obama) who hasn't had The Experience. This may be a good thing, because it shows that the race of the person is not as important as how the person votes on race. At least that's what passes for progress these days.

Not that any of this conforms to reality or the rules of logic.

This whole thing about testing a candidate's racial credentials is in the same category as debating whether Obama is unsuited to be President because he is not white enough. It is raw, inexcusable racism.

But Obama's racial qualifications are exactly what have been discussed quite openly and unashamedly, as if it were a legitimate issue, since he

declared his candidacy a few weeks ago. No doubt some of it was political envy because Obama had not apprenticed in traditional “black channels” of minister or activist (think Rev. Jesse Jackson).

But the details of the not-black-enough argument are more intricate. Basically, the difference is that his heritage is east African, not west African, from where most American slaves were kidnapped.

Hauling a hefty load of this racist ooze is one Debra J. Dickerson, in her Jan. 22 *Slate* piece, “Colorblind.” She writes: “‘Black,’ in our political and social reality, means those descended from West African slaves. Voluntary immigrants of African descent (even those descended from West Indian slaves) are just that, voluntary immigrants of African descent with markedly different outlooks on the role of race in their lives and in politics.”

When she finally gets around to it, her point is that the degree of Obama's blackness is really about white racism, wouldn't you know it. “He signals to whites,” she writes, “that the racial turmoil and stalemate of the last generation are past and that with [Obama] comes a new day in politics when whites needn't hold back for fear of being thought racist.” In other words, whites still hate “real” blacks.

Well, you could have fooled me. I didn't know that whites went around asking blacks if they were descended from east or west Africa before denying whether to deny them the use of the wash room. The back of the Montgomery bus didn't say, “West African blacks who have lived The Experience must sit in the back. Other blacks can pick their own seats.”

As hard it is for Dickerson to believe, we don't get up every morning contemplating how we can make life tougher for African-Americans. Yes, we can't help noticing Obama's skin color, as we notice that green is the color of the lawn. This will not go down easy in many corners, among folks who “just know” that whites harbor fantasies of reinstating Jim Crow. Those folks who must keep the fires of racial animosity going to access riches, power or prestige, or

simply, as with too many commentators, just to have something to say.

How else can you explain it, other than that the only folks who seem to be harping on Obama's degree of blackness aren't racist whites but racist blacks? They, more than others, cling to the anachronism that a "black can't be elected," while, according to polls, a majority and growing number of whites believe a black can. They'll assert that Jackson's failed presidential quest — of ___ years ago — is evidence of racism on a national scale, ignoring the possibility that some voters just may not have liked his imperious self all that much. Why isn't Jackson's failed try just old news?

Yes, we know how the argument goes: Sure, you whites claim racial progress in this country. But buried deep within the white psyche bubbles unremitting racism. Or it resides just under the surface, a pox ready, upon incitement, to raise visible, festering boils. There's no arguing against such assertions, because to argue against them is "proof" of their truth.

Please understand: Some portion of the population will remain bitterly racist, just as some portion of the population will be incurably manic. But today's racism is not the racism of 100, 50 or even 25 years ago. America is turning from an ugly nation once bitterly, openly and sometimes violently divided by race. While it is fitting that we still ponder how we can better integrate (when was the last time you heard that word?) the races, it seems that the only ones constantly dragging race into our consciousness are the flying squadrons of racial nags who still live in the 1960s.

So, where to from here? The vetting has begun of Obama's views on great and small issues, and of his mettle and character. This is all that counts, and if he is found wanting by some Americans, that is not evidence of their supposedly lurking racism.

As for what I've seen so far, I disagree with him on many things. I'm not anxious for a liberal to be elected President. But if we must have a left-winger in the White House, I hope that Obama kicks the bejeezes out of his white opponents. Maybe then the nags will at least give us a break.

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The Perils of Obama

Sen. Barack Obama seems to be a nice guy. I won't say he's "articulate," because some African Americans hear that word and take offense. In fact, I won't give the senator any compliments other than the nice guy description, just to be on the safe side.

Is there any question that we are living in an age of hypersensitivity? Some of that, of course, is justified. When Sen. Joe Biden described Obama as "clean," it was a verbal disaster, adjectival Armageddon. "Clean"? As opposed to what?

Some whites thought the reaction to Biden's remark was overblown, but consider this: If someone described me, an Irish-American, as a "sober thinker," surely most Irish folks would raise a collective eyebrow.

But when President Bush said Sen. Obama was articulate, I'll confess to thinking he was giving the guy a genuine compliment. I mean who knew some African-Americans would find the "a" word offensive? Many of us are still confused.

According to some columnists, if you label a black person "articulate," you are implying that other blacks are not. You are expressing surprise that an African-American can actually speak English well. And that's condescending, is it not?

Well, I guess it could be. But Mr. Bush's tone wasn't condescending at all. So I chalk this one up to mild paranoia and/or a victimization play.

Many of us know people of all races who are professional victims. They see slights everywhere. The world is against them, and if you live in the world, so are you. These people are tough to deal with. Anything you say to them can and will be used against you.

