



Obama Elected First Black U.S. President in 2008



THE CANDIDATES

Barack Obama, a first-term U.S. senator from Illinois, aimed to regain the White House for the Democrats. **Joseph Biden**, a long-serving senator from Delaware, added experience to the ticket.

John McCain, Vietnam war hero and long-serving U.S. senator from Arizona, hoped to succeed George W. Bush. **Sara Palin**, the governor of Alaska, was a surprise pick as McCain's running mate.

THE CAMPAIGN

1. Barack Obama, having defeated Hillary Clinton in the primaries, aimed to bring "hope and change" to the country, which was mired in an unpopular war in Iraq.
2. Obama became the first African American elected president of the United States.

THE ISSUES

	Obama (Democrat)	McCain (Republican)
Foreign	Americans had grown tired of the war in Iraq. Obama promised to end the war and to close the prison for terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.	McCain clearly had an edge in foreign-policy experience, but the financial crisis was of greater concern to voters.
Economic	The dramatic unfolding financial crisis that began in 2008 topped the list of voters' concerns.	As a Republican, McCain was closely tied to the outgoing president's economic policies.
Social	Because he performed well in all three presidential debates, Obama attracted independent voters.	A moderate on social issues, McCain was not seen as conservative enough by many in his party.

QUOTES & CUSTOMS

Obama promises hope "Yes we can" became the Obama campaign's slogan.

McCain on America at war "America should never undertake a war unless we are prepared to do everything necessary to succeed."

THE LESSONS

1. Obama's success was due in part to the fact of his being the first African American presidential candidate to have a real chance of winning. He was helped by high voter turnout.
2. Because the incumbent president, George W. Bush, was so unpopular, and the economy was in trouble, a challenger from the opposing party had a good chance to win.



Obama Wins Reelection in 2012



THE CANDIDATES

Barack Obama, the incumbent president, faced no serious opposition in the primaries. **Joe Biden** remained on the ticket.

Mitt Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, beat a field of rivals to win the Republican nomination. **Paul Ryan**, a U.S. congressman from Wisconsin, was his vice-presidential running mate.

THE CAMPAIGN

1. The Democratic Party had a superior "ground game" to get out the vote.
2. Romney, overconfident because of flawed polling, lost key "battleground" states.
3. Obama prevailed, despite the emergence of the "Tea Party" in the midterm elections.

THE ISSUES

	Obama (Democrat)	Romney (Republican)
Foreign	Although turmoil continued from Libya to Syria, Obama had brought an end to U.S. involvement in Iraq.	The Great Recession lingered and still the Republicans lost.
Economic	Americans seemed to trust the Democratic Party and President Obama more to handle federal budget problems, economic recovery, and inequality.	Republicans' efforts to repeal "Obamacare" failed, and the slow economic recovery was still seen as more the Republicans' fault.
Social	Same-sex marriage, on which Obama changed his position, was among the few social issues that played a role in the election.	Romney would have been the first Mormon to be elected president. His religion led to slightly reduced support from evangelical Christians.

QUOTES & CUSTOMS

Obama on government For saying, "if you've got a business—you didn't build that," Obama was attacked for belittling the private sector.

Romney on the "47%" Romney said that 47 percent of the people would vote for Obama no matter what, because they "are dependent upon government."

THE LESSONS

1. Obama was stronger among moderates, women, the nonmarried, African Americans and other minorities, and 18- to 39-year-olds.
2. Despite winning a wave election in the 2010 midterms, the Republicans could not capitalize on the Tea Party's strength.
3. The 2012 election was the first to have electoral votes apportioned based on the 2010 Census.