

“Out of Many, We are One”: Obama & the 3rd American Liberal Tradition

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Abstract

American political thought has been dominated by two contrasting traditions – a minimalist weak state and neo-classical capitalism, imbued with strong individual rights well reflected in President George Bush’s Ownership Society; and a relatively strong welfare state and regulatory capitalism seen most starkly in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal reform program. President Barack Obama’s campaign rhetoric represents a departure from either tradition. Obama’s political vision composes a third lesser known, and yet harder traveled tradition of small “d” democratic progressivism or populism. Obama’s vision constitutes not just a departure in thought, but it occurred in part given the electoral vacuum created by the hollow Democratic/Republican party’s agendas in combination with the collapse of the economy. This talk suggests that locating Obama’s vision in historic context helps us better understand not only his administration’s accomplishment’s but as well as his failures. It reviews five aspects that make the character of Obama’s thought part of this third American tradition that echoes the Three Musketeers cry: “out of many we are one.”

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American political thought has been dominated by two contrasting traditions – a minimalist weak state and neo-classical capitalism, imbued with strong individual rights mirrored in President George Bush’s Ownership Society; and a relatively strong welfare state and regulatory capitalism starkly pictured in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal reform program. President Barack Obama’s campaign rhetoric represents a departure from either tradition.

The first ever president who started out as a community organizer, Obama is a populist.ⁱ He believes in grassroots reform. As he describes it, “his journey began organizing, and working, and fighting to make people’s lives just a little bit better.”ⁱⁱ Obama’ rhetoric resonated during the campaign,

since neither his populism nor his grassroots reform is tainted, or as some critics would argue, sullied by any European or pseudo-European ideals. Being based upon a different conception of citizenship and national identity than exists in Europe, Obama's notion of reform fulfills the American version of liberalism and encapsulates the American dream because of its emphasis on freedom, equality, and not individualism – but individuality.

Obama's political vision composes a third lesser known, and yet harder traveled tradition of small "d" democratic progressivism or populism. This progressivism, however, appeared in a twenty-first incarnation during the 2008 election. It includes first and foremost, Obama's emphasis on "interconnectedness." Obama's political platform showed the voting public that equality and freedom could be, relational and reciprocal in the United States. Freedom could not be found alone. Nor could equality or equality of opportunity be secured singularly. Depending on, and being accountable for, one another, Obama proclaimed, is essential to the American individual, society, and the state in the twenty-first century. It is part of their democratic existence. "I believe deeply that we cannot solve the challenges of our time," Obama said, "unless we solve them together . . ."iii

Rather than being locked in the usual binary in American political thought – liberalism premised upon individualism and undergirded by capitalism versus strong social welfare state reform – Obama's campaign for reform was fresh. He imagined a nation that embraced the interdependence, equality of opportunity, authenticity and freedom of its people. Obama envisioned how the United States could profit from what this paper calls a democratic pragmatist notion of mutual inclusivity and survivability. Being constructed on the basis of shared reliance, Obama cast equality of opportunity and freedom as mutually inclusive constructs that created a give and take between, and among, all parties.

What makes Obama's platform part of a third tradition is that his notion of "change" creates a new vision of American politics. This is *not* the public interest progressive reform perspective practiced by Teddy Roosevelt at the turn of the century. Nor does he advance a watered-down version of communitarian social contract theory that makes the state "the solution" and marked what other progressive eras held in common. To Obama, as to a significant part of the American youth, the state is exemplified by the D.M.V. The state manifests itself as a bureaucracy, a bureaucracy in which a citizen stands in long lines and, fearing that a civil servant behind the counter could get one digit of her social security number wrong, would plunge her into a mistaken identity nightmare, that's hard to fix. To be

sure, Obama accepts regulation, but he does not believe that building governmental institutions constitutes liberal reform as it did in the Progressive Era, the New Deal, or the Great Society.

Put differently, Obama does not seek what could be called European social welfare state “lite.” The state is not the savior. No institution can come to the rescue, only people: people helping themselves as they help others. Like Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush before him, Obama supports the faith-based initiative. But, unlike Bush, these extensions of the state must be rooted in American values (i.e. no exclusions). Catholics cannot hire exclusively Catholics; and Mormons cannot hire only from their own faith to serve the poor and help the needy in their neighborhood or congregation. Nor can these extensions of the state do any proselytizing. Obama’s faith-based initiative gives secular groups the same role as religious ones, making room for “non-believers” to serve the community or “do good.” Obama’s initiative does not “favor one religious group over another -- or even religious groups over secular groups. It will simply be to work on behalf of those organizations that want to work on behalf of our communities, and to do so without blurring the line our founders wisely drew between church and state.”^{iv}

Not embracing the state does not mean, however, that Obama swerves to the pendulum’s other side. He does not adopt the classic American liberal perspective – emphasizing individual autonomy and accepting a self-regulating or free market. Obama rests his faith in the individual. This Democratic President does not accept the liberal premise underlying President Lyndon B. Johnson’s the Great Society -- the premise that gave the poor and disadvantaged what Republicans latter claimed was an “excuse” for life when they attributed their problems to societal ills rather than accepting personal responsibility. Obama insists on implementing public policy programs that promote individual responsibility. He believes in accountability. Talking about fatherhood and the African-American community, Obama says men must take “full responsibility for [their] own lives” To him, this involves “demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children, and reading to them, and teaching them that while they may face challenges and discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or cynicism; they must always believe that they can write their own destiny.”^v

Obama expects constituents of reform public policies to pull their own weight. At the same time, these policies must be as inclusive as possible. Health care, for instance, is available to everyone,

though it does not mean everyone will subscribe. Obama advocates policies that are universalizing. He does not offer universal entitlements. To do so, Obama pools resources. He insists on “binding our particular grievances - for better health care, and better schools, and better jobs - to the larger aspirations of all Americans -- the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man whose been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family.”^{vi}

Obama’s ideas about equality, responsibility, accountability, inclusivity, and universalism reflect a very different conception of progressivism rarely seen. This type of progressivism is not built on the thought of either the classical liberal John Locke or the communitarian social contract theorist Jean Jacque Rousseau. It is neither liberal nor communitarian. It promotes neither negative nor positive freedom. It employs no negative watchman nor erects a positive social welfare state. Rather, democratic progressivism emanates from ideas articulated most comprehensively and with consistency by a third doctrine – that espoused by the seventeenth century religious thinker and philosopher Baruch Spinoza whose principles can be found in the American political thought of John Dewey, Saul Alinsky, W.E.B. Dubois, Rheinhold Neibhur, and Hannah Arendt.

For Spinoza, the state and society create the context in which the individual can become free. Going beyond survivability, an interdependent state and society help this person pursue her potential or perfectability. Two heads are stronger than one. What Spinoza does is substitute the Hobbesian maxim underlying individualism that “man is a wolf to man” with “man is a God to man.”^{vii} While some people act like wolves, attacking others for their own gain, Spinoza emphasizes that other people behave like Gods or saviors, helping their peers for their own preservation and perfectability. Working together, “ordinary people,” Obama said, “can do *extraordinary* things.”^{viii}

Locating the character of Obama’s vision in Spinoza or the modern American iterations found in the thoughts of Dewey, Alinsky, Dubois, Arendt, and Neibhur that compose this third tradition is not to say he read the work of these political thinkers. There is no causality here. Obama’s democratic progressivism contains the same unique combination of a faith in the power of the people and upholds that self-interest is transformative as all of these political thinkers did. It maintains that truth and knowledge are socially constructed. And it suggests that everyone is interdependent. “Interconnectedness,” Obama said, “now spans the globe.”^{ix} We live in an “interdependent and interconnected world.”^x

Obama’s democratic progressivism spurns the idea of the public interest at the expense of self-interest. “We all have a stake,” Obama insists, “in each other’s success”^{xi} He dismisses the belief

in absolute truths. He challenges the myth of autonomy. Obama questions whether the strong social welfare state represents the solution. Each individual can understand and discover her own self-interest rather than have experts within state institutions do so. Obama's democratic progressivism differs greatly from Teddy Roosevelt's or Walter Lippmann's public interest progressivism that entrusts experts, embraces the public interest, and advances Americanization.^{xii}

Obama upholds what could be described as the survivalist part of the American political tradition. He believes in the frontier.^{xiii} But rather than advancing the self-interest of the farmer, the rancher or the miner, he promotes all the families on the pioneer wagon train. No one should try "to fool mother nature." No one, in other words, can do it alone. Obstacles, such as a winter storm, impose limitations that an individual no matter how fast, strong, or smart, cannot surmount better alone. The so-called abstract individual underlying individualism, and one of the basic assumptions behind classical liberalism and capitalism, is a red herring. Instead, Obama's filled his campaign with references about our interdependence and interconnectedness, and how vital it is to take individual responsibility in the context of a collective. He believes in pooling resources as a means of finding universalizing solutions for our many collective problems, problems however that reflect the concerns and sensibilities of the American middle class, not the poor or the working class.

By placing Obama's vision in historic context, I suggest, helps us better understand not only his administration's accomplishment's but as well as his failures. One year after the 2008 election, the jury is still out about the Obama administration's chances for success. The outcome of the health care battle will be telling. Can we attribute its success or failure to Obama? How far did his rhetoric depart from reality? Is Obama's legislative reform program facing the difficulties associated with the American political structure stymied by federalism, separation of powers, saddled with a two-party system, under ever-increasing corporate power? Or did Obama's appointment of former Clinton administration officials like White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, director of National Economic Council Lawrence Summers, and Secretary of Treasury Timothy weaken his reform resolve? Can they help this Democratic President push through the legislative impasses blocking significant reform?

After tracing the first two traditions in American political thought, the paper will review the five factors that make the character of Obama's thought part of this third American tradition. To limit the paper's length, I will focus more selectively on the thought of Dewey and Alinsky instead of DuBois, Arendt, and Neibhur, making only brief reference their primary philosophical Spinozian lineage.

THE FIRST TRADITION

The Classical Liberal Default or the Minimal State

Most mainstream political scientists in the United States consider American freedom and equality as well as the individual, the state, and society mutually exclusive concepts. Either they regard individual autonomy as paramount or they advance the needs of the state and society first. Citizens pursue individual self-interest or the public interest, but not both. These scholars regard the American state in some form that Louis Hartz did -- as a liberal state influenced by the philosophy of John Locke who privileged the individual over the state and society.^{xiv} A so-called Lockean state or classical liberalism also makes private property sacrosanct, privileging capitalism.^{xv}

Classical liberalism translated by Hartz, a consensus historian, writing after World War Two, maintains that all individuals are rational self-interested actors. Consensus historians agreed that the Cold War had room for only one ideology – American liberalism – captured succinctly in Daniel Bell’s well-known book title *The End of Ideology*.^{xvi} As Paul Rozen, wrote about his mentor, Hartz “wanted to use Locke as a symbol for a brand of political thought that could illuminate political reality.”^{xvii}

To Hartz, Locke’s philosophy accentuates human rationality. Supposedly, people behave in a way that is consistent with, or based on, reason or logic. Each individual has agency and choice. Her choice is dictated by reason. This, for classical liberalism, is human nature. This is not to say that everything is dependent on human action. Natural rights exist and are also inherent in human nature. But, natural rights are not contingent upon on human actions.^{xviii} These rights exist no matter what. A natural right is categorically different from a juridical or legal right enacted, implemented, and enforced by a government.

Taking into account human nature, society is the sum of all traits and qualities shared by its members. Rational actors act alone, though in concert. It is a sum rather than a community or a collective. A society, therefore, does not have its own identity.

Nonetheless, such a society, establishes a social contract that creates a government.^{xix} Were it not for this contract, a government would not exist.^{xx} The government is an artificial entity built to protect both natural rights and the legal rights that sustain the state and protect its citizens.

All individuals first and foremost are concerned about their own advantage and well-being.^{xxi} But to accommodate everyone and to provide security, each citizen had to surrender some of her liberty. How much liberty must be lost to maintain an orderly civil society? All people must be free to pursue whatever they like so long as they do not cross the line, harming another person or stopping her from

pursuing what she prefers. Citizens relinquish some freedom, in other words, granting this artificial state authority to enforce their legal rights, in lieu of securing a night watchman. On duty, the state umpires all conflicts. Constitutional constraints, natural rights, and legal rights dictate what constitutes interference. The government, however, must be careful not to draw too heavy of lines or the people might reassert their freedom, toppling it.

With all citizens acting alone, but in concert and pursuing their own preferences without interfering with one another, a well-ordered society arises. When this society is highly civilized, an invisible hand emerges, dictating economic relations. Classical liberalism believes that people pursuing their own self-interests have high moral character. Further, a whole society of people with such high moral character needs no state regulation. No night watchman or umpire is needed. Citizens voluntarily abide their legal rights and respect constitutional constraints.

Such a self-regulated society, however, is still not a community or a collective. It lacks a common good. Both society and the state have no identity of their own. Citizens in a classical liberal state and society remain the unit of analysis, not the collective, nor the community. Each individual is an abstraction. Only after recognizing the individual unit first can we envision how a group of individuals comes together, and then these groups merge, forming this river of a civil society.

