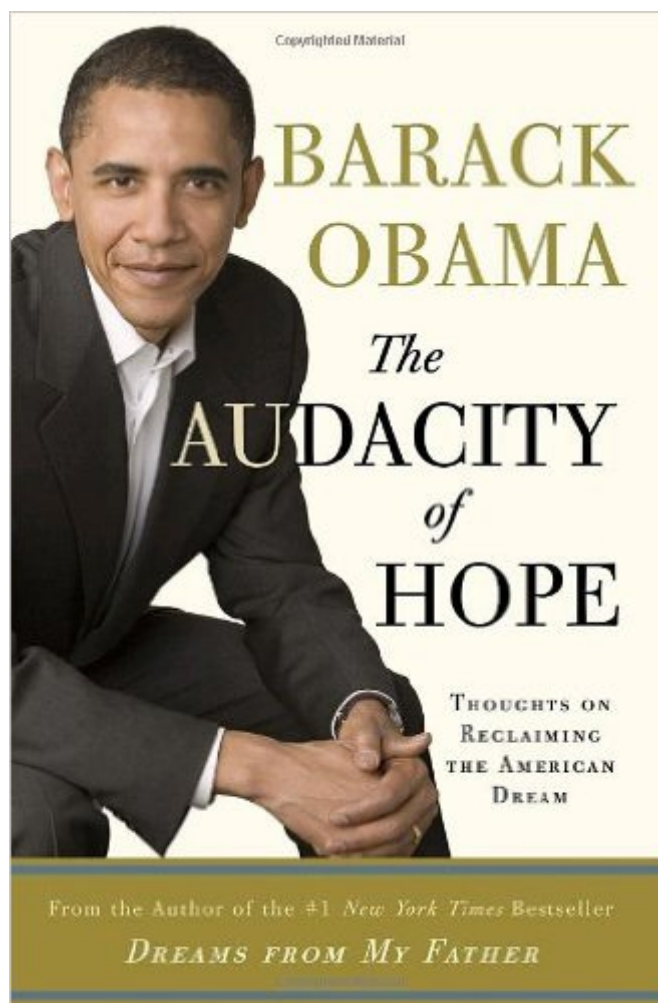


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# The Audacity Of Hope: Thoughts On Reclaiming The American Dream



## Synopsis

In July 2004, Barack Obama electrified the Democratic National Convention with an address that spoke to Americans across the political spectrum. One phrase in particular anchored itself in listeners' minds, a reminder that for all the discord and struggle to be found in our history as a nation, we have always been guided by a dogged optimism in the future, or what Obama called "the audacity of hope." The Audacity of Hope is Barack Obama's call for a different brand of politics—a politics for those weary of bitter partisanship and alienated by the endless clash of armies we see in congress and on the campaign trail; a politics rooted in the faith, inclusiveness, and nobility of spirit at the heart of our improbable experiment in democracy. He explores those forces—from the fear of losing to the perpetual need to raise money to the power of the media—that can stifle even the best-intentioned politician. He also writes, with surprising intimacy and self-deprecating humor, about settling in as a senator, seeking to balance the demands of public service and family life, and his own deepening religious commitment. At the heart of this book is Barack Obama's vision of how we can move beyond our divisions to tackle concrete problems. He examines the growing economic insecurity of American families, the racial and religious tensions within the body politic, and the transnational threats—from terrorism to pandemic—that gather beyond our shores. And he grapples with the role that faith plays in a democracy where it is vital and where it must never intrude. Underlying his stories about family, friends, and members of the Senate is a vigorous search for connection: the foundation for a radically hopeful political consensus. A public servant and a lawyer, a professor and a father, a Christian and a skeptic, and above all a student of history and human nature, Barack Obama has written a book of transforming power. Only by returning to the principles that gave birth to our Constitution, he says, can Americans repair a political process that is broken, and restore to working order a government that has fallen dangerously out of touch with millions of ordinary Americans. Those Americans are out there, he writes—waiting for Republicans and Democrats to catch up with them.

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## Customer Reviews

All too often here on , we review only those books and authors with which we totally agree...or totally disagree...and give little regard to the quality of the actual contents of the book. And then, our fellow viewers come along and rate our reviews strictly on the basis of their own partisan biases. This is not very helpful. I set out to read and review Senator Barack Obama's latest book, not because I agree with everything he has to say, but because in some ways, I had respected him because he seemed to be a thoughtful and eloquent American with a compelling story. I give the book 4 stars for style and significance in our culture, but much less for substance. The Senator has a generally warm and inviting style of communicating that portrays himself as an agent of change in American politics. In terms of writing style, THE AUDACITY OF HOPE is a good, though sometimes "preachy" read; at times, it seems a bit too earnest or striving for political correctness. Obama deserves credit for being able to discuss his values and faith in a manner that is more comfortable than many of his political contemporaries. And, in the book, he does a reasonable job of articulating why and how his faith and values cause him to think and act in the way that he does. At times, the reader may wonder if he is too ambitious - or even naive. One can respect his energy and commitment to change, even as one firmly disagrees with his policies and plans. And, I certainly do take issue with some of the Senator's actual policies and worldview that he discusses. His health care plans may sound noble, but they would likely lead to significantly decreased quality and choice for most Americans and soaring taxes and budget deficits...big government at its worst. Furthermore, given the overall poor performance of government in other programs, do you really want government managing your health care? Another issue: while I do believe there is strong evidence to suggest a change in the earth's climate, Senator Obama and I would disagree on the primary causes and "cures" for this change. I don't believe that cutting taxes for those who pay taxes (aka "the rich") is unfair; I may go so far as to say that Obama's affinity for radical and government-forced redistribution of wealth reeks of socialism (though it's socialism masked by a

