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Mobilizing Change: Lessons Learned from Obama's 2008 Campaign

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(Sean Means outside of Houston Texas Campaign Office)

Introduction

The idea of Hope and Change was one of the staples of Obama's 2008 campaign. However, one would have only been left to simply hope for a change in government if it wasn't for the intentional campaign strategies applied by his campaign. This campaign was unlike others before as it involved the implementation of technology that continually evolved throughout the ordeal. The campaign connected people from throughout the country from the mountains of Alaska to the beaches in Florida. In a time where it's sometimes hard for people to believe in government and one another, Obama's campaign brought people from all types of lifestyles and backgrounds together for one cause that once seemed impossible.

School Information and Demographics

Pittsburgh Westinghouse is part of Pittsburgh Public Schools. It is a building that serves 6th through 12th graders in a traditional academic setting. Students that attend the school come from Homewood, Larimer, Lincoln, Wilkinsburg and East Hills. The school is currently in School Improvement according to the State of Pennsylvania's Department of Education. The school serves a total of 708 students: 387 males and 321 females. According to the district's Discoverpps.org website, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students is 84.04%. Racially, the school has 665 African American students, 22 students that identify as multi-Racial, 10 Caucasian students, 6 Hispanic students, <5 Asians and <5 American Indian. (1)

Rational

Over the last few years, I have noticed a decline in my students' belief in their country and their ability to succeed within it. To be honest, I have also been conflicted about the current perception of the nation. The news, social media, and continued disenfranchisement of people of color have been an inescapable reality that continues to stain our country's reputation. I've been extremely critical of the nation both in and out of the classroom, frustrated with the gross disparities in wealth, privilege and the treatment of minorities. These issues are real and should never be taken lightly; still, if we only focus on the negative, we eclipse the opportunity for the future and leave those we teach with little hope for the future which, in the end, is counterproductive to the entire mission of education.

This year, I plan to pivot from previous units I have written at Yale and talk about the promise of America, a promise that is not realized easily or without trials. In a world where instant gratification seems to be the standard line of currency, I want to create a unit that highlights a time where the nation made a long-term investment in itself and its future, its people and its perception by others around the world.

Moreover, the unit's focus will be on the youth's involvement in organizing and implementing a successful campaign strategy. This is important because my students sometimes question what type of impact they can have in making a change in government and their own circumstances. This was a time in history where young

people were able to be part of that change, not only for America but for one another. I believe in the objectives of this unit because I was part of it. I worked my way from a being a volunteer to a staff member where I had the chance to travel from Virginia, Ohio, Delaware, Florida, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas, finally ending this chapter of my life in Washington D.C. Every office was filled with people from diverse backgrounds, both racially and economically. We all worked seven day, eighty hours weeks where we were fueled by fast food and idealism. The campaign provided clear goals and roles that the team was eager to commit to and invest in. Most worked for little or no pay and everyone I worked with wanted to genuinely create a better tomorrow by working today. I have never worked with a more youthful and optimistic team that believed in their candidate, their cause and one another.

Looking back at it, my adventure with the campaign was probably the most ambitious I've ever been in my life. I loved that team. We looked out for one another, walked in lock step and accomplished something once believed to be an unthinkable reality. I transferred that same spirit to my venture in education. I came to Pittsburgh to help turn around a school that had been failing for years, again, trying to do the impossible.

To be honest, to me, turning around a school has been harder than electing the first African American president. Systems, contracts, discrimination and poverty are barriers that cannot be deconstructed in a few months. Furthermore, you don't have the autonomy to get who you want on or off the bus; you're simply not at liberty to move how you want or when you want. And yet, within my own classroom I try my best to evoke the energy and optimism I once had during that chapter in life. I hope that if I can transfer that optimism to my students that they, too, will be able to believe that all things are possible in their own lives.