What Locke, whom Hartz considered the chief architects of classical liberalism in the American liberal tradition, outlined is called a negative state. Constitutional constraints, legal rights or a night watchman guards the periphery, ensuring that no one person harms another.^{xxii} Each individual is autonomous. The concept of negative liberty recognizes the difference between internal and external constraints whereas positive liberty does not. As Isaiah Berlin described it, negative liberty embodies the idea of being free *from* constraints.^{xxiii}

TRADITION TWO

For Goodness Sake

Intellectual historians balked at Hartz's characterization of the American liberal tradition. The new wave of social historians, who began populating the academy in the 1960s, saw Hartz as emblematic of "consensus" history, and all that was wrong with it.^{xxiv} This political scientist, writing during the McCarthy era, they maintained, rendered a "distorted" view of political history given his emphasis on American exceptionalism. It was intellectual historians steeped in either social history or the history of ideas who brought what I call the second tradition of American political thought into political science. Historians, such as Gordon Wood and J. G. A. Pocock, did so via the term

republicanism. During the creation of the early American Republic, before capitalism emerged in the 1830s, they argued that David Hume, Montesquieu and Machiavelli influenced the framers.^{xxv} Hume, a Scottish enlightenment follower of Jean Jacques Rousseau, inculcated a type of republicanism that emphasized the public good rather than individual self-interest. Meanwhile, the founders' fear of corruption planted an Americanized version of virtue in the Constitution and helped justify westward expansion.^{xxvi}

For historians, time bound the republican roots buried in American history. Unlike political scientists, few historians stuffed, boxed, and wrapped more than a decade or two into any one tradition.^{xxvii} Introducing the public good into an otherwise individualistic perspective in American politics helped political scientists create a new field – American political development -- around the refutation of the explanation for the absence of a nation-state. Influenced by Walter Dean Burnham's work on the two party system as well as the theory of Max Weber, Theda Skocpol, Stephen Skowronek, and Karen Orren, among others, refuted Hartz's thesis that the absence of feudalism explains the absence of socialism or at least a strong social welfare state in the United States.^{xxviii} Just after social historians turned their back on institutions, they brought back in the "American state." In the 1980s, they revived it as a term worthy of study, following Wood and Pocock who had put the United States in comparative context in the 1960s and 1970s.^{xxix}

Students of American political development questioned why the United States lacked the type of vigorous social welfare state found in Germany, France or the Netherlands that is both derived from, and fosters a close knit socio-economic, political community after World War Two.^{xxx} The social welfare state these students of American political development hankered after was the gold standard, or the Scandinavian social welfare state.^{xxxi} Is there any public good buried in policy programs in the United States? A social welfare state that uses its strength to create public programs that would help and encourage her to participate more fully in the community, or at least participate minimally as a client of social services. As the oft-cited T. H. Marshall said, the strong social welfare state provides political, economic, and *universal social rights*.^{xxxii} Extending universal social rights requires a mixed economy rather than a free market.^{xxxiii}

Historians debate whether it is the Scottish enlightenment or Machiavelli's idea of virtue that influenced the creation of the American state and President Andrew Jackson's frontier state.^{xxxiv} I suggest, however, that students of American political development, policy history, and theory tacitly rely on the assumptions underlying Rousseau, who is credited with creating a social contract that

depends on a positive state that advances universal social rights. This more full-bodied account of the state, or lack there of, composes the basis of the second tradition in American political thought.^{xxxv}

Rousseau provides the counterfactual -- the road not taken in path dependency literature - more fully than the historians tracing how Machiavelli or the Scottish enlightenment influenced specific moments in American history.^{xxxvi} What good is it to collect your civil liberties if you're out on the street, uneducated, or unable to take care of yourself? The state has a responsibility to intervene. Positive liberty is best characterized as helping a citizen have the freedom *to do* something. The night watchman does not just prohibit, he helps people by stocking them with the goods and services they need. A person cannot be free unless he or she is healthy. Therefore, the state should provide health care. Traditional demands for universal health care, for instance, rest on a positive conception of liberty. Eradicating an individual's internal constraints is invasive. External constraints do not penetrate society as deeply as internal constraints do. With internal constraints the state tells a person what to do.

Legal and political history has shown how the greatest irony about individualism articulated by Alexis De Tocqueville is that pursuing freedom from external constraints accentuates the similarities rather than the differences among people. Negative liberty does not foster difference. Women who succeed at work, for instance, do so on male terms. They must act like white men since it is men who served as the model for the first unit of analysis setting the norms and standards that cannot be violated.^{xxxvii} The night watchman does not disturb the status quo. Lifting the barriers that women can enter the workplace does not mean that they will feminize it by changing its culture if all it means is being freed from external constraints. Internal constraints must be imposed as well.

But alleviating internal constraints as a positive state requires, students of political development knew well, is more intrusive and is in opposition to basic American political values. The dilemma associated with positive liberty is that it depends on what political theorist Nancy Hirschman describes as a Rousseauian trap or second-guessing who needs what.^{xxxviii} It is a politician or bureaucratic expert who determines the needs.

Beginning in the 1940s, the political foes of universal health care have consistently managed to undermine the debate by inflaming this American cultural fear about needs and experts.^{xxxix} Initially, groups like the American Medical Association could defeat health care legislation by calling a reformer socialist.^{xl} Conservative critics picked up on the idea that liberals want what the Europe left got; and they painted their penchant for the public good as part of a Rousseauian second tradition as a means of maintaining the stranglehold of the first tradition. To do so, they introduce notion of needs into the

debate, a notion antithetical to the American political value and belief structure. The 1993 conservative coalition against the Clinton health care reform was their last attempt. After discovering the gross political miscalculation they made in shutting Congress out of the legislative process, President Bill Clinton, the White House staff and the “reform riders” failed to gain the requisite popular support to pass his plan. The fifteen million dollar Harry and Louise television advertisement campaign orchestrated by the Health Insurance Association of America turned public opinion against it just when the President needed to “go public” to counteract his party’s own hostility to the plan.^{xli}

To determine needs there must be trust. Progressives, conservative critics claim, assume that people are, by nature, good. People can be saved from themselves. Benevolence reigns. Interpreting Rousseau from the standard or mainstream perspective, the Enlightenment showed how society had evolved, overturning Hobbes’ and Locke’s arguments about the state of nature.^{xlii} “Nature makes man happy and good,” Rousseau claims, “but society depraves him and makes him miserable.”^{xliii}

While society creates the general will or such a public good, it is the sovereign alone who dictates the political agenda. The sovereign knows what matters to society overall. And the sovereign knows how to protect the whole. As society develops and becomes more complex, it transforms into a civil society, legal institutions emerge, staffed by magistrates or experts, who manage the division of labor and private property that the laws address. During the heyday of the European social welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s experts became the embodiment of the modern day “sovereign.”

Society only degenerates according to Rousseau when everyone starts competing with one another all the while depending upon each other to fulfill their basic political, social, and economic needs. This creates a “double pressure” or a double squeeze that threatens everyone’s survival and freedom. Some citizens must therefore subordinate their needs to other citizens to ensure that society and the state do not collapse.

Dependent upon a sovereign, and later impartial social welfare state experts who anticipate every citizen’s needs, balancing out one against another on the basis of merit, Rousseau’s state must be run with benevolence. Benevolence, however, “smacks of paternalism.” It is constraining. Most of all, benevolence is easily described by opponents of a strong social welfare state as anti-American because it goes against the grain of our notion of self-reliance. This type of civil society and state does not free us of the “second guessing” that undermines the American can-do pragmatic spirit.^{xliv} Rhetorically associating reform, such as health care, with the second tradition helps the G.O.P., moderate Democrats,

and the healthcare industry defeat attempts to create stronger social welfare programs in the United States.

THE THIRD TRADITION

Like the end of an action film, the Locke-Rousseau binary manifests itself in historiography and studies in American political development as *mano a mano* or Hartz vs. Wood or the first and second traditions in American political thought. This paper argues that neither tradition leaves room for what I call a *democratic progressive* perspective of the individual, state, and society. There is a “recurring theme” in American history that has been “challenging hierarchies, reasoning from the logic of the principle ‘one citizen, one vote’” writes intellectual historian James Kloppenberg “to the conclusion that economic power should not extend into social and political power . . . He suggests these battles about “disagreement, deliberation, and provisional compromises” . . . “never end. . . .”^{xlvi}

The 2008 election showed how Obama tapped into this third tradition in American political thought that shows how people can count on one another. This tradition constitutes a departure from mainstream political science, social and intellectual history. And it represents a rupture in the right-left continuum in campaign rhetoric in the United States. This paper concurs with Kloppenberg that “. . . it is not the sober-minded Hartz but the democratic ‘seer’ [Walt] Whitman who appears the more reliable guide to and the shrewder analyst of American culture.” It accepts Whitman’s “indomitable optimism.” And it agrees with Kloppenberg that “for the sake of historical accuracy as well as democratic renewal . . .” the grassroots interpretation of American history should not be dismissed as “un-American” and discounted.^{xlvi}

Yet, Kloppenberg’s argument about democratic renewal and the significance of grassroots reform in American history does not go far enough. This intellectual historian’s small “d” democratic bottom-up approach does not capture the American spirit or ethic of reciprocity. Couched between the classic liberal tradition and the communitarian tradition, Obama’s democratic progressive tradition straddles the middle. This middle position, however, should not be confused with mixing black and white to create grey matter. It is not a politics of consensus. It is neither liberal nor conservative -- it defies left-right categorization. For Obama it is the interdependence of this multitude in its impact on American democracy that represents the third tradition.^{xlvii} American citizens are all tied up together. In a nation that rewards autonomy and independence as no other wealthy nation does, Obama underscores the interdependence or interconnectedness of the individual, the state, and society. This represents a philosophical tradition in the United States embodied by one of the first philosophers to reject

metaphysics or the Cartesian duality – that is Spinoza, but rather than focusing on him today, this paper concentrates more on the twentieth century iterations of his work by Dewey and Alinsky.

In addition to rejecting metaphysics, this third interpretation of the individual, the state, and society, is based upon how American thinkers Dewey and activist Alinsky took into account individual responsibility and rewarded initiative and self-reliance as well as mutual reliance. They distrusted a government motivated by benevolence. They did not believe any one person can or should *care* for another.^{xlviii} Nor did they have faith in an objective truth.^{xlix} To them, neutral experts within national state institutions cannot govern impartially. The public interest cannot be peeled apart from individual self-interest.

Seeing truth as socially constructed, Dewey, and Alinsky place their power in the people. There are no absolute truths. No natural laws. No invisible hands guiding the economy. People can discover what is in their self-interest without the help of experts. But it is an interdependent group of people, a multitude that searches and achieves this enlightened self-interest.

Adapting to their environment, individuals evolve and can become accepting and enlightened, making them all the more open and tolerant to their peers within a collective that strives for the same thing. To come together, they must support, but not judge one another. The collective helps a dynamic of citizens, society, and the state survive, and can even make it flourish.

Berlin's dichotomy of negative and positive freedom has no place in this environment. Freedom is not found "from" the state. The state is no umpire who protects only our civil liberties, and for the rest leaves its citizens alone. Nor is freedom gained by "doing" or "getting something," such as universal health care that strong European social welfare states provide. Freedom must be secured *through* the state.

The state must facilitate and promote the freedom of both the individual *and* society. "The state retains its usefulness" explains philosopher Warren Montage, only as long people are able through "collective existence to do and think more than they could alone."¹ "At its most elemental level," similarly stated Obama, "we understand our liberty in a negative sense. As a general rule we believe in the right to be left alone . . . But we understand liberty in a more positive sense as well, in the idea of opportunity and a subsidiary of values that help us realize our opportunity – all those homespun values Benjamin Franklin first popularized . . . [that] express a broader confidence that so long as individual men and women are free to pursue their own interests, society as a whole will prosper."^{li}

There are five elements within Obama's campaign rhetoric indicating that his thought arises from this third tradition. First, Obama believes the legitimacy behind reform should well from the ground up, outside the state. While state actors control the legislative process, the power for the ideas must come from the people. Second, Obama promotes equality, not freedom or liberty first. Third, he believes in the politics of difference, not identity. Fourth, a reform package must include an interdependent ethic, not morality based on altruism or benevolence. And finally, Obama advocates pro-universalizing anti-universalism or pooling. He does not believe in universal mandates, which is to say he eschews needs-based reform dictated or governed by experts. Obama's position on health care throughout the campaign demonstrated this.

American Values Obama Style

1. "Organizing America"

Like most community organizers, Obama believes that power and strength come from the people below. The less dead weight, the lighter the pile, the more effective a reform. Pushed over the edge by the popular vote and electors for his 2008 victory, Obama credited "the millions of Americans who volunteered, and organized, and proved that, more than two centuries later, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people has not perished from this Earth." Every person carries, equal weight since she has an equal say and must have an equal chance. Obama does not confuse equality with autonomy.

Obama differs greatly from the public interest progressives at the turn of the century. The paternalism, the intolerance, and the arrogance, Dewey saw as stemming from eugenics and white Anglo-Saxon Protestant supremacy underlying Americanization during the Progressive era.^{lii} Obama similarly sees result from the American attempt at democratization in the Middle East. Obama not only believes in real equality of opportunity, but he also insists on foreign and domestic policies that promote tolerance both abroad and at home.

Being tied together does not mean that this mass constitutes an organic whole. Nor does advancing tolerance mean that there is no mass. The second fundamental principle that Obama adopts is that while a group of reformed-minded citizens should step forward, it should be a group not imbued with its own identity. For Obama, a group constitutes a collective, not a community. He honors the American tradition of having no common nationality, racial or ethnic identity, or religion. Presenting

his own experience as evidence of his conviction Obama said, “I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue scattered across three continents.”^{liii}

The absence of a community for Obama means that Americans compose a collectivity that is better described as a compilation of individuals pulling together in pursuit of a common goal: the group is defined by its individual members. “I will value your contribution to this country and I will do what I can to encourage it,” Obama explains, “because I understand that how well you do is inextricably linked to how well America does.”^{liv}

The definition comes from the fact that each and every person retains his or her individuality. It’s not that the group per se has its own personality. There is no American national identity.^{lv} Obama would have dismissed the turn of the century public interest progressives’ notion of eugenics for what it was – the creation of normalcy and transforming the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity as the American identity.^{lvi} The power of a collective rests in the people, its members, not the group identity per se or any constant or un-evolving ideology, nationality or ethnicity. Like Dewey, Obama emphasizes tolerance. We all have “all have different stories and reasons.”^{lvii}

The philosophy that best captures Obama’s type of community organizing is pragmatism. A pragmatism best described as informed by Spinoza, not Locke or Rousseau. Indeed, sociologists in the Chicago School of Pragmatism trained Saul Alinsky, the most prominent community organizer, and the leader Obama studied and cited most influential in his days as an organizer in Chicago.^{lviii} It was no less than Dewey and William James, the fathers of American pragmatism, who held great sway over these University of Chicago sociologists.

