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*The opinions expressed are those of the writers, and not necessarily endorsed by Tenth Dems*

# We the People

by Sara Knizhnik

It's our relationships that give us strength. I wish I could claim this idea as my own, but it's not. It is a statement made with conviction and confidence by an anonymous Obama campaign volunteer. You can hear it and many others, right now, on a video at the campaign website, [www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com). Although it looks and sounds like a campaign video, you won't see a single image of Obama the candidate or of Obama the president-elect. You won't even see the campaign's logo. The video isn't about him. It's about the millions of people who set about getting him elected and made it happen.

We. As in, "We the people." I'm 36 years old. All my life, I've been told that democracy is the best way to organize a society. That my country is special because it was built on the idea that all men are created equal. That in a democracy, I could make a difference. Having grown up in the '80s and '90s, it all rang a little hollow to me. For years, I looked around at my world and saw a lot of people living for themselves—myself included.

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# Tenth News

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DECEMBER 2008 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 5, Edition 12

## A Family Conversation and Politics

by George Rosenblit

Every year, my children and grandchildren converge at my home in Highland Park from Salem and Eugene, Oregon, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Ann Arbor. They're all here for Thanksgiving, the holiday. I'm here giving thanks—that we are all here together.

Besides eating a lot, we talked a lot. And this year the conversation turned to reflections on politics.

We are truly living in an historic time. Our 44th President will be a black man, fulfilling the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. More than a century has passed since the Emancipation Proclamation. President Lyndon Johnson, a southerner from Texas, helped enact the Civil Rights Act in 1964. It has taken 44 years from that event to get this far. (There's that 44 again—I hope it's a good omen). Now we know that the color of one's skin does not tell us about a person's ability and intellect, tolerance and caring. Our entire nation may not all be there yet, but we're on a roll!

A man with the strange name of Barack Obama will be facing monumental problems, domestic and foreign, on a par with a line of great presidents such as Abe Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John F. Kennedy. I do have the audacity of hope.

We discussed the eight years in the grip of a Republican administration intent on making the rich richer and the poor poorer, intent on eliminating the middle class, and intent on destroying unions.



Didn't they know that the middle class, earning a decent wage, buys the products and services that keep small businesses and large viable and profitable? They must know now, because factories are closing, airlines are heading for bankruptcy, and unemployment is going north as income and savings are going south.

But Obama has energized the nation, not only by what he has said in two years on the campaign trail, but also by his honest concern about people and his organizational skills.

I was asked how I became so deeply involved in the political process. It started before I retired in 1990, when my wife and I volunteered to feed the homeless one night a month for a year at a church in Evanston. After each meal, a member of the group we served came

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# Kirk Unmasked to Become Congress Watch

For the past 18 months, this column has highlighted the deceptive tactics employed by Representative Mark Kirk to create the illusion that he represents the values of 10th District residents—all the while using the power of his vote in the House of Representatives to undermine the causes we hold dear.

These tactics include:

- Voting the Democratic position on high-profile, final roll-call votes after supporting the opposite position on all prior procedural votes. Kirk has repeatedly employed this tactic in the 110th Congress, flipflopping on a host of legislative initiatives, including Democratic proposals to increase the minimum wage, to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission, and to require the federal government to negotiate Medicare prescription drug prices (see “Do you Know How Your Congressman Votes?,” *Tenth News*, June 2007 and “Kirk Votes Both Ways on the 9/11 Commission Recommendations and Student Loans,” *Tenth News*, July 2007—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0707\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0707_nl.pdf)).

This tactic may be mixed with the classic Republican ploy of catch and release, whereby Kirk votes the progressive Democratic position on critical legislation only when his Republican leaders have “released” him once they determine that they do not need his vote to achieve their desired outcome.

- Voting the Democratic position on strategically selected legislation supporting causes he otherwise opposes for the sole purpose of winning endorsements from advocacy groups like Planned Parenthood and the League of Conservation Voters (see *Kirk Endorsements: The Facts*, *Tenth News*, October 2008—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0810\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0810_nl.pdf)).
- Sponsoring inconsequential legislation, like the Commemorative Coin Act, for the sole purpose of aligning his image with causes voters can feel good about. (See *Kirk Unmasked: Symbolic Support for Veterans Is No Substitute for Tangible Benefits*, *Tenth News* September 2007—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811_nl.pdf)).
- Introducing sham legislation for public relations purposes with no real intention of moving the legislation forward. Kirk’s summer District Review mailing is rife with examples of his “legislation to nowhere.” (See *Kirk Unmasked: A Last Look at a Member of the Republican Congressional Leadership’s Full-Bore Effort to Portray Himself to a Majority Democratic District as a Political Independent*, *Tenth News*, November 2008—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811_nl.pdf)).
- Seizing every conceivable media opportunity to link his image to causes, such as veterans’ welfare, that he frequently votes against. Kirk is notorious for appearing at media events honoring U.S. veterans—even though he’s often turned his back on the men and women who have served our country by voting against legislative proposals to provide them with sorely needed, tangible assistance. *Kirk Unmasked: Symbolic Support for Veterans Is No Substitute for Tangible Benefits*, *Tenth News*, September, 2007—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0709\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0709_nl.pdf)).
- Using misleading and outright false statements. In an e-mail defending his vote against the Paycheck Fairness Act (a bill to ensure equal pay for women), Kirk suggested that the bill prevents women from taking legal action against discriminating employers, when it actually does exactly the opposite (see *Mark Kirk Uses Misinformation and a Push Poll to Defend His Vote Against Equal*



*Pay for Women, Tenth News*, September 2008—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0809\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0809_nl.pdf)).

