

Hello Everyone,

Last week, I was in Washington for a meeting of Barack's National Finance Committee. As you might suppose, it was quite up beat.

The amount of money raised during the first quarter – thanks to so many of you – was a very convincing indication of the viability of Barack's candidacy. As you know, he raised almost 30% more money for the primary than any other candidate. But all of us in attendance were even more heartened by the amazing breadth of support – over 104,000 contributors in just 2 ½ months – from a standing start. This was almost double the number of contributors for any other candidate – some of whom have been building their organizations for much longer.

Now that his national name recognition is dramatically increasing (over 20,000 people turned up for a rally at Georgia Tech this weekend) and his financial credibility has been verified, Barack told us he will turn his attention to giving a series of policy speeches and working on position papers. Tomorrow, he will make a foreign policy address at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs; I'll be there. The first debate among the Democratic candidates will be next Thursday, April 26, in South Carolina. It will be televised on MSNBC from 6 to 7:30p CT. In this context, it was most encouraging to hear him say that, as he enters this more substantive phase of the campaign, he will “not dumb down” his message. What a refreshing change in our political discourse that will be!

As further evidence of Barack's intelligent and thoughtful approach, I am including below a recent article from the *New York Times* in case you missed it.

And here's a potentially wonderful confluence of dates to fantasize about (especially if you're from Chicago) – in 2016 – the Olympics are held in Chicago and someone is elected to succeed Chicago's favorite son as he finishes his second term in the White House!

As always, click on “reply” with comments, questions, or suggestions – or to tell me if you're tired of hearing from me.

April 8, 2007

2 Years After Big Speech, a Lower Key for Obama

By [ADAM NAGOURNEY](#)

COLO, Iowa, April 6 — Senator [Barack Obama](#) is not big on what he calls red-meat applause lines when he campaigns in small communities like this one, 45 miles northeast of Des Moines. He does not tell many

jokes. He talks in even, measured tones, and at times is so low-key that he lulls his audiences into long, if respectful, silences.

Mr. Obama likes to recount the chapters of his unusual life: growing up in Hawaii, living overseas, community organizing in Chicago, working in the Illinois legislature, though not his years as a United States senator. He talks — more often than not in broad, general strokes — about an Obama White House that would provide health care to all, attack [global warming](#), improve education, fix Social Security and end the war in Iraq. His campaign events end almost as an afterthought, surprising voters used to the big finishes typically served up by the presidential candidates seeking their support.

“Thank you very much, everybody. Have a nice day,” Mr. Obama said pleasantly in Dakota City one afternoon, with a leisurely wave of a hand. He headed over to a table where copies of his books, brought by audience members, had been neatly laid out, awaiting the slash of his left-handed autograph.

For most Democrats, Mr. Obama is the Illinois senator who riveted the Democratic National Convention with a keynote speech that marked him as one of the most powerful speakers his party had produced in 50 years. But as Mr. Obama methodically worked his way across swaths of rural northern Iowa — his tall figure and skin color making him stand out at diners and veterans’ homes, at high schools and community colleges — it was clear that he is not presenting himself, stylistically at least, the way he did two years ago when he gripped Democrats at the Fleet Center in Boston.

He is cerebral and easy-going, often talking over any applause that might rise up from his audience, and perhaps consciously trying to present a political style that contrasts with the more charged presences of [John Edwards](#), the former trial lawyer and senator from North Carolina, and Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) of New York.

He rarely mentions President Bush, as he disparages the partisan quarrels of Washington, and is, at most, elliptically critical of Mr. Edwards and Mrs. Clinton when he notes that he had opposed the war

in Iraq from the start; the two of them voted to authorize the war in 2002.

His audiences are rapt, if sometimes a tad restless; long periods can go by when there is not a rustle in the crowd. Yet Iowa is not the Fleet Center, and this appeal — “letting people see how I think,” as Mr. Obama put it in an interview — could clearly go a long way in drawing the support of Iowans who are turning out in huge numbers to see him in the state where the presidential voting process will start.

“He’s low-key; he speaks like a professor,” said Jim Sayer, 51, a farmer from Humboldt. “Maybe I expected more emotion. But the lower key impresses me: He seems to be at the level that we are.”