Few want to deal with this victim mentality, and that's the danger in this articulate controversy. I know some white people who don't know what to say to black Americans so they completely disengage. They don't want to offend, and they don't really understand the "rules," so they play it cautiously.

This is not a good thing for America. All respon-

sible citizens should be trying to break down racial and religious barriers and work together. But, believe me, there is fear in the marketplace—fear along racial lines.

None of this, of course, is Barack Obama's fault, but he may suffer because of it. On Jan. 17, a Rasmussen poll had him tied among Democrats with Hillary Clinton in the presidential sweepstakes. Two weeks later, Obama was behind Hillary by 14 points in the same poll.

It is speculation, but all this word controversy stuff can't be helping Sen. Obama. For any candidate to be elected to high office, there has to be a certain comfort level with the folks. I don't know about you, but the articulation thing wasn't comfortable for me.

The solution here is for honorable people to give other people the benefit of the doubt. Sen. Biden made a mistake, but it was not born from malice. President Bush simply did nothing wrong. We have enough problems in this country without creating phantom annoyances. And that's about as articulate as I can be.

Mr. O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of Who's Looking Out for You?

Barack Obama: The Human Rorschach Blot

Barack Obama is like a small, shiny object. The easily fascinated can stare deeply into his blank sheen and see . . . their own reflections. He can be anything to anyone because he is nothing in particular. Yet listening to the leftstream media, one would have to conclude that the man is a multifaceted miracle.

He's a moderate. He's a third way. He's demographic fusion cuisine. He's a floor wax. He's a desert topping. He's everything you'd hoped for and whatever you need. That's the beauty of being unknown.

He's like that girl way over there at the other end of the bar—perfect, unknown, perfectly unknown, and improved mightily by distance and pent-up desire. Mentally, you're in love and three weeks into the relationship before you even make it halfway over to meet her.

Then you notice her eyes and think, “Man, which one do I look at when I speak, because they don't point in the same direction. And what's with the Adam's apple?” But at that point it's too late to turn around, because one of those eyes has seen you already. I think that's the way a lot of folks are going to feel about their Obamaphilia after a few months of campaigning have removed the gauze filter from his carefully blurred image.

If any of the fawning were asked to name his greatest accomplishment, could they name an accomplishment? Other than being elected to the Senate just two and a half years ago, and being simultaneously black and yet likeable to white folks, I mean.

For emphasis, let's examine a list of Obama's major accomplishments (so far):

1. Simultaneously black and yet likeable to white folks
2. Made the initials “B.O.” cool again
3. Good oral hygiene

That's it. He's the Wayne Brady of politics—everything white folks had been hoping for in at least one black person, the big payoff for all that tol-

erance and diversity babble. That may not be the politically correct thing to say, but it is an honest assessment of exactly what pent-up desire is fueling Obamamania among his white, liberal fan base.

Obama's resume and record (even just a record of firm opinions on important issues) are so thin that I really believed that early media talk of his running for President was an affectionate nicety—like a manager saying of a favored intern, “You'll be running this corporation before the summer's over!”

Yet here we are, just a year after such talk began, and the intern has announced that he's putting his resume in for the position. Well, I'll alert human resources.

Allegedly, his appeal rests with his “inspiring” story. Lord knows he's told his story enough: in two books, uncounted speeches and interviews and occasionally in explanations of why the story in the books seems to differ from the facts. (Obama was telling the “literary” truth, rather than getting bogged down in the literal truth.) Come to think of it, I should add a fourth bullet point to my list of Obama's major accomplishments (so far):

4. Telling his own story

The man's Jesus and John the Baptist all rolled into one—the messiah that foretells his own coming. But what, really, is so inspiring about his story? He is alleged to have overcome the odds—to have succeeded in the face of oppression. But to see “black” as a synonym for “oppressed” is just a stereotype (oh, and the rationale behind affirmative action laws). And we all know that stereotypes are wrong. I keep waiting for some real tale of the adversity he's faced and I have yet to hear it.

As far as I can tell, this is his inspiring story of success despite oppression:

He overcame the oppression of being born to a well-off middle class white woman and a Harvard Ph.D. father, then he overcame the oppression of attending private schools his entire life. His story took a dark turn toward further oppression when he

was admitted to Columbia University and then—gasp—Harvard Law School—where he was practically lynched into the position of President of the Law Review by an overwhelming majority. Nay, an oppressive majority. From there, his life has just been a Hell of accolade and accomplishment.

The Boston Globe this week cited as an example of his oppression that children at his private school sometimes made fun of his unusual name. Please excuse me if I don't rush off to a sit-in on his behalf. As a child named "Mac" entering elementary school right about the time of McDonald's famous "Big Mac Attack" campaign and "Big Mac" jingle ("two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles and onions on a sesame seed bun" as I seem to recall), and who soon learned that Mac rhymes with "Quack!" and "Whack!" I would now like to announce my candidacy for the presidency of the United States based on my inspiring story. I still can't hear a quip about "special sauce" without thinking of the oppression of my fathers...or at least the Clinton administration. Get in line, crybaby.