The Storm

At the time that Obama decided to run for the presidency, the nation was in turmoil. The nation was in an economic freefall. There seemed no end to the ascending climb of the housing market, "Average home prices in the United States more than doubled between 1998 and 2006, the sharpest increase recorded in US history." (2) This growth only pushed more Americans to invest more in their homes. Instead of being satisfied with the basic necessities, they wanted to maximize their initial investments. "Residential investment grew from about 4.5% of US gross domestic product to about 6.5% over the same period." The housing market also helped to create jobs and careers for more Americans looking for employment. "Forty percent of net private sector job creation between 2001 and 2005 was accounted for by employment in housing-related sectors." (3)

Benjamin Key of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Business explains that credit was also a key factor in the mortgage crisis. He says, "credit expanded in all directions in the build-up to the last crisis - any direction where there was appetite for anyone to borrow." (4) Credit, a system that in its very name, is supposed to represent a faithful account of someone's ability to be or not to be accountable when it comes to spending, saving, and managing money seemed to have lost all interest in accurately accounting for someone's ability to manage finances.

With the idea of credit having little credibility, financial industries were quick to join in what seemed to be an economic wild west of sorts. Financial institutions exploited these informational asymmetries to boost mortgage origination and securitization volume and thus their profits, which derive from fees taken at every stage of the process. In this fee-driven business model, increased volume meant increased profit, so financial

institutions were incentivized to make and securitize as many mortgages as possible.”

(5). All of these unchecked and overstimulated growth factors eventually led to an economic reckoning. The U.S. Domestic product dropped four points and the unemployment rate in America jumped from five to ten percent. (6)

The economy was not the only thing that the government was dealing with at that time. The nation was still committed to two warfronts. In a House Hearing in October 2007, it was reported that the Iraq war was the cause of “more than 3,800 military personnel and DOD civilians killed and more than 28,000 wounded.” (7) Monetarily, the war was draining American tax payers’ pockets too, in a time when their financial resources no longer had the flexibility. In 2007, the Iraq war had cost \$450 billion in total and was costing Americans \$10- to \$12 billion with each additional month of fighting. (8) In addition to the financial implications of the war, it continued to lose public favor and support amongst most Americans. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research center in February 2007, “fully two-thirds (67%) said the war in Iraq was not going well – the largest percentage expressing this view since the war began.” (9) Not only was the war costing lives and money, but the vast majority of Americans no longer saw a need to invest in the conflict.

In short, the growing economic and human cost of fighting on a two-war front was exasperating an already untenable economic and humanistic situation. Both of these conflicts would be forever connected to the Bush presidency and the Republican Party. Bush was limping out of office; the years of constant ridicule, a crippling economy and wars that seemed to have no end had aged the once wide-shouldered president from Texas. Every president has their trials and Bush was no different, yet unlike, other presidents, we don’t highlight his accomplishments. Still, none of these things mattered to the Obama, his team, or thousands of followers. People wanted a change.

One of the keys to getting a good start as president is winning the Iowa Caucus. The word caucus comes from Algonquin Indians. (10) It means that one is encouraging and advising a person to talk, to provide counsel and promote. Its purpose is to bring about some sort of action. The Iowa Caucus is just that, it’s the beginning of a campaign, a place where a candidate can really make their mark on the presidential race as they try to make a statement to the nation, or better, to the world that they are in fact a true contender. The Washington Times describes, “the caucus process is convoluted compared with straightforward primary votes, but the outcome has a big impact on the entire country’s political landscape: The victor and close runners-up get a significant boost heading into the rest of the primary season.” (11) One reality that was certain: if Obama wanted to do well in the primaries, he needed to do so early on. David Plouffe recounted in his book “The Audacity to Win” that “it started and ended with Iowa.” While this seems like an overly strong statement, when we think about momentum it isn’t all that far from the actual truth.

There had been grumblings about Obama’s possible step into the presidential race for some time, but on February 10th 2007 at a rally in Springfield, Illinois, the same spot where former president Abraham Lincoln gave his “House Divided” speech to a nation that was on the brink of a Civil War that lasted four year and take 1,100,392 American lives and leave much of the south in tatters, Obama had what seemed to be an appropriately humble coming out party. (12) The candidate proclaimed to the entire world that he was ready to take on the challenges of the presidency and the responsibilities and criticisms that come with the occupation. Like everything in his campaign, he and his team were intentional in their steps. (13) The nation wanted change, and the senator from Illinois was eager to jump into the storm and take on all challengers.