Mary Margaret Gran, a middle-school teacher who met him when he spoke to 25 Iowans eating breakfast at a tiny diner in Colo on Friday morning, summed up her view the moment Mr. Obama had moved on to the next table.

“Rock star?” Ms. Gran said, offering the description herself. “That’s the national moniker. But dazzle is not what he is about at all. He’s peaceful.”

Mr. Obama, wearing sunglasses as he sat in the back of a car that was taking him to a charter plane and then on to his home in Chicago for the Easter weekend, nodded when told what Mr. Sayer and Ms. Gran had said about him.

“I use a different style if I’m speaking to a big crowd; I can gin up folks pretty well,” he said. “But when I’m in these town hall settings, my job is not to throw them a lot of red meat. I want to give them a sense of my thought process.”

Still, the emerging style of Mr. Obama as a candidate for president, at least in a state like this with its emphasis on smaller settings, might startle those who knew him only from the speech that made him famous — a speech that is included prominently in the video sometimes used to introduce him.

Yes, there are strains of the populist call of [Ross Perot](#). “Thousands of people across the country feel we are in this moment of time where we might be able to take our country back,” Mr. Obama said at the Algona High School cafeteria, packed with young students and their parents.

His language about community and shared sacrifice can be evocative of [Mario M. Cuomo](#)’s 1984 speech to the Democratic convention. “We have responsibilities to ourselves, but we also have mutual responsibilities, so if a child can’t read so well, that matters to us even if they are not our child,” he said at V.F.W. Post 5240 in Dakota City. Heads nodded among the people surrounding him in the theater-in-the-round layout that he prefers.

But there is also, in a historical comparison that his supporters have tended to resist, the cool intellectualism of Adlai Stevenson who, for all the loyalty he inspired among many Democrats in the 1950s — some of whom still remember him fondly — lost two presidential elections. If Mr. Obama enters the room to the sounds of “Think” by Aretha Franklin and the roar of people coming to their feet, clapping and jostling for photographs, it is only moments before the atmosphere turns from campaign rally to college seminar, when he talks, for example, about the need for a “common sense, nonideological, practical-minded, generous agenda for change in this country.”

This evolution, or more precisely this attention to Mr. Obama’s credentials as a campaigner in communities like this, comes in a week in which he has, with the report that he had nearly matched Mrs. Clinton by raising \$25 million in the first quarter of presidential fund-raising, left no doubt that he had the resources and, presumably the popular support, to potentially deny her the nomination.

For Mr. Obama, his reception in Iowa has certainly changed since he came here after announcing his presidential bid in February, trailing enough reporters, press aides, advisers, family members and friends to fill a Boeing 767. Then, he was nearly suffocated at every campaign event with people craning for a look or a handshake or an autograph, or television crews shouting out a question.

This week, mostly far from the bigger cities of Iowa, there was much less press and staff, and the crowds, while still big, were manageable. Mr. Obama has developed a system for handling all the people who brought copies of his books to sign. “If you can put your name in the book and hand it to my staff after we’re done, I’ll sign them all at once,” he said.

Things have cooled off enough to permit Mr. Obama, dressed in his signature open-collared white shirt and loose-hanging black sports coat, to linger until almost the last person is gone. This more casual setting has revealed Mr. Obama to be a tactile campaigner; his bony hand grabbing elbows and hands, his long arms thrown over shoulders, drawing voters close in conversation.

And it allowed for moments like one that took place at the V.F.W. Hall in Dakota City, after almost everyone had gone. Mr. Obama was approached by a woman, her eyes wet. She spoke into his ear and began to weep, collapsing into his embrace. They stood like that for a full minute, Mr. Obama looking ashen, before she pulled away. She began crying again, Mr. Obama pulled her in for another embrace.

The woman left declining to give her name or recount their conversation. Mr. Obama said she told him what had happened to her 20-year-old son, who was serving in Iraq.

“Her son died,” he said. He paused. “What can you say? This happens to me every single place I go.”

The next day, at the rally here, Mr. Obama described the encounter for the crowd. The woman, he said, had asked if her son’s death was the result of a mistake by the government. “And I told her the service of our young men and women — the duty they show this country — that’s never a mistake,” he said.

He paused carefully as he reflected on that encounter. “It reminds you why you get into politics,” he said. “It reminds you that this isn’t a game.”

Please pass it on,

Chuck