- Touting bogus accomplishments on issues he’s actually worked to undermine and/or voted against. (See *Kirk Unmasked: A Last look at a Member of the Republican Congressional Leadership’s Full-Bore Effort to Portray Himself to a Majority Democratic District as a Political Independent*—[http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811\\_nl.pdf](http://www.tenthdems.org/newsletters/0811_nl.pdf).)

This column has repeatedly demonstrated how Kirk has used each of the tactics described here to have his cake and eat it, too; that is, to bolster his image as an independent leader in sync with the values of the district while quietly behaving like the partisan he is, one strongly devoted to the Republican Party agenda. But actions speak louder than words.

The fact is, Mark Kirk has been a rubber stamp for the immoral, destructive agenda of one of the most corrupt administrations in our nation’s history. He supported—every step of the way—the policies that enabled the mortgage crisis that destroyed our financial institutions and crippled our economy. He’s been a leading proponent of the war in Iraq, which has cost tens of thousands of lives and bankrupted our Treasury. He’s also condoned anti-democratic practices, including the Bush administration’s domestic spying program, its horrific, unlawful detainment and torture of prisoners without the right to a fair trial, and its egregious, unconstitutional expansion of executive power.

Mark Kirk has also made it perfectly clear that he opposes any sort of real healthcare reform. At a town hall meeting in Winnetka last October, he told the audience that he would never support the U.S. Government’s interference in an individual’s relationship with his or her physician, as if providing healthcare to all Americans would do any such thing. At his October 19 debate with Dan Seals, Kirk argued that tort reform was all that is needed to solve this country’s healthcare crisis. It is clear to us that Kirk’s position on healthcare reform stems from an unwillingness to let the basic needs of vulnerable, uninsured Americans interfere with his cozy relationship with the insurance lobby.

To our grave disappointment, Mark Kirk’s tactics have worked once again. On November 4, he was reelected to his fifth consecutive term as the 10th District’s congressman. We’re convinced that if the residents of the 10th District knew the real Mark Kirk, they would not have forfeited the opportunity to elect Dan Seals—a man of great integrity who would have given 10th District residents the representation in Congress they deserve.

We’re determined now to turn our disappointment into action. We’ll do an even better job of monitoring how our representatives in both houses of Congress vote and how they work with President-elect Obama to reverse the damage of the last eight years to restore integrity and justice to America government. Look to this column every month to find out how all of the 10th District’s representatives—Senator Durbin, whoever is appointed to President-elect Obama’s seat, and Rep. Kirk—discharge their duties to this nation and their constituents. We’ll look

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# TDU Back in Session

The 2008 Presidential Election is in the books, and it was mostly positive for progressives. What happened, and, importantly, why did what happened happen?

WGN radio pundit and Roosevelt University professor Paul Green will teach the class "Election 2008: Paul Green Looks Back, Looks Ahead" on Tuesday December 2, at 7:00 p.m., at the Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook.



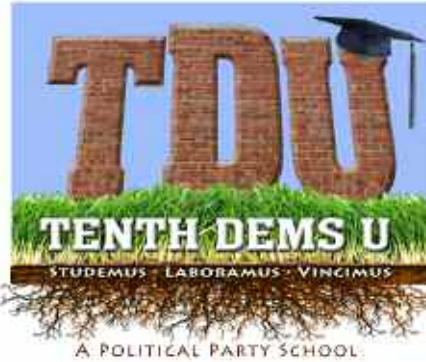
Paul Green is Director of the Institute for Politics at Roosevelt University and the Arthur Rubloff Professor of Policy Studies. He is also the political analyst for WGN Radio, guest columnist for *Crain's Chicago Business*, and the author of several books and articles on Illinois and Chicago politics. His latest publications, co-authored with

*Political pundit Prof. Paul Green*

Mel Holli, are entitled *World War II Chicago* and *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition*, 3rd edition.

Professor Green is frequently quoted and interviewed by the national news organizations for his views on the American political scene. He is often referred to as an expert in news stories in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. He has lectured at

universities in Europe, Asia, and Africa and was one of a few American academicians/journalists to travel with the candidates for British Prime Minister in 1997.



