

# Obama's Philadelphia statement

by Janet Jagan

It's a document well worth studying, not once but at least twice. There are profound truths expressed and a fresh, new outlook on what is essential to understanding the real problems existing in the USA. I refer to the address made by the U.S. Democratic Party candidate Senator Barack Obama on March 18, 2008 in Philadelphia. His remarks were more significant in view of the location he spoke from – opposite the Convention Hall where the Declaration of Independence was made by the early American Fathers of the Revolution in 1787.

An unusual, out of the ordinary, process is now going on in the USA to elect the Democratic Party's candidate for the November Presidential elections, only eight months away. The two contesting candidates represent sections of American life that never before reached this level of possibility of becoming not only the presidential candidate for one of the two major parties, but probably the future President of the USA. One, Senator Hillary Clinton is a woman and the other, Senator Barack Obama is Black.

And to add to the peculiarities of these elections is the fact that the Republican Party candidate, who has already made it as the official candidate, John McCain, is barely acceptable to his party, seems to have minimal influence and popularity and has to face an electorate strongly opposed to the outgoing President George Bush and his administration.

There is also the possibility, if one is to judge reports emanating from the USA, that the struggle of the two Democratic Party candidates is hurting that Party. The frequent clashes of the two candidates are becoming a delicate issue that some say could lead to an unfortunate backlash – that the final choice of one or the other candidates could result in a vote boycott by the loser's supporters, thus putting the Republican Party candidate into office. The realization of this possibility should lead the two candidates to rethink their present actions and pave the way for a united Democratic Party at the November elections.

Obama, in his outstanding Philadelphia address, deals coolly and wisely with the American race problem, giving an indication of his own character and thoughts. He solidifies the conception that he is a man, whatever his race and background, representing a fresh approach to the many problems facing most Americans and recognizes how racism exists and develops through lack of understanding and the injustices that are entrenched. For example, he talks about “a corporate culture rife with inside dealings, questionable accounting practices and short-term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists and special interests; economic policies that favour the few over the many...”.

He asserts his faith in the American people – “that working together we can move beyond some of our racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.”

Obama's theme is that it is possible for change to take place. He says in his address, speaking about Reverend Wright whose remarks have caused intense criticism: “The proficient mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress has been made; as if this country – a country that has made it possible for one of

his own members to run for the highest office in the land and hold a coalition of White and Black, Latino and Asian, rich and poor, young and old – is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. But what we know – what we have seen – that America can change. That is the true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope – the audacity to hope – for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.”

Obama’s theme is one that has great appeal to the American people, mainly that things can change for the better, in a society facing economic problems and immersed in a war that has, so far, killed 4000 of its youths and seems to have no end, a country of haves and have-nots, a country that could do so much better with enlightened and honest leadership. Barack Obama has, in the opinion of many, edged his way closer to winning the Presidential candidacy in his Philadelphia address.

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