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Barack Obama built his victory in Florida, a state that has been synonymous with heartbreak for many Democrats since 2000, by following the blueprint of Democrats before him -- and then systematically improving upon their numbers.

Most dramatic was his win among Hispanics, whom former [White House](#) political guru [Karl Rove](#) had avidly wooed. Four years ago, [President Bush](#) won 56 percent of the Latino vote in the state, thanks primarily to the influence of conservative Cuban Americans. But this year, Hispanics swung to the Democratic column, giving the candidate from Illinois 57 percent of their votes, according to network exit polls. Another boost to [Obama](#): Turnout among Latinos inched above the 2004 number.

Although the majority of Floridians said race was not a factor in their decision, the black-white divide this year closely resembled the state's racial split in 2004. The difference was the margins. [John McCain](#) drew about the same level of support from white voters as President Bush did four years ago, but Obama's margin among black residents -- who also turned out in larger numbers to back the first black major-party presidential nominee -- was nearly 10 percentage points higher than the one in 2004 for [John F. Kerry](#).

Florida's vote clearly split along economic lines, too, according to the exit polls. Voters making more than \$50,000 chose McCain over Obama. The Republican nominee also won among evangelicals, Catholics and voters older than 65. But McCain's margins there were generally slimmer than Bush's.

Floridians who ranked terrorism as their top policy concern voted overwhelmingly for McCain. But it was the economy that seemed to dominate voters' decisionmaking. More than 90 percent of residents assessed the state of the economy as "not so good/poor" -- a group Obama won handily, according to the exit polls.

-- Ceci Connolly

The New York Times  
nytimes.com

November 5, 2008

## Obama Wins Election; McCain Loses as Bush Legacy Is Rejected

By [ADAM NAGOURNEY](#)

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as

its first black chief executive.

Mr. Obama's election amounted to a national catharsis — a repudiation of a historically unpopular Republican president and his economic and foreign policies, and an embrace of Mr. Obama's call for a change in the direction and the tone of the country. But it was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.

Mr. Obama, 47, a first-term Democratic senator from Illinois, defeated Senator [John McCain](#), Republican of Arizona, a former prisoner of war who was making his second bid for the presidency.

Mr. McCain offered a gracious concession speech at the Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix shortly after 11:15 p.m. Eastern time, quieting his booing supporters more than once when he mentioned Mr. Obama's name. "Senator Obama has achieved a great thing for himself, and for his country," he said, adding that he was sorry that Mr. Obama's grandmother, [Madelyn Dunham](#), who helped raise him during his teenage years, had not lived to see the day; she died on Sunday.

"These are difficult times for our country, and I pledged to him tonight to do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges we face," Mr. McCain said. "I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him, but offering our next president our goodwill and earnest effort to find ways to come together."

To the very end, Mr. McCain's campaign was eclipsed by an opponent who was nothing short of a phenomenon, drawing huge crowds epitomized by the tens of thousands of people who turned out to hear Mr. Obama's victory speech in Grant Park in Chicago.

Mr. McCain also fought the headwinds of a relentlessly hostile political environment, weighted down with the baggage left to him by President Bush and an economic collapse that took place in the middle of the general election campaign.

The day shimmered with history as voters began lining up before dark — hours before polls opened — to take part in the culmination of a campaign that, over the course of two years, commanded an extraordinary amount of attention from the American public.

As the returns became known, and Mr. Obama passed milestone after milestone, winning Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Iowa and New Mexico — many Americans rolled into the streets to celebrate what many described, with perhaps overstated if understandable exhilaration, a new era in a country where just 143 years ago, Mr. Obama, as a black man, could have been owned as a slave.

For Republicans, especially the conservatives who have dominated the party for nearly three decades, the night represented a bitter setback and left them contemplating where they now stand in American politics.

Mr. Obama led his party in a decisive sweep of Congress, putting Democrats in control of both the House and the Senate — by overwhelming numbers — and the White House for the first time since 1995, when [Bill Clinton](#) was president. The president-elect and his expanded Democratic majority now faces the task of governing the country through a difficult period: the likelihood of a deep and prolonged recession.

The roster of defeated Republicans included some notable party moderates — including Senator

John Sununu of New Hampshire and Rep. Chris Shays of Connecticut— signaling that the Republican conference that convenes in Washington next January will not only be smaller, but more conservative.

Mr. Obama will come into office after an election in which he laid out a number of clear promises: to cut taxes for most Americans, to get the United States out of Iraq in a fast ifand? orderly fashion, and to expand health care. In a recognition of the difficult transition he faces, given the economic crisis, Mr. Obama is expected to begin filling White House jobs as early as this week.

The Democratic sweep took down some well-known Republican senators, including [Elizabeth Dole](#) of North Carolina and [John E. Sununu](#) of New Hampshire. But Democrats failed to achieve the 60-seat majority required to prevent Republican filibusters.

Mr. Obama defeated Mr. McCain in Ohio, a central battleground in American politics, despite a huge effort that brought Mr. McCain and his running-mate, Gov. [Sarah Palin](#) of Alaska, back there repeatedly. Ohio was a state Mr. Obama lost decisively to Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) of New York in the Democratic primary.

Mr. McCain failed to take from Mr. Obama the two Democratic states that were at the top of his target list: New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. And in addition to Ohio, Democrats captured two other Republican states, Iowa and New Mexico.

Mr. Obama comes into office with Senator [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#), Democrat of Delaware, his vice-presidential running mate. Even before the final results were called, there were indications that Mr. McCain's advisers were in fact unhappy with their vice-presidential candidate, Ms. Palin, who was announced by Mr. McCain to an explosion of enthusiasm and interest by conservatives and since caused a series of embarrassments for Mr. McCain.

