

KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

BOBBY RUSH INTERVIEW
OBAMA: IN PURSUIT OF A MORE PERFECT UNION
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Bobby Rush
US Representative, Illinois
October 24, 2018
Interviewed by Peter Kunhardt
Total Running Time: 1 hour, 2 minutes and 12 seconds

START TC: 01:00:00:00

MATTHEW HENDERSON:

Congressman Bobby Rush interview, take one, marker.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Bobby Rush

US Representative, Illinois

Meeting Obama

01:00:13:18

BOBBY RUSH:

As I recall, Obama was the Chicago Representative of a voter registration effort, a national voter registration effort. And I was a senior staff person on the Clinton campaign during the '92 election, and I was dispatched from Little Rock to bring a check for voter registration to Chicago, and to deliver it to a fellow by the name of Barack Obama. And I recall when I went to the office, it was a big desk in a small office. I mean, that desk was way out of

proportion to the space, the office space in the basement down there. And the guy, we met, and he was behind the desk, and we talked for a while. Pleasant person. And I presented him a very large check for—to new voter registration. We had a real wonderful meeting at that time. I mean I thought it was great. You know, I didn't think anything of it. At—from that time we would see each other a lot. We lived in the same area, not necessarily the same neighborhood, but the same area of Chicago. And I would see him—I remember one Christmas morning I went into a wine shop located on the Southside on Fifth and Third Street, and he was there buying wine for his Christmas dinner. I was surprised to see him. We had a pleasant conversation. So he was part of the neighborhood and an activist, lawyer, and I—I liked him a lot.

Obama's run for state Senate

01:02:34:00

BOBBY RUSH:

Well, he kind of came out of nowhere in terms of the overall African American community. I don't think that he was involved in terms of going through the different steps to being a politician. I don't recall him being involved in anybody else's campaign, that's normally how you would go. You'd help somebody else and then you'd, when it's your turn, you ask for help also. But I don't think he went through that—but I think that those who knew him, and certainly the liberal community, white liberals, some of the elitists kind of vote, they knew him, were impressed with him and really

encouraged him to get into politics. I think Obama came to Chicago with the thought and ambition of getting into politics. He had heard of the phenomenal success that we had—Chicago had with the election of Harold Washington as the Mayor of the City in Chicago, and I think he was inspired by that. So he wanted to come and get involved in that. And you know, Chicago was a hotbed of political progressive politics and he—he came and lived in Hyde Park. Then all of a sudden, I heard that he was running for State Senator, and then there was an issue about the—by the incumbent State Senator, Alice Palmer, who decided she was gonna run for Congress in a seat vacated by Gus Savage I believe, who was a congressman from the second congressional district. And in that race, Jesse Jackson Jr. also was a candidate, as I recall. And Obama had made a promise that—I wasn't in the room, this is what was re—reported, that Obama had promised Alice that if she did not win the primary for the congressional spot, that he would not run against her for the State Senate spot. When Alice did not win the primary, Obama, I'm told, challenged her nomination and she subsequently was removed from the ballot and he became the State Senator there. This is pretty well known, pretty well established in his—in terms of his early beginning. But again, he kind of jumped up, popped up out of nowhere in terms of the political climate and the political infrastructure had brought him and as loosely based as it was, he kind of really popped up out—popped up out of nowhere.

Bobby Rush's background as an activist and politician

01:06:09:06

BOBBY RUSH:

Oh, I—I—I have been an activist since I was 17 years old here in Chicago. I—you know, while I was in the US Army stationed in Jackson Park, which is on the Southside of the city of Chicago— at that time, it was a missile base. I was involved in the civil rights movement. I was going to demonstrations, political meetings. I was doing all that as a—as my duty allowed me to do that in that it was more like a job running to meetings in the military. We had to show up normally at 7:30 in the morning and then 4:30 unless you had extra duty, you were off. And I lived—didn't live on base. I lived at 67th and Elizabeth in Inglewood, and I was able to—I found—I met some people and I found myself involved in the civ—in the civil rights movement, the black power movement at that time. I was involved in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee here. That evolved into the Panther Party, which I co-organized along with a fella by the name of Robert “Bob” Brown. During the Panther Party, we had such phenomenal programs. Breakfast for children's programs, free medical clinics; and we were radical, media savvy, and at that time, J. Edgar Hoover was head of the FBI and the whole—the policy at the FBI was that the Panthers were the number one enemy of America, the number one threat to American security and so the—all the law enforcement infrastructure of the nation was on the Panther Party. And so it became a focus of the media and we were media savvy. We were very media savvy. And then on December the 4th, 1969, the FBI, after a series of raids on Panthers across the nation and in Chicago, the FBI decided that in retaliation for a shoot out that took place on November the 13th, 1969. On December the

4th, 1969, they raided an apartment at 2337 West Monroe in the wee hours of the morning, killed Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, wounded seven panthers. According to the police informants' report, I was supposed to have been in that apartment. I was not in that apartment, but that created—that murder, the murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark created such upheaval in the city of Chicago, you had a brink—the black community after the murder of Fred Hampton completely severed its relationship to the Daley machine, the Daley democratic machine, and elected a republican to be our states attorney, the black community did.