The only real adversity I can find in his life is that his mother couldn't seem to stay married to the same man for much time and his father couldn't seem to marry just one woman at a time. And, again, if having a screwed up family is a primary political asset, we'll need to form a really long line. The only thing weirder than the average family would be a normal family.

Yet the CNN.com poll question for Saturday was "Does Barack Obama's life story inspire you?" (Surprisingly, most respondents said "No." So I am not alone in my underwhelming enthusiasm for the media darling.) If stories like Barack's are inspiring, then the field is plainly crowded with inspirational tales:

Mitt Romney: An eloquent son of a former governor of Michigan. Like Barack, he overcame his privileged background to become a successful politician. Although, if it's triumph over real adversity and prejudice that you want, consider that young Romney spent 30 months as a Mormon missionary in France! Now this is a man that has known struggle against the odds.

Joe Biden: Born to a used car salesman, he somehow found a talent for politics. He later overcame a devastating battle with congenital dihydrotestosterone-induced alopecia. Despite its ravages, Biden has bravely kept "plugging away" at politics ever

since, chairing numerous televised hairings. Uh, I mean "hearings."

Tom Tancredo: Actually did come from a humble background, went to a humble school, became a public school teacher, married a public school teacher and yet went on to engineer a national political career. People don't like that story though, so let's focus on the fact that he was involved in public education and still became an unabashed conservative. Talk about overcoming oppression.

John Edwards: The son of a textile worker and a postal employee, grew up working class in rural North Carolina. He overcame this humble background to become a primping effete metrosexual millionaire trial lawyer. Perhaps picking leaders based on humble beginnings is not a foolproof system.

Dennis Kucinich: The son of an Ohio truck driver and a stay-at-home mom, Kucinich went on to overcome his obvious mental illness and the malnutrition of a vegetarian diet to become the member of Congress voted "most detached from world reality." Again, perhaps choosing leaders based on humble beginnings is not a foolproof system.

I could go on and on (and often do), but you get the idea. Barack Obama called his political aspirations "The Audacity of Hope," but really they're nothing so much as the audacity of hype.

Obama is just a human Rorschach Blot—a figure so devoid of definition and meaning that what his devotees see in him is more an insight into them than into him.

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Obama: Wasting His Own Breath

I have good news for everyone offended by the description of Sen. Barack Obama as “articulate.” He has quickly shed any claim to that label. Indeed, Obama’s recent remarks about American troops killed in Iraq were a bumbling, incoherent mess. You may now refer to him officially as the Inarticulate Barack Obama. (As for judging his current level of cleanliness and brightness, you know that’s Joe Biden’s milieu.)

At one of his opening presidential campaign events on the Iowa State University campus this weekend, Obama pandered energetically to the anti-war crowd. With his smooth voice rising and thousands of fans goading him on, he proclaimed: “We ended up launching a war that should have never been authorized, and should have never been waged, and to which we have now spent \$400 billion and have seen over 3,000 lives of the bravest young Americans wasted.”

Yes, “wasted.” Squandered. Pointless. Down the drain. Meaningless. Video footage of the speech shows Sen. Obama delivering his scripted words carefully and confidently. No umms or ahhs or pauses as he argued that each and every member of the military who volunteered to serve and died in Iraq “wasted” his/her life.

This revealing slip of Obama’s tongue and mind—or “Obamanation,” as conservative blogger Scott Johnson at Power Line calls it—did not play well among countless service members and their families who actually support their mission and sacrifice. Who repeatedly volunteer to go back even after the war has taken a turn for the worse. Who believe their work enhances their children’s and our children’s safety. Who risk their lives purposefully and of their own free will. Despite every best effort of the Democrats, media and anti-war movement to infantilize or demonize them, their voices are heard.

Listen to the father of Marine Sgt. Joshua J. Frazier, who was killed by a sniper in Iraq last week on his third tour of duty: “He believed in the United

States and believed what he was doing was right. He gave his life for what he thought was the right thing to do,” Rick Frazier said.

Remember the words of Marine Cpl. Jeffrey B. Starr, who died in a 2005 firefight in Ramadi: “Obviously if you are reading this then I have died in Iraq...I don’t regret going, everybody dies but few get to do it for something as important as freedom. It may seem confusing why we are in Iraq, it’s not to me. I’m here helping these people, so that they can live the way we live. Not have to worry about tyrants or vicious dictators. To do what they want with their lives. To me that is why I died. Others have died for my freedom, now this is my mark.”

Several days after taking flak for his disparaging comments dishonoring such heroism, Obama blubbered about what he really meant.

“I was actually upset with myself when I said that, because I never use that term,” he told the Des Moines Register. Well, then what dastardly saboteur slipped it into his well-rehearsed stump speech? What supernatural force produced the guttural noise that glided effortlessly from his voicebox through his lips and pronounced the term “wasted”?