Two David's, One Nucleus

One of the key elements of any great endeavor is that the people at the top are passionate, smart, organized and have the ability to delegate and inspire a team. While the candidate himself was in charge of winning over the hearts and minds of the American people, it was dual combination of David's that were the heads of the campaign machine: David Plouffe and David Axelrod. Together, they made the organizational nucleus of Obama's campaign structure. Although he was a very different person and politician than George Bush, he "followed the Bush model in one area. Obama was running to be a national antidote to George Bush, but he had read enough and studied enough about recent presidential elections to know that the Bush people did one thing very well: they had a tight circle involved in key decisions and none of those people talked out of school. Obama wanted the same along with a clear chain of command." (14) The David's were at the top of that chain and they shouldered most of the responsibility when it came to the day-to-day operations of the campaign and media messaging.

Axelrod and Obama first met in 1992. Axelrod recalls how they were introduced to him in an NPR interview: "Betty Lou Saltzman, who's kind of a doyen of liberal politics in Chicago, called me in 1992, and she said, I just met the most extraordinary young man, and I think you ought to meet him. And I said, well, I'm happy to meet anybody you want me to meet, Betty Lou, but why do you think I should meet this particular person? And she said, honestly, I think he could be the first African-American president of the United States. This was in 1992. I always joke that when I go to the track now, I take Betty Lou with me because she obviously has a gift for spotting the winners early." (15) Even though he believed in Obama, Axelrod explained in a 2008 Washington Post article that he eventually decided on joining Obama because as he put it, "I thought that if I could help Obama get into Washington then I would have accomplished something great in my life." (16) Axelrod, by title, was the campaign's "Chief Strategist." "Axelrod was considered the mind behind Obama's phenomenon." (17) Before coming to work on the Obama campaign, he had worked on several other political campaigns, helping "Deval Patrick become governor of Massachusetts, Hillary Clinton become a senator from New York, and Anthony Williams become mayor of Washington." (18) David had also worked on Senator Edwards campaign and helped advise Chris Dodd as well. (19) It was his responsibility to compose and keep a consistent but fresh message that couldn't be duplicated or claimed by other candidates. Obama had to be more than just a politician, he had to connect with the American people in ways that were different than any other candidate before him.

In terms of consistency, Axelrod explained that the message had to be consistent with the first one presented when he introduced himself in 2008. He explains that Obama presented the issues with government as the "the failure of leadership, the smallness of our politics -- the ease with which we're distracted by the petty and trivial, our chronic avoidance of tough decisions, our preference for scoring cheap political points instead of rolling up our sleeves and building a working consensus to tackle big problems." (20)

Some would say it was Axelrod who was Obama's first real political ally and it was his pedigree, experience and sincere belief in the impossible that attracted others to Obama's campaign team. In David Plouffe's memoir, "The Audacity to Win," Plouffe recalls how Axelrod was able to win him and a few others over to Obama's team. When a person asked, "let me get this straight. We should work for a candidate with no chance, no money, and the funny name?" (21) And yet still, Axelrod was undeterred, his confidence never wavering in the candidate he endorsed. Simply put, "Obama was a different guy." (22)

Recruiting David Plouffe to the team was probably the most genius thing that Axelrod ever did. Plouffe was

young for such a position and still didn't have the same experience as other candidates for the job. Axelrod told Plouffe that he was that right man for the job, that "I am going to tell him you are the only and best choice. We'll be in this boat together, even if it goes down. I had faith even when Plouffe didn't have it in himself, and Obama agreed with Axelrod." (23)

New Technology

Although having a massive force of boots-on-the ground canvassers is important, the 2008 campaign used the power of the internet and web-based technology to move its messaging to the farthest corners of not only the United States, but the entire globe. Every laptop, desk monitor and inbox were targets for this web-based political campaign. This was important because according to Carol Vernallis from the University of Texas, at the time "more media content was online than on television, and that during the 2008 election, 88 percent of all voters went online for political information." (24)

