

How Obama Got Elected (The first time)

Ignorance, Ideology, Cult Of Celebrity

When this was first published immediately after Election 2008, I wrote the following:

It's over! To the astonishment of millions of informed Americans, Barack Obama—arguably the least qualified presidential candidate in U.S. history—is now the 44th President of The United States of America. He is also Commander-In-Chief of the most powerful military force on Earth. Therefore, he is the most powerful man in the world. But how did he do it and what does it say about the current state of American politics, our media, and the health of the American electorate?

Well, it said a lot about who we were back then. But we cannot afford to make the same mistakes again. So I think it is instructive to revisit how Obama got elected in 2008 so we can do our best to prevent it from happening in 2012.

First, let's look at a video for some background information. It is a sampling of voters who were interviewed after they cast their votes for Obama in 2008. It is a small part of a much larger, more extensive survey conducted by the highly regarded, non-partisan pollster, John Zogby. If you react like I did, you will shake your head and think, "Is this really what we've come to?"

Now, on the assumption that you watched the video, let's add some perspective.

"Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." – George Washington, Farewell Address, September 19, 1796

and ...

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free it expects what never was and never will be." – Thomas Jefferson

and ...

The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all." – John F. Kennedy, 1963

So you can clearly see what happened. Many Obama voters were hardcore Democrats who always vote the party line. Others voted strictly on race. Some were white Americans who voted for Obama simply because he is an African American and they just wanted to elect the first black president. Then, of course, about 97% of African Americans voted for Obama. But far too many—especially young voters—had little to no knowledge of who or what they were voting for or against, nor did they have even a rudimentary knowledge of who our current leaders were or what the presidential candidates said or what they stood for. For them, Election 2008 seemed to be just one more "American Idol" contest and they simply chose Barack Obama for his charisma and his populist (demagogic) message of "change." Sadly, it was the young voters who made the difference and were ultimately responsible for the election of Barack Obama.

I said “responsible for” because in America we the voters are ultimately responsible for our own destinies. Our power is in the vote and, therefore, the health and welfare of our nation is dependent on the choices we make about who will lead and govern us. This is precisely why George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Kennedy, and many others, instructed us on the importance of being well informed before we cast a vote for any candidate who seeks power over us. Ignorance is our enemy and, unless corrected, it will, ultimately destroy us.

But how is it that so many Americans are still so politically ignorant? How did this happen? Once again, the answer is neither obscure nor complex. There is an unequivocal reason and many culprits: We call them “The Media.” For years, they have uninformed and misinformed the American public about virtually everything political. Think back to the video for a moment and remember how many people assigned so many remarks to Sarah Palin when in fact they had been made by Barack Obama or Joe Biden.

Ignorance is an enemy of democracy and ignorance helped elect Barack Obama. Washington, Jefferson, and Kennedy along with countless others knew all too well how serious is the matter of educating our citizens. Ignorant people can be manipulated, educated people cannot.

We must do all we can to make certain that Barack Obama is not re-elected.

See “The Presidential Election of 2008” for a more detailed analysis of how Barack Obama got elected.