Headed by Albion Small, the Chicago School of Pragmatism represented a “philosophical methodology built upon an awareness of the emergent nature of reality, wherein experience was viewed as a laboratory where theories and practices were continually experimented with and their validities tested.”^{lix} Such a perspective on “truth” and “knowledge” made Dewey a critic of knowledge “for its own sake.” Knowledge, an asset, must be put to good use.^{lx}

Alinsky’s type of community organizing incorporated this perspective from pragmatism. He followed no rigid principles. There was no theory for theory’s sake. Instead, Alinsky argued that community organizing must be idealistic *and* realistic at the same time. Decades earlier, James described Dewey’s leadership the same way. Dewey believed in “real thought and a real school.”^{lxi} “Truth and meaning were socially constructed concepts emerging within communal inquiry,” as Lawrence Engle explains in an article about the close ties between Alinsky and the Chicago School of

Pragmatism. Pragmatism “in and of itself was continually subject to the self-corrective processes of democratic life.”^{lxii}

Action shaped ideas. For this reason, pragmatists rejected religious fundamentalism with its belief in faith and strict adherence to abstract ideals. Some pragmatists even went so far as to equate “parochial evangelism” with pure science. Both fundamentalism and science suffered from being too detached from reality. They were also rigid and static.^{lxiii}

Given this interpretation about truth and knowledge as well as action and ideas, Dewey and the pragmatists could be called critical theorists. Community organizers, Alinsky insisted, should never abide by principles considered iron-clad. Organizers could not fixate on an ideology for themselves nor understand the ideology that governs the state and society as fixed. They should critically analyze all ideologies. They should view ideologies less as principles and more as setting norms designed within a specific context that reflects a particular constellation of power.

Dewey and Alinsky exercised subjective causal analysis.^{lxiv} To them, the state, harboring its specific principles, should recognize the principles for what they really are – norms. Norms, moreover, must be placed in context. They reflect the environment.

The American environment, the American culture, American beliefs and principles, shaped norms. They fostered reform. To Alinsky, American political culture did not contain any “seeds for revolution,” only reform. Obama agrees with Alinsky’s analysis that the chance of a revolution ever occurring in the United States is remote. Reform, home spun reform, represents the only way of achieving change in the United States.

Alinsky’s response to the radicals who sought revolutionary change in the 1960s was telling. He thought these radicals had it all wrong – it was wrong to use violence, wrong to insist on Black power, and wrong to abandon electoral politics. Real change must be instilled from within, not without, the American political system. Real, lasting change should bolster, build, and expand electoral participation. “When you start telling me you can't have any revolutionary changes by working within our structured institutions, that you've got to get rid of the whole society, tear it down, burn it down or something-then from where I sit this is just political LSD.”^{lxv}

Violence, particularly on behalf of black power, would result in state repression that could kill the movement. “Now the society's method of dealing with this,” Alinsky said, “will be repressive.” This type of repression, however, would be destructive. Alinsky warned the radicals that repression creates polarization that alienates everyone, and that ultimately defeats the activists and their cause. “There's a

difference between just being an ethnic group seeking power to participate as normal individuals in an ongoing society, and it's another thing when an ethnic group is also radical in its politics and begins to have revolutionary overtones. It means it doesn't want just to participate in that society; it's looking for radical change in that society.”^{lxvi} The youth should expand the electorate. They must have faith that electoral politics can lead to change.

To Alinsky, electoral participation cures political alienation. Enjoying his greatest success in the thirties and forties, Alinsky insisted that the poor must get involved in politics, and by their very involvement, they would see what power they held and would therefore fight for reform. Political participation begets more political participation. This, to him, was community organizing. Indeed, one of Alinsky's “iron rules” was “never do for others what they can do for themselves!” He empowered people.^{lxvii}

Obama expresses a similar conception of efficacy and empowerment. The person, the body, the corporeality, is not an end in herself. She is not the unit of analysis. Obama dismisses individualism because of these beliefs. Rather, he advances individuality. Each person must pursue her full potential. This means the individual is the subject of analysis, though within the context of the collective.

Obama crosses the liberal/community divide by recognizing politics as power and making it relational. He rejects the individualism underlying classical liberalism disputing the idea that individual autonomy is either natural or preferable. It isn't. It's cold out there. Obama realizes that alone, a person lacks power. People help each other to gain power. It is a relationship. Or as he relays, “No person is an island.”^{lxviii}

To thrive, the state and society must encourage its citizens to reach for their potential. Freedom means more than fulfilling our physical needs for existence. It requires individual accomplishment and fulfillment that society acknowledges and applauds. Each person must know what they want, and pursue it. They are emboldened and empowered. As Obama maintains, “Americans don't want a hand out, they just want a real chance to go to college...”^{lxix} “We welcome success stories here in America. We admire those who have climbed to the top of the ladder. We just need to be sure that the ladder doesn't get taken away from the rest of us. We want a system based on fairness - not special favors.”^{lxx}

The power necessary for “change” emanates from both its individual members, and the collective weight of these members. Unlike a community, a collective must find and develop its principles on the basis of consensus. The principles created by such a consensus are not fixed. Like the pragmatists, action must be informed by theory and theory informed by action. Democratic progressivism represents

an ongoing, perpetually evolving experiment. Community organizers must be flexible and adapt to each situation. Society is “in a never ending process of flux.” It is in “an unending competition and conflict of interests”^{lxxi} A society, and any collective within it, has a fluid identity. Identities are ever-changing. Change was the only constant Alinsky and the pragmatists recognized. To Obama, the “genius of this nation” is that “America can change.”^{lxxii}

Obama does not prefer “the dream to reality.” He is a “can-do man.” Obama disdains reformers “who preferred the dream to the reality, impotence to compromise.”^{lxxiii} Obama, like Alinsky and the pragmatists, holds little regard for following principles at the expense of action. He holds contempt for reformers who are painted into corners by their principles.^{lxxiv} Obama left community organizing because he wanted more of a “long term vision” that this type of activism could not provide. He had a greater chance of being less marginal as a mainstream politician than a community organizer, though knowing that being an effective leader meant learning the art of compromise.^{lxxv}

2. Equality, not Freedom or Liberty First

This paper argues that power within equality necessary for interdependence is a prerequisite for promoting American freedom. It’s not the balance of freedom and equality of opportunity that matters. Democratic progressives should reemphasize the power of the American people. They should return to their radical roots by having faith in the demos, the multitude.^{lxxvi} The same nation that made the rule of law sacrosanct, after all, gave juries, not elected representatives, judges or bureaucratic experts, the power to deliberate and decide their peers’ fate. But to rekindle this radicalism – we must return to the pre-capitalist frame of mind that gave birth to these eighteenth century ideals – popular sovereignty. Power must be returned to the people, and drawn by the state. The people, not the market, should offer the state its legitimacy and authority. Politics dictate markets. Markets should not dictate politics.^{lxxvii} Then, only *through* the state can the people have equality and find freedom.

For five decades the New Deal coalition governed. “Generations of Americans took it as an act of faith that Republicans represented the moneyed elites while Democrats stood up for the little guy.”^{lxxviii} This relationship ended in 1980. Today, it stands in tatters. Where the Democrats have made gains is among upper-middle-class voters. The Democrats’ decision in the early 1990s to move away from redistributive tax-and-spend economics – brought them upper-income professional voters. Yet, many Democrats refused to admit that the rupture between them and the working class has an economic

basis. Obama, however, does. He believes that the Democrats should no longer miscast their problems by associating with the working class when they should be consorting with the middle class.

The politics of blame are instructive. Obama does not blame Bush for the stagnant incomes of the working class and the middle class. Income growth for most families started slowing in the 1970s.^{lxxix} Obama does, however, blame Bush for policies that exacerbated income inequality. Obama believes that over the last twenty years, the rich have been getting much richer before taxes, their tax rates have also been falling far faster than the rates of any other income group.

At a time when income inequality is growing sharper, the Bush tax cuts gave the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans a tax cut that was twice as large as the middle class. At a time when Americans are working harder than ever, we are taxing income from work at nearly twice the level that we're taxing gains for investors. Talk about this in polite company, and sooner or later you'll get accused of waging class warfare. As if it's distasteful to point out that some CEOs make more in ten minutes than a worker makes in ten months. Or, as my friend Warren Buffet put it to me - "If there's class warfare going on in America, then my class is winning."^{lxxx}

The Republicans have packaged tax cuts on high earners with more modest middle-class tax cuts and then maneuvered the Democrats into an unsinkable choice: for tax cuts or against them?^{lxxxi} To him, the regressive tax structure must be changed. Obama argues that the bottom 80 percent of the population or households making 118,000 dollars or less receive a 900 dollar savings.^{lxxxii}

With the Republican trickle-down supply side economics being supplemented by the Democrats fiscal responsibility, income inequality crept back into the nation's economy. Now, many economists suggest that income inequality threatens to destroy the United States. Everyone from Republican operatives such as David Frum to finance entrepreneur Warren Buffet insist that the greater disparities between the rich and the poor, and the declining income of the middle class is "transforming American society," for the worse.^{lxxxiii} Frum warns fellow Republicans that "the trend to inequality is real, it is large and it is transforming American society and the American electoral map."^{lxxxiv}

Obama's believes in income redistribution given these inequalities.^{lxxxv} Convincing the public will be no easy task. The United States is the only wealthy industrialized nation in which less than half of OECD respondents consider it "the responsibility of governments to reduce inequalities."^{lxxxvi} What makes Obama's suggestion unique is that he's not proposing that a new policy or program redistribute wealth. Nor is he advocating the old liberal solution of re-regulation after a period of deregulation. Obama relies on an old one – the existing American tax policy. In his campaign rhetoric, Obama plans on making the tax structure progressive, arguing that as it became regressive it created an unfair "middle class squeeze."

Where did the benefits go? They flowed to a very small number of workers at the very top step of the income distribution ladder.^{lxxxvii} Looking back 15 years, Rubin told a reporter, "The distributional issues are obviously more serious now."^{lxxxviii} In 2008, income inequality constitutes a bigger problem than economic growth. And while fiscal discipline seems necessary, it is not sufficient.^{lxxxix} "The economy has changed in the last 15 years, and our understanding of economic policy has changed as well . . . What was appropriate in 1993 is no longer appropriate."^{xc}

Only now in the twenty-first century is the American economy ending what historian Sean Wilentz calls the Age of Reagan. This age had been open to more market forces. Also, most industries enjoyed deregulation, and the wealthy profited from income tax cuts. Wilentz, and many economic historians, credit this age with ending stagflation, minimizing the impact and the frequency of recessions, and propelling growth, more than existed in the more regulated economies of Europe. But, trickle down economics failed to deliver much to either the working class or the middle class.

To Obama, not only income tax, but the tax structure in the workplace contributed greatly to income inequality. The payroll tax takes the largest chunk out of an average family's tax bill.^{xc} As the federal government reduced income taxes over the last few decades, it allowed the payroll tax, which finances Social Security and Medicare, to creep up. The payroll tax accounts for a large part of how the bottom 80 percent of earners have not fallen as much as rates for the affluent. "That's essentially a major part of our economic plan."^{xcii} Since Social Security was founded, its benefits have been based on the amount of payroll taxes that an individual worker paid over his or her lifetime. The system is progressive, in that the rich contribute more than the poor and do not get out. Obama vowed to make the tax structure progressive.^{xciii}

The Republicans view this progressive tax structure with alarm. Of the tax on the wealthy, Holtz-Eakin, McCain's economic advisor said "It's hard not to look at that figure and be a little stunned." "As a political matter," he argued, "it reveals a lack of judgment." A program with almost unrivaled political support, he added, could turn into yet another government transfer program. The Republicans believe such a redistributive program creates dependence and would stifle American inventiveness.^{xciv}

Obama disagrees. He believes a progressive tax policy could spark technological innovation, and increase efficiency, and be more equitable. He adopts Warren Buffet's argument that equity be achieved "on the back end" so as not to impede "efficiency." "If you talk to Warren, he'll tell you his

preference is not to meddle in the economy at all -- let the market work, however way it's going to work, and then just tax the heck out of people at the end and just redistribute it.” Back end taxes do not stifle innovation and technological advancements that stimulate the economy.^{xcv}

Economically, Obama uses the tax code to spread the bounty from the market-based American economy to a far wider group of families. Politically, he drives a wedge through the great Reagan tax gambit. Tax cuts constitute the heart of Obama’s market-oriented redistributionist philosophy. By giving people funds to spend as they see fit, tax cuts relax the middle-class squeeze.^{xcvi}

But rather than going this redistributive route, the Obama administration prioritized health care over all but the economic stimulus package. Most telling, Obama chose former Clinton White House aide, and Illinois Congressman, Rahm Emanuel, as his Chief of Staff and the point person for all legislative reform. Emanuel, and all the White House actions since the economic stimulus package passed show that they have vested almost exclusively in the battle for health care rather than any major redistributive tax reform. A six-person team has worked tirelessly facilitating a health care compromise that passes. The White House regards this as the centerpiece of its reform agenda, and a determinant of whether the Democrats increase or maintain their majority for the mid-term congressional elections as well as pass the other two key items on Obama’s reform agenda – climate control and financial regulation.^{xcvii}

Not only has all other legislation taken a back seat, but Obama also embarked upon a less daring legislative reform agenda, deciding to risk disappointing the captured left, organized labor, in favor of securing the middle. Rather than fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act giving organized labor the capacity to increase its membership and further mobilize the left, the Obama administration puts its clout behind the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act that faced less political resistance.^{xcviii} Obama did not waver in his position on organized labor, though the White House denies this, indicating its support for both pieces of labor legislation.^{xcix} The stimulus package and the stress test for the banks rather than nationalization represent the Obama economic policy plan thus far, though a comprehensive financial regulation plan could follow the health care battle.