Mr. McCain's chief strategist, [Steve Schmidt](#), demurred when asked whether he thought in was happy with Ms. Palin's performance. "I'm not going to go there," Mr. Schmidt said. "There'll be time for the post-mortems in the race."

Initial signs were that Mr. Obama benefited from a huge turnout of voters, but particularly among blacks. That group of voters made up 13 percent of the electorate on Tuesday, according to surveys of people leaving the polls, compared with 11 percent in 2006. In North Carolina, Republicans said that the huge surge of African-Americans was one of the big factors that lead to Mrs. Dole's loss.

Mr. Obama also did strikingly well among Hispanic voters, beating Mr. McCain did far less better among those voters than Mr. Bush did in 2004, suggesting the damage the [Republican Party](#) has suffered among those voters over four years in which Republicans have been at the forefront on the effort to crack down on illegal immigrants

As thousands of people gathered in downtown Chicago to celebrate their hometown candidate, the audience erupted in bursts of applause each time a state was called for Mr. Obama. The party took on the air of a drive-in movie theater, with his supporters remaining eerily quiet until a new development flashed across giant television screens. A thundering roar sounded when the roll call of projected Democratic victories suddenly included Ohio.

Senator [Barack Obama](#) stood on the brink of an historic victory Tuesday after he appeared to

have won enough electoral votes to defeat Senator John McCain for president and to become the first African-American to serve as the nation's chief executive.

Mr. Obama won Ohio, a key battleground in American presidential politics, and held off assaults by Mr. McCain in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania, the top two states that Democrats won in 2004 that Mr. McCain had fought to take back.

The exit polls found that a broad majority of voters considered the economy to be the most important issue facing the nation. And Mr. Obama was viewed as much more qualified than Mr. McCain to deal with that issue.

Blacks made up 13 percent of the total electorate, up from 11 percent last time, the polls showed. More than 95 percent of them said they had voted for Mr. Obama, an African-American.

Mr. Obama was also winning overwhelmingly among Latino voters. Mr. McCain was faring much poorer among those voters compared with how President Bush performed in 2004, suggesting a long-term problem for the Republican Party with a rapidly growing demographic group.

Mr. Obama held on to the two top Democratic states that Mr. McCain had targeted to win back, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

Mr. Obama and Mr. McCain were in their home states late Tuesday, awaiting final results. Tens of thousands of Mr. Obama's supporters gathered in Grant Park in his hometown, Chicago, to greet him. Mr. McCain was planning to address supporters at a ballroom in the elegant Biltmore Hotel, designed by [Frank Lloyd Wright](#), in Phoenix.

In what was shaping up as a good night for the [Democratic Party](#), its candidates knocked off Republican senators in New Hampshire and North Carolina, while picking up an open Senate seat in Virginia with the victory of [Mark R. Warner](#), a former governor, to succeed [John W. Warner](#), a Republican who is retiring.

Senator John E. Sununu of New Hampshire was ousted by former Gov. [Jeanne Shaheen](#), while Senator Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina was beaten by a Democratic state lawmaker, [Kay R. Hagan](#).

Reflecting Mr. Obama's ability to draw new voters to his side, 70 percent of people voting for the first time said they had backed him. A similar percentage of voters under 30 years old also supported him.

The only age group that went for Mr. McCain, who is 72, were voters 65 and older, according to the exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky.

One in eight respondents said that age was an important factor in their vote; of those, three quarters voted for Mr. Obama.

The election ended what by any definition was one of the most remarkable contests in American political history, drawing what was by every appearance unparalleled public interest. Throughout the day, people lined up at the polls for hours — some showing up before dawn — to cast their votes. Aides to both campaigns said that anecdotal evidence suggested record-high voter turnout.

Reflecting the intensity of the two candidates, Mr. McCain and Mr. Obama took a page from what Mr. Bush first reference to President Bush did in 2004 and continued to campaign after

the polls opened.

Mr. McCain left his home in Arizona after voting early Tuesday to fly to Colorado and New Mexico, two states where Mr. Bush won four years ago but where Mr. Obama waged a spirited battle. These were symbolically appropriate final campaign stops for Mr. McCain, reflecting the imperative he felt of trying to defend Republican states against a challenge from Mr. Obama.

“Get out there and vote,” Mr. McCain said in Grand Junction, Colo. “I need your help. Volunteer, knock on doors, get your neighbors to the polls, drag ‘em there if you need to.”

By contrast, Mr. Obama flew from his home in Chicago to Indiana, a state that in many ways came to epitomize the audacity of his effort this year. Indiana for a Democrat since President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)’s landslide victory in 1964, and Mr. Obama made an intense bid for support there. He later returned home to Chicago play basketball, his election-day ritual.

Mr. Obama cast his ballot at 7:36 a.m., Central time, at the Beulah Shoemith Elementary School in Chicago, accompanied by his wife, [Michelle](#). “I noticed that Michelle took a long time though,” he said afterwards. “I had to check to see who she was voting for.”

Mr. McCain voted later, at 9:08 a.m., Mountain time, at the Albright United Methodist Church in Phoenix. He and his wife, Cindy, were greeted there by supporters with cheers of “Senator McCain” and “Thank you, senator.”

The nation’s faltering economy seemed to weigh in voters’ minds: A survey of voters leaving polling places found that 6 in 10 said this was their dominant concern, a reflection of the economic collapse that provided the backdrop for the general election contest.

Six in 10 voters said the economy was their top concern. In a sign of how much the terrain of this election changed since Mr. Obama and Mr. McCain started campaigning in their party caucuses and primaries more than a year ago, only 1 in 10 cited the war in Iraq.

