

Southfield Public Library

Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama

Discussion Questions used at SPL February -- 2008

1. What do you think about Obama political and life history?
 2. What is your perspective on politics (partisan, moderate, compromise) and how effective are these approaches? What is your perspective on this issue?
 3. How does his US Senate race compare with his current Presidential race?
 4. What do you think binds us together as Americans?
 5. What do you think are the country's greatest challenges?
 6. What do you think is meant by the "common good"?
 7. What does Obama need to do to avoid the pitfalls of politics? What do we as supporters need to do?
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General discussion questions

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author's writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author's use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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Audacity of Hope

Reading group guide created by Women for Obama Action Group, Chicago IL - Jul 19th, 2007

Our Women for Obama Action group recently had a dynamic book group discussion of *The Audacity of Hope* led by Illinois Women for Obama member Maureen Smith. She developed the following reading guide for the book to share with others.

1. A New Yorker article asserts, "We have a real live human being running for president." The *Audacity of Hope* is a political and personal reflection that provides insights into Barack's character. After reading the book, what personal characteristics would you ascribe to him?
2. Who are his political heroes? How do these people serve to underscore the virtues he is espousing?
3. How is Barack's vision for politics different? Is it possible? In addition to the White House, what else must change for this to be realized?
4. What aspects of the book would be challenging to a conservative audience? To a progressive audience? How does this support Barack's new vision?
5. Barack describes what he calls the "empathy deficit" in our current society. How do you see this phenomenon manifesting itself in today's world? In your community? In yourself? Which perspectives are most challenging to view empathetically? What are the limitations of empathy?
6. Barack examines the idea of fixed narratives set by the media. What is the current narrative/stereotype of Democrats and Republicans? In campaigns? In office? How might this be changed? What productive results might a change produce?
7. Barack states, "It is a truism that we Americans are a religious people." Do you agree with this assertion? How is Barack defining faith? How might faith be reframed in the current political context?

8. Of the issues that Barack addresses--health care, immigration, foreign policy--which are most important to you? To the current election?
9. Critics have accused Barack of having more style than substance. In what ways does the book serve to refute those claims?
10. Thomas L. Lieberman writes, "...many Americans have projected onto him their hunger for community." How does Barack fulfill this need?
11. Barack says at the end of the book, "My heart is filled with love for this country." How is this sentiment evidenced throughout the book? Do you share this feeling? To what degree?