3. Difference, Not Identity Politics

For Obama and democratic progressives, taking initiative and self-reliance still count. Initiative sparks more initiative. He proposes, for instance, policies that harness “the ingenuity of farmers, and

scientists, and entrepreneurs to free this nation from the tyranny of oil once and for all.”^c It sometimes takes the initiative of only one person to clear a path out of the wilderness. Everyone is interrelated and interdependent, often facing the very same limitations in life. Obama believes in relational power. He views Americans as an interdependent mass. We are bound together. Obama refers to this as interconnectedness.^{ci} This term is overarching as he speaks of the “interconnected world of this new century” in terms of the economy, the environment, war, and globalism, among other issues.^{cii}

Obama emphasizes relationality with the state and society, but he does not see it built on benevolence. It is not that people care for each other. Unlike most European nation-states, Americans do not have a community united by a common religion or a national heritage. Rather, they take care of one another as Dewey argues because it increases their own chances of survivability. Two heads are smarter than one. During a winter storm, two bodies pressed together are warmer than one.^{ciii}

Being tied together does not mean that this mass constitutes an organic whole. Nor does advancing tolerance mean that there is no mass. The second fundamental principle that Obama adopts is that while a group of reformed-minded citizens should step forward, it should be a group not imbued with its own identity. For Obama, a group constitutes a collective, not a community. He honors the American tradition of having no common nationality, racial or ethnic identity, or religion. Presenting his own experience as evidence of his conviction Obama said “I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue scattered across three continents.”^{civ}

The absence of a community for Obama means that Americans compose a collectivity that is better described as a compilation of individuals pulling together in pursuit of a common goal. The group is defined by its individual members. “I will value your contribution to this country and I will do what I can to encourage it,” Obama explains, “because I understand that how well you do is inextricably linked to how well America does.”^{cv}

The definition comes from the fact that each and every person retains his or her individuality. It’s not that the group per se has its own personality. There is no American national identity. Obama would have dismissed the turn of the century public interest progressives’ notion of eugenics and Americanization for what it was – the creation of normalcy and transforming the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity as the American identity.^{cvi} The power of a collective rests in the people, its members, not the group identity per se or any constant or un-evolving ideology, nationality or ethnicity. Obama emphasizes tolerance. We all have “all have different stories and reasons.”^{cvi}

The power necessary for “change” emanates from both its individual members, and the collective weight of these members. Unlike a community, a collective must find and develop its principles on the basis of consensus. The principles created by such a consensus are not fixed. Like the pragmatists, action must be informed by theory and theory informed by action. Democratic progressivism represents an ongoing, perpetually evolving experiment. Community organizers must be flexible and adapt to each situation. Society is “in a never ending process of flux.” It is in “an unending competition and conflict of interests”^{cvi} A society, and any collective within it, has a fluid identity. Identities are ever-changing. Change was the only constant Alinsky and the pragmatists recognized. To Obama, the “genius of this nation” is that “America can change.”^{cix}

Contrary to allegations made by some of his African-American critics – Obama does not promote the theory of whiteness. Speaking at the same 2004 convention, Al Sharpton argues that racial reconciliation should involve reparations. For Sharpton as well as well as Cornel West among others, race is paramount. They equate racial transcendence with an erasure of some of centuries’ injustices committed against African-Americans. What they deemphasize, however, is how Obama’s position echoes that of W. E. B. Dubois dynamic -- his philosophical and psychological “double consciousness.” Influenced by both the American transcendentalists and existentialists of what it is to be African *and* American, Dubois underscored the “twoness” of racial discourse “. . . two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body . . .”^{cx} Obama magnifies this consciousness. It is not just a doubling, but possibly a tripling (gender), a quadrupling (sexuality), and/or a quintupling (disability). Simply put, he accentuates the fluidity and multiplicity of our identity and the uniqueness of our experience. What Obama promotes is individuality – not identity. And the term individuality captures the distinctiveness of all people – their being and their existence or experience, their mind and their body. Obama remains unburdened by binaries or a Cartesian dualism. And like Dewey, Obama offers hope by promoting cooperation or harmony that stems from what some scholars call the “utilization of difference.”^{cx} No ranking one group of people primary, secondary, or tertiary -- it’s the relationship or the dynamic between the different individuals within the parties that matters.

The criticism of African-American activists, public intellectuals, and academics who claim that transcending race reifies “ideologies of innocence and positive self-presentation,” or constitutes an “erasure of race,” cannot be substantiated by his campaign speeches or his Senate record.^{cxii} Obama does not make whiteness the starting and ending point. Whiteness is not “normal.” Nor does he

champion the middle class – as a class. To be sure, Obama starts from the center, which in part accounts for his electoral success as the first African-American president. He seeks reform rather than revolutionary change. But Obama’s emphasis on fluidity and multiple identities creates a standardless standard – or no standard.^{cxiii}

Obama does not want a colorblind country to “jump off,” but rather a colorful one that brings new hope to American democracy. Like his second memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama aptly titled his most complex and controversial speech on race so that it captured the subtlety of his dynamic argument – a “*More Perfect Union*.” Obama takes in equal measure -- the past and the future – the explanation and the solution – the horror and the hope – the individual, the group as well as the individual within the group. It’s a dynamic or kinetic or ever-changing, relational conception of American politics.

Unlike the sixties radicals, Obama heard Alinsky and unwittingly recognizes the challenge of building a collective that promotes the individual’s sense of efficacy and empowerment. “Belief that our destiny will not be written for us, but by us”^{cxiv} Not only does Obama believe in working within the American political and economic system, and not singling out black power, but he fought for universal reforms that are not race or gender specific. Obama places great faith in the individual, and what makes this person unique. Being part of a collective in a community organizing effort or a political campaign, rather than a composite, means that each member retains what makes him or her unique.

Obama embraces difference. He transcends race.^{cxv} We may have “different stories,” Obama says, “but we hold common hopes”^{cxvi} He rejects individualism and embraces individuality as Dewey did.^{cxvii} In the American context this has great meaning. To accept and to be accepted the individuality of each group member everyone in the group must practice tolerance. While Obama’s perspective has been classified as a grass-roots organizers’ view of power and politics, this book shows that his worldview goes farther given his belief in difference and tolerance, a belief system that fosters individuality.^{cxviii}

Obama goes beyond Alinsky and other community organizers in that he recognizes how the individual operates within a group dynamic. Obama defines the relationship in terms of the individual, society, and the state, not just the individual versus the establishment. He makes it dynamic. By so doing, he promotes difference and tolerance more than Alinsky and most community organizers who

privilege identity, power, and empowerment. He also believed in long term vision – and like Dewey and Arendt made self-interest an ideal, not an immediate obtainable concrete goal.^{cxix}

Recognizing difference means that no one can dictate another's needs, no matter how well intentioned. The people must decide for themselves. Obama rejects identity politics, and he conflates individuals and groups so as to give them each agency – but he never lets anyone or any group off the hook. “He links the suffering of others to his own fate,” explains rhetorician David Frank, “displaying a rhetorical model of empathy necessary for transformation.” In his 2004 convention speech Obama turns all identity groups into a composite -- “There is not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America.” Obama unites all Americans because he “*nests* the traumas of slavery and racism with those suffered by American workers lacking a living wage and affordable health care, the bigotry 571-2 faced by gays and Arab Americans, and an America in the wake of 9/11.”^{cxx}

4. No Benevolent Societies

Time crowned Alinsky "a prophet of power to the people" in the 1930s. Alinsky detested the middle class. He disdained what he called the “bourgeoisification” of the United States. He threw his support behind the poor and the working class, believing they understood their self-interest and would fight for change. Three critical, powerful institutions -- the Catholic Church, local party machine politics, and organized labor – stood behind them as well.^{cxxi}

Obama breaks this belief. He does not put his faith the poor and the working class. Obama turned away from the possibility that the poor or working class could be a vehicle for change. The poor are too edgy, too African-American, too Latino/a, or too female for a liberal African-American reformer for an African-American liberal politician to pursue. Deindustrialization and globalism all but destroyed organized labor, as well as the traditional white American working class.

Obama joins Dewey in selecting the middle class as his engine for “change.”^{cxxii} Although the middle class is not championed, aided, or rescued by any institutions as the working class was in the 1930s and 1940s, it is in itself an American institution. The middle class is a cultural institution, an icon. It represents not just an acceptable catalyst for change – but one that cannot, by definition, face opposition within the mainstream political culture. Almost all faiths and political parties cannot condemn the middle class, the cultural bedrock of American values and beliefs. To attack the middle class is to criticize the United States of America, and all it stands for.

To be sure, Obama's middle class differs from Alinsky's middle class that emerged before and after World War II. The baby boom generation pledges its support for the greening of America, information technology, high tech manufacturing, state-sponsored health care, and middle class subsidies for higher education. They do not quarrel with the Republicans' characterization of them as the "latte-drinking liberal elite." The middle class coalition behind Obama's plan for change consists of a coalition of an upwardly mobile middle class. They are the educated, upper-income liberals, African-Americans, and the youth.^{cxxiii} Doubling the Party's advantage among the young since Bush's 2004 election, 60 percent of voters below thirty identify more strongly with Democrats than Republicans.^{cxxiv} The new demographic trend of people of color and educated professionals working in post-industrial jobs is expanding far faster than the white working class. This further bolsters the Democrats.^{cxxv}

Middle Class Sensibilities Too

Obama's three domestic campaign priorities – the environment, health care, and higher education – reflect middle class sensibilities. Founded and run by middle class reformers, the environmental movement has long lacked the working class' backing, particularly, organized labor, which fears limits on the old manufacturing sector will cost their members jobs. Meanwhile, the poor lack the luxury to worry about clean air and water. Food, housing, employment, and or their subsistence came first. Only in the last ten to fifteen years has an environmental justice movement sprung up as large corporations have been caught putting a disproportionate number of plants and waste in poor neighborhoods. Reforming health care also constitutes a middle class concern. The poor can be treated in emergency rooms. Finally, Obama concentrates on making higher education more affordable for the middle class. The poor and the working class qualify for need-based scholarships.

Like old-fashioned progressives from the turn of the century, Obama is a middle class reformer. The middle class is legitimate, it has a sense of efficacy that works well with electoral politics, and it is the accepted by all. Obama counts on the middle class instead of the poor or the working class to recognize their own self-interest.

Yet, it is not that Obama is calculating, callous or cold, but that the middle class represents the most viable vehicle for change. Promoting self-interest among the middle class is easier than doing it with the poor. "Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well."^{cxxvi} To be true to oneself helps one become true to thy neighbor. This means first, one must be true to thyself, which is to say one must find a sense of efficacy or even entitlement as a means of discovering self-interest.

Poverty is problematic in that poor people lack a sense of efficacy that defines the middle class. The middle class now has that capacity for change. But this does not mean that Obama believes in public interest progressivism. Rather, he takes Alinsky's democratic progressivism ideas and applies them to the middle class. He finds a different vehicle, though the ideas for change remain the same. Put differently, the middle class gains will not be contained to the middle class. This class represents Obama's catalyst for change. The changes, themselves will benefit all. That is, all but the wealthy in American society.

Obama's argument is not just about efficacy. Alinsky taught the poor about efficacy to extinguish their apathy. To Obama, the poor lack the openness he seeks. The middle class is less stultifying than the poor and the working class. He does not resent American bourgeoisification as Alinsky did. Rather, Obama imparts a fresh view of the middle class that reflects his Spinozist roots. To Obama, the middle class can be open, expansive, and tolerant. It accepts difference and diversity. Bestowed with more openness, he relies on the middle class instead of the poor or the working class to recognize better their own self-interest.

Obama sees self-interest as transformative. To be sure, Alinsky also viewed self-interest as life-altering. But "Alinsky's focus on self-interest—which was shrewd" provided "too narrow a conception of what motivates people—into a dynamic conception of the central relationships, core values, desire for dignity and hope that motivate people."^{cxvii} Obama's notion of self-interest is more akin to that of Spinoza and a more updated philosophical version articulated by Hannah Arendt.^{cxviii}

What is more, Obama does not accept an egalitarian perspective of power. The power of the individual is not one for one. There is no even exchange; no equal trade. Within the group or collective Obama accommodates difference. A mutually inclusive collective operates on the basis of interactions between, and among, self-interested individuals. But, Obama recognizes that every individual occupies a different position in the world. Each person is situated at a specific time and place. Every person comes from a different social, economic, and cultural position. Identities change. She has a multiple of overlapping identities. Life is fluid as people progress from infancy to being elderly.

To understand why and how individuals interact, they must each secure something. Yet, an interaction is no abstraction for Obama any more than it was for Spinoza. Interactions exist on both a practical and a material level. If one observes these interactions, she can see that the individual is not autonomous. People recognize each other. They acknowledge each other. And, they rely on each other.

At the same time, all people are foremost obliged to themselves. It is only because self-obligation is sacrosanct that the interactions between and among people are authentic.

Like the poor, Obama spurns the traditional American working class for strategic reasons. Yet, the strategy here is not wholly psychological. It has little to do with internal group dynamics. Rather, it has to do with external economic forces. Beginning in the 1970s, the economic infrastructure supporting the working class collapsed. Deindustrialization turned the American working class into collateral casualties of globalism. The working class cannot find its own self-interest, Obama suggested, let alone lead reform.^{cxxix}

5. Pro-Universalizing, Anti-Universalism

All the while denying identity politics, Obama does not lose sight of individual agency. He creates an “expansive sense of agency by paring actions taken by the government to better secure the welfare of its people with individual initiative. Obama said children can’t achieve unless we raise their expectations and turn off the television sets . . .” Obama denies essentialism and yet he does not slip into the pool of relativism that lacks responsibility or fails to make its swimmers accountable for their mistakes. Like the contemporary interpretation of Spinoza, Obama too maintains that only through “harmony between individuals” can human freedom and power or capability flourish. Obama too denies the “strict opposition” between individuality and the American state and society.^{cxxx}

Given that the individual profits from a policy program, as a constituent of such a program, she is expected to pull her weight. At the same time, policy programs should be as inclusive as possible. Health care is available to everyone, though it does not mean everyone will subscribe. He advocates policies that are universalizing but that do not offer universal entitlements. He pools resources. Obama insists on “binding our particular grievances - for better health care, and better schools, and better jobs - to the larger aspirations of all Americans -- the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man whose been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family.”

The rhetorical context Republicans and Democrats create juxtaposes the individual (read credit or blame) with society (read patronizing help or sharing). The American state need not be limited to these binaries. Society need not subsume individual values and norms. The individual need not be sacrificed as the self dissolves into the society. Having a state that does not blame its citizens is not the same as refusing to judge them or make them accountable.

Inclusion and tolerance are other aspects of pooling. Policies not dictated by judgments. For example, Canada offers a needle program for addicts called “harm reduction.” The addicts are going to

shoot up, but rather than driving them underground, increasing harm to all of society, the state provides a location for this, making it safe for the individual addict and society. First Lady Nancy Reagan's "just say no" to drugs campaign reflects the exact opposite perspective. Similarly, the teen pregnancy program promoting abstinence fails for the same reason. Rather than changing the morality of teens, a public policy should offer them education and the means to practice safe sex.