The first exit polls suggested a spike in voting among blacks that had been a source of concern among Republicans: 13 percent of the electorate, compared with 11 percent in 2004.

Across the country — in Florida, Georgia, New York and North Carolina, to name a few places — polling stations reported overflow crowds, with long waits and packed parking lots. Mr. McCain’s advisers had predicted that 130 million people would vote, compared with 123.5 million who cast ballots four years ago, reflecting the intense interest in the race.

Mr. Obama waged in many ways an improbable campaign. He is a first-term United States senator from Illinois who just five years ago was serving as a state senator. It was because of that résumé that his main opponent in the battle for the Democratic nomination, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, thought that he would not last.

But Mr. Obama proved to be a phenomenal campaigner, drawing huge and excited crowds and defeating Mrs. Clinton in Iowa, an overwhelmingly white state. That outcome, more than any other single vote, signaled to Democratic leaders the potency of the Obama appeal. But the two candidates battled through the very last primary battle in June before Mrs. Clinton, bowing to the inevitable, pulled out of the race.

Mr. McCain also won his party’s nomination improbably after he had, a year ago, appeared doomed when his campaign ran out of money. He persevered through a combination of

scrappiness and a field of primary opponents who each had problems with the fractured Republican electorate.

In his campaign, Mr. Obama offered some fairly ambitious promises, including tax cuts for most Americans, a withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and an expansion of health care coverage. Mr. McCain pledged not to leave Iraq without a victory and promised to continue Mr. Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy.

Early exit polls suggested that Mr. Obama was receiving the support of half of men. If that continued, he would be the first Democratic candidate since [Jimmy Carter](#) in 1976 to do so. Seven in 10 voters under 30 backed Mr. Obama, and voters over 65 supported Mr. McCain.

Julie Bosman, John M. Broder, Jack Healy, Dalia Sussman, Ian Urbina and Jeff Zeleny contributed reporting.



### **Obama wins over nation's Hispanic voters, exit polls show**

12:24 AM CST on Wednesday, November 5, 2008

**By EMILY RAMSHAW / The Dallas Morning News**

[eramshaw@dallasnews.com](mailto:eramshaw@dallasnews.com)

AUSTIN – Hispanic voters, considered a swing vote because of their concentration in key states, overwhelmingly backed Democrat Barack Obama on Tuesday.

Exit polls indicate more than two-thirds of the country's Hispanic voters cast their ballots for Mr. Obama, despite being heavily courted by Republican John McCain.

Mr. McCain was initially popular among Hispanics in his home state of Arizona, which borders the battleground states of Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada. His campaign was hopeful his immigration experience and social conservatism would appeal to Latinos.

"It is always going to come down to having experience and knowing how to handle things like the troops and Iraq," said McCain supporter Fatima Quiroz, 25, who voted at Stephen C. Foster elementary in Dallas.

But Mr. Obama managed to woo the nation's largest and fastest growing minority group away with a heavy field operation and Spanish-language ads. And voters said his stances on the economy and immigration were major factors in their decision.

"I want to get a job. I had a job with Clinton. But ever since Bush, it has been downhill," said Alfred Reyes, 39, who is unemployed.

Raul Acosta, 53, a personal chef from Dallas, voted for Mr. Obama because he wants "a change out from you-know-who."

"It didn't work," he said of President Bush. "We need some new blood."

Israel Moreno, 23, an employee of a Dallas beer distribution company, was voting for only his second time in a presidential election Tuesday.

He viewed it as an opportunity to correct what he considered an error he made before.

"I made a mistake in voting for Bush," said Mr. Moreno, who was born in Brownsville to Mexican-born parents. "But this time I will vote for Obama, just to see what he does for us."



## Obama buoyed by Hispanic voters

By HOPE YEN – 4 days ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrat Barack Obama gained lopsided support from Hispanics in Tuesday's election, winning solidly among voters with whom President Bush had made inroads in 2004.

About two-thirds of Hispanics voted for Obama, decisively surpassing the 53 percent who voted for Democrat John Kerry in 2004, exit polls showed. That year Bush enjoyed a high-water mark of GOP support from Hispanics with 44 percent of the vote from the nation's fastest growing ethnic group.

Bush had gotten the support of 35 percent of Hispanics in 2000. Republicans Bob Dole and the first President Bush both received 25 percent or less of the Hispanic vote in their losing presidential bids in 1996 and 1992, respectively.

This year, Republican John McCain had hoped to build on support from Hispanics who share his pro-military, anti-abortion stance. Obama also faced the challenge of converting the nearly two-thirds of Hispanics who had backed Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton in the Democratic primaries.

But like voters across the nation, the economy dominated the concerns of many Hispanics. McCain also found it difficult to shake his biggest liability with these voters: the R after his name.

John Marquez, an Albuquerque, N.M., Democrat, is among those distressed about the economy who supported Obama.

"We don't need another Bush in there," Marquez, 44, said Tuesday.

In New Mexico, for example, Hispanics traditionally back Democrats and this election was

no different. A strong majority supported Obama. McCain, for his part, was the favorite of a majority of non-Hispanic white voters.

"We need to get the Republicans out," said Marquez, who's unemployed because of a back problems. "They're driving us under. We've got to put the country back in order."

# The Miami Herald

Posted on Wed, Nov. 05, 2008

**Blacks, Hispanics signal Florida shift**  
BY MARC CAPUTO AND ROB BARRY

Buoyed by massive black support and the crucial votes of Hispanics, Democrat Barack Obama captured Florida by winning on the issues and striking deep into Republican strongholds.

