

# The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power

By Jeffrey C. Alexander

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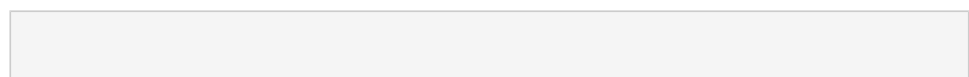
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## **The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power** By Jeffrey C. Alexander


Contemporary observers of politics in America often reduce democracy to demography, and presidential elections are no exception. But do differences in class, gender, race, and religion really determine the vote?

*The Performance of Politics* develops a new way of looking at democratic struggles for big-time power and it explains what happened, and why, during the 2008 Presidential campaign in the United States. Through a series of simple but telling concepts about meaning and performance in public life, illustrated with vivid examples drawn from a range of media coverage, participant observation at a Camp Obama, and interviews with leading political journalists, Jeffrey Alexander argues that images, emotion, and performance are the central features of the battle for power. While these features have been largely overlooked by pundits, they are, in fact, the primary foci of political actors. Winning depends on creating images so that candidates can become heroes. Obama and McCain carefully constructed heroic self-images for their campaigns and the successful performance of those representations characterized not only each candidate's actual rallies, and not only their media messages but also the ground game. Money and organization facilitate the ground game, but they do not determine it. Emotion, images, and performance do. In other words, demography isn't destiny and political parties can't always deliver the vote. Though an untested Senator and the underdog in his own party, Obama, through his moving performances, succeeded in casting himself as the hero and McCain the anti-hero, as the only candidate fit to lead in challenging times.

Drawing on these themes, Alexander then reveals several periods of shifting public opinion and isolates the drama of Obama's celebrity, the effect of Sarah Palin on the race, and the emerging financial crisis through an engaging narrative that conveys the immediacy and excitement of the final months of the historic 2008 presidential campaign.



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
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**The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power** By Jeffrey C. Alexander **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"In an extraordinary analysis of real breadth and depth, Jeffrey Alexander challenges us to re-think Barack Obama's election as president. Political observers have focused too much on the plain demographic facts of 2008, and too little about how and why those facts came to be. Reflect on the performance that takes place on a grand stage, Alexander advises, and we'll see the big picture."--Larry J. Sabato, author of *The Year of Obama*, and Director, Center for Politics, University of Virginia

"This is a work of dazzling brilliance and imagination. It sparkles with new insights that go well beyond standard interpretations of electoral politics. Especially to be treasured is its keen understanding of civil society and the importance of moral meaning and symbolism in public life."--Robert Wuthnow, Professor and Department Chair of Sociology, Princeton University

"Revealing himself to be de Tocqueville's true heir, Jeffrey Alexander draws a sweeping and daring portrait of the heroes, villains, fools, and mavericks who peopled the 2008 American presidential campaign. For Alexander, political elections are serious and dramatic moments of cultural meaning-making, in which the boundaries of civil society are forged and challenged. *The Performance of Politics* is riveting, taking the reader instantly back to those heady days of the 2008 campaign and, in the process, bringing sociological theory vividly to life."--Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Gil and Frank Mustin Professor of Sociology, Swarthmore College

"This book is a 'Making of the President 2008' with brains. The entire cast, Obama, Hillary, McCain and Palin enter this compelling narrative in the jaws of an unexpected Wall Street collapse. Uncompromisingly intelligent, yet a compulsive read."--Scott Lash, Professor and Director of Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London

"Jeffrey Alexander's intriguing argument in *The Performance of Politics*, a meticulous review of the 2008 campaign, is that his fellow sociologists have overemphasized impersonal social forces at the expense of the theater of public life--the way politicians perform "symbolically." It's a prosaic call for a more poetic (or at least aesthetic) understanding of politics. Ideology must connect viscerally, or it doesn't connect at all. Liberalism, like any idea or product, can succeed only if it sells."--The New York Times Book Review

"Representing a study of politics through a lens of cultural sociology, Alexander presents original theoretical arguments on the democratic struggle for power in America, and in the process provides a new explanation for Obama's historic victory." --Contemporary Sociology

"It brings sociological insight to public discussion of electoral politics, and as an eminently teachable book, it should also engage a new generation of students in the study of cultural power. All readers will enjoy reassessing their experience of the 2008 presidential election, and bring new powers of interpretation to future electoral contests."

--American Journal of Sociology

#### About the Author

Jeffrey C. Alexander is Lillian Chavenson Saden Professor of Sociology at Yale University, and a Director of the Center for Cultural Sociology. He is the author or editor of numerous books, including *The Civil Sphere* and *The Meanings of Social Life*.

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##### Steve Diaz:

Precisely why? Because this *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will shock you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book possess such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

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