By pooling we can imagine how public goods can be universalized. But it does not mean pushing for universal public goods. For instance, it is about dropping the dream for universal healthcare all the while providing more and more people with health benefits. States like California have already stumbled across the solution. First children were given health care, then the mentally ill, and finally the indigent. Each group was folded into the health benefits equation with little question.

Pooling universalizes rather than upholds universals. That is, universalizing involves the process of making a policy widespread. It is the making, not the principle that counts. It is about how many a public policy covers that counts. While the very word universal generates controversy because it is all encompassing, universalizing or folding in more and more people into a public policy does not.

Pooling particularly takes care of the poor, but not because we care.^{cxxxix} It is not propelled by benevolence. It is fueled by economy. Universalizing or pooling all the while suspending judgment helps the poor not by providing them with opportunities, but rather by purchasing goods.

Reducing harm represents one way. Another is pooling where buying benefits in bulk is cheaper than buying them on an ad hoc basis. Preventing diseases, illnesses, and injuries is cheaper than using emergency care. Providing good high schools, colleges, and technical schools costs less than building prisons or handing out welfare. This is not to say that harm reduction or pooling is primarily a technocratic or an efficiency solution.

To better understand pooling or universalizing and the globally interdependent pioneer wagon state, one must compare it to the strong European social welfare state. Aside from England, most Europe nation states give every citizen a specifically sized slice of pie. The trick is getting invited to the table. You must be born European to sit there. It is a sense of entitlement that creates a community that helps its citizens see the bottom line or the notion of social justice underlying the European social welfare nation-state.

In the United States, Americans lack any cultural sense of entitlement. Those native-born have few more privileges than those born abroad. The rhetoric about entitlement falls flat because it goes against our political homogeneity. It goes against the American power structure. No administration –

Republican/Democrat or left/right – can alter that. While politicians and bureaucrats no longer follow an explicit policy of Americanization, this policy during the Progressive era did impact American culture.^{cxxxii}

The United States, being populated with immigrants, is heterogeneous by being home to all ethnicities, religions, and races. It harbors a different conception of its citizenry than most European nation-states. But what Americans lack in terms of citizenship, they make up in terms of politics.^{cxxxiii}

The United States also lacks the ability to suspend judgment. The Republicans blame individuals. This explains how little funding goes to the poor. Whereas Europeans see the poor as unfortunate, Americans hold them personally accountable for their plight. Meanwhile, the Democrats blame society, sometimes relieving its citizens of responsibility. They look to big government for solutions. A new progressive vision, however, would benefit from putting an end to blame altogether.

Rhetoric resonates only if one believes, and these beliefs correspond with a nation-state's dominant value system. The United States has a very distinctive value system that cannot be equated with any one system held by a European nation-state. This value system helps explain why so many voters vote against their own self-interest. It's not that they are irrational, unenlightened, or contradictory. Most voters are emotional. They cast their ballots for platforms built on a type of optimism that meshes with the American political and economic system.

More importantly, a large number of potential voters – more than 40% opt-out.^{cxxxiv} They remain discouraged by their lack of efficacy and how public policies passed by either Tweedle Dee or Tweedle Dum -- the two parties in a two party system – do not change their quality of life. Voters remain willfully disenfranchised.^{cxxxv} After the peak in the 19th century, the progressives began attacking the political party machines.^{cxxxvi} No European or industrialized nation-state has had disenfranchisement numbers that match those in the United States for over a century.^{cxxxvii}

Obama's ideas about self-preservation fit in with American political beliefs and values. By pooling resources the state creates incentives individuals follow that bolster society. Pooling resources, moreover, is an idea not owned by the right or the left. Instead of venturing on the right/left or Locke/Rousseau or classical liberal/social liberal divide, pooling mixes and matches motives and outcomes that are distinctively American. This idea emphasizes efficiency and it looks at outcomes. It creates a bottom line without romance.

At the same time American political beliefs promote tolerance and the freedom of association, and promise inclusion. Tocqueville said it best “we're a nation of joiners.” Additionally everyone has

the chance to remake themselves – we’re living in a society that emphasizes striving and accepts starting over or starting anew. None of this is to say that we are a tolerant, inclusive society because marginal groups lack power.

With politics being about power, the individual is not autonomous. “The individual ceases to be a meaningful unit of analysis. For the power of the individual as individual – that is, as separate and autonomous, is so minimal as to be theoretically negligible.”^{cxxxviii} No one can afford to be alone.

Conclusion

Can Obama succeed without making equality a priority – either through redistributive taxation or with programs that indirectly hand power back to the people? Can Obama succeed as a middle class reformer?

Obama heeds Alexis de Tocqueville’s observations articulated in *Democracy in America* about the dangers associated with individualism. Individualism fosters sameness and selfishness, not difference and inclusivity as individuality does.^{cxxxix} Individuality cherishes what is distinctive about each person. Individualism, being premised upon neoclassical assumptions, overemphasizes a person’s power and control in shaping her life, without acknowledging how the socio-economic and cultural rules of the game hinder some, and helps others. These assumptions downplay those privileged and those disadvantaged given differences in birth and family. Correlations between education and wealth, women and men, black and white, whiteness and suburbia, blackness and urban blight or flight fall on the individual’s shoulders. And the critics who highlight, disparage, and despair these correlations -- rejecting the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches metaphor -- are condemned for not conforming or not following the American dream.

Obama embraces individuality and understands difference. Being raised by a highly educated white mother, a “lonely witness for secular humanism, a soldier for New Deal, Peace Corps, position-paper liberalism,” and white working class grandparents, who saw their own hopes for the American dream dissipate, all the while being influenced by the absence of a Kenyan father and the presence of an Indonesian stepfather who “followed a brand of Islam that could make room for the remnants of more ancient animist and Hindu faiths,” Obama was betwixt and between racial, national, and class identities.

Obama also understands power. “Power: The word fixed in my mother’s mind like a curse. In America, it had generally remained hidden from view until you dug beneath the surface of things; until

you visited an Indian reservation or spoke to a black person whose trust you earned. But here [Indonesia] power was undisguised, indiscriminate, naked, always fresh in the memory.”^{cxl} As a child Obama saw the power of privilege bestowed to some Americans, and not members of other nationalities, making him realize at an early age “the chasm that separated the life chances of an American from those of an Indonesian.”^{cxli}

But if Obama does not instill the middle class, his chosen people, with more power and redistribute wealth in the United States can he succeed? Obama’s “yes we can” campaign made it possible for the three Musketeers’ cry “all for one and one for all” to echo across this land and potentially to further the American dream for its citizenry and to bolster democracy at home and abroad. As Obama succinctly put it, “out of many, we are one.”^{cxlii}

Obama’s campaign rhetoric and ideals have been compromised by his reactions to domestic crises and world events. He has, and will undoubtedly continue to stray from his political platform, slamming up against a recalcitrant Congress, a conservative Supreme Court, an increasingly global economy in recession, terrorism, and other domestic emergencies and international catastrophes.

The American left has already made its pronouncement plain. Liberals became disillusioned with Obama before the inaugural ball, given his choice in former Clinton political appointees like Emanuel, Summers, and Geithner. Is there a chance that he could recover? As a *New Yorker* reporter writes, “Obama and his team have pulled the economy back from the abyss, but they will get credit only when it has been rebuilt.”^{cxliii}

Meanwhile, the GOP, initially demoralized by their defeat, is becoming emboldened by the tentative nature of the Obama administration’s positions, profiting from the Democratic party infighting in the two houses of Congress, capitalizing on the angry left, all the while understanding the fickle nature of public opinion when it comes to passing major reform. Will the Obama administration “waste a crisis?”^{cxliv}

All sides are poised behind the health care debate. The Obama administration realizes its success or failure hinges on this. Still, it is useful to have a road map of Obama’s ideals so that the sea change in American politics can be absorbed.

Addendum:

The Electoral Vacuum Created by Guns, Religion & Self-Interest

Grassroots reform is not just a result of the poor waving their angry fists at the American economic and power elite or establishment. American culture counts. And to Obama, it's the American culture of difference and toleration that counts most. This is part of a middle class culture that Obama embraces.

The post-industrial job expansion traveled westward, transforming this region from being solidly Republican to solidly Democratic. Since 2002, Democrats have replaced Republican governors in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Driving from Canada down to Mexico, a Republican governs not a single state. "That's a good pictorial of how you can think about what Democrats have done out here," Colorado Governor Bill Ritter said. The Democrats do better in Colorado and New Mexico, while they have lost ground among voters in regions that are experiencing hard times, such as West Virginia or parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio.

In *Whistling Past Dixie*, political scientist Thomas Schaller underscores these demographics, maintaining that the Democrats could concentrate on the West and stop wasting campaign resources on the South.^{cxlv} Schaller argues that the Democrats cannot and should not try to win the South, a region that uses "social issues as a prism through which they view all other issues." Quite simply, the Democrats' do not have enough cultural affinity with Southern voters, whereas, they have no such problem in the West. "You don't need to speak in tongues to win," as Ritter explained, "to win elections there."^{cxlvi}

The West gives the Democrats a historic chance to redefine themselves. It offers them a neutral zone for social issues like race. The racial dynamics of Colorado are not as fraught as they are elsewhere. "We never had slavery out here," Gary Hart said. "I mean, it's a Southern issue. And obviously the number of African-Americans is smaller, but that's not the point. The point is we just didn't have the heritage of slavery."^{cxlvii}

What's more, the two parties are not as strong as in the Northeast, making it possible for Obama to transform his party. The ideology of the Western frontier corresponds well with Obama ideas. It heralds individual achievement just as Obama does. "Democrats have the chance in the Western states to forge parties that reflect a post-Great Society, new-economy identity," he said. "That will be much

harder to do on the Eastern Seaboard, where the parties are dominated by Catholics and union households. The Colorado Democratic Party is a much better opportunity to forge a new party than, say, the Democratic Party of New York, which is filled with patronage politicians and dominated by identity politics and the barons of the old New York metropolitan machine.^{"cxlviii}

And finally, religion creates few culture wars in the West. There are few fundamentalists. "Westerners are individualists who do not like the beliefs of others imposed on us," he wrote. "We are people who believe in principles: integrity, honor, courage, accountability. The religious right preaches values. Democrats, regionally and nationally, should espouse *principles*, for themselves and for our country." While "values" have religious connotations, "principles" do not. Principles are secular.^{cxlix}

Given Obama's record-breaking campaign contributions, he did not make the hard decision to drop the South, but the West still opens up a new vista, a new frontier.^{cl} A watershed moment for the party, this moment, as some journalists describe, is also ironic. The party of the downtrodden has become the party of economic champions. "A party of the Western megapolitans . . . would be a party less and less like the party of F.D.R. and Lyndon Johnson. It would be more oriented to the haves than to the have-nots."^{cli} "More oriented toward high-tech workers and less towards labor," said Kenneth Baer, the co-founder of *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*. "It's the end of the New Deal coalition."^{clii}

Obama transforms identity politics into the politics of difference. Speaking before the candle lit tables of wealthy donors in San Francisco in early April 2008, Obama relayed why he appealed so little to white working class Democrats from small towns. They harbor great anger and resentment toward liberal Democrats who champion identity politics because of their economic misfortune. "They get bitter and cling to guns or religion ... as a way to explain their frustration."^{cliii} It is the economic distress that comes from deindustrialization and deregulation that accounts for their social conservatism.

Obama's remarks cost him the Pennsylvania primary.^{cliv} Criticizing any part of the Democratic electorate is not judicious. Obama apologized. But, was this a blooper or a naked truth about culturally-conscious Democrats? Obama described a culture of fear that the G.O.P. had cultivated and then harvested for more than thirty years. This culture helps account for the ardor in which the white working class' support on their so-called Second Amendment right to carry guns, the abolition of abortion, and a prohibition of same sex marriage. The same liberal Democrats who support identity politics, often condemned working-class white subcultures, like Irish-American Catholics and Southern

Scots-Irish Protestants. These Democrats found it frustrating these white subcultures refused to sacrifice their identities to their economic interests.^{clv} It's white-on-white class warfare.

Seething Classes

Obama was not the first Democrat to underscore how catastrophic class resentment could be. In 1991, Clinton claimed that Republican appeals to traditional values worked because "you have all these economically insecure white people who are scared to death."^{clvi} The Republicans, he explained, have pushed "economic liberalism" as "the pillar of their policy but only by grounding it in religion and patriotism." They masterminded a zero-sum situation for white working class Democrats: These Democrats had to choose between accepting so-called American values or being called un-American.^{clvii} "The perception of zero-sum competition between 'us' and 'them,' writes Nicholas Winter, "leads to hostility and negative emotions . . ."^{clviii}

Obama avoids the class-versus-culture debate by all but dropping the working class. To him, the white, working class often votes for values at the expense of their economic interests. When there is a conflict between people's pocketbooks and their values, most voters choose the latter. Self-interest never wins. "People who would not risk a blister for a raise will die for a creed."^{clix}

Experts argue that education, not class better explains this transformation. It's a war between those with and without college degrees. Those who abandoned the Democratic party had one thing in common – their lack of higher education. It is these voters, who some pundits called Sam Club Republicans, who became crucial to the G.O.P.'s success.^{clx} Other Republicans express concern that they will lose educated conservatives.^{clxi}

Obama's observation that blue-collar Democrats voted against their economic self-interest, making them bitter, coupled with the fact that the middle class, the upper class and the wealthy protect their self-interests. "White resentments distracted attention from the real culprits of the middle class squeeze - a corporate culture rife with inside dealing, questionable accounting practices, and short-term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many."^{clxii} The upper socio-economic echelons of American society found any number of reasons or rationalizations why their well-being benefited the whole of society. While many members of the white working class found Obama's statement insulting, it was less of a gaff and more a bald and insensitive statement about the American working class's and the Democratic party's recent history.

Obama, himself, never made the working class, particularly organized labor, a priority.^{clxiii} He saw the manufacturing industry as outmoded. New technologies had made some blue-collar work obsolete. Starting in the mid-1980s, many jobs went overseas to the huge low-wage work forces in fast developing nations.^{clxiv} American union membership went into a tailspin. Today, less than nine percent of the private sector is organized, down from 20 percent in 1980 and a high of 35 percent in 1956.^{clxv} Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic convention made no reference to organized labor.