“What I would say—and meant to say—is that their service hasn’t been honored,” Obama told The New York Times and other reporters in Nashua, N.H., “because our civilian strategy has not honored their courage and bravery, and we have put them in a situation in which it is hard for them to succeed.” As opposed to pulling out precipitously?

Obama offered the standard “sorry-if-I-offended-anyone” disclaimer: “...I would absolutely apologize if any of them felt that in some ways it had diminished the enormous courage and sacrifice that they’d shown. You know, and if you look at all the other speeches that I’ve made, that is always the starting point in my view of this war.”

Except on the first day of the biggest campaign of his life, that wasn’t the starting point. The starting point of his discussion on the troops in Iraq began

with the letter “w” and ended with “-asted.”

“Even as I said it,” Obama claims, “I realized I had misspoken.”

So what, one wonders, prevented him from immediately correcting himself there on stage, as thousands cheered the term he now says he immediately regretted?

Words fail.

Iran: Praying for Obama

We live in a dangerous world. According to the European Union, that world will become exponentially more dangerous in the coming years. An internal EU document leaked to the Financial Times states that Iran will likely go nuclear in the near future. “Attempts to engage the Iranian administration in a negotiating process have so far not succeeded,” says the document. “At some stage we must expect that Iran will acquire the capacity to enrich uranium on the scale required for a weapons programme.” The document also suggests that economic sanctions will be useless.

What is to be done? The European Union, as usual, has decided to stick its collective head in the sand. No surprise there. If Iran is to be stopped, of course, it will not be the EU that takes the leadership role—it will have to be the United States. “The price of greatness is responsibility,” explained Winston Churchill. The price of global leadership is global leadership.

Unfortunately, we are currently mired in an existential crisis of our own. The war in Iraq has undermined the will to use military force, even when military force is necessary. Just because we did not find massive stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq does not mean Iran is benign. Yet, like the Western powers after World War I, we prefer to watch as our enemies re-arm rather than stopping them when we can. The results, as they were in 1939, will be devastating.

All of which makes the presidential election of 2008 the most important election in recent memory. America teeters on the brink of a crippling European post-modernism.

The political embodiment of that post-modernism—that nihilistic resignation—is the modern Democratic Party. Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, the Democrats’ bright new star, is no more capable of global leadership than Jacques Chirac. Obama’s politics of “understanding” dictates that evil cannot be fought—it must be placated with psychobabble.

In his new forward to “Dreams From My Father,” Obama writes, “I know, I have seen, the desperation and disorder of the powerless: how it twists the lives of children on the streets of Jakarta or Nairobi... how easily they slip into violence and despair. I know that the response of the powerful to this disorder—alternating as it does between a dull complacency and, when the disorder spills out of its proscribed confines, a stead unthinking application of force, of... more sophisticated military hardware—is inadequate to the task.” This sounds like boilerplate rhetoric. It is not. It is the theory of appeasement, stated clearly and succinctly.

Obama’s adolescent insistence that everything can be talked out is matched in its idiocy only by his adolescent scorn for military sacrifice in general. In a speech in Iowa on February 11, Obama stated, “We ended up launching a war that should have never been authorized and should have never been waged—and to which we have now spent \$400 billion and have seen over 3,000 lives of the bravest young Americans wasted.” Wasted. This is the language of MoveOn.org, the language of Democratic Underground, the language of the 1960s radicals Obama claims to deplore.

This was no isolated incident. It reflects what Obama believes. After Obama sponsored legislation mandating a full troop withdrawal from Iraq by March 2008, Australian Prime Minister John Howard lashed out. Al Qaeda, Howard said, would be “praying as many times as possible” for Obama’s election in 2008. Obama’s response was breathtakingly ignorant and immature: If Howard is “ginned up to fight the good fight in Iraq,” spat Obama, “I would suggest that he call up another 20,000 Australians and send them to Iraq. Otherwise, it’s just a bunch of empty rhetoric.”

There are currently over 1,400 Australian troops dispatched to Iraq. Howard has a legitimate reason to declaim Obama’s politics: His country has hundreds of troops on the ground, and American policy

affects those troops. For Obama to dismiss Howard's opinion by insulting Australia's sacrifice is outrageous

And yet it is Barack Obama—a man who sees *aloe vera* as an actual foreign relations strategy, who routinely derides military sacrifice—whom the Democrats put forth as their hot new candidate for the 2008 presidential nomination.

Will America join Europe, sticking its head in the sand, enabling Islamism by ignoring it? Iran certainly hopes so. Like Al Qaeda, Iran's leaders must be praying every day that Americans turn to a candidate like Barack Obama.

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Debate Coverage: The Obama Question

The more time passes, the less the public cares for a political parade of presidential candidates. Yesterday's Democratic debate on ABC began with no frills when moderator George Stephanopoulos broached the question: "Is Barack Obama experienced enough to be president?" The answer is no, but none of the Dems would say that directly.

