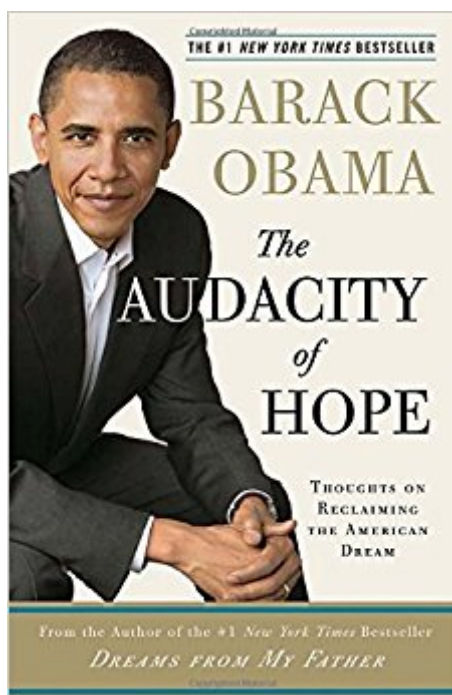


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The Audacity Of Hope: Thoughts On Reclaiming The American Dream



Synopsis

In July 2004, Barack Obama electrified the Democratic National Convention with an address that spoke to Americans across the political spectrum. One phrase in particular anchored itself in listeners' minds, a reminder that for all the discord and struggle to be found in our history as a nation, we have always been guided by a dogged optimism in the future, or what Obama called "the audacity of hope." The Audacity of Hope is Barack Obama's call for a different brand of politics—a politics for those weary of bitter partisanship and alienated by the "endless clash of armies" we see in congress and on the campaign trail; a politics rooted in the faith, inclusiveness, and nobility of spirit at the heart of "our improbable experiment in democracy." He explores those forces—from the fear of losing to the perpetual need to raise money to the power of the media—that can stifle even the best-intentioned politician. He also writes, with surprising intimacy and self-deprecating humor, about settling in as a senator, seeking to balance the demands of public service and family life, and his own deepening religious commitment. At the heart of this book is Barack Obama's vision of how we can move beyond our divisions to tackle concrete problems. He examines the growing economic insecurity of American families, the racial and religious tensions within the body politic, and the transnational threats—from terrorism to pandemic—that gather beyond our shores. And he grapples with the role that faith plays in a democracy where it is vital and where it must never intrude. Underlying his stories about family, friends, and members of the Senate is a vigorous search for connection: the foundation for a radically hopeful political consensus. A public servant and a lawyer, a professor and a father, a Christian and a skeptic, and above all a student of history and human nature, Barack Obama has written a book of transforming power. Only by returning to the principles that gave birth to our Constitution, he says, can Americans repair a political process that is broken, and restore to working order a government that has fallen dangerously out of touch with millions of ordinary Americans. Those Americans are out there, he writes "waiting for Republicans and Democrats to catch up with them."

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Customer Reviews

Barack Obama's first book, *Dreams from My Father*, was a compelling and moving memoir focusing on personal issues of race, identity, and community. With his second book *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama engages themes raised in his keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, shares personal views on faith and values and offers a vision of the future that involves repairing a "political process that is broken" and restoring a government that has fallen out of touch with the people. We had the opportunity to ask Senator Obama a few questions about writing, reading, and politics--see his responses below. --Daphne Durham 20 Second Interview: A Few Words with Barack Obama

Q: How did writing a book that you knew would be read so closely by so many compare to writing your first book, when few people knew who you were? A: In many ways, *Dreams from My Father* was harder to write. At that point, I wasn't even sure that I could write a book. And writing the first book really was a process of self-discovery, since it touched on my family and my childhood in a much more intimate way. On the other hand, writing *The Audacity of Hope* paralleled the work that I do every day--trying to give shape to all the issues that we face as a country, and providing my own personal stamp on them.

Q: What is your writing process like? You have such a busy schedule, how did you find time to write? A: I'm a night owl, so I usually wrote at night after my Senate day was over, and after my family was asleep--from 9:30 p.m. or so until 1 a.m. I would work off an outline--certain themes or stories that I wanted to tell--and get them down in longhand on a yellow pad. Then I'd edit while typing in what I'd written.