To Obama, the solution is simple, change the constituency that the Democrats identify with. The middle class should embody the Democratic party. To be sure, the poor and the working poor will benefit from this association, just as the poor profited from the New Deal coalition's identification with the working class.

Obama sees the culture/class conflict as fruitless. He also won the nomination without the working class. Hillary Clinton may have denied Obama a lock on the nomination by securing large majorities of swing voters, beginning in New Hampshire and culminating in West Virginia, but it was the New Politics coalition that gave him the nomination. Bowling in Pennsylvania and drinking Bud in Indiana Obama has tried to relating to workers by talking about his single mother and his wife's working-class roots. But as some journalists wrote "a forty-six-year-old black man in an expensive suit, with a Harvard law degree and a strange name" can't just "walk into V.F.W. halls and retirement homes and say, "I'm one of you,"" without seeming "both improbable and disingenuous."^{clxvi}

Can this election strategy pay off for the Democrats? Or are the progressive critics correct in arguing "turning away from their core liberal ideology and trying to embrace conservative economic and cultural positions, the progressives contend, the Democrats have gradually been transformed into a Republican Party II."^{clxvii} Or can Obama still create a coalition for reform?

ⁱ John R. Talbot, *How Bottom-Up Economic Prosperity will Replace Trickle-Down Economics* (New York: Seven Stories, 2008). Talbot writes that Obama was proud of being a community organizer and how sincerely it shapes his outlook in *Obamaomics*, 176.

ⁱⁱ Barack Obama, Iowa Caucus Victory Speech, January 3, 2008. Also see John B. Judas, "The Creation Myth: What Barack Obama Won't Tell You about his Community Organizing Past," *The New Republic* (). He supposedly told a friend, Jerry Kellman, that he feared community organizing would never allow him "to make major changes in poverty or discrimination." To do that, he said, "you either had to be an elected official or be influential with elected officials." In a video this spring, Obama stated that community organizing is "something I carry with me when I think about politics today--obviously at a different level and in a different place, but the same principles still apply." "Barack is not a politician first and foremost,"

Michelle Obama has said. "He's a community activist exploring the viability of politics to make change." Did this between 1985-1987. McKnight, "At the time, neighborhood organizing was very parochial. ... He could see that the impact wouldn't reach beyond the neighborhood. The change he was seeking was bigger." Obama said his friend had responded, "That's nonsense. We want a movement. I would love to have Martin Luther King here right now." Obama argued that charismatic leaders and movements bring "long-term vision," and that community organizers cannot be effective without such vision. Obama also criticized community organizers' "suspicion of politics." "The problem we face now in terms of organizing is that politics is a major arena of power," Obama said. "That's where your major dialogue, discussion, is taking place. To marginalize yourself from that process is a damaging thing, and one that needs to be rethought."

ⁱⁱⁱ Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," March 18, 2008.

^{iv} Jacqueline L. Salmon, Kimberly Kindy, and Michelle Boorstein, "Obama's Faith-Based Office to Depart from Bush's Precedent," *Washington Post* (February 5, 2009).

^v Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," March 18, 2008.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Fourth Part, Proposition 35 in *Spinoza's Ethics* revised translated and ed. G.H.R. Parkinson (Longon: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1989), 163.

^{viii} Barack Obama, "Iowa Caucus Victory Speech."

^{ix} Barack Obama, "Iowa Caucus Victory Speech."

^x <http://blogs.record-eagle.com/?p=1255>

^{xi} Barack Obama, "Main Street Speech to Wall Street Crowd," September 17, 2007.

^{xii} See the Walter Lippmann and John Dewey debate for the clearest explication. John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (New York: H. Holt and Company. 1927); Walter Lippmann, "The Hope of Democracy," *The New Republic* (November 12, 1916), 231; Walter Lippmann *Public Opinion* (New York: York; Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. 1922).

^{xiii} Obama's idea of the frontier are in complete opposition to those of Frederick Jackson Turner, "[The Significance of the Frontier in American History](#)," delivered to the [American Historical Association](#) in 1893 at the [World's Columbian Exposition](#) in [Chicago](#). <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/frontierthesis.html> Critics long observed the racism underlying Turner's ideas. "According to Turner, the forging of the unique and rugged American identity had to occur precisely at the juncture between the civilization of settlement and the savagery of wilderness. The dynamic of these oppositional conditions engendered a process by which citizens were made, citizens with the power to tame the wild and upon whom the wild had conferred strength and individuality. ... Every generation moved further west and became more American, more democratic, and as intolerant of hierarchy as they were removed from it. They became more violent, more individualistic, more distrustful of authority, less artistic, less scientific, and more dependent on ad-hoc organizations they formed themselves. In broad terms, the further west, the more American the community..." For a provocative new interpretation of the Turner thesis without the racism see Patrick Griffin. *American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

^{xiv} See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955). Political scientists have been significantly more persuaded by the Hartzian approach than historians. Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, two of the founders of American political development, a subfield within American politics, write that it "is difficult to imagine how one might move further away from the developmental conception of American politics without calling into question the enduring significance of liberal ideals altogether." See Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 72. See also the journal *Studies in American Political Development* created in 1986 and *Polity*, and the *Journal of Policy History*, among others. The books that cite, challenge, or support Hartz are too numerous to list. For a recent overview of Hartz's influence in political science see Carol

Nackenoff, "Groundhog Day Again?: Is the Liberal Tradition a Useful Construct for Studying Law, Courts, and American Political Development?" *The Good Society* 16 (2007): 40-45. Also see historians Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); and Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

^{xv} By contrast, American historians have judged harshly political science's preoccupation with Louis Hartz's book, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, written in the 1950s during the McCarthy era. See James Kloppenberg, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*," *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001), 474-75. As Kloppenberg said, "Hartz's vague and imprecise analysis did to American thinkers what Walt Disney had done to Davy Crockett." Given Hartz's dominance in political science, Kloppenberg concludes that "criticizing Hartz thus ruffles feathers across the contemporary political spectrum. Too many people, right and left, have too much invested in the idea of an American liberal tradition to surrender it without a fight." As a result, this historian believes that the role that "democratic thinkers, activists, and movements in American history," have played has been underplayed by "those who continue to endorse Hartz's notion of a liberal tradition --whether from the right or the left--consciously or unwittingly . . ."reinforce the claims of those who define as Also Sean Wilentz writes "[t]he great weakness of Hartz's approach was that, as a unified field theory of American political thought, it turned politics in a modern liberal polity into fake battles fought with wooden swords." Also see Sean Wilentz, "Uses of The Liberal Tradition: Comments on 'Still Louis Hartz after All These Years,'" *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (March, 2005), 118.

^{xvi} Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, second edition).

^{xvii} Quoted from See Kloppenberg, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*," 474.

^{xviii} See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (1988) For a good secondary source see Peter C. Myers, "Between Divine and Human Sovereignty: The State of Nature and the Basis of Locke's Political Thought," *Polity* 27 (1995): 629-49.

^{xix} Some scholars find fault with C. B. Macpherson's interpretation that Hobbes emphasized "possessive individualism," the cornerstone of modern capitalism, and that this interpretation influenced a whole generation of students. See C. B. Macpherson, "Introduction to Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Penguin, 1968), 9-63. Also see C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) for the full articulation of this argument. See Peter Hayes, "Hobbes's Bourgeois Moderation," *Polity* 31 (1998): 53-74 had a more moderate perspective on competition.

^{xx} Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 434-35. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Chapter VII, Sections 95-98 <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2/locke2nd-c.html>

^{xxi} Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Chapter IX, Section 129.

^{xxii} Alex Scott Tuckness, "Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003): 547-63 makes the argument that no need to debate if the Lockean or liberal tradition is more dominant than the Humean or republican tradition since there are multiple traditions as Rogers Smith in *Civic Ideals* argues. For the historians debate about this opposition see the classics of Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), and Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: Norton: 1972).

^{xxiii} Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

^{xxiv} For a good overview of republicanism see Daniel Rodgers, "Republicanism: Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 11-38; and for social history see Mark M. Smith, "Making Sense of Social History," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 165-86.

^{xxv} Garry Wills relies on David Hume extensively in *Explaining America: The Federalists, With a New Introduction* (New York: Penguin Press, 2001).

^{xxvi} See chapter 15, “The Americanization of Virtue,” of J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

^{xxvii} To be fair, a number of political scientists have taken a more nuanced position neither in support nor opposition to Hartz, starting with David Greenstone, “Political Culture and American Political Development: Liberty, Union and the Liberal Bipolarity,” *Studies in American Political Development* 1 (1986): 1–49. Greenstone advances the tension between the liberal and the republican or reform perspectives in American political thought. Arguably the harshest critic of Hartz’s dominance in American political development is Rogers Smith’s book *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). He insists that multiple interpretations coexist. Finally, with Hartz writing in the late 1950s when religion played a very marginal role in politics, the absence of religious thought in his work has only recently been addressed given the rise of the right. See for instance James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Also see Sandra M. Gustafson, “Histories of Democracy and Empire,” *American Quarterly* 59 (2007):107-133 for an interesting distinction the early Americanists in American Studies now insist on making between them and those who study the period after 1835 being the U.S.-Americanists.

^{xxviii} Burnham was one of the authors of realignment theory that predated American political development. See “Party Development and the American Mainstream,” 3-32 in *The American Party System: Stages of Political Development* edited by William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Werner Sombart’s 1906 book *Why is There no Socialism in the United States* (New York: Sharpe, 1976) mentioned by many in American political development to show that the question of American exceptionalism long predated Hartz.

^{xxix} See Stephen Skowronek & Karen Orren, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) for a good overview of the field; as well as Romain Huret, “All in the Family Again? Political Historians and the Challenge of Social History” *Journal of Policy History* 21 (2009): 239-63. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Stephen Skowronek, *Building the American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Karen Orren, *Belated Feudalism: Labor, the Law, and Liberal Development in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

^{xxx} In particular, the republican perspective spawned a whole series of articles in American political development around the progressive era and the New Deal from Gerald Berkowitz, Amy Bridges, Daniel Carpenter, Howard Gillman, Ira Katznelson, Victoria Hattam, Eileen McDonagh, Suzanne Mettler Anne Norton to Karen Orren, Theda Skocpol, Stephen Skowronek and Rogers Smith as well as it’s own journal entitled *Studies in American Political Development*.

^{xxxi} For a good overview of the assumption that “how the assume that the social democratic welfare states of Scandinavia were the norm see Peter Baldwin, “Beyond Weak and Strong: Rethinking the State in Comparative Policy History,” *Journal of Policy History* 17 (2005): 12-33, 14.

^{xxxii} See T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto Press, 1987, originally published 1950). The book came from a series of lectures he delivered in Cambridge England in 1949-50. Also see Martin Bulmer and Anthony T. Rees *Citizenship Today: The Contemporary Relevance of T.H. Marshall* (Bristol, PA: UCL Press, 1996).

^{xxxiii} In criticizing Hartz, historians found other interpretations of the Founders vision. For the debate among historians see Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1992); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1993) “The republican interpretation evoked a strong reaction from scholars who advocated the primacy of Lockean liberalism as the basic intellectual tradition in early American history,” explains Zoltan Vajda. And for good review essays of the debate see Vajda, “John C. Calhoun’s Republicanism Revisited,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 433-457; Robert E. Shalhope, “Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography,” *William and*

Mary Quarterly 29 (1972): 49-80; Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 334-56. Political scientists than accepted this approach or the Lockean approach.

^{xxxiv} See chapter 15 of Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*; and John P. McCormick, "Machiavelli Against Republicanism," *Political Theory* 30 (2003): 615-44.

^{xxxv} This is the mainstream interpretation of Rousseau reflected by the work of Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the Systems of Rousseau's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Roger D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) among others.

^{xxxvi} Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94 (2000): 251-67.

^{xxxvii} See Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139-67.

^{xxxviii} Nancy Hirschmann, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom," *Political Theory* 24 (1996), 49; and Ruth O'Brien, *Bodies in Revolt: Gender, Disability, and a Workplace Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge Press, 2005), 63.

^{xxxix} Ezra Klein, "The Lessons of '94, The Three Reasons the Clinton Administration's Health Care Reform Effort Failed, and How the Next Democratic President can get it Right," *American Prospect* (January 22, 2008 web version http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_lessons_of_94).

^{xl} See Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, (New York: Basic, 1982), 280–86; and James Colgrove, "Reform and Its Discontents: Public Health in New York City During the Great Society," *Journal of Policy History* 19 (2007) 3-28.

^{xli} Robin Toner, "Harry and Louise and a Guy Named Ben," *New York Times* (September 20, 1994); and E Klein, "The Lessons of '94." Don't take it from me: "I was the biggest mistake of the Clinton health care bill," says Sara Rosenbaum, who sat in a hotel room with other policy experts and drafted the legislation. "It was a terrible error to have the President doing what Congress was supposed to do. It was a misuse of the relationship between the legislative branch and the executive branch. The executive branch is supposed to generate action and the committees are supposed to actually take the action. By sending a 1,300 page bill, you're writing a detailed blueprint for the policy rather than using the congressional process to create a consensus."

^{xlii} Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, Donald A. Cress, trans. (Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), 49. While the standard view makes this contrast, with some going so far as to equate his idea of Justice with Platonic forms, there are a few who do not. See Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the Systems of Rousseau's Thought* ; and Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*. For a good recent overview of the debate see David Lay Williams, "Justice and the General Will: Affirming Rousseau's Ancient Orientation," *Journal of History of Ideas* (2005), 384-85, 88. Williams takes the positivist position and also refers to Plato, arguing that the General Will is transcendently constrained, which is to say that it "presuppose[s] the existence of universal and immutable standards."

^{xliii} Ibid.

^{xliv} Hirschmann, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom,"49.

^{xlv} The dominance of Hartz has enabled historians and political scientists to dismiss "grassroots interpretations or radical interpretations of American history as "un-American." "Kloppenber, "In Retrospect: Louis Hartz's The Liberal Tradition in America" *Reviews in American History*, 474.

