

## **BARACK OBAMA ON FAITH**

Key values in Barack Obama's public statements on faith and politics

- **God is constantly present in our lives, and this presence is a source of hope.**

*"Hope in the face of difficulty, hope in the face of uncertainty, the audacity of hope: In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation, a belief in things not seen, a belief that there are better days ahead." – Democratic National Convention Keynote Address.*

- **Progressives should boldly approach matters of faith and values.**

*"[I]f we truly hope to speak to people where they're at - to communicate our hopes and values in a way that's relevant to their own - then as progressives, we cannot abandon the field of religious discourse...Because when we ignore the debate about what it means to be a good Christian or Muslim or Jew; when we discuss religion only in the negative sense of where or how it should not be practiced, rather than in the positive sense of what it tells us about our obligations towards one another...others will fill the vacuum, those with the most insular views of faith, or those who cynically use religion to justify partisan ends." – Call to Renewal Keynote Address*

*"Our failure as progressives to tap into the moral underpinnings of the nation is not just rhetorical, though. Our fear of getting "preachy" may also lead us to discount the role that values and culture play in addressing some of our most urgent social problems." – The Audacity of Hope.*

- **As Joshua built on the work of Moses, leaders of today – the 'Joshua Generation' – must build on the foundation of previous generations to move our nation forward.**

*"The final thing that I think the Moses generation teaches us is to remind ourselves that we do what we do because God is with us. You know, when Moses was first called to lead people out to the Promised Land...the Lord said I will be with you. Throw down that rod. Pick it back up. I'll show you what to do. The same thing happened with the Joshua generation.*

*Joshua said, you know, I'm scared. I'm not sure that I am up to the challenge. The Lord said to him, every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given you. Be strong and have courage, for I am with you wherever you go. Be strong and have courage. It's a prayer for a journey. A prayer that kept a woman in her seat when the bus driver told her to get up, a prayer that led nine children through the doors of that Little Rock school, a prayer that carried our brothers and sisters over a bridge right here in Selma, Alabama. Be strong and have courage." –Address to Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, Selma, Alabama, on the Anniversary of Bloody Sunday.*

- **Faith should not be used as a wedge to divide.**

*"We think of faith as a source of comfort and understanding but find our expressions of faith sowing division; we believe ourselves to be a tolerant people even as racial, religious, and cultural tensions roil the landscape. And instead of resolving these tensions or mediating these conflicts, our politics fans them, exploits them, and drives us further apart." – The Audacity of Hope.*

*"Well, I say to them tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America – there's the United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America – there's the United States of America. The pundits like to slice-and-dice our country into Red*

States and Blue States; Red States for Republicans, Blue States for Democrats. But I've got news for them, too. We worship an awesome God in the Blue States, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the Red States. We coach Little League in the Blue States and have gay friends in the Red States. There are patriots who opposed the war in Iraq and patriots who supported it. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America." - Democratic National Convention Keynote Address.

- **The separation of church and state is critical and has caused our democracy and religious practices to thrive.**

*"[Conservative leaders] need to understand the critical role that the separation of church and state has played in preserving not only our democracy, but the robustness of our religious practice. Folks tend to forget that during our founding, it wasn't the atheists or the civil libertarians who were the most effective champions of the First Amendment. It was the persecuted minorities, it was Baptists like John Leland...It was the forbearers of the evangelicals who were the most adamant about not mingling government with religion, because they did not want state-sponsored religion hindering their ability to practice their faith..."* - Call to Renewal Keynote Address

- **We are a nation of many faiths and of those with no faith at all. The religious practices of all must be respected.**

*"Given the increasing diversity of America's population, the dangers of sectarianism have never been greater. Whatever we once were, we are no longer just a Christian nation; we are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, a Buddhist nation, a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers."* - Call to Renewal Keynote Address

- **Faith is a source of action for justice.**

*"Imagine Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address without reference to "the judgments of the Lord." Or King's I Have a Dream speech without references to "all of God's children." Their summoning of a higher truth helped inspire what had seemed impossible, and move the nation to embrace a common destiny."* - Call to Renewal Keynote Address

*"We should never forget that God granted us the power to reason so that we would do His work here on Earth - so that we would use science to cure disease, and heal the sick, and save lives."* - World AIDS Day Speech: Race Against Time

*"Pastors, friends of mine like Rick Warren and T.D. Jakes, are wielding their enormous influences to confront AIDS, Third World debt relief, and the genocide in Darfur. Religious thinkers and activists like our good friend Jim Wallis and Tony Campolo are lifting up the Biblical injunction to help the poor as a means of mobilizing Christians against budget cuts to social programs and growing inequality...Across the country, individual churches like my own and your own are sponsoring day care programs, building senior centers, helping ex-offenders reclaim their lives, and rebuilding our gulf coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina."* - Call to Renewal Keynote Address

- **Government alone cannot solve all of our problems - we have an individual responsibility to be our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper.**

*"And although government will play a crucial role in bringing about the changes we need, more money and programs alone will not get us where we need to go. Each of us, in our own lives, will have to accept responsibility - for instilling an ethic of achievement in our children, for adapting to a more competitive economy, for strengthening our communities, and sharing some measure of sacrifice. So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation."* - Presidential Announcement Speech