During Obama's campaign, strategists were able to organize more than 140,000 volunteers and raise \$6.4 million in small donations. What many people think of as spam or junk mail could also be referred to as "micro-targeting." (25) In an article published by the Utrecht Law Review, the author explains that micro-targeting is when campaigns are able to assemble data based on a person's interest and tailor a personal campaign to win them over. The article states that the move from voter management databases to integrated voter management platforms made the shift from mass-messaging to micro-targeting employing personal data from commercial data

brokerage firms; the analysis of social media and the social graph; and the decentralization of data to local campaigns through mobile applications.'" (26) This same concept can be applied to political campaigns, "With online micro-targeting, political communications can be targeted at individuals or niche audiences, and the messages can be adapted to the recipients. A company gives an example of the possibilities for targeting niche audiences: "targeting fathers aged 35-44 in Texas who frequent gun enthusiast websites." (27) Once they understand what the person is interested in, they are able to create a campaign message that is consistent, cost efficient and relevant to that person. If your political interest revolves around new energy, crime, healthcare or the military, campaigns will know and they will be able to construct a campaign using the data taken from cookies, searches and micro-data to create something that is specific to your interest when you're sleeping and when you're awake.

Micro-targeting goes hand-in-hand with social networking. In 2008, three in four 18- to 24-year-old young adults had some type of profile on a social media platform, such as Facebook or Myspace, and over half of 25- to 30-year-olds had a social media profile (28). What's important to remember about these groups is that this was considered to be an untapped area of potential growth in terms of voter turnout. For some time, these groups of voters seemed to be disenchanted with the voting process. Understanding this growth opportunity, Obama and his team seized the moment and pushed ahead of this inescapable trend to gain new voters.

Facebook was a key player in the 2008 election and Obama had an ally in Chris Hughes, one of Facebook's co-founders who decided to provide his social media experience and acumen to help spread the message of hope and change. With Hughes' help, Obama and his team were steps ahead of others. For instance, in May of 2007, Facebook launched the "Platform" which allowed users to customize their Facebook pages in a way that

was easier on the eye and more user friendly. Obama’s team had user friendly pages up in the first week while it took Hillary Clinton’s team until February of 2008 to have a similar page up and running.

In addition to having an online profile earlier than his competitors, Hughes instructed Obama, staff and volunteers to push everyone to visit Obama’s official website. Mark Jamison PhD. explains that supporters were encouraged “to log into My.BarackObama.com— ‘a website where supporters could join local groups, create events, get updates, and engage in fundraising—using their Facebook accounts. This gave the campaign access to their Facebook data, which the campaign then used for microtargeting.” (29)

The concept of going viral was also used to attract younger voters, too. For instance, Will.i.am's, pop sensation and member of the pop group The Black-Eyed Peas, wrote and produced the song and video, "Yes We Can." It has been seen as the most influential political video of the 2008 presidential election, won an Emmy and a Webby award, and had been viewed by the time of election day 26 million times. This video came after the New Hampshire primary. In the video, you see clips of Obama. His message of “Yes We Can” served as the hook and the title of the ballad. It was played throughout the rest of the campaign on the internet and at campaign rallies. (30) There were also less popular videos that were still circulated widely, such as “I got a Crush on Obama” had 10 million views and “Dear Obama” had 12 million views (31).

Obama was the pop stars’ president, getting endorsements from Oprah, Robert De Niro, Chris Rock, Usher, Kerry Washington, Brendan Routh, Kate Walsh, Kal Penn, Tate Donovan, Tracee Ellis Ross, Journee Smollett, Vicki Kennedy, Kelly Hu, John Legend, Adam Rodriguez, Amber Valetta, Nick Cannon, and Kareem Abdul Jabbar. (32) While each of these celebrities only had one vote themselves, they had a cult-like following in the millions of mostly young, impressionable followers who could organize, provide financial support and most of all, vote. While a song or a view is not a vote, from a marketing perspective, it’s supportive. While this continued messaging and audio video stimulation may not by itself win people’s votes, it helped to give an added bit of motivation for younger voters to get to the poles. In contrast from the 2004 primaries to the 2008 election, there was a bump of 5% in the Iowa Caucus, 7% in Georgia, 4%, in New Hampshire, 5% in California, 7% in New York, 5% percent in Massachusetts, 5 % in Missouri, 5% in South Carolina, 6% in Tennessee, 5% in Connecticut, and 1% in Arizona. While these are only small surges in overall gain, they are significant increases in youth voting in the primaries paid dividends in battle ground states in the general election. (33)

