



How Obama Won

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I want to thank the L.A. World Affairs Council for inviting me today. I'd like to think this is the first book out of the block. As you well know with President Obama, there have been many books and there will be many, many more books that will be written about him and the historic win.

One of the things that I was motivated to do in writing this book is to look at some keys to the win. How did Obama pull this off? We all know; we heard this many times about this being an historic event, but how did it happen? How did this monumental event happen? I isolated five different areas and I talk about this in the book.

As a matter of fact, let me back it up one second. A minister said to me, "Can you tell me in twenty-five words or less how he won?" I said, "Mr. Minister, that's kind of hard but why don't you get the book and read it? That's not going to be a bailout for the book. You're not going to be the stimulus plan for the book." But he got me thinking. I said, "Let me do this. How about not in twenty-five words but, rather, sum it up by isolating five keys?"

Number one: money! Money is very important. As we know in presidential politics, it's a billionaire's derby. You have to have money to compete at that level and what Obama was able to do was in many ways masterful. Certainly the Republican Party raised a lot of money, but in this case a Democrat was able to raise money and that was so important because you're not going to be competitive and you're not going to win without money.

One of the things that killed Hillary Clinton at the end was she didn't have the money. She couldn't compete in the primaries when it was really on the line. You need money. There are so many things that you have to buy in terms of getting things done in a presidential campaign.

The second thing that was so important was the media. Early on, the media... fixated on a Democratic candidate. Usually, the Republicans get an edge in the media but in this case, although I know media bias and liberal bias, but generally there's more of a balance than many people think. But in this case there was a likeability factor in the media for Obama.

I think that served him well because it sent a big signal to corporate America, the banking interests, brokerage houses where money is funneled into campaigns, it's OK, he's safe; he's a reliable candidate. He's not a wild-eyed radical. He's not a populist. He's not going to overturn the system. He's OK. So I think when the media signed on that was a big step forward.

Also, too, the whole change in the timing. I think a lot liked that; a lot of those in the media that made decisions like that because of another reason. Many people did not like Bush in media. They did not like what happened. They did not like the treatment in the media. Many people saw him as arrogant. Many people saw him as essentially distant from the media. There was a lack of likeability there, so Obama comes along, he was an easier sell.

Then there was a third factor: an organization. You have to have an organization that can really produce. This was a masterful organization, a masterpiece of how you put together a professional organization. I have to tell you, if I got one more e-mail from this "Info," Barack this, Barack, that, Barack every minute on the minute during the whole campaign! I got one e-mail from John McCain. Somebody fell down on that one.

But Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, e-mail blasts, how to use the Internet to put together volunteer networks, fundraising – it just went on and on. It was a masterpiece. The organization actually has won awards. Not political awards from political organizations, but from business groups on how you put together an organization.

The Obama campaign mechanism of machines are being studied worldwide and it's really changed the dynamics of politics not only in this country but worldwide. It will be the standard for politics and politicians, those that are politicians and wanna-be politicians, for years to come.

The fourth thing: minimizing race. That was important because race is there. Now this is historic: the first African-American. With many issues; many problems, could race be a major factor?

Could it play a role? Could it torpedo the campaign? Could it sink it? These are the kinds of things that were uncharted territory. We didn't know; we did not know where this was going. This was a big debate – the first African-American presidential candidate, blah blah, blah. We really didn't know. So, what happened? Because with changing times; changing conditions, there was a softening there.

I think there was a willingness to cross over. A good message of coming together; unity and pulling together. I think that all played a role in terms of softening who he is, what he is, and the potential danger that threatened some circles being an African-American.

Another key which I think was important was the presidency. This might not have worked – organization, money, all of these things – if we didn't have a failed presidency. I think there was a great sense on the part of a wide segment of the American people that this was a miserable failed president and presidency. I think that was a factor, too. In fact... towards the end {of the campaign} many people said – and I heard some Republicans say – “I've been a lifelong Republican and this time I cannot vote for John McCain. I have to go with Barack Obama.” I heard that from a lot of Republicans.

Yet another thing that I think is very important is a change in dynamics in America and worldwide. *Time* magazine today is looking at how the world is looking at Obama and it's different because foreign policy, as we know, is an intimate part of domestic policy – how the world sees us, how we see ourselves, and how we interrelate.

When you're dealing with Iran, when you're dealing with North Korea, when you're dealing with Pakistan, when you're dealing with all of these areas, I think it's important that you really send a good signal and Obama was able to do that. He was able to get into foreign leaders who said, “We want a new change in policy. We want someone that essentially reflects a new dynamic.”

He was able to do that. He was able to pull that off and people were able to respect that and I think that will change the image of the United States globally and also change how the rest of the world sees the United States from outside. I think that will be there.



If I could take just one minute, another book that I wrote that doesn't get a lot of play, *The Emerging Black GOP Majority*. Many people were saying, "Earl, how could you write this book? How could you have this title? This is a ridiculous title." Well, we know something – there's change in the Republican Party. The Republican Party now has a new Republican National Chair, Michael Steele. We'll see if that really changes the Republican Party, we'll see where that goes, we'll see if the Republican Party, to be competitive in 2012, can actually make that change. That's going to be something that we're going to have to keep our eye on.

In any case, those are some of the areas that I stress in the book, some of the things that I will be talking about and some of the things I will be happy to answer your questions about.

Thank you very much.

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