warm smile). Another point: I don't believe that a "pro-choice" position offers adequate choice for the unborn child; Obama's rhetoric in the book is moderate, but his voting record on abortion is very extreme. And, some of his associations are troubling, particularly with some radicals who seem to have shaped a significant portion of his worldview and helped launch his career. I do agree with Senator Obama that America must overcome our addiction to foreign oil, though his opposition to many reasonable remedies is curious. I do agree that more emphasis needs to be placed on strengthening families and upholding traditional values; on reducing teen pregnancy and the root causes of poverty. However, it is difficult to align many of Obama's expressed ideas here with the numerous radical and ridiculous statements of Obama's pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright - a man who preached one sermon that inspired the title of this book. Senator Obama's stated efforts to transcend partisanship are laudable, but it would be helpful if he acknowledged that partisanship is not only the province of "right wing Republicans" but also a staple of many of his Democratic brethren. In the meantime, whether one is a "conservative" or a "liberal," there is much to gain in terms of insight into one of the most significant individuals on the American political stage today by reading this book.

I wasn't expecting a whole lot from *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama. I thought it would be a lengthy stump speech, worth knowing but no revelations. What I found, however was a thoughtful plan, mapping out a direction for restoring common sense into the political process. Obama is a well-spoken, well-written, humble man who really knows how to articulate a message. He uses personal anecdote, history, Constitutional interpretation, and a healthy respect for the expertise of others in building a cohesive platform for success. Were it delivered consistently as well as he delivered his prose in this book, it would be the basis for repairing many of the rifts in the political landscape torn apart by extremism. What really impressed me about his ideas was the respect he showed to the opposition. The book lacked the vitriol common to today's political discussion, more rightly called bucks in rut. He recognizes that most people don't live, eat, breath, and bleed politics. Most people have families and jobs and lives to live. Most people have dozens of important issues that are important to them and aren't nearly as extremist in their views as our dichotomous news media would have us believe. People want the opportunity for comfort, education, success, security, and happiness. Obama knows this and writes eloquently about it - it's not us vs. them, but it's us trying to succeed together. His positions are clear - protect American jobs, regulate for safety with a mind toward capitalistic growth, health care for all, and a strong education system. He describes the process by which Republicans framed the debate, usurping issues and positions, claiming them as

their own. He shows how this is false and declares the need to reclaim those arenas of discourse that Democrats have been thrust away from in public opinion. Democrats can be men of faith, most believe in God, most are Christians. Democrats are hard working motivated individuals and business owners who believe in a strong capitalist economic system so long as protections against abuses are in place. Democrats understand the need for both petroleum and petroleum alternatives and aren't trying to thrust us back into the 1800's. He's right in this book and I'd have given him all five stars if there'd have been more passion in the words, more commitment to the change processes, and more leadership. Perhaps if he becomes president and afterward writes a memoir he'll speak of those passions and commitments more freely. - CV Rick

I got this Saturday and have enjoyed reading it. Essentially, Obama calls for an end to the partisan bickering and tendencies to demonize in American politics today. While he criticizes some of the stands of Presidents George Bush Jr. and Ronald Reagan, he also admits to the good he finds in both men as well as admitting some of the mistakes of the far left. The chapter on race is a good articulation of the feelings of post-civil rights movement African-Americans who do not subscribe to either the extreme Christian right or the extreme Black nationalists. Nice to know that there is an ideological place for black centrists of our generation. The chapter about the Constitution shows his background on teaching Constitutional law, which may be a bit much for the nonacademic reader, but his sentiments on this and other issues seem heartfelt. I found this book similar in tone to Bobby Kennedy's "To Seek a Newer World" (1967) and Booker T. Washington's "My Larger Education" (1911). He adds a lot of personal anecdotes (especially about his family) to prove his points, which makes the book more engaging. Political reconciliation almost seems like an oxymoron in these polarized times, Obama tries to prove this is not necessarily the case. Read it and see what you think.

I purchased this book following the 2004 Democratic Convention because of the speech President, then Senator Obama gave. I wanted to know more about this man. When I think back over his years as President, nothing really surprises me. Getting to understand the man through this book helps one understand how the man operates. I will say, I find him to be someone that remains true to himself. Watching him continue to evolve is awesome.

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