The Field Operation



(Broward County Florida Campaign Staff and Volunteers)

The Obama campaign served as a blueprint for how political candidates should organize and implement a new-aged form of campaigning. Although the candidate himself was once a community organizer, he left his own campaign's organizing to a new group of hungry individuals, ready to create change in their own backyards as well as across the nation. This type of community organizing began in places like Chicago and Iowa. That grass would soon grow and bear ripe fruit, a mobilization of thousands of volunteers and staff that would orchestrate the most politically savvy ground game in modern history.

Generating the ground swell of a campaign can be looked at similarly to the mobilization of military. Think America right after Pearl Harbor. At first, you don't have much but in a short amount of time, you have people from around the country willing to give their time, energy and effort to a common cause. In the case of Obama's campaign, this first happened at "Camp Obama" which was held in Chicago, Illinois in May of 2007. The camp was held in a high rise in the city with approximately fifty people who came in four-day sessions. There were five weeks of sessions of volunteers and staff. During these sessions, the Obama faithful learned the rules of elections, they strategized the campaign they hoped to implement in the field and then planned to proceed come the primaries. (34) This was the beginning of the field operation; the Obama team had commenced mobilization.

During the Obama training sessions, they saw that there would be five organizing practices that served as the fundamentals that would lead the field campaign: Narrative; Relationship; Structure; Strategy; and Action. (35). Time Magazine explains that the job of the campaign staff is to shape the limited time and activity of both of the candidates and his or her supporters into a unified effort that drives a win. (36) Each member of

the team would be trained in the importance of these practices and what they meant to the overall campaign's end goal. In terms of the personal narrative, the campaign wanted to focus on how the values of the candidate aligned with their own values. Staff and volunteers were able to make connections with the candidate's values which they took door-to-door and communicated those similar values to those that listened. That shared experience had energy and a genuine enthusiasm. By making the connection between the candidate's personal narrative, their own, and the potential voter's narrative, canvassers were able to find common ground that was more authentic than just analyzing the issues. (37)

Second, the campaign trained their volunteers to prioritize relationships. Instead of only having large rallies, organizers "learned the craft of the one-on-one meeting and the house meetings that laid the foundation for local organization, rooted in the commitments people made to each other, not simply an idea, task, or issue." (38) The campaign couldn't take all the credit for this approach. They had taken it from the Howard Dean playbook. He used it in his 2003 New Hampshire campaign and it served the candidate well. As Obama pushed forward in the primaries in his campaign in South Carolina, this strategy was implemented throughout the state. "Organizers had some 400 house meetings attended by 4000 people." What's important to remember is these same networks would be called on again after the primaries. Even if they couldn't win their state, they could make things tougher for McCain, stretching his resources while making calls to other battleground states. (39)

One of the most important parts of an efficiently run campaign is its structure, how it's organized. "The Dean campaign was a wake-up call about the importance of disciplined organization in our political process. It didn't lack energy or enthusiasm, it lacked a sound foundation, which made it hard to build upon." The '08 campaign learned from those mistakes. (40) While there was indeed leadership at the highest levels, when it came to the field, volunteers were broken into leadership teams. This served as the fundamental organizational unit that was responsible for a certain area identified as turf, usually within their own communities. Each neighborhood team had captains: data captain, phone bank captain and neighborhood team leader. (41) These teams organized phone banks, community canvases, fundraisers etc. Because they were familiar with their own communities, they got more people to open doors and listen to their pitches. These types of authentic relationships, outsiders or paid staffers often don't have and cannot duplicate.