Obama's Florida win over John McCain was a stinging loss for Republicans who control the Legislature and governor's mansion and, until just two months ago, were openly questioning whether the Democrat would campaign full force in the nation's biggest swing state.

But hard financial times, McCain's gaffe in Jacksonville where he said the "fundamentals of the economy are strong" and Obama's juggernaut of a campaign inalterably changed the race.

Obama beat McCain by a 51-48 percent margin, and captured a lopsided share of Florida votes from young people and first-time voters, winning comfortably among independents, and by besting McCain among Hispanic voters by double digits, according to Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International exit poll of voters.

Once a reliable Republican voting bloc, Hispanics have shifted more toward Democrats in recent years as South and Central Americans started swelling the voter rolls and curbing the influence of Miami-Dade's Cuban Americans, who comprise about 70 percent of the county's Republican voters.

"The politics driven by the embargo and Fidel Castro are becoming long gone," said Obama's Florida campaign manager, Steve Schale, who noted that younger Cuban Americans seemed to be shifting toward the Democrats as well.

"The U.S. relationship with Castro, at the end of the day," Schale said, "is a minor concern when you can't get a job or find health insurance for your children."

## **CASTRO KEPT OUT**

In a nod to the new political climate, Miami-Dade's three congressional Republican incumbents -- all Cuban Americans -- kept their seats by emphasizing the economy more than Castro.

Obama won Miami-Dade by about 133,000 -- triple Democrat John Kerry's margin in 2004. Part of the reason: Most Cuban precincts didn't support McCain as strongly as precincts with

the highest black populations backed Obama. Obama's biggest vote margin was in Broward: 241,000.

The Democrat poured an unprecedented sum into the state on field offices, voter registrations, get-out-the-vote efforts and television ads, which drive poll numbers in a state as big as Florida. Obama might have bested McCain by as much as a 4-1 margin in TV ads, Republicans say.

Obama's well-broadcast message: McCain is an out-of-touch President Bush clone who can't bring change.

The exit polls suggest the message stuck.

About 56 percent of voters said McCain is not "in touch with people," while 57 percent said Obama was in touch. About 47 percent of voters said McCain would continue Bush's policies, while about as many thought he would bring change. But of those voters who said that "bringing about change" was the most important issue, 92 percent favored Obama.

More voters also said they were contacted by mail, phone or in person for Obama -- a sign of a more robust get-out-the-vote effort by the Democrats.

The campaign made an unprecedented push to bank early votes, giving the Democrats an edge of up to 363,000 ballots cast before Election Day even started. By contrast, in 2004, Republicans led by about 50,000 ballots before Election Day.

McCain's chief Florida fundraiser, Brian Ballard, estimated the Democrats spent up to \$75 million in the state for Obama.

"If Obama really won this, it's all about money," Ballard said. "Money. And the economy."

Though McCain was perceived as having more experience, he unsuccessfully tried to frame Obama as a liberal -- a charge that didn't stick, the exit poll showed. For his efforts, McCain was successfully framed by Obama as being too negative. The exit poll showed that more people felt McCain was unfairly negative than Obama.

### **MAKING A STATEMENT**

In many ways, Florida came down to a fight about bragging rights. Obama had already secured enough Electoral College votes to win the presidency. But Florida Democrats wanted to make a statement: The era of Republicans easily winning a state where Democrats outnumber them is over.

Republicans pointed out, however, that they defended legislative seats in tough races and the conservative constitutional amendment banning gay-marriage passed by a big margin.

Obama is only the third Democrat to win on a statewide ballot since 2000, and he's the first black candidate to win in a contested partisan statewide race for an executive office.

And race played a big role -- in Obama's favor. Though he lost the white vote by an estimated 42 to 56 percent, the first black man to win the presidency carried the black vote by 96 to 4.

Jacksonville played a major role. So powerful was the black vote in counties like Duval -- where Bush won 59 percent of the vote in 2004 -- that Obama lost by just one percentage point. Blacks account for 27 percent of Duval's electorate.

Obama's biggest shocker: Sarasota County, a Republican bastion Bush won by 16,250 votes in

2004. Obama won it by carrying precincts with young, black and Hispanic voters in Sarasota and Venice.

Republicans seemed to underestimate Obama's chances in the state, with Republican Party of Florida chief Jim Greer openly doubting the existence of some of Obama's 53 Florida field offices. Greer and McCain's Florida manager, Arlene DiBenigno developed a frosty relationship. Gov. Charlie Crist disappeared from the Florida campaign trail for a while after he was passed over by McCain as a running mate. Crist spun a TV ad for McCain last week, but it wasn't even enough in Crist's home county, Pinellas, where Obama won 54 to 45 percent.

"McCain was out-campaigned in strategy, tactics and message," said former Republican Party of Florida political director Jamie Miller.

He said the Republican loss was "eerily familiar" to the 2000 election that Bush narrowly won in Florida when the Republican's national campaign didn't pay enough attention to the expertise and advice of the state party's staffers.

Miller said McCain's national campaign appeared to make the same error this year when its Washington-based staff siphoned Florida money out of the state and seemed to ignore the party and campaign staffers in Tallahassee.

"Obama should never have been in this race in Florida," Miller said. "He promised change and unity. Now he has a chance to show us."



