

YES WE CAN IN PUERTO RICO

By Barack Obama
May 8, 2008

At a time when our families are facing rising costs, stagnant wages, and the terrible prospect of losing a home, I understand how important it is to have a real partner in the White House – a President who is fighting for you, and treating you with the respect you deserve. And as someone who grew up in Hawaii, and appreciates the great pride you take in being part of your *Isla del Encanto*, that is the kind of partner I intend to be.

I will be a President who works with Puerto Rico to help the Island regain its economic footing so it can be competitive in the 21st century. We will give every child the world class education to compete in our global economy; provide universal health care for all; empower entrepreneurs with the support they need to expand their businesses; and invest in our infrastructure like roads and bridges, and in our green energy sector – so we can bring about a clean energy future, and create millions of good-paying jobs in the process.

As president, the first step I will take is to create a joint U.S. federal government-Puerto Rico economic task force. The task force will conduct a systematic review and report on specific ways to create jobs in Puerto Rico. The task force will report back no later than August 31, 2009, and I will immediately move to take action based on the report.

But there are steps we can take in the meantime. Since 1996, Puerto Rico has lost more than 40,000 manufacturing jobs. We need to invigorate the manufacturing industry with new incentives to invest on the island. I will also work to extend the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit; fully fund the Community Development Block Grant; and raise the minimum wage to benefit Puerto Rico families. I will strengthen the rural communities that have been neglected for too long improving their infrastructure and housing. We will not ignore other productive sectors of the island's economy such as small businesses and tourism.

Any discussion of Puerto Rico's economy would be incomplete without a discussion of the Island's status. As president, I will make it my responsibility to guarantee that Puerto Ricans can have a fair process of self-determination. I will work with people from all sides to develop a fair process and I will respect and support whatever decision Puerto Ricans make.

You can trust me to fight for you because I have been fighting for ordinary Americans for over two decades. After college, I turned down a career on Wall Street to work as a community organizer in Chicago so I could help provide job training to the jobless after the local steel plants closed. I worked side by side with Hispanic leaders on

issues ranging from failing schools to illegal dumping to un-immunized children. As a civil rights lawyer, I stood up for people who were denied opportunity on the job or justice at the voting booth because of what they looked like or where they came from. And in the Illinois Senate, I brought Democrats and Republicans together to expand health care to 150,000 children and parents, and put a \$100 million tax cut in the pockets of working men and women.

I am offering a set of detailed policy proposals. But more importantly, I am offering a new kind of leadership in Washington – leadership that can unite Americans of all races, regions, and walks of life in a coalition for change that Washington cannot ignore; leadership you can trust to always be straight with you about the challenges we face; and leadership that will serve the American people, not the special interests.

I propose we forge real change for all American citizens, here in Puerto Rico and in the mainland. This is the message I will carry with me when I campaign across Puerto Rico in the coming weeks to earn your support. This primary represents an historic opportunity where you will have the chance to determine who will be the next President of the United States. This election – this moment – is too important to settle for more of the same. We must aspire more, and with your support on June 1, that is what we will do together.