"Tenth Dems U"—established by the Tenth Congressional District Democrats, "Tenth Dems," for short—is a series of classes designed to teach potential candidates, campaign volunteers, and interested voters about the issues facing our community.

The courses consist of one session each, are free of charge, and are offered at various locations around the 10th Congressional District. Registration is easy and can be done online at [www.TenthDemsU.org](http://www.TenthDemsU.org). Tenth Dems is a group of grassroots political volunteers who formed the organization in late 2003 to help elect Democrats to all levels of office throughout the 10th District.

Tenth Dems University's winter term is off to an auspicious start. Join Paul Green on December 2, and check our website for upcoming courses. As our motto urges, get ready to rock and enroll! Remember, TDU is a Political Party School.

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## Grassroots Activism Triumphs Challenges Loom

by Marla Sundb

The interminable national election is over now. For many of us, the road was long and tiring, but the victory made our hearts soar and caused our voices to rise in gratitude.

Our hard work doesn't end with this election; it simply charts a new course. When President-elect Obama told us he needed our help, we turned out in droves to work for his election. But he also warned us that if he was elected we would have to sacrifice; we would have to join him in the work of restoring our country to its original promise.

He knows, as many of us do, that grassroots activism is the name of the game. His victory serves as evidence of that fact. The term grassroots, defined around 1901, referred originally to mining, getting to the source, under the soil, where gold could be found. As the years went by, the term became associated with ordinary, salt of the earth people and their communities. It became an almost anti-establishment term, applying to people at the low end of the political spectrum. Grassroots, at its core, speaks to a certain attitude of openness, creativity, and action.

The grassroots movement that has been energized by this election must maintain pressure on lawmakers to live up to the challenges we face. In keeping with the message of Barack Obama, the need for change is great, and it will take all of us, working together, issue by issue, to restore America to her greatness.

Citizen action groups need to turn their attention to the issues that confront us. For example, as gasoline prices plummet, the human instinct is to go back to the old driving patterns. The urgency to find alternative energy sources is then lost. But this time, the old

driving patterns, the old ways are unacceptable. We can't let our leaders forget the overriding necessity to further the cause of alternative energy.

America has become a voracious consumer, as we use resources rather than build them. The loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector of the economy is well documented. But we can change that. We can get back to innovating, and then producing those innovations. What better way than through the development of technology—wind power, solar power, and natural gas? Think of the new jobs that will be created by our taking a leadership role in the development of these technologies.

The global climate crisis is another area of great concern. Global warming threatens many species on the planet, and the effects on human beings have been well documented.

The availability of health insurance needs continued focus to make it possible for all Americans to be insured. We also need to prevent insurance companies from making the process of utilizing health-care services almost incomprehensible.

These are only a few of the topics requiring grassroots attention and efforts.

President-elect Obama has thrown down the challenge to us. He has spoken and written on these issues, and has insightful plans that await our concerted effort. November 4th signifies a new beginning. Freedom-minded Americans must find ways to mobilize effective grassroots resources if we are to accomplish the significant change this country needs. So let's get fired up and ready to go.

# What a Year!

by Adrienne Kirshbaum

*Annus Horribilis.* Remember when Queen Elizabeth of Britain used that Latin phrase to describe her year? There had been a fire in one of her palaces, her children were involved in messy divorces—she'd had such a bad year that she had to resort to Latin to describe it. And now, looking back at 2008 and its mix of triumphs and tragedies, that Latin phrase occurs to me. Can I really call the past 12 months a horrible year after Barack Obama's amazing victory? Yes I can!

The Cubs lost, the White Sox lost, Dan Seals lost. Our troops are still in Iraq. The economy tanked. I imagine that every American has been affected in some way by our disastrous economic situation. The jobless rate has soared. People are losing their homes. It seems there is nowhere to turn for good news—except, of course, Barack Obama's electoral landslide!

Conservative pundits say that the only reason Obama won was the economy and that decisions made during the Clinton administration caused our current woes. We know this isn't true and that those pundits are tasting the sourest of grapes, but why must they tarnish

the shine of our success? I marvel at the Republicans' inability to take blame. But I worry that the problems we have are too great for Obama and the Democrats to fix right away, and I hope that people will be patient.

There's not a lot of room for optimism. Even watching Obama and his beautiful family on the stage at Grant Park, and seeing the city I love in the background all lit up on prime time TV, I couldn't feel the happiness I wanted to experience. I was too sad about Dan Seals and the prospect of another two years with Mark Kirk as our congressman.

Still, in the midst of all the bad news and the mindless rerunning of the most recent Sarah Palin interview, there is always that one bright spot—Barack Obama. And new polls show that the American people have confidence in our president-elect and think he will do a good job.

Confidence is an important concept. There's been very little of it, lately. If Obama's message of hope can truly inspire a country that has lost faith in its government, and if his election will really bring about the change we have all been waiting for, then maybe it's too early to call 2008 a bad year. If it marks the beginning of a new era in America, then I guess it's not so *horribilis* after all.