Posted Tuesday, November 04, 2008 9:37 PM

### *Obama's Latino Edge*

Arian Campo-Flores

If Sen. Barack Obama wins Florida, one key reason will be his apparently strong performance among Latinos in the state. According to exit polls, Obama won 57 percent of Florida's Hispanic vote, compared to 42 percent for Sen. John McCain, says Fernand Amandi of Bendixen & Associates, Obama's Hispanic polling firm. That marks the first time in memory that a Democrat has carried the state's Latino vote. In 2004, the numbers were almost exactly the reverse; Sen. John Kerry won 44 percent, compared to President George W. Bush's 56 percent. As Sergio Bendixen told NEWSWEEK earlier this year, "if [Obama] gets 55 percent [of Florida's Latino vote], then he would pretty much [be assured of] winning the state." If the exit polls are to be trusted (and that's a big if, considering how unreliable they proved in 2004), Obama's narrow lead in Florida could be largely explained by this significant shift of the state's Latino electorate.

A number of factors explain Obama's apparent success with Florida's Latinos. For one thing, the

state's mix of Hispanic voters has been rapidly changing. In 2000, Cuban-Americans--who lean heavily Republican--accounted for about 70 percent of the state's Hispanic electorate. This year, they're likely to represent less than 50 percent. The reason: a huge influx of Central and South Americans in South Florida and a ballooning Puerto Rican population in the Orlando area. Most of these groups tend to favor Democrats. But Obama also apparently managed to peel away a sizable chunk of Cuban-American votes. According to exit polls, says Amandi, Obama captured 35 percent of Cuban-American voters--nearly doubling Kerry's take in 2004 and matching Bill Clinton's strong performance in 1996. "The reason Obama will win Dade County with a 150,000-vote lead is the overwhelming support of non-Cuban Hispanics and an unprecedented number of Cubans," says Amandi.

The Latino numbers nationally are even more impressive for Obama. Exit polls show him winning the overall Hispanic vote 68 percent to 30 percent--outperforming Kerry by 10 points--and winning 85 percent of the Mexican-American vote nationally. That's a big reason why he apparently captured huge margins in Western states like California--where the polling shows him beating McCain among Latinos 80 percent to 20 percent--and Nevada, where Obama apparently won among such voters 75 percent to 25 percent.

Obama benefited from widespread Latino disgruntlement with the Bush administration over the economic crisis and the war in Iraq. He also capitalized on broader Hispanic resentment at the GOP, which has come to be viewed by many Latinos as an anti-immigrant party because of some Republicans' strident rhetoric on illegal aliens. Just as important, though, the Obama campaign put together a muscular Latino outreach that targeted Hispanics in critical swing states like Florida, Nevada, New Mexico and Colorado. Frank Sanchez, Obama's national chair for Hispanic finance, says the campaign has spent more than \$20 million on ads and organizational efforts targeting Latinos.

Obama's appeal to Hispanics was apparent on Election Day in Florida. Yudelka Lopez, 40, a Dominican who became a citizen only three years ago, cast her first presidential vote ever for Obama at a polling station in Hialeah Gardens, near Miami. As she sees it, Obama cares more about the poor and will try harder to help them. Plus, "I want a change," she says. In her eyes, he's the one to make it happen.



### **Freddy Balsera: 'How Obama Closed the Deal With Hispanics'**

Last update: 11:00 p.m. EST Nov. 4, 2008

Three weeks before the November election, the Obama campaign's Hispanic media team bucked the trend of negative campaigning and took the bold move of making its entire paid Spanish language message completely positive. Gone were the criticisms of John McCain or the attacks on his policies. They were replaced instead with uplifting messages on how Obama would help Hispanic families achieve the American dream through lower taxes, access to health care and college assistance. A strategy of hope and promise versus defamation and fear mongering was how Obama closed the deal with Hispanic voters.

Having the discipline to resist counter punching while the other side is spewing venom at you is easier said than done. To put things in perspective, this course was charted at a moment when McCain and the Republicans were painting Obama as responsible for everything wrong in the lives of Latinos: the defeat of the immigration bill, abortions among teenage girls and crime in the inner city. In Miami, where I live, it went a step further. McCain and his surrogates appeared more like McCarthy, unabashedly portraying Obama as a communist in dramatic Cold War fashion. According to them, Obama had more in common with Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega than with Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton. They were serving up heaping portions of red meat to their base by engaging in a Latino "culture war." One hundred percent of McCain's Spanish television and radio ads in the country were negative. And in the midst of this maelstrom of attacks and distortion, the Obama Hispanic media team took a deep breath and realized that McCain was missing the boat with Latino voters. It was yet another example of McCain just not getting it. Latinos didn't want to hear insults and attacks; they wanted high minded politics based on plans and ideas. They wanted solutions to their problems.

The pundits who said during the primary process that Hispanics would not support an African American candidate clearly didn't understand how our community thinks and acts. They completely misread why Hillary Clinton received a disproportionate amount of Hispanic support during the primaries. It wasn't about rejecting a black candidate like the so-called experts said; it was about supporting someone they believed in and felt they had a relationship with. So Obama's challenge in the general election was to develop his own relationship and level of comfort with Hispanics. He lived up to that.

The McCain campaign rode into the general election with blinders on, feeling almost arrogantly confident and strong about McCain's popularity among Hispanics because of his role on immigration reform. Granted, that is an important issue to Hispanic voters and he showed tremendous leadership on it, but what they failed to recognize is that immigration isn't the only issue that mattered to Hispanics in this election. Unemployment, lack of health care coverage, the war and gas prices are affecting Hispanics the same as everyone else. For McCain, being good on immigration wasn't enough in the eyes of Hispanics if they disagreed with his views on every other issue.

Hispanics wanted someone to vote for, not against. And McCain never told Hispanics what he stood for and why we should vote for him; he only told us why not to vote for Obama. That's just not good enough anymore. Meanwhile, Obama dedicated himself to telling Hispanic voters who he was and how he would lift us up through better paying jobs, greater access to health care and

college assistance for our kids. The clincher was when he said it himself in Spanish in his last TV spot "Sueno Americano."

