

THE PROCRASTINATOR

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SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

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POLITICS:

“ALWAYS VOTE FOR PRINCIPLE AND YOU MAY CHERISH THE SWEETEST REFLECTION THAT YOUR VOTE IS NEVER LOST”

– JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

MICHAEL ORR

On Saturday morning November 1, I was driving near the Richland County (SC) office building where I'd gotten my car registration. There were far more cars parked along the street than usual, especially for a Saturday morning, and I could see people milling about from afar. As I passed by I realized all of the people were actually in line and there were small signs in the ground saying 'VOTE.'

It turned out that over three thousand people had waited in that line on Saturday morning for a chance to vote absentee. South Carolina does not have early voting and these folks were trying to make sure their vote was counted because they couldn't get off work on Tuesday or any other reason.



This struck me as amazing. Sure, there are lines on Election Day, but to see literally thousands of people in line on a Saturday morning just to cast a vote in a state that has dealt its electoral votes to the Republican Party in every election since 1976 was just great to see.

Voter turnout was one of the keys in this 2008 election, particularly at the top of the ticket. Barack Obama and his army of volunteers flooded the market with the intent to get out the vote. Of course there was some risk that getting out the vote would not just get out the vote they wanted, but that was a risk Obama was willing to take. This country is better off for it, and not just because Obama was elected.

This was the third consecutive election that increased voter turnout. 2008 will be remembered not just as the year in which the first black president was elected but also as the year in which many more people finally realized that their vote could actually make a difference. As previously mentioned, South Carolina is one of the reddest states in this country. Yet at my precinct, one of about seven hundred residents in downtown Columbia, about seventy percent of those waiting in line were black. They probably knew that South Carolina would go to the Republicans but there they were at 6:45am waiting in line to cast that ballot in the off chance that their vote was the one that sent Obama over the top.

Of course South Carolina did go to the Republicans but the idea of increasing voter turnout did prove to be successful across the country. This was especially true of younger voters; those classified as such fall between the ages of 18-29. These are people my age, those who have become adults in the world of George W. Bush. In 2004, the first presidential election in which I voted, eighteen percent of all voters were in this younger group. This year that number increased to twenty-one percent. One in five voters were under thirty, and that was from a larger whole than four years ago.

But as great as it was to see so many more people going to the polls, there is still work to be done in this country to make our elections more representative of all the people who live within its borders. The first thing Barack Obama should do upon taking office is try to institute federally required early voting laws. The states should still be able to determine at which locations and between which dates they would like to conduct these polls but the federal government should require that each state have the opportunities prior to Election Day. There are too many people who cannot get off work on the day itself who deserve the opportunity to vote. Congressman Jim Clyburn has, I think, accurately labeled this as a modern day poll tax. Those who cannot afford to take the day off or even the several hours required to wait in line are effectively disenfranchised.

Which leads me to my second point. Election Day should be moved to the second Wednesday of November and declared a federal holiday. Moving the date to a Wednesday would help prevent people from taking four-day weekends (if it stayed on Tuesday) and neglecting to vote. It also would allow many more people the chance to cast a ballot than currently do so. Combining these two ideas would be the best of all options.



There will be people out there who say these ideas are Panglossian but I think it would change the way this country works. This year the increased voting turnout helped the Democrats sweep into the White House and increased leads in seats of both houses of Congress. But in 2012 the scene will be very different, even if my ideas aren't put into place.

With the groundswell of support and organization levels produced by Obama's team this year as a blueprint, the Republicans will respond with massive efforts to increase their likely voters as well. Hopefully this means that there will be yet another record broken for turnout in 2012, regardless of who wins.

I am pleased that Barack Obama defeated John McCain last night. Ultimately though I am impressed with the people of this country who took it into their own hands when

given the opportunity. If President Obama is defeated in 2012 by Mitt Romney or whoever comes out of the woodwork on the right, I will be satisfied with that result because it means that millions more people came out to vote. The only possible way one can affect politics when not actually running for office is to vote for those who do. Hopefully everyone will learn from this election that it is the people who can and should make the decisions in this country.

Michael, who is not usually this mild-mannered, can be reached at: mikeaorr@gmail.com.

