

## Presidential Candidates

### **BARACK OBAMA**

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4th, 1961. His father, Barack Obama Sr., was born and raised in a small village in Kenya, where he grew up herding goats with his own father, who was a domestic servant to the British.

Barack's mother, Ann Dunham, grew up in small-town Kansas. Her father worked on oil rigs during the Depression, and then signed up for World War II after Pearl Harbor, where he marched across Europe in Patton's army. Her mother went to work on a bomber assembly line, and after the war, they studied on the G.I. Bill, bought a house through the Federal Housing Program, and moved west to Hawaii.

It was there, at the University of Hawaii, where Barack's parents met. His mother was a student there, and his father had won a scholarship that allowed him to leave Kenya and pursue his dreams in America.

Barack's father eventually returned to Kenya, and Barack grew up with his mother in Hawaii, and for a few years in Indonesia. Later, he moved to New York, where he graduated from Columbia University in 1983.

Remembering the values of empathy and service that his mother taught him, Barack put law school and corporate life on hold after college and moved to Chicago in 1985, where he became a community organizer with a church-based group seeking to improve living conditions in poor neighborhoods plagued with crime and high unemployment.

The group had some success, but Barack had come to realize that in order to truly improve the lives of people in that community and other communities, it would take not just a change at the local level, but a change in our laws and in our politics.

He went on to earn his law degree from Harvard in 1991, where he became the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. Soon after, he returned to Chicago to practice as a civil rights lawyer and teach constitutional law. Finally, his advocacy work led him to run for the Illinois State Senate, where he served for eight years. In 2004, he became the third African American since Reconstruction to be elected to the U.S. Senate.

It has been the rich and varied experiences of Barack Obama's life - growing up in different places with people who had differing ideas - that have animated his political journey. Amid the partisanship and bickering of today's public debate, he still believes in the ability to unite people around a politics of purpose - a politics that puts solving the challenges of everyday Americans ahead of partisan calculation and political gain.

In the Illinois State Senate, this meant working with both Democrats and Republicans to help working families get ahead by creating programs like the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which in three years provided over \$100 million in tax cuts to families across the state. He also pushed through an expansion of early childhood education, and after a number of inmates on death row were found innocent, Senator Obama worked with law enforcement officials to require the videotaping of interrogations and confessions in all capital cases.

In the U.S. Senate, he has focused on tackling the challenges of a globalized, 21st century world with fresh thinking and a politics that no longer settles for the lowest common denominator. His first law was passed with Republican Tom Coburn, a measure to rebuild trust in government by

allowing every American to go online and see how and where every dime of their tax dollars is spent. He has also been the lead voice in championing ethics reform that would root out Jack Abramoff-style corruption in Congress.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator Obama has fought to help Illinois veterans get the disability pay they were promised, while working to prepare the VA for the return of the thousands of veterans who will need care after Iraq and Afghanistan. Recognizing the terrorist threat posed by weapons of mass destruction, he traveled to Russia with Republican Dick Lugar to begin a new generation of non-proliferation efforts designed to find and secure deadly weapons around the world. And knowing the threat we face to our economy and our security from America's addiction to oil, he's working to bring auto companies, unions, farmers, businesses and politicians of both parties together to promote the greater use of alternative fuels and higher fuel standards in our cars.

Whether it's the poverty exposed by Katrina, the genocide in Darfur, or the role of faith in our politics, Barack Obama continues to speak out on the issues that will define America in the 21st century. But above all his accomplishments and experiences, he is most proud and grateful for his family. His wife, Michelle, and his two daughters, Malia, 9, and Sasha, 6, live on Chicago's South Side where they attend Trinity United Church of Christ.