This election is the greatest example of the evolution of the Hispanic electorate. Our community played a critical role in battleground states like Colorado, Florida, North Carolina, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Moreover, Hispanics showed that even though we strive to preserve our culture and traditions, we are also very proud of being new Americans and take the future of this country very seriously. We came here seeking the American dream and want the very best for this country and all of its people.

Obama made Hispanics feel respected by talking about issues in a way that inspired us. He invested in our community and made a historic effort to communicate his vision in terms that were meaningful and effective to Spanish speaking voters. In the end, he showed Hispanics that he understood us. The Obama campaign's Hispanic campaign was the most prolific in the history of presidential politics, and it was done the right way.

Freddy Balsera is the Managing Partner of Balsera Communications. He helped develop Obama's Hispanic message and media campaign and also served as a Latino surrogate for the campaign.

SOURCE Balsera Communications  
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# The Miami Herald

## Obama first Democrat to win Florida Hispanic vote

**The 2008 presidential election marked the first time Florida Hispanics backed a Democrat since exit polling began in the 1980s.**

**BY CASEY WOODS**

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Rose Pujol, a Cuban-American, pushed hard for Barack Obama's presidential victory. The Miami resident attended the Democratic convention, volunteered for the Florida campaign, and put up a life-size cutout of Obama in her Coconut Grove offices.

"He takes people from all walks of life and gets them behind him," said Pujol, 53. "I wanted to be part of that America."

Such enthusiasm paid off for the Democratic candidate in Florida's elections: the state's Hispanics voted for him in overwhelming numbers and arguably handed him his victory in the Florida victory.

Obama won 57 percent of the state's Hispanic vote, compared to 42 percent for John McCain, according to exit polls done by the Democratic polling firm Bendixen & Associates -- making this election the first time the state's Hispanics have backed a Democratic presidential candidate since polling of Hispanics began in the 1980s. In 2004, President George Bush won 55 percent of the Hispanic vote to John Kerry's 44 percent.

Polls indicate the state's Hispanic vote may be divided. On one side are conservative older Cuban-Americans, who vote reliably Republican, while on the other are younger Cuban-Americans and a swelling number of non-Cuban Hispanics, who tend to lean Democrat.

Evidence of the potential divide is the Pujol family.

Her father, who came from the island in 1959, called into Cuban-American radio shows before the election, telling listeners that an Obama victory would mean that soon the little *pioneros* would be part of the U.S. education system. The "pioneers" are the children in Cuba's communist education system who are taught to support the revolution with mottos such as "we will be like Che [Guevara]."

When Pujol, a lifelong Republican, went to her parent's house to break it to them that she was backing the Democratic candidate, she found they were shocked.



## Obama Win Propelled by Votes in Fast-Growing Suburbs

By Indira A.R. Lakshmanan

Nov. 6 (Bloomberg) -- [Barack Obama](#) was propelled to victory by the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. electorate -- suburbanites, minorities and young voters.

Two-thirds of voters from 18 to 29 years old favored Obama, a 12 percentage-point increase from 2004's presidential vote. Obama also attracted votes from two out of three Hispanics, the fastest-growing demographic group, making the difference in Florida, Colorado and other states with significant Hispanic populations. More than 40 percent of Hispanics voted for President [George W. Bush](#) four years ago.

Communities that put the Democratic president-elect over the top in a half-dozen Republican-leaning and swing states -- Virginia, Florida and North Carolina in the South, Ohio and Pennsylvania in the industrial Rust Belt, and Colorado in the Rocky Mountain West -- say a lot about the changing face of the U.S. electorate.

"Suburbs at this point are the middle ground in America," said [Robert Lang](#), director of Virginia Tech University's [Metropolitan Institute](#) in Alexandria. With "a changing metropolitan population and a fast-growing one, they are barometers of where we're going."

In a series of crucial states, Obama reversed historical Republican majorities in areas like the

Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., and greatly expanded support in Democratic-leaning areas, such as suburban Philadelphia.

### **Metropolitan Values**

Republican nominee [John McCain](#) and his running mate, Alaska Governor [Sarah Palin](#), stumbled in suburbs with a message stressing "small-town values," Lang said. Obama, meanwhile, campaigned hard and organized extensively in the big and small metropolitan areas where more than 90 percent of Americans live.

Obama got 52 percent of the vote in Virginia, which no Democrat had carried since 1964, by "vastly outperforming" his party's 2004 nominee [John Kerry](#) in fast-growing suburbs, noted [Jared Leopold](#), communications director for the Virginia Democratic Party.

Obama bested Kerry's vote by as many as 10 percentage points in Loudoun and Prince William counties, outside Washington. The Democrat's last rally on election eve drew 90,000 people to Manassas, in Prince William.

### **No 'Bradley Effect'**

Obama's victory shot down speculation about a so-called "Bradley effect," which theorized that polls may overestimate a black candidate's support because some people lie about their willingness to vote for a minority.

Exit polls show that Obama trailed by 12 percentage points among white voters, coming at least as close as white Democratic nominees did in five of the past seven presidential races. The result is comparable to a 13-point margin in the last nationwide Bloomberg/Los Angeles Times pre-election poll.

Among all voters, Obama's victory margins in Florida and Ohio were within 1 point of [Pollster.com](#)'s composites of pre-election polls.

In Florida, Obama's victory remade the political map in a state that, like Virginia, is changing from its traditional Southern roots by drawing more transplants from the North, more minority voters, and more immigrants. Anti-communist Cuban-Americans who were reliable Republican voters are no longer a majority among Florida's Hispanics -- who favored Obama by 57-42 percent over McCain.