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD:

OBAMANATION: DARK HORSES, DARK NIGHTS, AND THE INFECTIOUS PROPHECY OF CHANGE

RUSTY LEE

As of November 4, 2008, we witnessed both a breathtaking denouement and the genesis of a wholly historical era: A prolonged period of uncertainty and tempered optimism gave way to a storm of unbridled hope. Barack Obama was elected to succeed George W. Bush as the leader of the free world, and in doing so, gave palpable life to an idea that has been bandied about for months and months: “Change.”

In hindsight, it’s hard to imagine Obama’s campaign theme being anything else. From the moment the idealistic, wide-grinned junior Senator from Illinois launched his bid for the nation’s highest office, his message essentially wrote itself. Consider: Obama is young, African-American, and brimming with intelligence and the power to inspire. He came along on the heels of an unprecedented period of national misguidance – a zillion-dollar quagmire in the Middle East, a world-shaking financial debacle, and an overwhelming public feeling of mistrust and malcontent. Add to this the immeasurable significance of a black man



becoming President of the United States, and it's hard not to concede that Barack Obama is the most epitomizing example of a "change candidate" that this nation has ever seen.

Initially, I appreciated this mantra of "something new" solely for its profound political implications. I compartmentalized the message of change, taking a comforting yet detached sense of solace in the idea that something so *politically* bad (i.e. America under GWB) could be upended by something so *politically* refreshing. Sure, there were no guarantees; even if this guy were to win, things might not necessarily change. But here's the kicker: In the case of Barack Obama, people refused to succumb to the convenient specter of cynical pessimism. They began steadfastly to believe that something new and better *could* happen.

As the Obama campaign progressed, I quickly realized that the message of change was transcending the mere concerns of politics, economics, and so on. As I listened to then-Senator Obama relay his grand vision, I felt a sort of call to consciousness that people of my generation have only read about or discussed tritely and academically (you know – that Modern U.S. History class where everyone professes the motivating power of JFK, even though none of us were alive then?). Indeed, the "Obama factor" began to saturate my very worldview, rearing its head in seemingly disparate arenas, far and wide. I actually began to believe *with conviction* that the status quo can, in fact, change.

Amid my own interests, and in my own life, I am presently witnessing the renewing spirit that distinctly characterizes the post-Obama landscape. For example, consider, of all things, the current college football season. The Alabama Crimson Tide are ranked #1; the Texas Tech Red Raiders are ranked #2; and the Penn State Nittany Lions are ranked #3. Huh? From the outset of this roller-coaster madness – whether it be USC's stunning late-September loss at Oregon State or Florida's shocking botched PAT against Ole Miss – I've maintained a soundly pre-Obama outlook on things. In much the same way that I thought latent racism and fear would override in-the-moment polling and vault John McCain into the White House, I have long assumed deep down that Alabama, Penn State, and especially Texas Tech couldn't *possibly* hold off the inevitable re-ascension of the Trojans, Gators, and Sooners of the world. It's simple: In college football, the have's are the have's, and they always rise above the have-not's. Last year, West Virginia needed only to beat lowly Pitt to earn its way into the BCS title game, and even this relatively easy task proved too much. Consequently, LSU eked into the national title picture, despite an imperfect record.



This is not to say that 'Bama and Penn St. are not storied programs. Without question, they rank among college football's most respected teams. However, ours are the days of USC and LSU, of Oklahoma and Ohio State; since the 2002-2003 season, *every* BCS

Championship game has featured either the Trojans, the Buckeyes, or the Sooners. These guys are the norm – they're the Good Ole' Boys, the status quo, the lingering bedrocks that counteract our fear of the unknown. They are the America that I feared would vote for John McCain.

Now, though, we're in the age of "Yes we can." A black man was elected President – and Graham Harrell connected with Michael Crabtree on a most improbable last-gasp touchdown to slay #1 Texas, another recent BCS bigwig of note. If I could have imagined college football's upcoming scenarios a month ago – if someone had asked me to pick the winners of Texas Tech-Oklahoma and Alabama-Florida (assuming those teams remain unbeaten) – I'd have certainly fallen prey to the ideology of comfort, blandly asserting that the Tide and the Red Raiders simply *couldn't* do it. Heck – there's still a small part of me that thinks a Sooners-Gators BCS matchup isn't at all a bad bet. But now – oh boy, now – I actually believe that miracles can happen.