Q: If readers are to come away from *The Audacity of Hope* with one action item (a New Year's Resolution for 2007, perhaps?), what should it be? A: Get involved in an issue that you're passionate about. It almost doesn't matter what it is--improving the school system, developing strategies to wean ourselves off foreign oil, expanding health care for kids. We give too much of our power away, to the professional politicians, to the

lobbyists, to cynicism. And our democracy suffers as a result. Q: You're known for being able to work with people across ideological lines. Is that possible in today's polarized Washington? A: It is possible. There are a lot of well-meaning people in both political parties. Unfortunately, the political culture tends to emphasize conflict, the media emphasizes conflict, and the structure of our campaigns rewards the negative. I write about these obstacles in chapter 4 of my book, "Politics." When you focus on solving problems instead of scoring political points, and emphasize common sense over ideology, you'd be surprised what can be accomplished. It also helps if you're willing to give other people credit--something politicians have a hard time doing sometimes.

Illinois's Democratic senator illuminates the constraints of mainstream politics all too well in this sonorous manifesto. Obama (*Dreams from My Father*) castigates divisive partisanship (especially the Republican brand) and calls for a centrist politics based on broad American values. His own cautious liberalism is a model: he's skeptical of big government and of Republican tax cuts for the rich and Social Security privatization; he's prochoice, but respectful of proliferators; supportive of religion, but not of imposing it. The policy result is a tepid Clintonism, featuring tax credits for the poor, a host of small-bore programs to address everything from worker retraining to teen pregnancy, and a health-care program that resembles Clinton's Hillary-care proposals. On Iraq, he floats a phased but open-ended troop withdrawal. His triangulated positions can seem conflicted: he supports free trade, while deploring its effects on American workers (he opposed the Central American Free Trade Agreement), in the end hoping halfheartedly that more support for education, science and renewable energy will see the economy through the dilemmas of globalization. Obama writes insightfully, with vivid firsthand observations, about politics and the compromises forced on politicians by fund-raising, interest groups, the media and legislative horse-trading. Alas, his muddled, uninspiring proposals bear the stamp of those compromises. (Oct. 17) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Brilliantly written compelling read challenges us to get engaged and not sit on the sidelines of life. Insightful and some self-reflections too. Eloquent and shows his commitment to the same values he spoke of during his moving farewell address.

This book describes a reasonableness in life and politics that is refreshing. I anticipate it will become a moving, successful movie.

Amazing read. True inspiration. I have one and this is my third purchase as a gift for someone.

I read this book just before Barack Obama took office as the President of the United States. I wanted to see how he would change after serving as President. After 8 years as President, I read his book again. I believe he is basically the same man as he was then. This book is a good representation of who Barack Obama is. The audio book is read the President himself.

Ok, he's not president ... yet. We still have 14 more days. However, I bought this book before the election, wanting to read more about the man's state of mind and his thoughts on the American dream. It has taken me this long to read it, not because the words are too hard (I read that somewhere that someone was daunted by the "big" words he used), but because it is very thought-provoking and it is not a book to rush through. I rarely if ever underline anything in my books but this book broke that rule of mine. I was underlining so many different thoughts in there to remind myself that it is what I agree with too. That doesn't necessarily mean that I agree with everything he has said, but he does provide fodder for thought. It is a very well-written book. It makes me wish that I could attend his classes on Constitutional Law, which is saying something since I find law boring. He provides examples after examples to back up his thoughts. He has obviously done his research especially in foreign policy (which is my least favorite chapter of all the chapters. It was also one that I disagreed with the most.) and he is passionate about his beliefs. He is passionate about the American people. I've seen it in his speeches and during the debates. He is passionate about the American Dream. And it's about time there is someone at the helm who is passionate about the Dream and how we can work together to bring it about. I don't expect Obama to bring about all the changes that he'd like to see because, let's be honest here, politicians in Congress will not agree and they will fight everything they can to push their own agenda through. Hopefully, Obama will be able to override that but that remains to be seen. However, he does have a good plan in mind and hopefully, he will be able to implement it. The one thing I got from this book is the strong sense of hope. The strong sense of hope and change that his presidency will bring about, hopefully. For the first time in 8 years, there is a feeling of hope among the people and among different readers. This book has generated a lot of talk among people. Hopefully, these talks will bring about the necessary change that is needed desperately for this country to thrive. It doesn't matter which side of the aisle you are on, this book is a much read. It is also a relief that for a change, there is an intelligent man at the helm of this country. 1/4/09

This is a great "motivating" story about a great man who overcame tremendous obstacles to become the first Black President of the United States. It is powerful and moving..... A must read for all Americans.

good insight on who he is and how he thinks.

Good read.

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