

**The
BLACK
C o m m e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

bc

**We are facing
the most serious
cash crunch in our
6 year history.**

[Click here to become a BC paid Subscriber](#)
or
[Make a contribution of any amount you choose.](#)

[Home](#)

**Why Barack Took The Money (And I'm Glad He Did)?
Between the Lines
By Dr. Anthony Asadullah Samad, PhD
BlackCommentator.com Columnist**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Much ado (about nothing) has been made about Barack Obama becoming the first Presidential candidate to reject public financing of Presidential elections (and the \$84.1 million spending limit that comes with it) since it started in 1976. Mainly that Obama reversed himself on his position as a supporter of campaign spending limits and a previous stated commitment to take the public financing. This was a no-brainer as far as Barack was concerned. Though it presented another opportunity for John McCain and the Republicans to assert that this was, again, another chance to see who Obama really is, it was really about Barack demonstrating that he sees this process for what it really is - a chance to handcuff him against what we all know awaits him in the two months after the party conventions, the period we know as the general election.

Understanding the Republican strategies of the past two elections, while we don't know what the issue will be, Obama's decision essentially came down to two words (whether he'll admit it or not), "Swift Boat." The Swift Boat attack ads of 2004, driven by independent expenditure (IE) groups, dogged John Kerry's candidacy and dictated his campaign strategy. Kerry didn't respond to the Swift Boat ads as quickly as he needed to because of decisions about where his money when he best served, campaigning or defending allegations. When he finally decided, he was forced to

spend money defending his war record, and the "flip-flop" allegations on the Iraqi War, causing whatever message he was tried to get out to the America people (I still don't know what it was) to get lost in the campaign clutter. For this reason, and this reason alone, it made sense for Barack to opt out of public money. It gives him the flexibility to respond to attacks. We would be naïve to believe it's not going to happen-there will be some "swift-boating" going on in 2008. For this reason alone, Barack took the money.

Aside from the obvious, there were a number of reasons to opt out of public financing. It's interesting that the Republican Party is doing the most whining this election cycle - the first time someone has finally figured out how they roll. Republican Presidential candidates never had to opt out of the "hard money" constraints that public financing rules place on candidates because they owned the "soft money" processes that supplemented their candidates' message and ideological agendas. Soft money is money from large contributors - corporations, large donors, labor unions, who give to the political parties to get around the federal individual and PAC contribution limits, specifically for the purpose of running partisan "independent" advertisements, so-called "issues ads" - mostly to attack their party's opposing candidate.

They call themselves things like, "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" and they (and the party candidate) deny any contact or cooperation with their party's Presidential campaign. Soft money has grown, according to the watchdog group, Common Cause, from \$86 million in 1992 to \$260 in 1996 and over \$750 million in each of the Presidential elections held in 2000 and 2004. In each of those elections, the Republican Party significantly out-raised the Democratic Party. Despite the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance reforms passed in 2002, soft money is expected to find new loopholes and exceed one BILLION dollars in 2008. Most of that money will probably still be raised by Republican corporate and stakeholder interest, and be used to fashion attack ads against Barack Obama.

Obama has over 1.5 million donors, half of who have given \$200 or less. He has an obvious advantage in fundraising, and a greater capacity to raise more. Why would he concede such an advantage when Republicans have never conceded any advantage they have held? This will be the first Democratic Presidential candidate that is projected to out-raise a Republican. And, of course, as Hillary found out, they never expected a black candidate to raise this kind of money (because none ever has). However, Obama will also be the first Democratic candidate to have the flexibility to be able to respond to immediately to attack ads (as he did throughout the primaries) and he will be the first to make the Republican candidate spend money in states that are traditionally "red" (vote Republican), states being taken for granted. Barack will spend his money and John McCain's too.

Barack has raised more money than any "non-incumbent President" political candidate ever. Largely because, through the internet, he's opened up the political process to the average Joe (or Jane). Public financing would return the political process back to the "traditional donors," the rich, the corporate and the well-connected and make soft money "the decider" in this year's election. He committed to public financing under the premise that everyone else (the Republican nominee included) would close soft money loopholes and play by the same rules. Of course, history has taught that Republicans never play by the same rules - and where none exist, they make up their own. What reason do the American people have to believe that this election cycle will be any different? A broken system is still broke, and this aspect of the broke system has the biggest broken part. Barack knows that. That's why he opted out of public financing. When they come after him, he'll have the money to do what he needs to

do, rebut the IE attack ads, and target battleground states that McCain will take for granted to change the political landscape. The Democrats will make the Republicans spend money defending their record (the Bush-McCain record) for a change.

So, I shouted from the mountaintop when Obama made his announcement, "Take the uncapped money, Barack." He did and I'm glad - now it will be close to a fair race (fight).


BlackCommentator.com Columnist, Dr. Anthony Asadullah Samad, is a national columnist, managing director of the [Urban Issues Forum](#) and author of [Saving The Race: Empowerment Through Wisdom](#). His Website is [AnthonySamad.com](#). Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Samad.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

Click Here

[Home](#)

Click Here To

CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To

CONTACT 

Any BlackCommentator.com article may be re-printed so long as it is re-printed in its entirety and full credit given to the author and [www.BlackCommentator.com](#). If the re-print is on the Internet we additionally request a link back to the original piece on our Website.

Your comments are always welcome.

eMail re-print notice

If you send us an eMail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002 - 2008
[www.BlackCommentator.com](#)
All Rights Reserved