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## My Journey for Barack Obama

by Cynthia Anderson

One evening last January, I sat in my living room watching another Barack Obama stump speech. I listened intently to Barack when he said, "I need your help," and "Nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change." I vividly remember the nagging call inside me to do something, that this time I couldn't just hope for the best outcome in November and that it would all turn out right just because I wanted it to. This was the first election I donated money to a candidate. While feeling good, but not quite good enough, I searched the internet further and stumbled on to MYBO [www.my.barackobama.com](http://www.my.barackobama.com) website. Stunned and overwhelmed at all the opportunities to get involved, I thought I could make phone calls for a few hours on one evening and that I will have done my part. Little did I know that Lauren Beth Gash would greet and approach me to supervise the phone bank for twice a week at the Moraine Township Democratic Organization's office. Reluctantly, I agreed, and what a whirlwind followed. What started out as a gesture to pitch in and help out became my commitment to work full time for the Obama campaign. And so my journey began.

During the Pennsylvania primary I was invited to my first rally, at the University of Pittsburgh. I saw Barack and Michelle Obama for the first time, and also Theresa Hines Kerry and Senator Bob Casey. How amazing it was to watch the mile-long line wind around the Pitt campus to enter the building. I vividly remember the electricity of hope in the air on the eve of the primary. Even though Barack lost that primary, I would never trade those five days of bruised knuckles from knocking on doors in McKee's Rocks for anything, for I had been learning what it was like to be an American in Western PA.

My participation in the Indiana primary was equally memorable. I canvassed from morning until dark for four long days. I partnered up for the first time with fellow organizer Erin Heard. Erin was great to canvass with partly because she was extremely personable with an amazing drive but also because she knew her way around town, for she had grown up in Lafayette. Erin and I became friends after working on the Indiana primary together; we

would later call on that friendship to support one another during the ups and downs of the campaign.

One Saturday afternoon during our canvass a man pulled up in his car proclaiming, "I got them, I got them." "You got what?" we said. "The tickets," he replied. Erin and I looked at each other. "Is Barack in town?"

We went back to the campaign office for our third packet of canvassing materials and confirmed that the Obamas were making an appearance at "The Skate" in Lafayette. Erin and I were in luck; we received the last tickets available. That Saturday evening, as the Obamas made their way through the meet and greet line, I found myself standing next to Barack, and after Erin posed for a photo with him I spoke with Michelle and said to her, "My name is Cindy Anderson and I live in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. I have never been involved in a campaign before, but your husband has inspired me and I am now traveling for him and canvassing". Michelle placed her hands on my arms and said, "Together we can do it." Tears welled in my eyes. That evening, we skated with Malia and Sasha as Barack and Michelle walked alongside.

Later, I was approached by the campaign to travel to Louisville, Kentucky, to canvass. Sean from campaign headquarters persuaded my husband to join me, and with our six-year-old son Tristan and our golden retriever, he traveled six hours to Kentucky to canvass for three days. This would be the first of many trips for my husband and youngest son.

June arrived, the primaries were finally over and my involvement with general election planning for the "Tenth for Obama" organization had begun. At this time the campaign headquarters in Chicago had been busy recruiting full-time volunteer field organizers from the Chicago area. Sean approached me, Erin, and Sam Piro and requested that we all meet together along with other volunteers for training. From that point on, we were in full general election mode and all of us became extremely busy recruiting and leading local volunteers in canvass efforts to help the state of Wisconsin go blue. Sean became my campaign manager, and along with the responsibility of volunteering full time

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## We the People *continued from page 1*

With each passing year, I seemed to learn about more injustice, more discrimination, more ways that my country was failing to live up to its ideals. That's not to say I didn't believe in these American ideals. In spite of my disillusionment, I held fast to my faith in them. I just never really believed I would see any of them in action.

And then, in 2004, Barack Obama gave his speech to the Democratic National Convention, and it took my breath away. Here, finally, was a leader who was putting the very ideas and frustrations that had been jumbled up in my head for years into a coherent message that the entire world would listen to. Like many people, I knew immediately that I had to do whatever I could to make him our president.

Before the Obama campaign, I had never been involved in any political activities at all. I had never donated to a presidential campaign. But, I signed up to volunteer for Obama's presidential bid on the very first day that it was possible for me to do so. And I never regretted even one moment that I spent on campaign activities or even one penny that I donated. My only regret is that I didn't do more. As I was living this experience, I knew it would all be worth it to see Obama elected. What I didn't expect was the gratification this experience would bring, the deep sense of pride and satisfaction I found in being a part of something bigger than myself, in being a part of something together with other people.

