

by Samuel Francis

Perfect for This Moment

The hero of the hour, if not the messiah of the New Age, is Barack Obama, a gentleman whose name might lead you to suspect him of being an Afghan terrorist or the most recent American puppet candidate for the presidency of Iraq but who, in fact, is merely the freshman senator from the state of Illinois and very possibly the next vice president (and future president) of the United States. But his current and future achievements are of little significance. What's really important is Mr. Obama's rapid ascent to superhuman and indeed virtually messianic status. Why is this happening?

In the first place, it really is happening. Mr. Obama, an entirely obscure state legislator from Illinois, was unknown outside his own district until last summer, when he managed to wangle a spot at the Democratic National Convention and deliver what everyone seems to agree was an impassioned, brilliant, electrifying keynote address that Really Told It Like It Is. I confess I have long since abandoned my adolescent habit of listening to the speeches at the national party conventions, and I didn't listen to this one (or any other), but I'm skeptical. I suspect it was simply yet another contrived stemwinder that wallowed in the insights and gestures that the audience at Democratic conventions and in the media elite insist on hearing. Yet within a day, national commentators not only were woozy with awe at their newfound genius but were whispering, not very quietly, about a Hillary-Obama ticket in 2008 (a proposition that more or less conceded that John Kerry, the purported hero of the hour, would return to obscurity very quickly, much more quickly than the same people booming Mr. Obama were publicly admitting.)

The salivation over Mr. Obama soon became a veritable tsunami when, winning 70 percent of the vote, he devastated black neoconservative Alan Keyes in the Illinois Senate race, an outcome predictable to everyone except the Republicans who imported Mr. Keyes from Maryland and nominated him. Mr. Keyes, the roommate of neocon wonderboy Bill Kristol at Harvard and later Mr. Kristol's campaign manager in yet another

lackluster neocon political effort, has become a kind of professional losing candidate, having run for Senate (and paying himself a handsome salary for doing so out of his own campaign funds) and for president several times. Mr. Keyes' main function seems to be to make sure real conservatives can't win, and, if that is his purpose, he is impressively good at it. Last year, however, he was upstaged in this profession by the Illinois GOP itself, which chose him to confront Mr. Obama rather than nominate the reasonably conservative James Oberweis, who had opposed the Bush amnesty for illegal aliens. Thanks to the bottomless and truly astonishing inanity of the Republican Party, then, we now enjoy not only another liberal Democrat in the Senate but the messiah himself—and, soon, the utopia he and his disciples can be expected to deliver.

Probably the real reason, if there was any, that the Stupid Party brought Mr. Keyes into the race was because he is black and so is Mr. Obama. (Illinois Republican State Senator Steve Rauschenberger said as much to a reporter from the *Los Angeles Times*.) By running a black Republican against the black Democrat, the Stupidoes figured, "they can't accuse us of racism," and we can cut into Mr. Obama's black base. What is frightening is that there are people who actually think this way. You can accuse the Republicans of racism regardless of what they do because that is the whole point of accusing people of racism—to smear them with an unanswerable but meaningless charge and thus to provoke them into spending all their time and energy trying to "disprove" it. But you can also accuse them of something actually resembling "racism" because they obviously assumed that blacks would support a black candidate over a white one, because that's the way blacks are, you know.

In the event, Mr. Obama won a tidy 92 percent of the black vote in Illinois against the black Stupid Party candidate; Mr. Keyes managed to salvage a modest majority of Republicans (56 percent) and to lose overwhelmingly even the state Catholic vote. (He is a Catholic himself and is most noted for his fervent opposi-



tion to abortion.) Mr. Obama, a member of the United Church of Christ and a strong supporter of abortion, won the Catholics in the state by a not-so-modest 75 percent.

Because he won so heavily, Mr. Obama's victory actually had little to do with race, but it is when we touch that sensitive subject that we approach what I suspect are the real reasons for his elevation to messianic status. Mr. Obama, you see, is not only black but is what used to be called a "mulatto"—half black and half white. His father was a native of Kenya and an economist who met his white mother, aged 18, at the University of Hawaii. (He seems to have deserted his wife and child soon after the latter's birth; according to *Newsweek*, he saw his son only once after leaving, ten years later.) Mr. Obama, as the hot gossippers who are crafting his messianic iconography never tire of repeating, is "the first African-American male Democrat elected to the U.S. Senate." He was also, they like to repeat, "the first African-American president of the Harvard law review," and, as *Newsweek* solemnly assured us in a nauseatingly gushing cover story on Mr. Obama in December, this "was not the product of affirmative action or popularity but of academic candlepower and unrelenting work." Why, one wonders, should anyone be disposed to question that, and why would *Newsweek* feel the need to make sure we know it?

As not only a "multiracial person," as I suppose we must say today, but also a Harvard illuminatus, Mr. Obama is staged to join, as well as to lead, the swelling ranks of the New America, an America that itself is intended to be multiracial. His colleagues in the New America so far are such figures as Tiger Woods and Halle Berry, but soon there will be others. The myth being crafted around

these multiracial persons, and about multiracialism in general, is that it means the “end of racism,” that whites cannot possibly continue being mean to nonwhites because there will not be any whites left, and the nonwhites will be such only in part, so they will not be able to hate white people, either. In the meantime, multiracial political messiahs such as Mr. Obama can lead us closer to the promised land of a rainbow America that mass immigration into the “first universal nation” is supposed to be creating.

