

## Obamania - The Game

### Background

The election of Barack Obama as the 44<sup>th</sup> and first African-American president of the United States represented an important historical event for people throughout the world. Not only will the day of his election be remembered, but the unique campaign that led to this event will likewise not be forgotten. The campaign which led to Super Tuesday during the preliminaries was a massive spectacle, and it was followed by a presidential campaign that represented history in the making.

Besides garnering large donations, Obama raised donations from small donors via internet instead of drawing on public financing. He also sent text messages to his followers, kept them updated via twitter, and published videos on YouTube to keep supporters informed. He made it clear that the campaign was not all about him but rather that it is only possible to create change if the campaign was about the entire American people and if Americans could believe in the campaign slogan "Yes we can!"

By campaigning for change, he managed to restore faith in the world's most powerful nation after the Bush administration had squandered America's good reputation through wars and ignorance and after many people had been left feeling disappointed. The resulting enthusiasm for change and the charismatic young African-American presidential candidate that intended to enact this change had an impact on foreign countries as well. Many of these would have elected Obama with a vast majority.

The downside of the hope and the huge expectations that his campaign had produced became visible only a few months after Obama's inauguration. People recognized that he was not a magician and that he also had to make his vision cohere to political reality. One year after his election, Obama has faced a lot of criticism. However, the question of whether Obama can fulfill his promises cannot yet be answered.

### The Idea

Obama quickly became a role model for many people around the world. Due to the fact that his campaign, his speeches, and his personality filled so many people with enthusiasm, he was frequently compared to major figures in American history such as Martin Luther King or John F. Kennedy. The idea to invent a game was triggered by Obama's enormous status and the wish to be President Obama that many children have. This game uses this motivation to combine fun and education.

More specifically, the game pursues three different intentions. First, it intends to broaden the player's knowledge of American history, politics, and geography. Second, the game aims to familiarize the player with Barack Obama's life, politics, and character. Third, Obamania was created in order to be fun. This guarantees that learning about the United States and its president will be effective and will occur unconsciously. Expanding knowledge through games is an important teaching method that has proven to be highly effective.

### Creator's Note

I was really glad to have the opportunity to do something besides writing another term paper. Creating the game while writing my *Examensarbeit* was a good distraction. More importantly, I learned a great deal while creating it and more than I would have learned through writing a term paper. A lot of seminars at the university extol the virtues of action-oriented and student-centered teaching as the best methods for enhancing the learning effect. Unfortunately, however, many university instructors do practice what they preach and, instead, force students to learn by listening to lectures and writing term papers. As a future teacher I was glad to have the chance to demonstrate what I have learned by creating a project like this game.

The game is not ready to be sold on the market, but it has been sufficiently developed to offer an idea of how it works. Although this was a seminar on cultural studies, I tried to connect its' subject with my future profession and decided to invent a game. It shows that there are other ways to use literature like Obama's biography or information about American culture than the ordinary ones used in schools and universities; learning will be enhanced if more action-oriented methods are included in the classroom.