### **Florida Shift**

"We've seen Florida's electorate get more diverse and younger from 2004 to now," said [Eric Jotkoff](#), spokesman for the Florida Democratic Party. "There's a major shift among Hispanic voters this year, with registered Hispanic Democrats outnumbering registered Republicans in Florida for the first time ever."

Obama beat Republican nominee [John McCain](#) by 18 points in Orange County, which surrounds Orlando, thanks in part to a growing Puerto Rican community that traditionally favors Democrats. Bush and Kerry split Orange County in 2004.

In North Carolina, Obama beat McCain by 15 percentage points in Wake County, home to commuters working in education, technology and medical jobs in the Raleigh/Durham area, where Bush had won.

In Mecklenburg County, which includes Charlotte and its suburbs, Obama beat McCain by 24

points four years after Kerry carried the county by just 4 points.

### **Philadelphia Suburbs**

McCain devoted much of the campaign's final days to Pennsylvania, a Democratic state where he tried to win by increasing Republican strength in rural counties and staying even in suburbia. Four years ago, Kerry won narrow victories in Republican areas surrounding Philadelphia. Obama significantly outperformed Kerry in Delaware, Montgomery, Bucks and Chester counties.

In Ohio's Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati, voters haven't supported a Democrat for president in 44 years. Obama won by 20,000 votes, 52 percent to 47 percent, a reversal of the 2004 spread between Bush and Kerry.

“In the suburbs of Hamilton County, the Republican message of social values and not talking about job loss didn't work,” said [John Hagner](#), targeting director for the Ohio Democratic Party.

Out West, the Hispanic vote in Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada grew between 5 and 9 percentage points from 2004, helping Obama win those states, according to exit polls. In Arapahoe County, east of Denver, Obama beat McCain 55 percent to 43 percent. Bush won the county by 3 points over Kerry.

### **College Graduates**

Another group that's key to suburban success, college graduates, represented a majority of the U.S. electorate for the first time this year. Obama carried college-educated voters 53 percent to 45 percent for McCain.

“We certainly have seen some movement indicating perhaps an emerging Democratic majority,” said [Karlyn Bowman](#), a senior fellow at the [American Enterprise Institute](#) in Washington. “We won't know for two years whether this was simply a rejection of the status quo or an embrace of what Barack Obama was saying.”

Lang said Republicans relied on an outdated playbook that wasn't effective with growing groups of voters.

“Republicans picked a rural vice presidential candidate who talked about moose hunting. How many Americans go moose hunting?” Lang asked. “They won small towns, but the problem is not enough people live in small towns. America's new small towns are called suburbs.”

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*Ruben Navarrette*

**Latinos insulted, but involved**

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Remember when the pundits and other political analysts assured us with absolute certainty that Latinos wouldn't support an African-American for president?

I do. In fact, one of the last times we heard that insulting refrain was just after the March 4 primary in Texas, a state where Latinos make up almost 40 percent of Democratic voters.

The experts claimed there was a historical tension between Latinos and African-Americans born of competition that played out everywhere from public schools to prison yards to university campuses to the job market. And they insisted that this brown-black feud would undoubtedly carry into the voting booth. Some amateur anthropologists went further and implied that Latinos were racist because of their Latin American heritage. Of course, that theory ignored the fact these people come from countries that have already elected indigenous presidents, including Benito Juarez in Mexico, Alejandro Toledo in Peru, and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

The experts even offered what they saw as hard evidence that Latinos wouldn't support an African-American -- the fact that Hillary Clinton had so dominated the Latino vote in the Democratic primaries against Barack Obama. Clinton carried Texas, California, Florida, New York, Arizona and New Mexico -- all states with significant Latino populations. Clinton won the Latino vote overall by a margin of nearly 2-to-1. It never occurred to the experts that Latinos were demonstrating loyalty to the Clinton brand, and that once Clinton was no longer in the race, they'd shift that loyalty and back the Democratic brand in the general election.

Of course, the slander about not supporting an African-American was never really about Latinos. The experts were simply projecting onto this ethnic group the anxieties, fears and prejudices being expressed by white voters in Rust Belt states such as Pennsylvania. There, Gov. Ed Rendell, a Clinton supporter, was blunt in acknowledging that many white voters wouldn't support an African-American for president.

So how did Election Day turn out? Obviously, not very well for John McCain and Sarah Palin. But it was a good day for Latinos. Not only did they play a crucial role in the election's outcome, but they also drove a stake through the heart of conventional wisdom.

In his matchup with McCain, Obama won the Latino vote decisively. In fact, he won it by roughly the same margin by which he had lost that vote to Clinton several months earlier.

According to the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund, 9.2 million Latinos were expected to vote in this election. But the turnout may have reached 10 million. That would be about 8 percent of the electorate, a significant showing for a community that represents 14 percent of the U.S. population, much of which has not yet reached voting age.

According to exit polls, Obama won 66 percent of the Latino vote compared to 32 percent for McCain. Moreover, the Latino vote helped Obama carry four battleground states: Colorado, Nevada, Florida and New Mexico. According to an analysis by the Pew Hispanic Center, Obama won 78 percent of the Hispanic vote in New Jersey, 78 percent in Nevada, 74 percent in California and 73 percent in Colorado. He even made significant inroads into the Cuban-American community, a traditional GOP stronghold, in winning 57 percent of the Latino vote in Florida.

