



*A Union of Professionals*

**2008 Historic Election: A Teachable Moment  
AFT-Designed Lesson Plan**

**Words to Actions: Examining Barack Obama's 2004 Democratic  
National Convention Keynote Address in the Context of His 2008  
Presidential Run**

**Grades:** 9-12

**Content areas:** Social studies, technology, language arts and art

**Objective:** Students will identify major themes and ideas that emerged in Barack Obama's 2004 speech to the Democratic National Convention in Boston. Using illustrative examples, they will evaluate how his 2004 speech foreshadowed the themes, policies and campaign strategies that President Obama used in his 2008 presidential campaign. Students will further demonstrate their understanding of the themes and ideas identified through discussion, debate format and visual representations.

**Materials needed:**

- Transcript and video clip of Barack Obama's 2004 speech to the Democratic National Convention ([www.aft.org/tools4teachers/americaelects/Obama.htm](http://www.aft.org/tools4teachers/americaelects/Obama.htm))
- Internet access, newspaper and magazine articles about the campaign
- Art supplies

**Instructional procedures:** Show a video clip of the speech by Barack Obama at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Give each student a transcript of the speech. Choose from the options below to complete the lesson:

**Option 1**

Have the students identify major themes and ideas expressed in the speech. Lead a discussion about what was viewed and how those themes and ideas foreshadowed his presidential run in 2008.

**Option 2**

Break students into small groups to prepare a "Sunday morning talk show" complete with a moderator and several expert media and policy discussants. The topic for debate and discussion will be a retrospective of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Begin with the premise that his historic 2004 speech at the Democratic National Convention was foundational and predictive of the platform he would run on in his 2008 presidential bid. Choose four themes that emerged from Obama's 2004 speech and find evidence of support for the prominence of those themes in his 2008 general election run. Discussants will identify two themes that were prominently featured in Barack Obama's campaign (actions, speeches, debates, interviews, rallies and advertisements) and also identify two themes in the 2004 speech that were not as

prominently featured in the presidential campaign. The moderator will ask follow-up questions and keep the discussants engaged.

### **Option 3**

Break students into small groups to design and create a series of posters (collage, painting, mixed-media, etc.). The posters will visually compare and evaluate how three ideas that emerged in Barack Obama's 2004 speech to the Democratic National Convention turned into specific policy proposals in his 2008 presidential campaign. Be sure the posters represent and compare the initial ideas in the 2004 speech and how those ideas were portrayed and evolved into actual policy proposals in the 2008 general election campaign. Students will need to think about how to visually portray and compare broad ideas from the 2004 speech with the specific policy proposals Obama built his presidential campaign around. Students should assess how the three ideas their group selected are connected, and make sure their posters express both the continuity and change of ideas into policy proposals in the campaign. Just as a campaign for president requires all the ideas to make sense together, so should the posters.

Students will display posters in the auditorium and invite other classes to schedule a gallery walk. Students in each group will present what they learned as a result of their research. Each participant will receive a student-designed outline of the presentation.

### **Option 4**

Highlight the following text in the 2004 transcript:

“Now even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us, the spin masters and negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of anything goes. 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.”

Using the Internet and print media, have students research the kind of campaign that Barack Obama ran, the resources and tools, the strategies implemented and the mobilization efforts employed that embody the notion of “inclusion” and “unity” foreshadowed in his 2004 keynote address. Students will then use a variety of sources (electronic and print) to research President Obama's campaign strategy and develop a list of these techniques and/or strategies in preparation for a student-led discussion. (This discussion might include the following ideas: grass-roots mobilizing, using the Internet to mobilize volunteers, running a 50-state strategy versus only a battleground-states strategy and issues-based campaigning.) Students should connect Obama's campaign strategies to the themes of “inclusion” and “unity.”

### **Extension Activity**

Design a similar lesson based on President Obama's inaugural address. Compare and contrast key ideas from his presidential campaign and those he proposes in his inaugural address.