

## Obama's Dream and My Own Become Reality

H. Nicole Anderson --15 October, 2009

Watching the 2004 Democratic Convention from my sister's Florida home, I told her flatly, after watching Obama's riveting speech that he would become the first African-American president of the United States. Although Obama's inspiring words convinced me immediately that he had presidential mettle, I had no idea that Obama would capture the prize so soon. Having been recently laid off, I was about to go to work for Moveon.org as an unpaid volunteer and help get Kerry elected. I thought Obama might be ready by 2012 at the earliest. The probability of an Obama 2008 victory seemed distant in 2004 but not nearly as distant as my carrying a 4.0 GPA at CCSF and studying to become a teacher.



Yes, I have a dream. More succinctly, I had a dream. It seems more like an impending reality now. Having been victimized by yet another cable industry layoff in 2004 ---my fifth layoff in twenty years---I survived on unemployment while I was looking nationwide for a cable industry job and found that Comcast in San Francisco was hiring. I flew out to interview and got the job! So I loaded up the truck and moved to...Twin Peaks! Working as a sales rep, I prospered financially but I was miserable. Under the pressure of meeting weekly quotas, my alcohol dependency and my (undiagnosed) depression worsened. In March of 2007, I rather flipped out and was taken to the hospital. The shrink recommended that I seek help for my alcoholism and later, I was diagnosed with Bipolar illness. I had an excellent disability package that helped me get my life in order after 42 years of drinking, depression and mania. After several months, the fog started to lift but a nagging question emerged, "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" I began doing volunteer work, working every Project Homeless Connect function that came along. I thought, "Wow, if only I could do something to help people and get paid for it." My still addled mind wouldn't permit me to think I could actually ever find a paid job helping people. But about that time, Barack Obama came into my life.

Until Obama delivered his speech in Philadelphia on race, I assumed Hillary would win. That speech energized me so much that I signed up to attend Camp Obama to train as a volunteer to go to Colorado and

work as a precinct captain, which I had done for John Kerry. Unfortunately, personal issues prevented me from leaving town so I had to settle to do “phone banking”--essentially telemarketing for the candidate. Having worked as a telemarketer in the past, I have no stomach for it but I gladly “smiled and dialed” for Obama.

The ultimate telephone experience came on Election Day at the Oakland Convention Center calling voters to see if they had voted, planned to vote or needed help getting to the polls. With one eye viewing the election results on the big screen TV, we continued calling even after Obama appeared to be a shoo-in. As the polls were about to close in California, we started calling Alaska. Sarah Palin territory! Finally, only minutes before the networks began to call the election, we were told our job was done and we gathered in front of the TVs.

The moment the polls closed in the West, CNN announced that Obama had achieved the presidency. As strains of “A Change is Gonna Come” played on the loudspeakers, the balloons were released and the champagne flowed. (Calistoga for me, thank you.) To say that I was ecstatic would be an understatement. The moment proved as thrilling as any in my life.

Having been part of the experience of helping Obama achieve his dream, I began to believe anyone can accomplish almost anything if she is willing to do the work to achieve the dream. Although I had already planned on enrolling at CCSF in January, I had no specific goals. But between November and January, I formulated them. On the day that Obama took the oath of office, students in my LRN 50 class shared their thoughts on what the election meant to them. I shared a brief version of my dream and my fellow students applauded. At that moment, I thought that my dream to become a teacher might become a reality. And now I am *convinced* it will.