There were a multitude of reasons why Latinos rallied around Obama. Many were loyal

Democrats who never stray from the party's ticket. Others were disillusioned former supporters of President Bush who decided to show their disappointment by embracing the Democrat. Some, like the Latino reader who wrote me, might have assumed that electing a person of color would somehow benefit all people of color. Many liked Obama's policies and believed his promises. And no doubt many more got caught up in the wave of enthusiasm that also swept up tens of millions of other Americans.

Whatever the reason for their support, Latinos can say they played an important role in helping to elect the nation's first African-American president, and in delivering some of the key states that helped make that happen. Now that America's largest minority has proved the experts wrong, where does it go to get its reputation back?

I know where many of them would like to tell the experts to go.

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### **Is this a moment of shifts made to last?**

#### **Obama's victory breaks away from past voting trends, making political realignment possible**

November 9, 2008

BY BRUCE N. GYORY | Bruce N. Gyory is a political consultant with Corning Place Consulting, based in Albany. He has worked for three Democratic governors in New York and has advised elected officials from both parties.

Does [the election](#) of [Barack Obama](#) mark a profound shift in U.S. politics, forging a new majority coalition likely to define the direction of the country for years to come?

The elections of [Franklin Roosevelt](#) and [Ronald Reagan](#) brought about realignments in the last century, transforming politics for decades. Some thought [Bill Clinton](#)'s re-election in 1996 would do the same. But his tumultuous second term, while sterling in its management of the economy, did not mark a long-term shift in party allegiances.

Realignments are hard to predict. They either solidify or evaporate, based upon political, economic and social events. But the classic ingredients are present in Obama's election: a significant disruption of traditional voting behavior, following a campaign of high intensity and sharp political conflict. The coalition forged by Reagan of suburban with rural and exurban voters - the last great realignment - has been shattered.

Obama forged a coalition of voters in the once heavily Republican suburbs and traditionally Democratic urban areas, leaving [John McCain](#) with the small-town and rural voters.

In the suburbs - where half the total voters live - Obama won 50 to 48 percent. In urban areas, which account for a third of the voters, Obama won by 28 percent. Small-town and rural voters formed 20 percent of the electorate, and McCain carried them by 8 percent.

Certainly Obama benefited from the high turnout. Non-whites reached a historic high of 25 percent of all votes, and Obama swept both their votes and the increased number of first-time voters. The Hispanic vote was critical in [the Electoral College](#) in turning red states blue ([Nevada](#), [New Mexico](#), [Colorado](#) and [Florida](#)). Under-30 voters gave crucial levels of support (74 percent in [North Carolina](#), 67 percent in Nevada, 63 percent in [Indiana](#) and 61 percent in [Ohio](#)), swinging to the Democrats states long held by Republicans.

Obama also attracted young, female and more educated voters, who increasingly make up today's suburbs. According to [exit polls](#), he won more than half the votes of women, people earning \$200,000 or more, and those with college and post-graduate degrees.

Like Reagan in 1980, Obama brought in significant gains for his party in Congress: 6 Senate seats and 20 House seats (with 3 Senate seats and 6 House races still too close to call).

The magnitude of the congressional realignment becomes more obvious when you add up the [GOP's](#) losses from the 2006 and 2008 elections: 55 House and 12 Senate seats.

But a clear victory such as this one still has only the potential to be realigning. The re-elections of [Woodrow Wilson](#) and Bill Clinton spring to mind. The bitterness in public opinion, due to the lost peace following World War I, crushed Democratic hopes after Wilson. The lost momentum in Clinton's second term eroded Democratic support among older suburban voters in the North and stunted his party's outreach among Hispanics and younger suburban voters in the West.

Moreover, just because there is a new majority coalition does not mean that a minority party coalition cannot successfully govern. President [Dwight Eisenhower](#) had two productive terms in office, but he succeeded by adapting rather than trying to change the landscape paved by Roosevelt, just as Clinton prevailed, but only by maneuvering within the parameters of the Reagan coalition.

Geographically the new Democratic majority is based upon a northern land bridge, connecting both coasts, with inroads to the Mountain West. The Obama win grafts onto the Democrats' improved showing in the cities a majority of suburban voters, forming a melded metropolitan majority. To hold this coalition together, Obama will need to govern as a moderate.

Political demographics are on Obama's side in terms of long-lasting staying power: Democratic registration is up sharply while Republican registration is down; the white share of the electorate has declined from 86 percent in 1980 to 75 percent in 2008; and yes, the under-40 millennial

generation, so drawn to Obama, has surged past the baby boomers in population.

But the science of political demography often misses the crucial role of artistry in politics. What separates successful realignments from those that never materialize is the transformative leadership of the president at the helm. This larger challenge becomes a test, not only of a president's suppleness at effective compromise, but of his ability to use the bully pulpit to rally public opinion to his side, again and again.

Several examples prove illustrative. Years after [Andrew Jackson](#) died, votes were still cast for him in presidential elections by the Scotch Irish of Western [Pennsylvania](#). Many were surprised by the outpouring of public affection attending Ronald Reagan's funeral cortege. Neither should have been a surprise. Americans crave leaders who stand and deliver on their hopes. In the end, political realignments are about hope restored, not merely promised, and the affection-laced loyalty of voters.

We will not know if 2008 was a realigning election until we know if the Obama administration has been successful enough to keep its majority coalition intact. Our nation faces daunting domestic and foreign challenges, and Obama's success is not assured.

[Abraham Lincoln](#) once said, "I confess plainly that events have controlled me, I have not controlled events."

Events will be one of the big factors in determining if the 2008 election has ushered in a political realignment. The elements are there. Now let us see if, like FDR and Reagan before him, Obama will have his name attached to a political era in the history books still to be written.