A TV interview with Mr. Obama soon after his speech at the convention made his multiracial identity and mission clear, but it made something else clear as well. Mr. Obama regards himself, as he stated in the interview, as black, and so, obviously, do the 92 percent of black voters who supported him. Like other multiracial persons, he therefore finds himself in a strong position. He can be both black and nonblack at the same time and can thereby perform two different functions. When he is black, he can appeal to the black racial solidarity that allows black voters, for example, to deliver 90 percent of their support to particular candidates, and thereby reap the political rewards of possessing a clear nonwhite racial identity. But when he is multiracial, he can lecture whites about how race is meaningless. Indeed, he can even lecture blacks about this, as he did in speaking to the Congressional Black Caucus soon after his election, when he told them, as *Newsweek* reports, that “I’m looking forward to working with you and *all* Americans.” That’s swell, but the truth is that Mr. Obama can be expected to promote a racial and political agenda that is as antiwhite and as left-wing as anything the Black Caucus or the Democratic Party itself ever proposes. The advantage he has over most of his comrades in this respect is that he can deploy his own multiracial identity to claim that he cannot be racially motivated, even as he supports antiwhite causes and measures. Mr. Obama, it turns out, is the one you cannot accuse of being racist.

Some of his comrades were slow to grasp what is going on, and, as *Newsweek* noted, one long-standing criticism of Mr. Obama among black radicals has been that he’s “too white.” Nevertheless, some are beginning to get it, and more will soon. Last summer, Newhouse News reporter Jonathan Tilove wrote an important story on Mr. Obama that made his new identity and its political utility clear.

Thus, Angela Dillard, a black history professor at New York University, saw what was going on at once. “I think this is really the end of an era of race and politics,” she chortled to Mr. Tilove. “Something’s shifting and changing and people like [Al] Sharpton can’t change with it, and something new and different is being created and it is about people like Obama.”

Al Sharpton’s presidential candidacy last year was a total bomb. His problem was that he is too black and alienates even other blacks, not to mention virtually all whites outside the readership of the *Nation*. Despite some obviously well-crafted image work, the Reverend Al will always remain the ranting racial demagogue who sponsored the Tawana Brawley fraud and used it to promote himself and his cronies. What Mr. Obama appears to offer is different, and probably far more dangerous. “I think he is talking about race when he’s not,” Professor Dillard said. “Something about the way he pitches things is perfect for this moment.” More exactly, perhaps, Mr. Obama is talking about race when he seems to be talking about something else. That’s what is dangerous, and from the perspective of the antiwhite left, white or nonwhite, that’s what is “perfect for this moment.”

Mr. Tilove also interviewed black Chicago congressman Danny Davis, who acknowledged that “black candidates seeking higher office are always on the knife’s edge of either appearing to whites to be ‘too strong on black-oriented issues’ or, conversely, not strong enough for the black base.” That was probably a polite way of saying that many of them, like the Reverend Al or Jesse Jackson, are simply “too black” to attract many white votes.

But, Davis said, “it seems like Barack has this quality about him that makes people go for him,” managing to win the hearts and minds of white voters in suburban and small-town Illinois while staying good “in the hood.”

Mr. Obama’s 92 percent of the Illinois black vote certainly helped, but what probably won him the election was the 66 percent of the state’s white vote he carried (against the pathetic 31 percent Mr. Keyes took). By contrast, George W. Bush won a piddling 58 percent of the white vote nationally. The largest percentage of the white vote any Republican has won in recent decades is Rich-

ard Nixon’s 67 percent in 1972. Mr. Obama is therefore competitive with Republicans in the core constituency of their party. You can understand why, for the Democrats, as political scientist Jeremy Mayer told Mr. Tilove, Mr. Obama “is a godsend.”

Mr. Obama’s own beliefs remain a mystery, though his background as a legislator and “community activist” show little deviation from conventional leftist poses. The line he currently seems to be promoting is that “we need new ideas” or some such banality. “One party seems to be defending a moribund status quo, and the other is defending an oligarchy,” he intoned to *Newsweek*. It is not clear which party he believes is doing which, or what the difference is. *Newsweek* drooled over his convention speech as showing that “an upbeat ‘One America’ message still resonates” and purred that his “own rethinking of where the country should go still contains more questions than answers” but nevertheless insists that Mr. Obama is “about embracing our hybrid origins and transcending our often narrow-minded past.”

