



Barack Obama: The Clarion Call of a Creator Leader

The Great American Drama of the U.S. presidential race has come to an exciting and hope-filled conclusion with the election of Barack Obama. It will take days, weeks, and months for the realities of this transformational election to sink in and take shape.

On the night of this historic event, like millions of others around the world, my wife & I and a circle of friends watched with bated breath as the returns and projections began to unfold. When the results became clear, shouts of joy and release filled our living room. We then witnessed the same response spill out into the streets of cities and villages around the world. Tears flowed as we realized a new day was dawning after what felt like years of a long, long violent storm and the darkest of nights.

Such feelings of relief and release often occur at the conclusion of any traumatic drama.

Much of the just-completed presidential campaign was firmly rooted in the language and the toxic fear-based manipulations of the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT). Many newscasts leading up to election night were filled with shrill dynamics between Victims, Persecutors, and candidates vying to become the next Rescuer.

But this newsletter is not really about politics and the American political system. (If that interests you, there is a more full exploration of the DDT in American politics in the "TED* Letter" of February, 2008, entitled "TED* for President.").

Instead **Barack Obama serves as a "case study" of a Creator Leader at a critical "choice-point."**

I have observed Barack Obama with fascination ever since hearing him speak over two years ago, which was months before announcing his candidacy. I was struck then, in the way he spoke and responded to questions, that **his approach to leadership was (and is) from the orientation of a Creator.** His focus was on what he felt we were called to create in our country and the world, not what he felt he needed to fight. His energy was clearly passion-powered, not fear and anxiety based. The actions he proposed and spoke to seemed to harness the dynamic tension between high-principled aspirations and a sober assessment of current realities, not merely reacting to the challenges we face.

He then followed his own Call by announcing his candidacy to lead his country – a candidacy that was as seemingly improbable as the Wright Brothers passionate pursuit of a flying machine at the beginning of the 20th century.

Senator Obama followed his passionately held vision of a better America and a better world baby step by baby step. Unfortunately, given the nature of modern day politics, he also had to navigate through a system that sought and succeeded in pulling him into the Dreaded Drama Triangle that has typified such a campaign. That

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was the “current reality” he faced in creating the outcome he envisioned. And, **over time, he succeeded in enrolling enough others in sharing his vision that the once-unimaginable has become the new reality.**

Which brings us to today and the question of what the “B Case” will be for Barack Obama. (In business schools that use the case-study method, the “A Case” is the story that leads up to a crucial choice-point that a leader faces. The “B Case” covers what the leader made of that choice and what eventually unfolded).

We – as well as Barack Obama – are at a critical choice-point: will we perpetuate the Dreaded Drama Triangle or make “shift happen” and co-create a new era reflective of The Empowerment Dynamic (TED*)?

The default path, in the realm of The Power of TED*, would be to perpetuate the DDT. How? By seeing the outcome of the election in terms of victors and victims, of winners and losers. And, above all else, by seeing President-Elect Obama as the great Rescuer who, on January 20, 2009, will magically ride into Washington as a hero come to save the day and set things right.

The UK’s “Sunday Times Online” observed the Sunday before the election that, “Among the most enthusiastic Obama supporters, there are tinges of hero worship and aspirations beyond anything any human being can deliver. And the hostility born of dashed expectations is always the worst. People expecting a messiah will at some point be forced to realise they have merely elected a president.” (The full article can be found here).

We cannot afford to merely look upon Barack Obama as a Rescuer. To do so places us subtly in the role of Victim. And that is easy to do as we face the realities of a wobbly national and global economy, a planet in peril, and the wars and terrorism that play out on the world stage.

Rather, he comes not as a hero/Rescuer, but as a Challenger to us all – for we are all in this together. As a Challenger and a Creator Leader, during his inspiring and sober acceptance speech, Obama said something few public leaders have ever dared to admit: “I need your help.”

I once read that the **hallmark of a great leader is not that they have followers; the hallmark of a great leader is that they create other leaders.** There is a corollary within TED*: **The hallmark of a Creator is that they see those around them as a Creator in their own right and call forth that capacity in them.** News accounts have shown the reaction of men and women and boys and girls of all ages, ethnicities, and persuasions who are realizing that the improbable is possible and that they too can pursue their dreams and passions.

A Creator Leader – that is the kind of leader I experience Obama to be. Millions of Americans – literally millions – joined with Obama as volunteers, contributors, and organizers, leading in ways great and mundane, in order to bring countless people into the process of democracy that had never before participated.

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But, in order for us to shift to an era reflective of TED*, we must embrace the fact that Obama's election is only the "A Case" of this study of a Creator Leader and to us as Co-Creators. He seems to know this, as evidenced by the following remarks from his inspiring and sober acceptance speech:

"This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were.

It can't happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice...

There is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves -- if our children should live to see the next century... what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment."

This time and these events are a clarion call to take responsibility and action as a Co-Creator in our country (whichever country you call home) and in our world.

The challenges we face – personally, professionally, and as a people – call all of us to contribute in our own unique ways to building the kind of world that generations to come will be grateful to inherit. We can do this as Creators, Challengers, and Coaches in all of our relationships: with loved ones in our families; with colleagues in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, places of worship, and our communities – indeed, with all of Creation.

This is the clarion call of a Creator Leader – to inspire us all to be leaders and creators!

Putting TED* into Practice

In what ways do you feel called as a Creator Leader?

Great leaders call forth other leaders and Creators call forth other Creators. So, reflect over the course of your own life and identify 1-3 people who have been leaders and/or Creators that have challenged, inspired and served as positive examples to you.

With those individuals in mind, answer the following questions (this would be an excellent journaling exercise!):

- What are the qualities and characteristics that describe what made this person special to you?
- Which of those qualities and characteristics would you like to emulate, cultivate and/or enhance in yourself?

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- In what ways might you express those qualities and characteristics to others?
- How could you contribute those in your community (however you choose to define “community” for yourself)?

Begin practicing and experimenting

The Spread of TED*

TED* continues to spread in and through a variety of sectors of our societies. More and more organizations and professionals are incorporating the frameworks and tools that TED* (*The Empowerment Dynamic) provides.

If you are actively using or participating in TED* related processes, please let us know by emailing me:

David@powerofTED.com.

The end of the year is rapidly approaching. Stayed tuned for a new calendar of public seminars to take place in 2009! The following are some of the private and public offerings of TED*:

December 2: (Private) “The Power of TED* (The Empowerment Dynamic): A New Paradigm for Creating Resourceful Interpersonal Dynamics”; Toronto, Ontario, CA; Toronto East General Hospital

December 3: (Public) “Introducing The Power of TED*”; Toronto, Ontario, CA; Hincks-Dellcrest Institute (co-sponsored by ABI Possibilities and Delisle Youth Services); 9:00 – 4:00

To learn about upcoming events, visit www.powerofTED.com for the latest developments.

If you would like to schedule a TED* Event for your organization or community, please contact me!

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