On the Sunday before Election Day, my sister and I were knocking on doors and passing out Get Out the Vote information in a Milwaukee neighborhood. It was one of those cold, gray days that come one after the other in the Midwest this time of year. The neighborhood was not a thriving one. (That's a euphemism for downright poor and maybe even desperate.) But, we parked our car in front of an elementary school that looked like people were proud of it. As we got out of the car to begin our canvassing, two women with bibles in hand were walking out of a dilapidated home across the street. They saw our campaign buttons and, with the wariness of people who are used to being disappointed, immediately asked if we had any to give away. We didn't, but we gave them the posters we had in the back of the car. They continued on to church, and my sister and I went about our business. As we circled the block, we cheerfully greeted

everyone we passed—the sullen teenaged boys, the indifferent teenaged girls. Everyone we passed had his guard up. The more suspiciously a passerby looked at us, the more cheerfully we smiled at him and chirped hello. We were trying our best to hide how uncomfortable we were to be where we so obviously didn't belong. But then, people started to respond. They started to ask us questions about how and where to vote. A few people even smiled.

As we circled back to our car at the end of the afternoon, the posters we had given the church women were plastered on the front door of their home. And there, in the front yard, was a middle-aged man and five or six teenagers. They had obviously been waiting, watching our car, and hoping to talk to us about the campaign. The man stood six feet tall, at least. And, he looked like he knew what it means to be in a fight. Life had clearly not been easy for this man. He was not at church. He was exactly the kind of person whom I would not normally ever have any sort of contact with—not by choice, but by circumstance. Even though only seventy miles or so separates our homes, our lives are worlds apart.

When the man saw my sister and me down the street, he yelled at us and asked if we had any more campaign stuff to give away. Since it was the end of the last day that I would volunteer for the Obama campaign, I took the button that I had been wearing for two years off of my sweater, felt my heartbeat pick up its pace, put a huge smile on my face and walked across the street to hand it to him. He gave me an even bigger smile right back. We chatted a bit about the campaign and about what it would be like to see Obama win. We introduced ourselves and shook hands. And, right there, in front of his children, he told me that he had never voted before but he would be doing so on November 4.

I feel very sure that he did.

I like to imagine the scene on election night in that dilapidated home. It must have really been something. When I reflect now on this campaign and on what the experience has meant to me, the first thought that always comes to mind is that Milwaukee man and how good it felt to really connect with someone who had seemed, on a superficial level, so unlike me and to find out, to my surprise, how much we have in common. It's our relationships that give us strength.

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## What Happened?

For readers who are suffering from political withdrawal even in spite of the lively new parlor game showing on all the news networks, "Name that Cabinet Nominee," the Tenth News provides for your consideration some analysis of the election results in the Illinois 10th Congressional District.

From 2006 to 2008, Dan Seals improved his share of the vote in eight of the townships in the 10th District, and his overall vote percentages in both Lake and Cook County improved as well. Yet, despite a hard-fought effort, we were not able to bridge the gap between a win and a loss. Although Dan ran behind the Democrats at the top of the ticket, much of this is simply a testament to the power of incumbency.

Like Barack Obama and Dick Durbin, Dan Seals was an outstanding candidate. But Barack Obama and Dick Durbin were also incumbent senators with outstanding records.

Lacking an outstanding record, Mark Kirk spent unprecedented amounts of money to recast his image. By October, he was a new-fangled moderate who aligned himself with Obama, who touted his work with Durbin (and other Democrats such as Melissa Bean), and who did all he could to hide his tight association in the previous five years with the Bush administration.

Did the people who voted for Obama and Durbin and Mark Kirk know

that in June Kirk voted against an extension of unemployment benefits? If they had known, would they have voted differently? What if before the election they'd heard Mark Kirk on WLS's Don Wade & Roma Morning Show (Nov. 18) opposing any financial rescue of the U.S. auto industry even though he supported the \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street? What would they think if they'd heard him recite the very same Republican talking points as Senators Jon Kyl and Jim DeMint had the previous Sunday, calling the Democratic proposal to divert some of that \$700 billion as a bridge loan to the "Big Three" auto makers "a bailout of the United Auto Workers, not General Motors"? Did people who overwhelmingly cast their votes for progressive Democrats Barack Obama and Dick Durbin really want to be represented by a Republican congressman who is anti-union and votes against the interests of working people?

Dan Seals was a terrific candidate, and we worked hard for him. He took a district considered completely non-competitive just a few short years ago, and turned it into a top national race, giving Mark Kirk a real nail-biter. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for being willing to take on the good fight and give it his all. As we look forward to 2010 we need to think about what more we could have done for him and how we could have done it better. Mark Kirk knows how to exploit his incumbency, but he can be exposed and defeated. We must redouble our efforts to replace him with a genuinely progressive lawmaker.

# Obama and Democrats Stand With Israel

by Steve Sheffey

If it weren't for Republican smears against Obama, I might not have supported him as early as I did. Before the primaries, I was torn between Hillary and Barack. Then right-wing groups used guilt by association to question Obama's commitment to Israel. I felt obligated to learn more about Obama. The more I learned, the more I liked him.

I'm not alone. Early polls showed Obama faring much worse among Jews than a Democrat should, but MSNBC exit polling showed that Obama won 78% of the Jewish vote, having done better than John Kerry.