Leading the race at 27%, according to an ABC poll, Obama's response regarding diplomatic relations with volatile nations in the previous debate has generated heat with Sen. Hillary Clinton (NY). Clinton has said Obama's ideas to meet with foreign leaders — in places like North Korea and Iran — was naïve and irresponsible.

But on the Iowa stage, Clinton praised her own experience instead of describing Obama's. When pressed by Stephanopolous, she conceded that, "I do not think that a president should give away the bargaining chip of a personal meeting with any leader, unless you know what you're going to get out of that."

Sen. Chris Dodd (Conn.) and Gov. Bill Richardson (NM) toed the party line but ultimately said that Obama was deficient in experience for president. Obama, last to answer, jokingly said, "Well, you know, to prepare for this debate, I rode in the bumper cars at the state fair..." More seriously, he claimed that we "shouldn't be afraid" of meeting with threatening countries and it was "common sense" to take out Osama bin Laden if he were "in our sights...before he plans to kill another 3,000 Americans," in reference to his own recent comments regarding a potential invasion of Pakistan if bin Laden were there.

At one point, Obama argued that experienced people were responsible for what the Dems insist is the failed war in Iraq. Though he didn't say it directly,

Obama seemed to be saying that experience was a bad thing.

This moved the discussion towards nuclear weapons. Obama has decried their use in the past — and was criticized by Clinton for ruling them in out. Former Sen. John Edwards (NC) said he "would not talk about hypotheticals" when it comes to nuclear weapons but he would eventually "lead an international effort to...eliminate nuclear weapons from the planet."

Clinton and Richardson wanted to keep all options "on the table," effectively safety netting future actions when their words could come back to haunt them. The question is, who can deal most effectively with these threats should they become reality?

Democrats' recent Congressional takeover is part of the change Obama attempts to promote with his campaign. During the debate, he capitalized on his fresh-faced reputation, saying America needs "somebody who can break out of the political patterns that we've been in over the last 20 years."

Edwards agreed that the '06 election results were a positive step for America. But the unkept promises, irresponsible decisions and careless statements of the party's top leaders — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Harry Reid — have been disappointing thus far.

When Stephanopoulos played a clip of Karl Rove, departing deputy chief of staff for President Bush, speaking about Clinton's negative popularity numbers, she blew it off as nothing more than "a Republican attack machine" and moved along to universal healthcare.

Edwards — notable of late for strongly (and for the most part, hypocritically) condemning opponents — criticized Clinton for taking money from

lobbyists. She claimed there was an “artificial distinction” in this argument because others just “take money from the people who employ and hire lobbyists and give them their marching orders.”

More importantly, the candidates lapsed into familiar “end the war” talking points. Richardson said his plan was to get the troops out and start diplomacy talks. It was Joe Biden, once again, who delivered the only realistic approach to the war. “If we leave Iraq and we leave it in chaos,” he said. “There’ll be regional war. The regional war will engulf us for a generation. It’ll bring in the Shia, it’ll bring in the Saudis, it’ll bring in the Iranians, it’ll bring in the Turks . . .”

Clinton said she agreed with Biden but seemed hesitant to fully commit and Edwards said that any Democrat President would end the war. Edwards continued, saying that “the differences between all of us are very small compared to the differences between us and the Republican candidates, who the best I can tell are George Bush on steroids.”

His point is not music to liberal ears, but Biden’s approach masters the rest. “This war must end, but there’s much more at stake as to how it ends.”

Obama clung to his usual strongpoint — never having supported the Iraq war, and chided his opponents for their previous decisions, bringing it back to the experience issue. “Nobody had more experience than Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney and many of the people on this stage that authorized this war,” he noted, bolstering his credentials on the left.

Changing directions, Stephanopoulos read a viewer question on the power of prayer to prevent disasters. Each candidate appeared genuine in their dedication to prayer, though Clinton and Edwards history of insincerity begged for skepticism. Edwards said he didn’t “think you can prevent bad things from happening through prayer” and Obama averted it back to politics, saying, “We’ve got to express those values through our government, not just through our religious institutions.”

Questions on agriculture, fair trade, and education dominated the remainder of the debate. Clinton

said she hoped to “maximize the impact of what we’re trying to export and quit being taken advantage of by other countries” and Obama said we have to be “hard bargainers” in the age of globalization. A trend focused on the family farmers of America dominated the agricultural portion.

One of the last questions came from an Alabama citizen, asking for a time when candidates have failed to tell the whole truth. While some, like Mike Gravel and Dennis Kucinich refused to relent, others like Clinton and Edwards, opted for authorizing the war as an untruthful time, though it seemed just another opportunity to blame Republicans without accepting responsibility.

Each seemed adamant in reforming or hacking No Child Left Behind and Richardson went so far as to suggest a \$40,000/year federal minimum wage, advocating that currently teachers are “disrespected.”

The pander-worthy state of public debate remained in tact but finally, an unapologetic focus on the authentic candidates — Clinton and Obama — rose above the rest of those on the stage who are now just playing house.