^{xlvi} According to Kloppenberg, Hartz “came to prominence just as John Dewey’s ideas went into eclipse.” Kloppenberg, “In Retrospect: Louis Hartz’s *The Liberal Tradition in America*” *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001), 475-76. Since the eighteenth century it has been less the absence of feudalism than the “presence of democracy” --albeit imperfect and constricted but nevertheless slowly expanding--that has distinguished the United States from other nations, and that difference has shrunk as democracy has spread.

^{xlvii} My contemporary interpretation of Spinoza is most indebted to the radical Australian feminists Elizabeth Grosz, Geneieve Lloyd, and Claire Clarebrook. See Claire Claybrook, “From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens,” *Hypatia* 15 (2000) 89. Also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Press, 2005).

^{xlviii} I take a similar position that an alternate notion of an “ethic of care” can be adopted by examining survivability rather than benevolence in a monograph about the Americans with Disabilities Act and capitalism. See O’Brien, *Bodies in Revolt* for an overview of the traditional view of an ethic of care as well as a few alternatives see chapter three. For other interpretations that do not view care from the perspective of benevolence also see Martha Albertson Fineman’s body of work, including *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency* (New York: New Press, 2005).

^{xlix} Louis Menand describes the pragmatist position well. It is not that all morality is relative or subjective without regard to any standards. As he explains, “pragmatism regards truth in the same way that statistical science regards a fact: It is the provisional place that the preponderance of experience leads us to assert a belief. Truth is like a natural law in science: It is what, given certain conditions, will happen *most of the time*. It is not an iron law. The universe being what it is, there may be a natural law of iron, but there are no iron laws of nature.” He quotes 19th century philosopher of science as saying “Scientific laws are the bed over which passes the torrent of facts; they shape it even as they follow it. . . . They do not precede things, they derive from them, and they can vary, if the things themselves happen to vary.” See Louis Menand, “The Science of Human Nature and the Human Nature of Science,” *Sign Language Studies* 5 (2005), 182-83.

^l Montage, “Who’s Afraid of the Multitude? Between the Individual and the State,” 658.

^{li} Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Crown Publishing Group and Three Rivers Press, 2006), 193.

^{lii} How far eugenics extended into American culture on the right and the left is well told by Leonard C. Thomas, “More Merciful and Not Less Effective”: Eugenics and American Economics in the Progressive Era, *History of Political Economy* 35 (2003): 687-712; and Ian Robert Dowbiggin, “A Rational Coalition”: Euthanasia, Eugenics, and Birth Control in America, 1940-1970,” *Journal of Policy History* 14 (2002): 223-60. Originally revived by the philosopher Richard Rorty, feminists have forged an alliance between pragmatism and radical feminism. See Barbara Thayer-Bacon, “Pragmatism and Feminism as Qualified Relativism,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003): 417-38.

^{liii} Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union.”

^{liv} Obama, “Main Street Speech to Wall Street Crowd.”

^{lv} See Hongmei Peng, “Toward a Fully Realized Human Being: Dewey’s Active-Individual-always-in-the-Making,” *Education and Culture* 24 (2008): 20-32.

^{lvi} Among the progressive eugenicists were Theodore Roosevelt, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., the sociologist Edward A. Ross; the political scientist Harold Laski; David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford; Charles William Eliot, the president of Harvard; and even the Marxist revolutionary Emma Goldman. See Louis Menand, “The Science of Human Nature and the Human Nature of Science,” *Sign Language Studies* 5 (2005): 170-187, 181. Also see Thomas C. Leonard, “‘More Merciful and Not Less Effective’ and American Economics in the American Progressive Era,” *History of Political Economy* 35 (2005): 687-712; Lawrence R. Goodheart, “Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917,” *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59 (2004): 90-111; and Dana Seitler, “Unnatural Selection:

Mothers, Eugenic Feminism, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Regeneration narratives," *American Quarterly* 55 (2003): 61-88.

^{lvii} Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{lviii} Contributing an article to a journal edited by one of his Chicago mentors, Ernest Burgess, Alinsky explained that his largest organizing success was "an experimental demonstration of a community organizational procedure predicated upon a functional conception of a community and its problem. . . . the functional nature of community or of the socioeconomic strata of the community and its corresponding implications." Saul D. Alinsky, "Community Analysis and Organization," *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941), 798.

^{lix} Engel, "Saul D. Alinsky and the Chicago School," 51.

^{lx} John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938).

^{lxi} William James, "The Chicago School," *Psychological Bulletin* 1 (1904), 2.

^{lxii} Engel, "Saul D. Alinsky and the Chicago School," 52. Pragmatism was built on the idea that people are tentative. It embraced the social constructionism or the "hypothetical character of all knowledge and human understanding."

^{lxiii} Harry C. Boyte, "A Different Kind of Politics: John Dewey and the Meaning of Citizenship in the 21st Century," *The Good Society* 12 (2003): 1-15, 5.

^{lxiv} Dewey, *Logic*.

^{lxv} "Special Feature: Organizing Youth," *Social Policy* 34 (2003), 107.

^{lxvi} Quoted from "Special Feature: Organizing Youth," 108. Alinsky lost most of his financial support as well as his supporters during the McCarthy era in the early 1950s. He did, however, have one last successful activist organization in 1963. The Temporary Woodlawn Organization (TWO) succeeded in preventing the University of Chicago from buying up property to expand its campus at the expense of the African-Americans, who lived in nearby neighborhoods. Some African-American leaders took most of the credit away from Alinsky, himself, who died less than a decade later, a "forgotten man." See Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy* (New York: Knopf., 1989).

^{lxvii} Robert E. Lindquist, and James F. Essman, "Overcoming Addiction: A Twelve Step Program for Building Power and Revitalizing the Labor Movement," *Social Policy* 36 (2006), 20.

^{lxviii} Quoted from Talbot, *Obamomics*, 35.

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^{lxx} Barack Obama, "Calls for Middle Class Tax Cut Speech," July 9, 2008.

^{lxxi} Lawrence J. Engel, "Saul D. Alinsky and the Chicago School," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 16 (2002), 52.

^{lxxii} Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{lxxiii} MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?" *New Yorker* 48-.

^{lxxiv} MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?" *New Yorker* 48-. Check in Obama's book for contempt of reformers

^{lxxv} Judas, "Creation of a Myth."

^{lxxvi} See the Walter Lippmann and John Dewey debate for the clearest explication. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: H. Holt and Company. 1927); Walter Lippmann, "The Hope of Democracy," *The New Republic* (November 12, 1916), 231; Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: York; Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. 1922).

^{lxxvii} See Sen's notion of human capability and development. Amartya Sen *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999). 292-97.

^{lxxviii} Peter S. Canellos "Democrats Must Renew Bond with Working Class," *The Boston Globe* April 15, 2008.

^{lxxix} David Leonhardt, "A Free-Market-Loving, Big-Spending, Fiscally Conservative Wealth Redistributionist," *New York Times Magazine*, August 24, 2008, 30. What is more, Obama does not believe in the traditional Democratic response of tax-and-spend ways.

^{lxxx} Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{lxxxi} MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?"

^{lxxxii} MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?" The Tax Policy Center, a research group run by the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute. McCain's various tax cuts would mean a net savings of about \$200 a year on average.

^{lxxxiii} David Frum, "The Vanishing Republican Voter," *New York Times Magazine* (September 7, 2008), 50. He cites two reasons: revolution in family life with fewer than 50% of heads of households being married; and inequality within nations is rising as inequality is declining in other nations. The Chinese middle class enjoy the same lifestyle as in the United States.

^{lxxxiv} David Frum, "The Vanishing Republican Voter," 48-51.

^{lxxxv} Talbot, *Obamomics*, 55-56.

^{lxxxvi} Quoted from Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed*, 177.

^{lxxxvii} Leonhardt, "A Free-Market-Loving, Big-Spending, Fiscally Conservative Wealth Redistributionist,"

^{lxxxviii} While Clinton became a fiscal conservative, casting his lot with Rubin in the 1990s, a decade later Rubin agrees more with Reich. "One of the points I raised," Obama told Leonhardt at a conference was "if you just use you, Bob, and you, Bob, as caricatures, the truth is, both of you acknowledge the world is more complicated." This said, Rubin and other Democratic champions of fiscal responsibility believe that reduction did "an enormous amount of good . . . : The 1990s was a boom period that included advances in high tech and low oil gas prices that also stimulated the economy in addition to what they see as "broad-based income growth" Leonhardt, "A Free-Market-Loving, Big-Spending, Fiscally Conservative Wealth Redistributionist," Not all economists agree. See Madrick, *The Case for Big Government*.

^{lxxxix} Leonhardt, "A Free-Market-Loving, Big-Spending, Fiscally Conservative Wealth Redistributionist,"

^{xc} Ibid.

^{xcii} To put that in perspective, the cut in the payroll tax would cost about \$70 billion a year.

^{xcii} MacFarquhar, "The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?" Obama's tax cuts for most families that are larger than those McCain proposes. . .

^{xciii} See Talbot, *Obamomics*, 55-68.

96 Ibid.

(jump because of program bug)

^{xcvii} Team is Emanuel, Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Health Care Policy Coordinator, Budget Director Peter Orszag as well as Presidential aid Jim Messina who is on good terms with Max Baucus, the chair of the House Committee; and Dan Pfeiffer, Deputy Communications Director. David M. Herszenhorn and Robert Pear, "White House Team Joins Talks on Health Care Bill," *New York Times* (October 15, 2009); Peter Nicholas, "Endgame for Healthcare Team; the White House has Relied on Six Key Players for Months. Now they begin their Final Push for Reform," *Los Angeles Times* (October 21, 2009). This team did not anticipate the public option and how it would endanger reform. See Michael D. Shearer and Ceri Connolly, "Debate's Path Caught Obama by Surprise: Public Option Wasn't Intended as Major Focus," *Washington Post* (August 19, 2009). Supposedly, Obama had "hoped to be selling middle-class voters on how insurance reforms would benefit them, the White House instead finds itself mired in a Democratic Party feud over an issue it never intended to spotlight." Progressives see this as a senior staff person said "their Waterloo."

^{xcviii} Harold Meyerson, "Dropped, not First Issue, as Hoped," *Washington Post* (September 16, 2009).

^{xcix} Susan Milligan, "Stalled Agenda Irks Labor Leaders; Unions See Little Action from Democrats in D.C.," *Boston Globe* (October 12, 2009); Harold Meyerson, "Dropped, not First Issue, as Hoped," *Washington Post* (September 16, 2009).

^c Barack Obama, "Iowa Caucus Victory Speech".

^{ci} Obama gave a campaign video this name. <http://vimeo.com/1891426>

^{cii} Barack Obama, "A Secure Energy Future Speech," July 11, 2008.

^{ciii} Barack Obama, "Presidential Victory Speech," November 4, 2008.

^{civ} Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{cv} Obama, "Main Street Speech to Wall Street Crowd."

^{cvi} Among the progressive eugenicists were Theodore Roosevelt, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., the sociologist Edward A. Ross; the political scientist Harold Laski; David Starr Jordan, the president of Stanford; Charles William Eliot, the president of Harvard; and even the Marxist revolutionary Emma Goldman. See Louis Menand, "The Science of Human Nature and the Human Nature of Science," *Sign Language Studies* 5 (2005): 170-187, 181. Also see Thomas C. Leonard, "'More Merciful and Not Less Effective' and American Economics in the American Progressive Era," *History of Political Economy* 35 (2005): 687-712; Lawrence R. Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917," *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59 (2004): 90-111; and Dana Seitler, "Unnatural Selection: Mothers, Eugenic Feminism, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Regeneration narratives," *American Quarterly* 55 (2003): 61-88.

^{cvi} Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{cviii} Lawrence J. Engel, "Saul D. Alinsky and the Chicago School," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 16 (2002), 52.

^{cix} Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{cx} W.E. B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folks* Randall Kenan, intro. (New York: Signet Classic, 1995), 45.

^{cx} Review, 178.

^{cxii} McPhail, "Barack Obama's Address to the 2004 Democratic Convention," 579, 582. Also see Matheew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

^{cxiii} See O'Brien, *Bodies in Revolt*, 63-65.

^{cxiv} Barack Obama, "Iowa Caucus Victory Speech."

^{cxv} Princeton professor Cornel West criticizes Obama because "when you run from history, you run from memory," he should be able to acknowledge and affirm all of the sacrifice that has gone in for him to be where he is." Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President of Bennett College, said "I agree with Cornel completely. The fact is that he basically perpetrated a whitewash of our history." See Princeton Professor Cornel West, *Hope on a Tightrope*, and Dr. Julianne Malveaux, President of Bennett College http://www.pbs.org/kcet/tavissmiley/archive/200808/20080828_drsjulianmalvea.html Also see the ongoing debate between civil rights activists and Shelby Steel, a conservative black intellectual who believes in racial transcendence. An overview of the debate is found in Richard Fausset, "Obama's Race is Seen as a 'Bonus,'" *The New Republic* (November 3, 2008), A-8. Also see Nathaniel X Turner II, "Barack Hussein Obama: The Meteoric Rise of a Race-Neutered Presidential Candidate," June 6, 2007, http://www.blackagenda.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=239&Itemid=34 For more scholarly interpretation of Obama's position on race and reconciliation see David A. Frank and Mark Lawrence McPhail, "Barack Obama's Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention: Trauma, Compromise, Consilience, and the (Im)possibility of Racial Reconciliation," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 571-93.

^{cxvi} Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{cxvii} John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999), 33. A very interesting article on Dewey and a different conception of citizenship based upon difference is Larry A. Hickman, "Pragmatism, Postmodernism, and Global Citizenship," *Metaphilosophy* (2004): 65-81.

^{cxviii} Obama rejects both the New Left multiculturalism and the conservative pluralists. See Jacobson, *Roots Too*, 179 for his argument that the conservative pluralists reassert "white hierarchy, primacy, and exclusion" but dress it up as civic nationalism.

^{cxix} See Adams, "At the Table with Arendt: Toward a Self-Interested Practice of Coalition Discourse," 15; and Judas, *The New Republic*.

^{cxx} Frank and McPhail, "Barack Obama's Address to the 2004 Democratic Convention," 571-72.

^{cxxi} Joseph Heathcott, "Urban Activism in a Downsizing World: Neighborhood Organizing in Postindustrial Chicago," ?. None of these institutions give the same type of support to the poor and the working class.

