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**An Obama Victory: Joy and Pain
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His was a modest declaration to seek this country's highest political office almost two years ago. In a crowded field of Democratic heavyweights, the candidacy of Barack Obama was initially not taken seriously.

But it happened. Change did come to America on November 4 with all the world watching. Barack Obama became the 44th president of the United States and its first African-American.

On Election Day, urban radio stations played songs like "A Change is Gonna Come" and "We are the World."

Seventy countries around the world supported the Obama candidacy by a three to one margin.

And millions of people voted, many waiting in lines for up to 8 hours, determined to cast their vote for Obama and be a footnote on the page of this nation's history book.

Joyful celebrations, tearful reflections and trepid declarations punctuated the Obama victory.

Obama had the audacity to talk about hope, a human emotion that must be nurtured, if people are to be inspired for tomorrow's promise. The other candidates, both Democrats and Republicans, discounted this important factor in their respective campaigns until they saw how it resonated with a hope-starved populace.

This has been quite a ride - a long one at that. It is going down as the longest

campaign in history. In retrospect, I realize that Obama was smart in starting his campaign nearly two years ago. It would take that long for voters to get to know this man, his family, his roots, his principles. By the end of the campaign, I was finishing his sentences like a wife in a long marriage.

The campaigns set new records for raising and spending monies. The cost for the race to the White House is estimated at \$1.5 billion - reaffirming the need for campaign finance reform.

The unrelenting effort to suppress votes, particularly in battleground states, must be addressed decisively. It has occurred openly for three election cycles now and cannot be ignored - reaffirming the need for more election reform and reinforcement of existing laws.

The kind of response that Barack Obama inspired has been mind bottling. I have never, ever seen this many people from the many different backgrounds react in the same way about a person. I studied the campaign as Obama built a ground organization that will become the gold standard in American political campaigns. I did what any good organizer would do: I took notes.

Everybody is not joyous about the Obama victory. You have the bitter white folks who are holding onto their guns and religion. And you have folks on the left castigating anyone who participates in the electoral arena of the moribund capitalist system. Some of the black left seem to be particularly upset that there's all this to-do about a black man running for the titular head of Babylon.

I can't speak for others but I am not naïve. I know the limitations of the US presidency. I know that President Obama will be tested in ways his predecessors never would. I know that even if Obama is sincere about implementing the policies he articulated on the campaign trail, he may not always be able to count on his gutless, spineless, money-grubbing Congresspeople who are out for their own self-serving agendas. Obama's challenges include steadying a tail-spinning economy, developing an exit strategy for two misguided wars, improving the tarnished world image of the US and a host of other challenges on the horizon.

There is no doubt the social justice movements will have to hold Obama's feet to the fire. Since we help put him there, it's our duty to both make him accountable when he veers and to support him when he's trying to carry out work on issues we deem important.

The social movements organize under the banner of building toward transformative politics and democracy. To pursue our progressive agenda, any organizer worth his or her salt knows that opportunities for achieving reforms are more likely under an Obama administration than a McCain one. An astute organizer does not put all of its strategies and tactics in one basket and the electoral arena is but one of several arenas where we fight for working class power.

Barack Obama said he was going to change the political map of the US. According to the latest electoral map on the <http://theelectoralmap.com>, Obama, along with his three million volunteers, has done just that. Most of the map is shades of blue.

Those of us in the various social movements can sharpen our organizing skills by collectively studying, debating and assessing the Obama ground game. The little bit of Organizing 101 that he learned from people like us while in Chicago took him to the White House. Some adaptation and revamping of those organizing principles should definitely enhance our capacity to take on our own challenges we face. Let's go out there and see who we can inspire.

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