Obama's strong showing is no surprise. Obama national security spokeswoman Wendy Morigi said shortly before the election that "as President, [Obama] will ensure that Israel can defend itself from every threat it faces, stand with Israel in its quest for a secure peace with its neighbors, and use all elements of American power to end Iran's illicit nuclear program. No false charges can change Barack Obama's unshakeable commitment to Israel's security."

Obama chose Joe Biden as his running mate after winning the Democratic nomination. Senator Biden told the *Forward* in 2007 that "in my 34-year career, I have never wavered from the notion that the only time progress has ever been made in the Middle East is when the Arab nations have known that there is no daylight between us and Israel. So the idea of being an 'honest broker' is not, as some of my Democratic colleagues call for, the answer. It is being the smart broker, it is being the smart partner."

Obama chose Rahm Emanuel as his chief of staff after winning the presidency. Emanuel is a pro-Israel congressman whose father is Israeli. Emanuel served as a volunteer (non-combat) in the Israel Defense Forces during the first Gulf War.

The vast majority of Jews vote Democratic because they share the values of the Democratic Party. In 2006, a vocal minority tried to woo Jews away by forecasting doom and gloom should the Democrats regain control of the House. Under the leadership of Nancy Pelosi, the last Congress proved to be firmly pro-Israel. As Pelosi said in 2007, "America's commitment to Israel is unshakeable... Let us be very clear: Iran must not be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon... There are those who contend that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is about Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. In truth, the history of the conflict has never been about the occupation. It is over the fundamental right of Israel to exist... The United States will stand with Israel now and forever."

The same vocal minority tried the same tactics in the presidential election and failed again.

The leaders of the Democratic Party, Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi, are progressive Democrats, and, true to their values, they are firm supporters of Israel. The entire Democratic leadership—Obama, Biden, Pelosi, Steny Hoyer, and Harry Reid—is firmly pro-Israel. There are fringes in both parties who are questionable on Israel (the similarities in viewpoints on Israel between the far right and far left are striking, and Michael Lerner is already whining about Obama's choice of Emanuel), but the Democrats running the country are, to a person, all strong friends of Israel.

There will always be some Democrats who disagree with the Democratic Party's positions on Israel. No Democrat agrees with the party on everything; we have every right as Americans to disagree. But when Republicans attempt to use those isolated voices to divide our community and achieve electoral success by smearing the Democrats on Israel, we must remind voters that the Democrats who

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## YES-WE-DID! *And We Still Can*

by Sam Piro

Wow, the election is *finally* over. And we did it... Barack Obama will be our next president. During the primaries (remember the primaries?), Tenth for OBAMA made dozens of canvassing trips into a half dozen states. We made countless calls into more than half the states in the Union. During the national campaign, something like 750 volunteers from the Tenth Dems traveled out of state to canvass for Barack. Many of the volunteers made multiple trips, sometimes in the pouring rain. Hundreds more made phone calls from phone banks set up around the 10th District. People set up fundraisers and voter registration drives. This was truly a bottom up, grassroots campaign. I am so impressed by, and proud of, all the citizens who stood up and participated fully in the democratic process.

The experience of working on a campaign like this is something I'll remember the rest of my life. I met so many people who were so excited and willing to do whatever it takes to make this country a better place. It was simply amazing to witness the amount of positive emotional energy people poured into the campaign.

Now that the campaign is over, there is no reason to store that energy away for four years. In his speech at Grant Park, Barack Obama, pointed out that what we really won is the chance to make a difference. Many volunteers are now asking, "So what's next? What more can I do?" Tenth for OBAMA is starting to compile a list of volunteering opportunities. I'll bet some of you already know of a worthy local cause in need of help. Please let me know, and we'll add it to the list. If you would like to receive a copy of the list, please let me know that as well. You can reach me at [sampiro1@comcast.net](mailto:sampiro1@comcast.net).

## Conversation & Politics *continued from page 1*

back to the kitchen to thank us on behalf of all those we fed. Some were more articulate than others. I realized then that these were not faceless people to be sidelined and forgotten. These were real people overwhelmed by personal problems and circumstances beyond their control. There should be no homeless in America. And I resolved right then and there to try to do something about it in my retirement; not only to feed them, but also to create an environment where they could be educated, find a job, and be respected members of a community.

I experienced the moment, together with several hundred people, of seeing the announcement on TV that Obama had won the election and would be our next president; we all stood and cheered with our fists in the air and yelled at the top of our lungs, "YES WE CAN," and I lost count. We have taken a step beyond hope, to action and results.