01:09:46:08

BOBBY RUSH:

And so, my involvement, my name, my commitment to the African American community and to progressive politics, we didn't—weren't just operating in the African American community at that time—we had—we had coalitions. As a matter of fact, the whole term the rainbow coalition was coined by a member of the Black Panther Party by the name of Bob Lee and that reflected our organizing on—among the ap—some Appalachian whites who lived in the uptown area of Chicago. They had an organization called the Young Patriots. There was a Hispanic organization in the Humboldt Park area. It was called the Young Lords. And of course, the Panther Party; we created an alliance of coalitions. Media savvy, organizing, controversial, but creating a relationship, a strong relationship and an abiding relationship with the African American community. That's where I found myself.

Elected to Congress in 1992

01:11:11:03

BOBBY RUSH:

I was elected to congress in 1992 and sworn in in 1993 along with Bill Clinton had been elected president in 1992 and I was elected to Congress. Cable was just kind of developing and flexing some muscle and on election night of the primary, March of 1992. I was in a room trying to figure out whether or not I had won. There weren't the results, and I get a call on the phone, it was Bill Clinton telling me that I had won the primary in Chicago. I was elected along with him, after serving on his—. And he—he joked to me that he was talking to somebody else, he didn't even know his own results on being elected and he called somebody—another politician telling them they had just won.

Racism in Chicago

01:12:08:13

BOBBY RUSH:

Dr. King showed the world, but he didn't show Chicago. Chicago knew—blacks in Chicago knew it was racist. I mean the history of racial animosity and resistance and violence in Chicago goes all the way back to before Chicago was incorporated as a city. 1919 there was a race riot — two young African Americans being stoned and drowned in Lake Michigan on a sunny hot afternoon—summer afternoon, and they just happened to be swimming

in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whites on the beach started throwing rocks at 'em, I guess hit 'em—pelted them with rocks to the point that they drowned. And as a result of that, there was rioting going on, and I think there was 19 African Americans who was killed. So I mean, Chicago is steeped in racism. So Dr. King, he focused the attention on it once again at a time in the 60's where most of the nation was focused on southern segregational racism. And then Dr. King came to Chicago because he wanted to expand the civil rights movement to show America that racism existed in northern areas also. Not necessarily the same kind of racism. When two—we're talking about two forms of racism. Chicago has—Chicagoans have had public accommodations, ya know, we've been—for years. Fair housing, and those kinds of acts. So that created the legal—focus on legal—the legal area to give us the legal rights to open our—even though it wasn't enforced. Chicago had the right to vote. You know, we elected our first member of congress to—in 1906, so we didn't have the same kinds of issues they had in the South. Our racism was much more institutional. In some ways, just as vehement, just as powerful, just as deadly; it wasn't public accommodations. It wasn't the right to vote, you know? It was living in segregated communities. In the South, they didn't care how close you lived, just don't get too big. In the North, they don't care how big you get, but just don't get too close. That was how we kind of described the different aspects of racism that existed. And today, you know, it still abounds in Chicago. Chicago is still in some ways locked into its racist past. The housing segregation in Chicago is still so very, very significant. Neighborhoods in Chicago are still segregated—highly segregated.

Extensively segregated. And public policy, especially in the area of law enforcement. Those police are dispatched in a very segregated pattern as is related to Chicago today. The legacy of racism is still profound here in the city of Chicago.

Obama vs. Bobby Rush in the '92 congressional campaign

01:16:23:20

BOBBY RUSH:

Oh, he had credentials. I mean he had credentials, very impressive credentials. But he didn't have community credibility. His credentials were earned credentials in academia. He was a nice fellow. He is a nice fellow, and he is a very impressive individual. Very, very articulate, very handsome. But he, with all of that, he did not have any kind of good relationships, you know—I mean, I'm a guy who's been before I was elected, since I was elected, been in congress now for another year, I'm still you know, community. I'm still—I live right next door to a public housing development right now, ya know? I — me and my community are one, you know? You know, slip it there. And not because it's a part of a political strategy, it's who I am. I'm pastor in church. I come home every, every, every weekend to a church in the community that I'm—that I'm pastoring. I'm right there. I'm blood of my blood, bone of my bone, that's what I am, you know?

“Obama was blinded by his ambition”

01:17:58:02

BOBBY RUSH:

He is one where his talents and gifts and—meet his ambition. There are some who—who are ambitious but don't have the requisite talents, skills. Obama has an abundance of talents and skills for his ambition. When I made that statement, that statement was as the result of Obama completely surprising me. I mean, I'm thinking that Obama and I are buddies. You know, we know each other, we walked down the same walk, we bop to the same tune, alright? And then all of a sudden the guy challenges me, you know? And out of the blue. So I made that statement that he was blindly—'cause, what happened to our personal relationship? You know, if he had a problem with me, why didn't he come and talk to me about it? I have never had a political debate or dispute with Obama until that time. Never have, never had one. Alright? And then all of a sudden, he says, "I'm gonna run against Bobby Rush." You know? Where did that come from. And I thought it was ill conceived, you know? Because I knew who—I know who I am, I know where I stand at with my community. When he decided to run, I just attributed it to blind ambition. He let someone whisper in his ear that he could take me out.