Next, the strategy must come from a central location and that strategy is then disseminated to each state, local office, staffer and volunteer. Everyone is on the same page. The national effort and the local effort are one in the same. That said, people had the autonomy to build their own local coalitions as long as they kept the big ideas in mind. Every one-on-one meeting looked different but the overall goal was for that meeting to encourage a house meeting where more supporters would hear about how they could help the campaign. This was followed by a training and an action plan for their designated turf. Most of this would be facilitated by the volunteers. This happened over and over again in big cities and small towns, building capacity for the overall field operation. (42)

After the infrastructure of the campaign teams had been built from a national and local level during the primaries, the next step was to make sure that it created a successful GOTV effort. GOTV means "Get Out the Vote," what some would call the campaign equivalent to D-Day. By the time the general election came around, the Obama team had created a massive "network of campaign volunteers who helped him establish over 700 field offices across the country, compared to less than 400 for Senator John McCain." (43)

Get Out the Vote

In “The Audacity to Win,” David Plouffe explains why Iowa, the first primary/caucus in the cycle, is so important to a presidential race. In a conversation with David Axelrod, he says, “we were running against such a formidable front-runner that if she won the first few contests, the race would be over. We would never be able to erase her big leads in the latter primary states, and at that point, her organizational and financial advantages would really kick in, as she looked to be the all-but certain nominee and we campaigned states where we had spent little time and resources. As Ax told me over a breakfast in Chicago on day during this period, ‘I really don’t think we have a choice. It’s Iowa or bust.’” (44)

He did just that. After winning in Iowa, the campaign took off and Obama was now to be taken seriously. On January 23, 2008, Obama won Iowa, defeating Clinton and Edwards in the first major primary. He lost the New Hampshire primary but bounced back in South Carolina, winning by thirty points. (45) Obama took more states than Clinton on Super Tuesday but he trailed in terms of the popular votes and Clinton maintained a slim lead. Throughout this time the field, fundraising and technological data gathering continued to grow as the campaign moved from state to state. Obama was able to counter every obstacle put in his way. He weathered the storm of Samantha Powel’s comments on Hillary Clinton, where she called the senator a monster during an off the record conversation, successfully sidestepping his former foreign policy adviser’s comments and while staying focused on his main objective. (46)

When he was questioned about his connections with Reverend Wright, Obama and his speech writers countered with “A More Perfect Union,” an uncannily calm composition that answered the question from critics from all angles. This could have ended the candidate, but instead, Wrights comments fueled an already hot fire in the field, helping to raise funds and interest for Obama and his campaign. Calm and collected, the Illinois senator continued to remain in control of his emotions and the campaign, bowling a 37 in Altoona, PA and finally winning the Democratic Nomination after the North Carolina Primary. In June, with a surge of 40 new super delegates’ endorsements, he officially took the democratic nomination.

The infrastructure that had been created during the primaries supported the weight of the general election with ease as the candidate’s popularity and piggy bank continued to grow. According to the Washington Post, “3 million donors made a total of 6.5 million donations online adding up to more than 500 million. Of those 6.5 million donations, 6 million were in increments of \$100 dollars or less.” (47) This financial support help led to an unprecedented amount of adds, yard-signs, buttons etc. Not only was McCain outspent, he was, more importantly, out-strategized by Obama’s tactician at every measurable point. In the end, more than 69.4 million Americans cast their vote for Obama, while some 59.9 million voters chose McCain. (48) The end result was an Obama victory with 365 votes to McCain’s 173.

Although the candidate got most of the praise for the victory, it was in fact the strategic ground game led by college students, interns, ordinary citizens from big cities and small towns, people from every color, belief system and income level, all of whom were willing to sacrifice their time and energy to a call bigger than themselves. Change doesn’t happen by accident, it occurs through the consistent and intentional moves of believers in an idea that is rooted in strategy, proper and deliberate organization and implementation. The Obama ‘08 campaign serves as an example of what’s possible when things are properly planned and acted upon.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: JFK and Obama Lesson

This unit can be taught in several different ways depending on the approach, overall goal of the educator, content area and teaching style. If the educator would like to approach the content from a more historical lens, I recommend that they look at how campaigns had been run in the past. I highly recommend using John F. Kennedy's election of 1960. John F. Kennedy's was similar to Barack Obama's in terms of youthful energy and strategizing. Kennedy and his campaign team made every effort to create a narrative that connected with the American People's sense of hope and idealism with the nation. Kennedy wanted to "get the nation moving again" and he and his team would showcase that sense of moving by how they rallied their supporters in a ground game that covered every state in the country. (49)