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Who The Liberals Really Are

When the Democrats tell you who they are, what they think, and what they intend to do, believe them. When they claim (with Oscar-worthy straight faces) they “support the troops,” their history — both past and recent — betrays that vacuous claim.

Last week, Senator Barack Obama made his third big mistake, the result of a series of on-the-fly policy pronouncements. Mistake Number One was his statement that he’d move more aggressively into Pakistan if, as president, he had “actionable intelligence” about al Qaeda operating there. The statement itself was quite hawkish, so the mistake wasn’t on the policy, it was political: he ticked off his liberal base, which does not want escalated military action in Pakistan, or frankly, anywhere else. Mistake Number Two came when he tried to fix Mistake Number One: he said he’d take nuclear weapons “off the table.” This brought him back into the liberal lovenest, but just about everyone else thought it was “naïve and irresponsible.”

Then came the Third Big Mistake. He was asked about U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, and he said this: “We’ve got to get the job done there. And that requires us to have enough troops so that we’re not *just air-raiding villages and killing civilians*, which is causing enormous problems there.”

Throwing American troops down the stairs. It may have been the first time Obama has done it, but it’s not the first time his party has.

Another liberal Junior Senator repeatedly made wild accusations about the conduct of the American military in a different war:

“...they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians,

razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.”

The year was 1971, the war was Vietnam, and the man was an aspiring politician (and president) named John Kerry.

The routine was the same: Accusing U.S. troops of widespread barbaric acts. Equating them with the savage beasts they were fighting. Essentially saying that they are no better than the enemies trying to kill them — and us.

Where else have you heard a similar tune recently? In the pages of *The New Republic*, a left-leaning publication, that ran columns from Iraq, written by an anonymous soldier, called “Baghdad Diarist.” In these columns, the soldier accused his fellow troops of “mocking and sexually harassing a woman whose face had been marred by an I.E.D.” and “one soldier of wearing part of an Iraqi boy’s skull under his helmet,” among other things.

The Weekly Standard raised some serious questions about those “reports,” forcing *The New Republic* to identify the writer as Pvt. Scott Thomas Beauchamp. The military then did its own thorough investigation and found that the allegations made by Beauchamp were “false.” Beauchamp himself signed statements recanting the stories as “exaggerations and falsehoods.”

It doesn’t take Sherlock Holmes to see an ugly pattern here. Liberals with a predilection for slanderously and maliciously skewering American troops in order to further their own agendas.

This is who the liberals are. This is what they believe. These are the “values” they would bring if they win the presidency and hence, the role of commander-in-chief.

At least Senator Hillary Clinton was smart enough to “decline to comment” on Obama’s remark about our troops in Afghanistan. But remember: she and Bill slashed military budgets when they were president the first time around. During his draft evasion days, he was on record as saying he “loathed” the military. He was accused of using the military during times of personal political crisis, and only from politically safe heights of 30,000 feet.

John Kerry, 1971. Bill and Hillary Clinton, 1992-2000. Harry “the war is lost” Reid, 2007. The New Republic, a few months ago. Barack Obama, last week. They are all cut from the same cloth, singing the same refrain. And despite their self-serving and empty rhetoric to the contrary, it isn’t about “supporting the troops.”

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The Liberal Egotism of Barack Obama

Barack Obama's personality and speaking ability have made him a media darling since the 2004 Democratic convention. But campaigning in Iowa, his unfocused optimism has rapidly declined into the same old tired liberalism.

Obama — like all liberals — believes he knows what's good for you: in fact, better than you do.

Obama's standard stump speech, repeated over and over in Iowa, says in part that politicians shouldn't tell people what they want to hear but what they need to hear. Implicit in that is Obama's belief that he knows more than Iowans do about the issues that should be important to them.

At the Art Institute of Chicago last year, a student garnered attention when he fashioned a statue of Obama as Jesus. As I wrote in a previous column, the statue was “capped with a neon halo and lifting his hands in peace, the effigy...a physical enrichment of the senator's recently elevated public persona.”

Analysts have jokingly referred to Obama as the “Messiah” due to pointed coverage of his “peaceful” message. Newspapers from the *New York Times* to the *Boston Globe* have scrounged up quotes from college classmates and friends that Obama “defus[ed] battles large and small” and “sometimes g[ave] warring classmates the impression that he agreed with all of them at once.”

With so much positive coverage, it's easy to see how it could go to his head.

His approach to foreign policy increased popularity among Democrats and undecided voters. Moreover, he touts his 2003 vote against the invasion of Iraq as a foundational marker of wisdom against Hillary Clinton's vote for the war.

Earlier this year, he told audiences that faith had

been “hijacked” in large part “because of the so-called leaders of the Christian Right...[were] all too eager to exploit what divides us.”

Obama often speaks like a humanitarian, last week telling an Iowa audience that “hope is — that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better is waiting for us around the corner.” But his noninterventionist approach to foreign affairs and belief in socialized healthcare and entitlement programs proves he believes that government is superior to free will.

Obama's vision is dependent on his belief that people are fed up with President Bush and the Republican Party. But Obama is part of the Democratic Congress that is even lower than the President in popularity, with a 9% approval rating.

