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From: David Kline <dkline@well.com>
To: Alicia Paulson <info@aliciapaulson.com>
Subject: Why Obama?

Hi Alicia,

David here. Sarah told me you were interested in why I like Obama, and I'm happy to share with you my feelings about something that I frankly thought I would never get to experience again in my lifetime.

I'm talking about hope, inspiration, and a genuine sense that people really can and will change the world.

I felt that once, in the 60s. I know people are tired of hearing Boomers talk about the 60s, but you have to understand why we do.

Back then, I swear to God I did not know a single person who did not believe the world was theirs to shape as they wished. Law students were not just going to be lawyers; they were going to change the very nature of law in society. Or law students decided that what they really wanted to do was become potters, so that's what they did.

Can you imagine that today, in an age when people just want to get a safe secure job and a rich income?

(And btw, where do you think the craft movement was born into a mass social phenomenon? I submit the 60s had something to do with it.)

Anyway, to the issue at hand. Why am I -- why are so many of us -- really excited and hopeful about Barak Obama? I have never not once ever been excited about any Democratic nominee in my entire voting life -- which began after King and the Kennedys were killed. Not Mondale, not Dukakis, not Gore, certainly not Kerry and not even Clinton. So especially given my leftwing background, why am I so committed to this man who is, after all, just another politician?

I don't think I've suddenly gone naive in my middle age. I don't believe that all of a sudden I have turned into some sort of Pollyanna who swoons at a smooth politician's soaring rhetoric.

No, I'm excited because Obama is actually NOT just another politician -- at least not in terms of what he can accomplish. No, make that **because** of what he **has already** accomplished.

He has gotten new people involved and doubled voter turnout in every primary so far. He's broken through every racial identity barrier and now appeals to the majority of young, old, women, men, whites, Blacks, and even now Latinos (at least in Virginia, with Texas next on the agenda). And he has demonstrated an almost supernatural ability to win support from not only Democrats and independents, but from quite a few conservatives and Republicans as well.

In fact, Susan Eisenhower, a lifelong Republican activist and granddaughter of the late president, said in a Washington Post editorial that she was supporting Obama because "he is the *one* presidential candidate today who can salve our national wounds and both inspire and pursue genuine bipartisan cooperation."

The above is not rhetoric. These are real-world achievements that no one else has been able to accomplish in 40 years. And they are the kinds of achievements that can change the face of America and rebuild a majority liberal politics in our culture again.

In fact, Obama is the first candidate/leader since Roosevelt and JFK actually capable of sparking a large-scale movement for progressive social change. You think FDR and JFK were totally pure of heart heroes? Neither, frankly, was a Mother Theresa of politics. JFK was behind the Bay of Pigs and made huge mistakes in Vietnam. And as for FDR, he was a master of political sleight of hand and manipulation.

But what each had was a magical ability to inspire people and mobilize them to broad social action. In FDR's case, that was the whole New Deal movement that gave working people rights and security for the first time. In JFK's case, it was the 60s' civil rights and women's and other movements.

Obama has that magical alchemy of inspiration and mobilization, too. And frankly I could care less if Hillary's health plan is better than Obama's or whatever. Only Obama can spark mass action for progressive change. And he's the first person in 40 years to be able to do so.

The simple truth is that Obama is not a candidate. He's a movement.

Think about it: Isn't it ironic that some of us now get embarrassed to admit that we feel "hope" again because of Obama? In these cynical days, that sort of thing appears almost silly, and certainly naive.

But every great change movement seemed silly and naive at first -- until people actually went out and made it happen. Everything we now take for granted was at first deemed naively hopeful.

So I consider myself blessed. I got to live out the spirit of the 60s once, and now I get to see a similar new spirit of growth and renewal sweep the country again. We have the chance to restore a good part of the dream to the American Dream again. And frankly I never expected to be lucky enough to witness that again in my lifetime.

So that's why I'm betting on Obama!

Love,

David