As you have students compare and contrast the two campaigns, I highly recommend that you have students look at how the two candidates crafted speeches that spoke to principles, struggles, and the promise of America and its people. For instance, you could have students read and listen to Obama's "Iowa Victory Speech" where he spoke to the promise of America, what Americans want out of their country and what is possible for the future if the nation chooses to support him as their president. It's important the text is printed for every student so that they can both read and hear the president's words as he says them. Have students pull out 10-12 ideas as it pertains to change, the future and the potential of America.

Once they have that completed, present them with another transcript from Kennedy's 1960 campaign speech at the Democratic National Convention. (50) Once the students have read and heard the words of JFK, have them compare those words, ideas, and promises to that of Barack Obama speech. How are they alike and how are they different? How are some of the same ideas, expectations and principles echoed in each of the speeches and what about the two speeches is very different? Present these ideas to the class as a whole and then have each student write their own individual analysis of the two speakers.

Lesson 2: Close-Up Washington D.C: The Fundraising Project

One of the keys to any election is the ability to raise enough money to keep your election going. In this activity, students will be in charge of their own fundraising campaign. Their goal will be to get to Washington D.C. strictly on money from donors. They cannot use any of their own money. The program they'll be raising money for is Close Up Washington D.C.. This will be an experience of a lifetime as students are taken to Washington D.C. for a trip where they'll tour the nation's capital buildings, monuments and historical museums. Depending on the length of the package you decide, the trip can cost anywhere from \$900-\$1,500. While these may seem like an overwhelming cost at first, if the trip is properly planned it's an entirely achievable goal. Students should begin to plan for the trip in the spring of their sophomore year and they should plan to take the trip the following spring. It's important that they have parent volunteers that serves as chaperones for one fundraising initiative each month.

Encourage students to be creative. They can put together car washes when it's warm or Chick-Fil-A breakfast sandwich drives when it's colder. Students can mow lawns, work concession stands, sell cookies, pretty much anything that can make money in an efficient manner. The last strategy I'd recommend is a Go-Fund-Me campaign. I think these are good but if your students use this a strategy, I think they should have a goal that is a fraction of their entire cost of the trip. It's good that they work with their peers on the other parts of their

fundraising campaign to build team comradery instead of relying completely on online donations. You'll have a smaller number of disparities among the students in terms of who raised what as well.

What's important to note about this project is that the students will be invested in it for over a year. Once they've accomplished their overall goal they'll be taken to D.C. where they'll have a chance to build relationships with one another and their teacher. For many of these students, it will be their first time to Washington D.C. This is a great opportunity for them to gain a real life and up-close perspective in regards to how government works, what it looks like and how they're representatives conduct themselves on a day-to-day basis. Close-Up has been in operation for decades and has several partnerships with government affiliates. This will be a well-organized trip and it will also be one that your students will never forget.

Lesson 3: The School Campaign

Educators should try to get their classes into a classroom runoff where every section/class and teacher has runs against other classes. The educator should come up with a series of questions that they present to each class that have to deal with world, local and/or school policy. Students in each class should be empowered to come up with their own campaign. They should break up the class empowering their classmates with different roles. If it's easier for the teacher to put the students in roles, that's ok too. These roles can range from Data Collector, Phone Bank Captain, Social Media Consultant, Canvasser, Speech Writer, Classroom Debate Speakers, Poll Workers, Political Poster Illustrator, etc.

Students should lobby their classmates throughout the entire school for their votes. The teacher should have an assembly and during that assembly, a spokesman for the class should debate around things such as school policy, educational reform, social justice, and education reform. There should be a moderator for these debates that keeps students on task and makes sure every student speaker has the same amount of time to answer the questions as they others. The next day at lunch, there should be a supervised ballot boxes, and ballots with that are representative of each class. Votes should be taken, and the winning class should get a pizza party sponsored by the PTA.