In addition to being a media darling, Oprah Winfrey's recent endorsement caused a wave of Obama publicity. Winfrey told an Iowa audience that “we need a leader who shows us how to hope again in America as a force for peace.” Her speech sounded similar to a Sunday morning church sermon. But will Oprah deliver more than just publicity? Generally, celebrities don't deliver more than their own entourages. Oprah may be different.

The latest Des Moines *Register* poll has Obama with 32% to Clinton's 25% and veteran political reporter Robert Novak predicts Obama will come in first tomorrow night. If Obama beats Clinton in Iowa, his ego may be grown even more than hers is damaged.

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Reality of Obama Taking Hold

Fred Thompson is not the only presidential candidate suffering under the weight of unrealistic expectations. It appears that exuberant Democrat primary voters are finding out that Barack Obama's appeal begins and ends with his personal story.

Hillary Clinton's cryogenic personality and tractor trailer full of personal and political baggage had opened a window of opportunity for a contrast candidate.

Yet, according to a recent national poll (*Washington Post/ABC*), Hillary's lead over Obama has ballooned to 33-points just as she has also emerged as the frontrunner in Iowa.

Hillary may be running her campaign with the ruthless efficiency of a Japanese automaker but Obama's pixie dust is losing its hold on Democrat primary voters because his second story, that of being a reformer challenging the system, does not comport with the reality of his past or the rhetoric of his present.

In the past, Obama spent his time in the Illinois State Senate as a toady for current Senate President Emil Jones, not exactly a name synonymous with government reform.

While in the General Assembly, Obama further attempted to curry favor with the Chicago Democrat Machine by attaching his name as a co-sponsor to virtually any legislation that came from Mayor Richard Daley's City Hall. Hizzoner Part II is many things but a radical iconoclast seeking public policy paradigm shifts is not one of them.

It was also during the time that he was being toted around our state's capitol by Emil Jones like some celebutant's cockapoo that Obama bonded with other purveyors of good government like Tony Rezko, currently awaiting the start of his federal

corruption trial.

In the present, Obama talks about talking about big, bold ideas but he never quite gets around to offering any — unless you count his inspirational stand against American flag lapel pins.

Otherwise he's a biracial George McGovern, offering the same humdrum, big government liberalism pushed by the Left since the Great Society.

Even on the War in Iraq, his self-selected defining issue, Obama is awash in contradiction. He sponsored legislation calling for complete troop withdrawal by the end of March 2008 but then recently refused to commit to complete troop withdrawal by the end of his first term — that's 2013 — were he elected President.

After watching Obama grope in the dark for the past 9 months, it is not surprising he is down 33 points. It is surprising he is down only 33 points.

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Obama in Perspective

Give Barack Obama his due. He won a smashing victory in Iowa, then gave a stirring speech framed as a transformational moment in American history. Millions watching him speak Thursday night presumably saw a plausible president, quite possibly the next president.

But first, a few gritty details.

Obama is still the presidential contender with a one-page resume. The Illinois state legislature and half of one term in the U.S. Senate is scant preparation to be president of the United States. In his brief Senate tenure, Obama has no legislative accomplishments, mainly because for most of that short time he's been running for president.

For a candidate aspiring to the toughest, most important job in the world, shouldn't experience count for something?

Foreign policy and national security are a president's top responsibilities, especially in time of war. Obama is devoid of experience in either field. His gaffes - threatening to invade Pakistan, offering prompt negotiations with anti-American despots - bespeak his amateur standing on matters vital to the safety and security of the American people.

Obama's inconsistency on Iraq is amply documented. He's been alternately for and against withholding funding for the troops, for and against setting timelines for withdrawal, and for and against a quick retreat from Iraq.

Whatever one's views on Iraq strategy and home-front support, these vacillations on a war in progress don't inspire confidence; in Obama's judgment, his grasp of Iraq realities and his constancy of purpose. Whatever this is, it isn't leadership.

All of this betrays Obama's lack of experience; a glaring deficiency that should be raising profound

questions about his qualifications and fitness, at least now, for the presidency.

Then there's the disturbing disconnect between Obama's carefully crafted persona as a unifier and a supposed "trans-ideological" agent of change, and his actual record in office.

Obama is running, quite effectively, as both a change agent and an unconventional politician. That fits his campaign motif, a fresh-faced, idealistic outsider running against the Washington establishment voters so distrust. That, in turn, also suggests that Obama is a different kind of Democrat; one perhaps less reflexively partisan and divisive than, say, Hillary Clinton or John Edwards. Certainly that was an implicit message sent in his eloquent Iowa victory speech.

What's troubling, however, is that Obama's record doesn't match his reassuring persona.

The liberal Americans for Democratic Action rates Obama's voting record in the Senate at 97.5 percent, near perfection for liberal Democrats. The American Conservative Union, the ADA's ideological opposite, rates Obama's voting record at a rock-bottom 8 percent. Both ratings leave no doubt that Obama's actual votes mark him as a traditionally liberal Democrat, not a moderate.