^{cxxii} John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

^{cxxiii} Lizza, "The Code of the West." Sam Tanenhaus summed up the 2008 arguing that "Goldwater was to Reagan as McGovern is to Obama. From the ruins of Goldwater's landslide defeat in 1964, conservatives began the march that brought them fully to power sixteen years later. If Obama wins in November, it will have taken liberals thirty-six years to gain their majority back and he could pose a realignment of New Politics." Obama almost echoes McGovern. "I can present liberal values in a conservative, restrained way. . . ." the seasoned campaign journalist Theodore White quoted McGovern as stating. And that "I see myself as a politician of reconciliation."

^{cxxiv} Lizza, The Code of the West. This was the original vision of a McGovern adviser named Fred Dutton, whose 1971 book, *Changing Sources of Power: American Politics in the 1970s*, foresaw a rising "coalition of conscience and decency" among baby boomers.

^{cxxv} Demographic work of John B. Judis and Ruy A. Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (New York: Scribner, 2002).

^{cxxvi} Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union."

^{cxxvii} Harry C. Boyte, "Seeds of a Different Politics," *The Good Society* 12.1 (2003), 71.

^{cxxviii} Katherine Adams, "At the Table with Arendt: Toward a Self-Interested Practice of Coalition Discourse," *17 Hypatia* (2002), 27. "Self-interest coexists with group interest," writes Adams, "each conditioning the other."

^{cxxix} Obama wants to transform the working class into a post-industrial working class. During the primaries, the AFL-CIO supported Hillary Clinton, not Obama. Unite threw its support for John Edwards before he left the race. Kris Mahr, "Unions Split Early Support for White House Hopefuls," *Wall Street Journal* (2007) August 30, 2007. Edwards received the support of the United Mine Workers of America and the United Steelworkers. See Michael Fallcone, "Edwards Receives Two Big Gifts for Labor Day," *The New York Times* September 4, 2007. Not until late June when it was almost clear that Clinton lost the primary did the AFL-CIO back Obama. According to Steven Greenhouse, support was divided between Obama and Hillary Clinton and that "Labor's vocal and enthusiastic backing is important for Mr. Obama because some Democrats are concerned that his support is weak among working-class voters." See Steven Greenhouse, "AFL-CIO Backs Obama," *New York Times* June 27, 2008. In July the Obama campaign realized it was weak on this score. See Campaign 2008, "Obama Voters Step Up to Woo Hispanic, Union Voters," *Boston Globe* July 30, 2008. "Union voters, like many voters across the country, are still learning about [Senator Obama](#) and have heard many things - some true, some false," the AFL-CIO said.

^{cxxx} According to Gatens and Lloyd follow Antonio Negri and Etienne Balibar in arguing that Spinoza does not believe in this dichotomy between individuality and community. See in review Sarah Donavon, review of Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present* (New York: Routledge, 1999) in *Hypatia* 19 (2004), 175-77. I differ in that I reject the term community, replacing it with a collectivity.

^{cxxxi} First in countries with greater income inequality, poor are unlikely to have much more political clout. Alesina, Glaeser, and Sacerdote, "Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?" 209.

^{cxxxii} Americanization created national unity by erasing ethnocultural, political, and linguistic differences among immigrants, insisting that they adhere to unspoken Anglo-Saxon values as well as the basic beliefs within the American dream. "Americanization implied the unquestionable superiority" wrote Isaac Berkson in his classic 1920 study ". . . of the Anglo-Saxon race and culture." According to the proponents of Americanization, "all newcomers from foreign lands must quickly divest themselves of their old characteristics, and . . . obliterate all ethnic distinctions. They must utterly forget the land of their birth and completely lose from their memory all recollection of its traditions in a single-minded adherence to American life in all its aspects" Theodore Roosevelt emphasized that Americanization rested on three principles—"language, common civil standard and reasonable equality of opportunity." He advocated deporting all aliens who did not learn English by "by a certain number of years." See Philip Davis, ed. *Immigration and Americanization: Selected Readings* (New York: Ginn and Company, 1920), 655. "The melting pot came to symbolize the enormous capacity of American society to amalgamate immigrants into the dominant society, assimilated through their exposure to the unifying beliefs and principles acquired in the workplace and institutions of U.S. society." First, social workers created the settlement house movement that Americanized Eastern and Southern Europeans. Social workers were educators as well as effective proselytizers who had as "their ultimate goal the conversion of the immigrant to the prevailing American ideology." See Robert A. Carlson, *The Quest for Conformity: Americanization Through Education* (New York: John Wiley, 1975), 79, 83. Second, existing groups such as trade unions, the YMCA, and the Daughters of the American Revolution helped assimilate these Europeans. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1981,) 235. Finally, the federal government became involved by creating the Bureau of Naturalization in 1906, taking over from state and local governments the naturalization process. See King, Desmond. *Making Americans: Immigration, Race and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 55-68. By 1917 after the economies of Europe collapsed and the old social order all but destroyed, American officials feared immigrants would overwhelm the U.S. and as a result passed the Immigration Act, which excluded illiterate aliens from entry and created other means of exclusion, such as poor mental health. In 1918, the National Bureau of Education and the National Committee of One Hundred held a conference for state governors arguing that immigrants brought over radical political ideologies that were gaining adherents support among the American working class.

^{cxxxiii} In “What I Saw in America,” G. K. Chesterson, writes in 1922 “The American Constitution does resemble the Spanish Inquisition in this: that it is founded on a creed.” <http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~mward/gkc/books/america.html>

^{cxxxiv} Mark Lawrence Kornbluh, *Why America Stopped Voting* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 89-117, 132. He argues that decline in mass electoral participation – from late 19th highs, fell sharply as size of active electorate contracted, demographic composition of voting became skewed along socioeconomic, regional, racial ethnic and age lines. From 1896 to 1916 voter participation fell from over 14 in the Midwest and the mid-Atlantic region, 17 percent in the border states, 18 percent in the West and over 21 percent in the South. The era “when almost every eligible and able voter went to the polls had clearly ended.” These drops proved enduring, falling in the 1920s, recovering a bit in the 1930s and leveling off after World War II, and then falling again in the 1960s. Despite the 19th Amendment’s ratification in 1920 giving women the right to vote, the 20th century little political participation. Southern states also disenfranchise African-Americans. By 1908 seven of 10 Southern states had literacy taxes and each had a poll tax. By 1910 Southern blacks completely excluded from vote. Also see J. Morgan Kousser, *Minority Voting Rights and the Undoing of the Second Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), who finds a connection between wealth and voting, demonstrating that Southern turnout lowest among whites and black socio-economically deprived. The 2008 election voter turn-out rate varies from 56.8 percent to 61.6 percent as an early projection. See <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781453.html>; and http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2008G.html

^{cxxxv} See Susan J. Tolchin, *The Angry American: How Voter Rage Changed the Nation* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1999) 2nd ed., 53-76, who argues that rage over economic outlook explains non-voting. Despite strong economy, 75 percent of middle-class families indicate that they can not make ends meet.” Two-thirds of Americans worry their children won’t live as well, and most believe the American dream out of reach. Children from poor families in Sweden at least 15 other industrial nations are more likely to prosper than American children. She cites Michael Lind, who calls this the “Brazilianization” of the United States, arguing that a new permanent oligarchy that monopolizes power, income, resources at expense of poor and middle has been established.

^{cxxxvi} Progressives from both parties began challenging party control over the government during the gilded age when political corruption was arguably at a peak. Beginning in the 1880s, progressives passed strict anti-corruption laws or enforced existing ones. They made institutional and administrative changes, including making civil service merit based, undermining party patronage and creating the so-called Australian ballot to minimize political corruption. Just five years after the Progressives began fighting to get rid of party printed ballots in favor of official state printed ballots that consolidated all parties, 32 states and two territories had it. Only Georgia and South Carolina did not have this type of ballot by 1896. Not only did this minimize fraud, but the ballot consolidation gave voters a choice of candidates rather than a party slate. By 1917, 17 states used an office block ballot and 26 used party column format. Twelve of these states had straight party voting, though fewer states allowed emblems on the ballot. But, the shift to a secret ballot immediately minimized mass participation, impacting African-Americans, the poor, and immigrants the most because the ballot itself could now be used as a de facto literary test. Primaries also became important by 1917 when approximately three-quarters of all states mandated direct ones for statewide offices. While this reduced turnout at the general elections, it diminished the power of parties. State and federal progressive reformers passed campaign financing laws, forbidding corporate campaign contributions in national elections. Paul Kleppner and Stephen Baker, registration reform account for 50 percent of drop in 40 percent of all states. They argue that electoral reforms should be characterized as permissive rather than determinative factors. Nonetheless, the progressives ended the party era, creating a new era in which interest groups would eventually take power. Kornbluh, *Why America Stopped Voting*, 123-35.

^{cxxxvii} Connie de Boer, “The European Voter: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18 (2006): 142.

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^{cxxxix} Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* edited and abridged by Richard D. Heffner, (New York: Signet Classics, 2001), 192-94.

^{cxl} Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father* (New York: Crown Books, 1995, 2004), 46.

^{cxli} *Ibid.*, 47.

^{cxlii} Barack Obama, “Presidential Victory Speech,” November 4, 2008.

^{cxliii} See Ryan Lizza, “Inside the Crisis; Larry Summers and the White House Economic Team,” *New Yorker* 85 (October 12, 2009). According to Lizza the team was Vice President Joe Biden, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, Senior Advisor David Axelrod; Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner; Council of Economic Advisors Chair Christina Romer; Budget Director Peter Orszag; Biden’s economic advisor Jared Bernstein and several more. Obama also created the President’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board headed by the Former Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volker and outside economists, and CEO’s and labor officials (PERAB). Lizza describes why Obama chose Summers as well as how Emanuel determined the 675 to 775 million against Romer’s advice of a 1.2 trillion stimulus package. He also explains why Obama decided against nationalizing the banks. The four point memo explaining this that Obama received argued first that there was no legal authority to take over large bank holding companies; that nationalization might “trigger systemic shocks”; third medium term risk that would lose value the way foreclosure cause value loss of a home; finally Sweden didn’t nationalize for over two years when it was dire. Lizza presents an empathetic portrait of Summers, letting him describe in his words that “You put me in the midst of an economy that is basically held back by government borrowing, and, except for that, is substantially succeeding, and I have the orientation that I had during the Clinton Administration. Stepping back and seeing where things were after the Bush years, what you saw was these large bubbles forming, pervasive inequality, everything having moved in the wrong direction on health care, on energy . . . And so when things were pretty screwed up, and the dominant thrust of the policy had been of doing nothing, the inclination was much more on the activist side. But I don’t think it’s because I changed, I think it’s because the world changed.”

^{cxliv} Emanuel said in the transition and “never waste a crisis” caught on in international news both as a reflection of the Obama administration’s position and in general. See Gwyne Dyer, “Never Waste a Crisis,” *Korean Times* (November 26, 2008); David Miliband, “Let’s Turn the Anger into Real Change,” *News of the World*, May 31, 2009; “Uganda; Opposition Must Have Goals Beyond Winning Election,” *Africa News* (October 7, 2009); and Geoff Elliott, “Presidential blueprint to keep the ‘new west’ won,” *Weekend Australian* (February 21, 2009); Matt Richtel, “Austere Times? Perfect,” *New York Times* (April 11, 2009).

^{cxlv} Thomas Schaller, *Whistling Past Dixie: How the Democrats can Win without the South*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

^{cxlvi} Lizza, “The Code of the West: What Barack Obama can learn from Bill Ritter,” *The New Yorker*. Education, climate change, and energy independence constituted Ritter’s platform. He rarely discusses cultural or social issues.

^{cxlvii} *Ibid.*

^{cxlviii} *Ibid.*

^{cxlix} *Ibid.*

^{cl} See Schaller, *Whistling Past Dixie*, 152-63.

^{cli} “t would be more oriented toward small businesses and thus more skeptical of workplace regulations. It might become a party that puts more emphasis on achieving energy independence and combating global warming than on providing universal health care and social justice. “It’s a party that becomes more Hispanic, and less African-American . . .”

^{clii} Lizza, “The Code of the West.”

^{cliii} Michael Lind, “Winning Over The Values Voters,” *Newsweek* 151 (May 5, 2008).

^{cliv} Lizza, “The Code of the West.”

^{clv} *Ibid.*

^{clvi} See Nico Pitney, “Bill Clinton Flashback: “All These Economically Insecure White People...Are Scared To Death” *Huffington Post* (April 13, 2008)
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/04/13/bill-clinton-flashback-al_n_96433.html

^{clvii} Ibid.

^{clviii} See Nicholas J. G. Winter, *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas about Race & Gender Shape Public Opinion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 39

^{clix} Lizza, “The Code of the West.”

^{clx} See Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

^{clxi} Michael Cooper, “Among Republicans, a Debate Over the Party’s Road Map Back to Power,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2008.

^{clxii} Obama, “A More Perfect Union.”

^{clxiii} Neither did Clinton. As Ryan Lizza writes, “Clinton gave us NAFTA. He gave us the World Trade Organization. He and his Labor Secretary really wouldn’t say the word ‘union’ for two years when they were first elected.” Clinton himself recently acknowledged the reaction. In a speech to the Democratic Leadership Council in late July, he said, “There is one problem that we all have to admit still divides our party and divides the country, where our position right now is not popular, and that is trade. There is a sweeping rejection of globalization and a withdrawal from more trade relations, not just in the United States but in virtually every wealthy country in the world.” Trade is the core of Edwards’s anti-Clinton attack, especially in Iowa, where there is considerable protectionist sentiment.” See “Clintonism with Bill, Hillary, Her Rivals, and a Legacy with Problems,” *The New Yorker* 38 (September 17, 2007).

^{clxiv} MacFarquhar, “The Conciliator; Where is Barack Obama Coming From?” *The New Yorker*.

^{clxv} Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, “Introduction” in *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* Milkman and Voss, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1.

^{clxvi} Lizza, “The Code of the West.” The McCain campaign realizes it struck a chord in characterizing Obama as part of the elite.

^{clxvii} Leon Hadar, “Has Obama Let Voters Down?” *The Business Times Singapore* (September 5, 2009).