As if college football weren't proof enough, consider a completely unrelated arena of being: my personal life. Rather recently, my girlfriend (of over a year) and I experienced a rough string of relations. We had a fight, I cut and ran, I did some "things," she did some "things," and then we found ourselves face-to-face, trying in a painstaking way to define what "us" now means.

In the beginning of this laborious process, I was despondent beyond salvation. I simply assumed that some wounds – and some actions – alter people in such a way that What Once Was becomes something no longer attainable, if even desirable. After a spell of dark, quiet, and unstable nights, I once again turned to the ever-prominent message of



change. I woke up, metaphorically speaking, and said to myself, "Hey, if Barack Obama can convince the American people that no malaise is too severe to overcome, then why can't I convince D. that change is, in fact, possible?"

Wow – what an emotional revolution, and what a groundbreaking idea. Forget fighting to return things to their exact former glory. Why not restore an *ideal* – why not embark upon a campaign of personal and

interpersonal change? Perhaps things with D. will never be as I so fondly remember them... but perhaps, by the same token, they could become better. Barack Obama has demonstrated the power of working towards an ideal – of setting one's sights on a vision, a feeling, and letting the particulars gradually push that idea to fruition.

In short, if I start with the convictions that I want a certain person in my life, and that I want to change for the better, then the actual specifics that arise from those evolutions

will be, in and of themselves, wholly *good* things. “New” may mean “different” – but “new” joined with impassioned, disciplined determination can equal “different... and better”.

Over the past month, I’ve pondered the future of our county; I’ve imagined what it would be like to call Texas Tech the national champions of college football; and I’ve wondered, for brief moments, whether life is actually worth it sometimes. All of these strands seem unrelated, but in a truly magical sense, the ideas contained within them have all been transformed – and redeemed – by the infectious prophecy of change that has so perfectly been embodied by President-elect Barack Obama.

While it may sound foolish, people everywhere can now have visions of rushing the field, and of recapturing lost love. In the post-Obama world, every experience is a choose-your-own-adventure book. And more than ever, it’s alright to believe in happy endings.

Rusty, when not teaching prime factorization or bluffing at the wrong pot, can be reached at russellclee@gmail.com.

BONFIRE OF INANITIES:

REDSKINS CHOKE, NATION REJOICES BRAD WRIGHT

Jubilant crowds waited outside the Washington Redskins players’ entrance to congratulate the team on its 23-6 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers, a loss that assured an anxious nation that Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama would be the next president of the United States.

The Redskins -- whose last home game prior to a presidential election day has determined the winner in the last 17 of 18 contests (a win meaning the incumbent party retains the White House and a loss meaning a victory for the opposition party) -- came into the game with a 6-2 record on the outstanding play of quarterback Jason Campbell and the play calling of rookie head coach Jim Zorn.

As the final seconds ticked away, barrooms across the nation erupted in frenetic celebration as the ‘Skins were unable to overcome the suffocating Steeler defense.

“I think my heart stopped a little when Big Ben [Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger] went down,” exclaimed longtime Obama supporter Zach Markakis. “I thought, ‘Great, a friggin’ shoulder injury is going to give us four more years of Bush.’ But then Lefty [backup QB Byron Leftwich] came in and played great, and all is going to be right with this country again. Yes We Can!”

Redskins fans seemed torn by the loss, as they still sit in a comfortable position in the NFC East standings. “They really screwed up my fantasy stats,” complained superfan Mike Orental, “but I suppose they saved our collective reality, so I can’t be too upset.” The players themselves contended that this game represented an unusual ethical quandary for them. Sartorially challenged running back Clinton Portis said, “It was really tough to



go out and play tonight. I want my man [Obama] to win big but at the same time I gotta play hard for my team.”

In the end, however, the “Redskins Rule,” as it is known, held true, and Barack Obama defeated Republican John McCain by a substantial margin.

Conservative commentator George Will mused, “Some may say that Senator

McCain was doomed by the faltering economy, his selection of Sarah Palin as VP candidate, and his inability to find a coherent campaign message. In reality, however, it was the stifling Pittsburgh rush defense that clinched it for Obama.”

Brad, when not weeping over his Cubs, can be reached at: bwright08@gmail.com.