Where in these votes is the evidence of trans-ideological change that Obama is selling so successfully on the campaign trail? Where in this record is the evidence that Obama is the unifier he claims to be?

On domestic, economic, foreign policy and national security issues, Obama's actual record is consistently liberal and consistently orthodox in Democratic Party terms. Obama typically talks like a centrist but votes like a liberal.

Obama's record also raises another disturbing

matter - his penchant for ducking tough issues. In the Illinois Legislature, Obama compiled a record of voting “present” on controversial and politically explosive bills. However politically convenient, this isn’t leadership. Obama’s three years in the U.S. Senate are similarly devoid of any leadership examples on legislation of consequence.

This doesn’t necessarily indict Obama’s claimed leadership skills as fraudulent. It does demonstrate that those skills have not yet been in evidence in his legislative work. That’s a curious, and worrying, fact.

Cataloguing the doubts about Obama isn’t nit-picking or partisanship. It’s the sort of scrutiny every presidential candidate should get. This is information that every voter deserves, and should want before making fateful decisions about this country’s future.

Barack Obama is showing that he’s a skilled campaigner with a deeply inspirational message. His appeals to hope, to change and to less divisive politics are proving compelling and popular, as arguably they should be. Obama is poised, possibly, to surpass Hillary Clinton as the odds-on favorite to win the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.

Before that sale is made, however, voters should be looking closer and learning more about Barack Obama.

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Huckabee and Obama: A Study in Contrasts

In almost poetic lockstep, Republican and Democratic caucus voters in Iowa rejected the political establishment. In picking Mike Huckabee and Barack Obama, they selected candidates who, at this time last year, conventional wisdom would have deemed inconceivable.

Beyond this common denominator, and equally fascinating, is the fact that these two candidates and two political stories are mirror images of each other. Huckabee a traditional values conservative and Obama a boiler plate liberal. And, of the leading candidates in Iowa, Huckabee spending the least money and Obama the most.

To the extent that these caucus outcomes point to the themes that will define this upcoming election, and I believe they do, we can expect a national referendum about what America is about today.

Regarding Obama, this is, of course, a great and moving story. The historic significance cannot be lost. Iowa Democrats, in a state whose population is perhaps 2 percent black, decisively picked a black man to be their candidate for president of the United States.

For anyone who follows public opinion polls, it's not news that race is no longer a factor of significance in American political choices. But to see this translate into hard reality is something else and sends a very important message to blacks and all Americans about what a great country this is.

But in understanding the Obama candidacy, we must go beyond recognizing that this is not about race. It is about who Obama is, and this is the story that will play out in this election.

Obama not only obliterates the lines on race, but he also obliterates the lines on everything else. The end of the racial line is a great achievement. But the

other points of demarcation we do need.

I am talking about the lines that define right and wrong in the sense of our religious traditions. The lines that define family and establish the standard by which we measure its health and breakdown. The lines that we have used in the past to instruct our children about how to manage and direct their sexual impulses.

I am also talking about the lines in our nation's Constitution that draw a boundary where the federal government belongs and does not belong. And the lines that define property and ownership that go beyond our Constitution and reach to our ancient truths and traditions (Thou Shalt Not Steal).

The lines from our traditions that provide crucial direction for managing our own selves (Thou Shalt Not Covet) and the crucial line that defines the very beginning of life.

Unfortunately, these are lines that liberals, and Sen. Obama is certainly one, no longer see as relevant. If getting rid of these lines is what he and his enthusiasts mean by change, we'll have a chance to see what our nation at large thinks about this.

Everything that Sen. Obama is not, Mike Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor, is.

The story in Iowa was the large and enthusiastic turnout of evangelical Christians and their unequivocal support of him.

Huckabee's trouncing of Mitt Romney, despite being outspent by a factor something like 15 to 1, is a great political story. It has turned doubters into believers and it's now appreciated that he is a real and viable national candidate. The "Huckaboom" has been evident in that he has soared in national polling along with his emergence in Iowa.

I found it particularly rewarding that Huckabee

even finished first among Iowa Republicans who said that their number one issue was terrorism.

Clearly the man is touching Americans. The plethora of televised national debates played a critical role, making it possible to get to know him without his having to have tens of millions on hand to spend on ads.

The road out of Iowa is, of course, long and many chapters remain after this first one.

There's a lot of talk about an independent run — possibly Michael Bloomberg.

To the extent history tells us anything, third party candidates only serve to be spoilers. But I don't think this is what this about anyway.

I don't believe Americans today are looking for political technicians. I think they want to reach down, rediscover, and re-embrace the principles that have made this such a great nation.

I see a hint of prevailing sentiment in a Gallup poll of last week asking voters how important a consideration "family values" will be in their selection of a candidate. Seventy five percent replied either "extremely important" or "very important."

Huckabee and Obama are studies in contrasts that draw a line that will define this election. Stay tuned.

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Human Events

The National Conservative Weekly

One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20001

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