Having been one of a first generation born in this country, I can appreciate the words of Barack Obama ending a speech he gave in Denver just a month ago:

"Maybe some of your parents or grandparents, they were born in another country without freedom of speech or freedom of worship, but they said, you know what, we know there's this land across the ocean called America, where it's a land of opportunity and a land of freedom, and we're willing to take the risk to travel to that place to create a better future for our children and grandchildren. In this audience, there are people whose parents or grandparents couldn't cast a vote, but they said to themselves you know, maybe my child or grandchild, if we march, if we struggle, maybe they may be able to run for the United States Senate, maybe they might run for the Presidency of the United States of America." (David Sirota, *Denver Post*, October 26, 2008)

Those remarks resonated with me. At last, at last, we have climbed the mountain and seen the other side. I'll hang on to the torch as long as I can, and then I'll pass it on to you.

# Optimism to Despair to Hope: An Election Journey

by Ben Strubl

It's a well-known Washington truism that each presidential campaign begins immediately after the previous one ends. I would have to go further and say that this election began for me even before that, in late December 2003. That was when I came to support Barack Obama for President of the United States.

I was a high school junior at the time, the head of my school's fledgling "Democrat Club." We had started just a few months before that, and for a week I was not only the first member—I was the only member. After the 2002 elections the situation seemed really bleak for Democrats, but by 2003 I could start to feel some energy for progressive ideas building again. In a time when strong hints started to surface that the Iraq War was not going as planned, our club was able to build enthusiasm and membership. We discussed the upcoming Democratic presidential primaries passionately but didn't really know what to make of the Senate race.

Those who remember that race might recall that for a long time Blair Hull, the multimillionaire businessman, seemed the prohibitive favorite to win the Democratic nomination. This was the case primarily due to the millions of dollars Hull was spending on name recognition. The other candidates included a powerful scion of a Chicago political family and a popular talk radio host, among others. And then, there was Barack Obama. At the time Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky endorsed Obama, I didn't know anything about him. After I started paying attention to him, I really came to believe that he was a great candidate.

The problem was that few others really knew who he was, or anything about him. I'd talk about the race and mention Obama and people would say, "Who?" I wasn't sure if it was worth it, if Blair Hull was just going to be able to buy the election. I didn't quite know what to think.

Ironically, Blair Hull may have sealed my support for Obama. Hull mailed a flyer that said, "You cannot tear this flyer. Like my promise to you it is unbreakable." He had printed the flyer on a special type of paper that was nearly indestructible. And I say nearly because after five minutes of hard work I discovered that I could indeed tear the flyer. The incident made up my mind that I shouldn't allow a candidate to win based solely on a financial advantage and that with proper effort such challenges could be overcome.

Blair Hull's flyer provided the perfect metaphor as I began to hand out Obama literature at train stations, walk door-to-door, and talk to my friends.

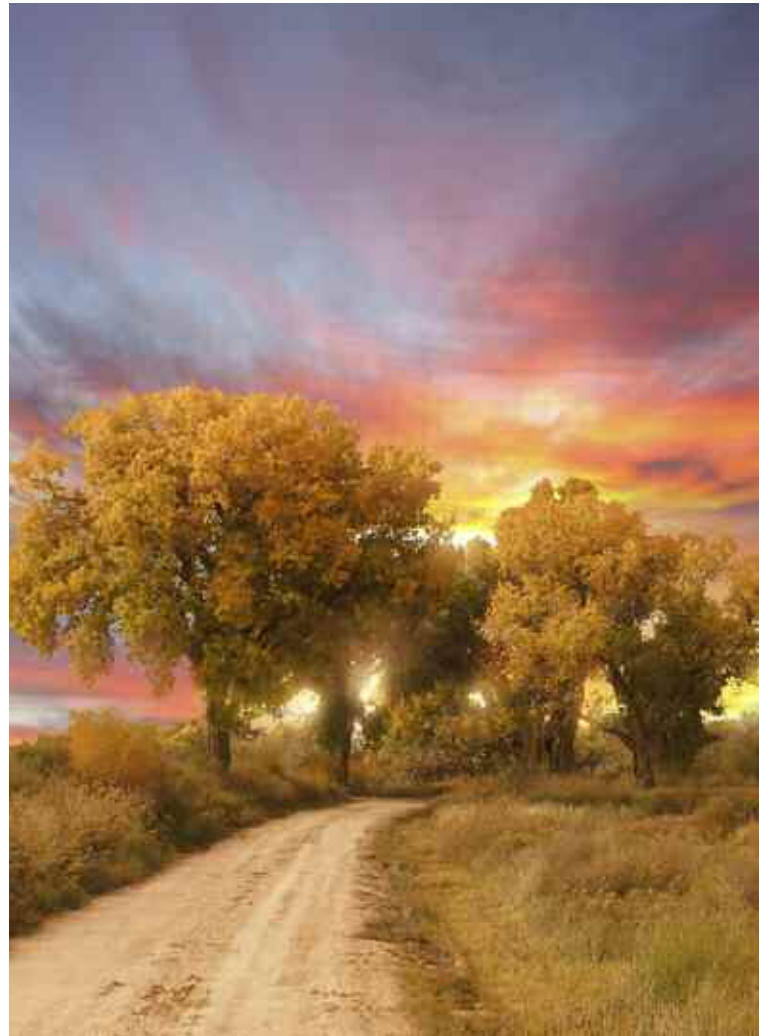
My political optimism started to build, and it only grew when Obama won the Democratic primary in a landslide. Obama had received more votes than all the Republican candidates combined. Surely, I thought, this was a portent of good things to come.