And for all the staleness of that platitude, that is what Mr. Obama and his multiracial identity and his electrifying messages are really about. He is the messiah for the New America, the multiracial and multicultural mess toward which mass immigration and the dwindling birthrates of white Americans are leading, an America in which our “narrow-minded past” will be extirpated as surely as the Confederate flag and Christmas crèches have been in recent years. That kind of symbolic and ceremonial “transcendence” is only the beginning, of course, and ultimately the real “transcendence” will be the homogenization of race, culture, region, class, religion, and nation into the same stew—the real meaning of the “Melting Pot” that Israel Zangwill brewed in his insipid play of that name more than a hundred years ago. Mr. Obama may or may not become vice president or president, but the rulers of the New America will have to be people largely indistinguishable from him, and, if his performance in the Illinois election is any indication, few Americans, white or black, see anything wrong with it. <e>

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Principalities & Powers

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Three Strikes and You're Out

April 2005 will mark the third mayoral election since I arrived in Rockford at the end of 1995. In that first election in April 1997, Rockford's first (and, so far, only) black mayor, Democrat Charles Box, was running for his third term. For eight years, the city had been under a federal court order to desegregate its schools; the school board had imposed taxation without a popular referendum (later declared illegal by the Illinois Supreme Court) to pay for the lawsuit, which ultimately cost Rockford's taxpayers a third of a billion dollars; and the city's residential neighborhoods were crumbling under the highest property-tax rates in the nation.

The protest against the illegal tax, led by the redoubtable Mary Hitchcock and the indefatigable Barb Dent and fought *pro bono* in the courts by the heroic Michael O'Brien, was at its peak; The Rockford Institute turned out over 700 people on a cold, snowy, and icy night in February for a rally against judicial tyranny; and all Mayor Box could bring himself to do was to advise the taxpayers of Rockford to "belly up to the bar."

Black families were having their homes taken from them through eminent domain in order to build palatial "magnet schools" (equipped with planetaria and Olympic-sized swimming pools) that were somehow supposed to rectify discrimination against those same black families; allegations of corruption against Box and his administration (including collusion with public-works contractors who had financed Box's mayoral campaigns and for whom, after he left office, he would go to work) were widespread; and, when the dust had settled, Box had been reelected to his third term.

Four years later, Mayor Box having announced his retirement, the Democratic mantle passed to Doug Scott, who had served as city legal director under Box before moving up to the state legislature, backed by the same public-works contractors who had funded Box. As a state representative, Scott's most-important legislative initiative was a bill that would have legalized euthanasia, not exactly a popular measure in this staid Midwestern town. Publicly identified with Box's

stand on the school-desegregation lawsuit (Scott had consistently refused to take any action against the illegal taxation imposed by the school board), Scott was also widely criticized for having sponsored legislation allowing Winnebago County to employ "Quick Take," a particularly virulent form of eminent domain that allows a governmental body to seize private property first and negotiate a price later. (Traditionally, under eminent domain, the owner retains control of the property until he has been paid, which allows him, if he can afford a competent lawyer, to negotiate something close to a just price. Under "Quick Take," however, government has no need to play fair, since the property is transferred at the beginning of the process.) Blind veteran Tom Ditzler had lost over half of his rural homestead west of Rockford in a "Quick Take" action that made the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* when a local activist tried to chain himself to a tree to prevent its destruction by a bulldozer.

And, when the dust had settled, Doug Scott was elected mayor of Rockford in April 2001.

Why, in a city routinely described (at least until recently) as Republican have the Democrats won six mayoral elections straight? (Democrat John McNamara was in office for two terms in the 1980's before handing the mantle over to his city legal director, Charles Box, and returning to the "private sector" to become president of the parent company of the public-works contractor that backed McNamara, Box, and Scott.) Partly, it can be attributed to the dynastic effect that we see at work in national elections as well; and, partly, well, the times, they are a-changin'. The erosion of Rockford's manufacturing base, whose owners and workers have traditionally voted Republican; white and middle-class flight during the 13 years of the federal desegregation lawsuit; and increased immigration (Rockford's Hispanic population grew from around two percent of the total population in 1990 to just under ten percent in 2000) have combined to tip the political balance. Today, Rockford is either evenly split (as the city council, in fact, is) or trending Democratic. By no means, how-



ever, should the mayor's office be out of play for the Republicans.

Still, come April 5, Doug Scott will be reelected for his second term, despite a lackluster first term that has satisfied neither his critics nor his supporters. Rockford's downtown, though arguably no worse off than when Scott took office, has not experienced the revival he promised; over 11,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost over the past four years; minor-league sports teams and important new business ventures have been snapped up by surrounding cities and counties. Over the last six months, the city has engaged in a frenzy of road projects, presumably to provide Scott with one accomplishment he can point to in his reelection campaign; the main effect, however, has been to anger drivers (some of whom do vote), who have found crosstown trips doubling or tripling in time (if, indeed, they can even get there from here).

So why am I certain that Mayor Scott will win reelection? Because, for the third time in a row, the local Republicans have put up a losing candidate. In 1997, they nominated W. Timothy Simms, a former state legislator and Rockford alderman who had, over the years, turned off many older Rockfordians with his imperious, self-righteous attitude. Sick as people were of the Box regime, Simms' campaign did not lack for volunteers, but the campaign managers made very poor use of them, calling the same Republican voters as many as five times during the campaign to ask them whether they intended to vote for Simms. Caught up in conspiracy theories about the connections and past actions of Box's financial supporters, Simms and his cronies refused to address the question of the influence of public-works contractors directly; the closest they dared come was a cute little commercial, which ran a few times only days before