

DEMOCRACY

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Editors' Note

Kenneth Baer and Andrei Cherny

When we wrote our opening letter in the first issue of *Democracy*, two and a half years ago, we noted that ideological conservatives had "amassed more power for themselves than at any point in nearly a century." With this control over the levers of government, they were able to put into effect the ideas they had developed over the past quarter century. From Iraq to Katrina to the economy, these ideas in action were found wanting.

We believed something else was required. Not simply a reaction but a new direction, "to rejuvenate progressivism and send it back on the march with bold ambition to change America and the world for the better." As 2009 begins, that march is on.

With a new progressive president and large progressive majorities in both houses of Congress, America might well be on the verge of the most exciting period of policy change in over 40 years. This moment cries out for bold new solutions equal to the scale and novelty of the challenges we face. For behind the headlines and crises of the moment, the central truth of our time is that America is undergoing multiple transformations, each as significant as any faced by previous generations. The ramifications of our move from an industrial-age, assembly-line, national economy to an information age, high-tech, global economy can be felt from Merrill Lynch to the middle class. America is facing new national security challenges that know no borders and cannot be addressed by the traditional tools of foreign policy. And the bonds of community and a common national culture are changing rapidly as the twenty-first century razes the old and raises the new.

To assess the America Barack Obama will inherit, we have convened a symposium in this issue to take a look at "Obama's America" as seen through the lens of key American values, and through the eyes of five thoughtful progressives: Orlando

Patterson looks at the state of equality, Michael Waldman examines democracy, Jedediah Purdy delves into community, Geoffrey Stone assesses liberty, and Elizabeth Warren and Amelia Warren Tyagi consider opportunity.

As we usher in a possible new era of reform, Gregory Treverton—an intelligence expert at RAND, formerly responsible for writing National Intelligence Estimates—offers a plan to restructure our intelligence community, Duke Law's Zephyr Teachout turns to the Founders for a way to clean up our political system, and Robert Atkinson calls for a new "innovation economics" to rejuvenate our economy. With military issues still on the front burner, John Nagl—who helped rewrite the Army's counterinsurgency manual with General David Petraeus—looks at how national security decisions are made, and the Truman National Security Project's Rachel Kleinfeld offers a progressive assessment of the state of the war in Iraq and the surge. Historian Matthew Lassiter uses the trucker revolts of the 1970s to warn of the perils of re-regulation, and Gloria Feldt, former president of Planned Parenthood, argues for a new strategy for the reproductive rights movement. Finally Ethan Porter offers a personal view of the great hopes that accompany the new administration.

As America gains new leaders, we are pleased to report on developments in the leadership of *Democracy*. On January 12, managing editor Clay Risen's new book, *A Nation on Fire: America in the Wake of the King Assassination*, will be published by John Wiley & Sons. It is a penetrating examination of the riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and how they helped shape the future of cities and American politics for years to come. You can't begin to appreciate the historic breakthrough of the election of Barack Obama without reading this book.

We are also very excited to announce that we are expanding the senior leadership of *Democracy* as well. E.J. Dionne, Jr.—columnist, scholar, and preeminent public intellectual—has joined *Democracy* as our first chair of the Editorial Committee. While still keeping his perches at the *Washington Post* and the Brookings Institution, he will be working closely with *Democracy's* editors, the rest of the Editorial Committee, the Board of Advisors, and the many other thinkers and writers involved in this enterprise. He will be an invaluable guide and roving ambassador for our efforts. We are honored to have him join us at the outset of what could become one of the most significant periods of progressive reform in the nation's history. It will be quite a ride. **D**

—Kenneth Baer and Andrei Cherny