Lesson 4: Dinner and a Movie

The idea of Dinner and a Movie is something that brings classrooms together and allows teachers to spend some time with their students in a less stressful environment. The idea is for the film to have a drive-in/ movie on the lawn type of feel. For this Dinner and a Movie, I recommend that the teacher have it on a Friday night. They should bring the projector outside of their school and wait for the sun to go down. The movie should be broadcasted on the side of the school on a flat area. I think it's a good idea to invite school administration, parents and other students to see the film. They don't have to be part of your class but I would give students that attend who are in your class extra credit as an incentive for their participation. The movies that I'm recommending that go along with this unit are following: "The Way I See It" tells the story from Obama's photographer's prospective. It highlights his time before, during and after the campaign. Another film is "By the People: The Election of Barrack Obama." This film focuses on what went into electing Obama to the presidency and his election was, in fact, an election by the people. Lastly, "Obama's Pursuit of a More Perfect Union." I wouldn't recommend that you show all three movies, just one film that the students pick. It could be a good idea to show the class all three trailers and let them pick which one they think is the most interesting. That will empower them and hopefully lead to a greater level of collective participation.

Lesson 5: Book Club

While the main focus of this unit is on the organizing of the campaign, if time permits and the teacher believes it's a worthy investment of time and energy, they should have their administration purchase the following books the summer before the students enter the class: *Dreams of My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope*. These two books will provide some context in regards to who the candidate was and his story before the presidency. They should read these books prior to coming to class.

Lesson 6: John McCain "What If?"

Have students watch the film "Game Change" in class. Have them compare and contrast McCain's approach to the presidency to the prior knowledge they've already consumed both in and out of class about Barack Obama. Once they've finished the film, ask them to reflect on the following questions in individual responses or in a five-paragraph essay- 1. Do you think John McCain's campaign was run well? Why or why not? 2. Why do you think John McCain lost? 3. How was his campaign different than Obama's? 4. Is there one political party that is inherently bad or good? Explain.

Lesson 7: Independent Writing and Reflection Prompts

As you study the unit, have your students work through the different parts of the campaign. Use the provided content as a resource for the lesson in leadership, organization and politics. Then have your students write individual answers to the following questions. You should use an argumentative rubric provided by your ELA or History department as a resource to guide your grading. This will most likely look different depending on the school system.

1. What is teamwork and how does it show up in the 2008 campaign? Would success have been possible if people worked as individuals and not a collective?
2. What does leadership look like? Where could be seen in the form of people and decisions in the 08 campaign? What are the benefits and consequences of great or poor leadership?
3. Do you believe that money is an essential part of winning in campaigns? Explain your answer citing the resources provided.
4. What was more important to the overall success of the candidate, his overall narrative, platform and appeal or the candidate's campaign team?
5. How will campaigns continue to change in the future? What strategies will stand the test of time and which ones will become obsolete in the coming years?
6. How has the internet changed things when it comes to everyday politics and campaigns? Is our ability to get news from a variety of different outlets a good or bad thing when it comes to making a more informed opinion about how we feel about our politicians and the platforms we are personally invested in?
7. What do you think of the slogans "Hope" and "Change?" Are these merely slogans by themselves and should be seen as such or are they more than that? Do you feel like you can create change in American society? Explain.
8. What are three overarching ideas that you will take from this unit? Why do they resonate with you and how and what will you apply them to in the future?

Lesson 8: Photographic Narrative-

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ID678wH3T0ixpEb86vAK77GwgnUjx_2q/view - I've placed a photographic narrative for teachers and their students that gives a brief account of my time during the campaign. I'd

welcome additional conversations or zoom meeting with them if interested. My contact is seanmeans1@gmail.com

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

Standard - 5.2.9.D

Analyze citizens' roles in the political process toward the attainment of goals for individual and public good.

Standard - 5.3.9.D

Explain how citizens participate in choosing their leaders through political parties, campaigns, and elections.

Standard - 5.3.12.E

Evaluate the fairness and effectiveness of the United States electoral processes, including the electoral college.

Standard - 5.3.12.H

Evaluate the role of mass media in setting public agenda and influencing political life.

Standard - 5.3.12.H

Evaluate the role of mass media in setting public agenda and influencing political life.

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