Everyone remembers that Obama was eventually elected to the Senate in 2004, as I'm sure everyone also remembers that George W. Bush defeated John Kerry that same election. The latter event was far more important to me than the former, and I was absolutely devastated. In one fell swoop almost all of my optimism was lost. America had been presented with such a compelling choice, and America chose George W. Bush. Obama's victory was nice, but it was no more than one small bright spot on a night of utter catastrophe.

For much of the next four years my political views about the country as a whole were anything but hopeful. As I worked hard with Tenth Dems to get candidates elected to offices in the Illinois 10th District, I was able to picture things a little more optimistically. The 10th District was getting more and more Democratic, and those of us working on the races there saw many victories in places where we had never won

before. Somehow, though, I thought these local lessons did not apply in any way to the national scene.

When Barack Obama announced he was running for President of the United States, I was skeptical. I didn't think a message of "hope" was going to carry him to victory. The way I saw it, Americans had voted in 2004 solidly for "fear" and Republicans would tear Obama to pieces on the campaign trail. Obama ran on inspiration and change, not on specific policy proposals (on which his rivals were often far more



detailed), and I didn't see inspiration and change as enough to win an election. Hillary Clinton, I decided, was tough as nails, and, as Joe Wilson observed, she could take whatever they threw at her. I didn't particularly want a repeat of the Clinton years. It was a purely defensive pick.

Barack Obama went on to confound all expectations and exceed all predictions. He won a near landslide against the Republicans' strongest candidate, and he did it running on hope and change. As time and time again Obama inspired me on the campaign trail, I came to believe that maybe, just maybe, he really could win. I was terrified of a repeat of 2004, but optimism had started to return.

Now that Barack Obama is our president-elect, I've felt a sudden surge of that hope that had been missing in me these last four years. I'm really convinced now that the power exists to make a difference. George W. Bush made me far more cynical than I ever wanted to be, and I realize that now. Barack Obama reminded me what I knew back in early 2004—sometimes there's nothing more powerful than the belief, "Yes we can!"

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## **Journey for Obama** *continued from page 4*

for the campaign came some perks. Erin and I were offered two tickets to the Democratic Convention. Being with 84,000 Obama supporters was one of the more memorable experiences during the campaign and one you can't quite imagine accurately unless you were there.

From late July until the election my job as a field organizer seemed to grow with each passing week. By October, I was scheduling three groups every week for Saturday and Sundays, originating from Buffalo Grove and Deerfield. I had a combined schedule of 125 volunteers weekly. The Obama campaign became my life; I would fit my family in between. Amazingly, my husband and youngest son agreed to accompany me weekly from September through GOTV (get out the vote, Nov. 1,2,3,4).

GOTV finally arrived. Everything we had been working towards was for this moment. This was it; time to give it all we had. My husband and I would commute to Milwaukee for Saturday and Sunday, arriving back home by 9:00 PM. Monday night we stayed in Milwaukee to work well through the evening on Election Day, knocking on doors until 7:00 PM. Many voices and images of Milwaukee voters on Election Day will live with me forever. People had a newfound sense of hope in their words and an extra skip in their step.

You can only imagine the jubilation in our van as we listened to the first election results on NPR for New Hampshire and, shortly thereafter, for Pennsylvania. My husband and I, along with Erin and four other canvassers, raced back to the hotel to watch the rest of the election results on MSNBC and later to join our other fellow organizers, Wisconsin volunteers, and staff in the ballroom.

At 10:00 PM it was announced, "Barack Obama elected President of the United States." Never before had I witnessed such a celebration; tears and cheers surrounded me. The room was vibrating from all the supporters jumping up and down. What a happy ending to such a long journey!

I will never be the same. I have become a different person than the one who reluctantly volunteered in January. I am part of the grassroots movement that helped elect Barack Obama the 44th President of the United States of America.

## **Congress Watch** *continued from page 2*

carefully at their votes on the important issues so that you know exactly how you are being represented in both houses of Congress.

Fortunately, our disappointment over the outcome of the congressional race is tempered by the hope we've been given by Barack Obama's victory. As the man who we wish had won the 10th District congressional race recently told his supporters, "We may have lost the battle, but we won the war!"

## **Israel** *continued from page 6*

represent the Democratic Party are the Democrats who lead the Democratic Party, starting with Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi.

Republican Jews have been dying an intellectual death ever since, in their quest to make the world safe for plutocracy, they questioned Joe Lieberman's commitment to Israel when he was Al Gore's running mate. Barack Obama—a proud, liberal, progressive Democrat—is already proving to all open-minded Americans that we Democrats are firmly committed to Israel's safety and security.