

# Obama: faith, hope, perseverance

He did it!

Barack Obama played by the rules and won the Democratic Party nomination for the president of the United States of America — and he did it with grace.

There were many who said he could not do it. America would not vote for an African American for the nominee, much less an African-American president, even though he is of biracial heritage.

But armed with a deep and abiding faith in God, in himself and in the American people, who he contends are ready for change, Obama forged ahead with an “audacity of hope.”

Hebrews 11:1 in the Bible defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Obama had the faith to believe in something that he could only visualize in his dreams, and he held on to his faith despite the naysayers.

Despite being mocked by his opponents as an unrealistic dreamer who was selling false hope and living in a “fairytale;” despite being marginalized as an inexperienced “kid;” and being depicted as someone with nefarious intentions simply because he had the misfortune to share a middle name with an evil dictator; and despite efforts to divert the conversation from substantive issues to trivial issues — Obama persevered and catapulted from underdog status to a major political contender, building an army of like-minded Americans who shares his dream of a better, more united America.

Obama’s historic nomination is undeniably one of America’s most shining moments. To see a country — that was built on the forced enslavement of Africans — finally embrace a man of African-American descent for the presidential nomination should make us all pause and reflect on how far we have come as a nation and where we want to go.

Are we going to stand for change



**Shirley Smith**

and evolve or stay in our comfort zone and remain stagnant?

Long before Obama entered the political arena, there was another great American leader that had the audacity to hope, and a big dream — the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He and his wife Coretta played major roles in the nonviolent civil rights movement for social change.

Dr. King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963 challenged America — at a time when African Americans were treated as second-class citizens — not to judge people by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. Though it took years for America to rise to that challenge, and there is still much work to be done, Obama’s nomination brings us closer to that “color-blind” society that Dr. King envisioned.

Dr. King’s struggle for racial equality and justice through nonviolent protests and inspirational speeches raised the conscientiousness of America and led to the abolition of the inhumane Jim Crow laws and the enactment of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed segregation in public accommodations, facilities and schools. The law also prohibited employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender and national origin, and it recognized every citizen’s constitutional right to vote.

The civil rights movement also led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed discriminatory voting practices including the use of literacy tests as a prerequisite

for voting.

Dr. King said:

“One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. But today our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant, and to face the challenge of change.”

Dr. King also said:

“We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools.”

Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela, the renowned anti-apartheid activists, were big dreamers as well.

Nelson Mandela defied all the odds when he emerged from a South African jail cell in 1990 after 27 years of imprisonment to become the country’s first elected president in the first fully represented democratic elections in 1994. Following his release from prison, Mandela preached a surprisingly reconciliatory message to a nation that had been torn apart by centuries of white minority rule and decades of a brutal policy of apartheid, which wreaked havoc on its black majority citizens.

His victory in 1994 marked the end of apartheid, but before his historic election, his then-wife, Winnie — proclaimed while he was still in jail and it seemed inconceivable — he would walk out of prison and become president.

Alongside the Kings and Mandelas were countless brave men and women of different races and religions who suffered, sacrificed and died for civil rights. It’s on their backs that Obama stands.

The Obamas, Kings and Mandelas dared to dream and had the courage to challenge the status quo. Their victories against insurmountable odds are a testament to the power of unwavering faith.

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