Obama's claim that Bobby Rush was rooted in the past

01:19:46:20

BOBBY RUSH:

No, he pulled that out of nowhere. That was the blindness of his approach. This was in 1992. I mean, we had elected Harold Washington, Mayor of the City of Chicago in 1983, re-elected him in 1987. And so, this is 1992. I was

elected—he ran against me in the year 2000. That was just political rhetoric. That was him trying to justify crossing me out, stabbing me in the back.

Support of Black churches

01:20:27:15

BOBBY RUSH:

I had the support of every—all—the Black community. I had the support of the Black community. It was important, pastors, because I had—you know, I had just graduated from the seminary two years prior to that, myself. I was an active member of a church and believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, I was all that. I fed hungry children. I've given free clothing to people, I've put myself in the cross hairs of the police department for my community. It might have been yesterday's news, but that's because you're an outsider looking at it. The people who are—who I had made those kinds of contributions to their life, it wasn't old news to them because I was the same guy continuing the work. And I served in the city council on the fourth ward and still in my community during the whole Washington Vrdolyak 29, 21, with these local council wars that existed in Chicago. I was on the right side of history as it relates to my community, so when did that become old news and to who is it old news? If you're a victim, you know, it ain't old news. If you're looking at victims on the outside looking in, it might not be relevant to you, but it's certainly relevant to those people you're asking to vote against me.

Intellectualism

01:22:06:06

BOBBY RUSH:

I remember that. I mean, that's political rhetoric, that was the excess. I mean, you know, I—it was what we called signifying, alright? You know? And that was an art that you developed. If you didn't develop that art, you couldn't survive in the—in the black community if you didn't know how to signify, alright and if he had thin skin. So I—I resorted to signifying with Obama, and I guess it must have stung because he wasn't familiar with how to signify. If somebody says something to you and signify and you ain't got no instant retort, you know, you always say, hey you can't—if you can't signify, you don't qualify. I tested Obama with that, and he was today—some of his friends who hold that against me. I read a newspaper account from one of his friends, another guy who was supposed to be in recent years, and he said that that campaign in 2000 was the most anti-intellectual campaign that he's ever seen. A campaign is not an intellectual pursuit, alright? It's arm wrestling, it's twisting, you know. It's engaging in street warfare. It's not sitting into an ar—in academia discussing ideals, you know? It's getting out there, twisting arms, and elbowing and clawing and scratching and biting and kicking and stomping and everything else. So to him, his problem with it—with it was that I was not in his mind an intellectual—an intellectual competing with another. Well, that was—intellectualism was Obama's arena. Street warfare was my arena. That was—that's—that's what—and I was in—I wanted to bring Obama into my arena rather than me trying to go into his arena. And

not—not that I couldn't do the intellectual bit. You know, I—the Panther Party, unlike what people might understand, we had political education classes. We—not only did we read and—and debate and discuss Marx and Lenin and Emmanuel Kant and Nietzsche and all these thinkers, great thinkers. You know, we had classes around these guys, alright? So I could deal with it, and I'm a reader anyway. I am where I am primarily because I love books, I like to read. I found that reading gives me a certain consciousness; expand my whole outlook on life. I mean my worldview has been enlarged so much because of books. Alright? So, I can do the intellectual stuff but it—I'm primarily a person that lives and is motivated by helping people and working on behalf of the least of these. My intellectual proclivities are in service to following humanity. So I'm gonna be there following humanity on the outside. My intellectualism was not in isolation, you know? I wasn't living in a twilight zone of academia and intellect. You know, my—I had applied you know, social practice as a criteria for my truth, alright, and not you know, some lofty arguments that nobody can use, can't feed nobody, can't slow nobody, can't deal with police aggression, misconduct, murder. You know, intellects can write about it, think about it, I gotta act about it, act on it. So I—I—but I found it quite interesting that this one particular individual would say that it was the most anti-intellectual campaign that he has ever witnessed, based on me making statements and talking about Obama and his Harvard Ivy League education and his proper manner and things like that. But I won.

The timing of Obama's run

01:26:56:14

BOBBY RUSH:

I've had to wrestle with this since that time. I really had have—I had—I have—not just this and thinking that if I was hurt or surprised, that's what surprised me the most. My son had just been killed, shot down on the streets of Chicago. And my family and I were in a very difficult place. For him to challenge me at that point, you know? That kind of destroyed, at that time, whatever sentimental attachments I had to him, you know. Because we were really hurting, you know? And then I had to, you know, engage in a campaign against someone who I viewed as being a friend, you know. That was very poor timing on his part, very, very poor timing on his part. One of the few times that I can really say that someone has really—who was—that was one of the most treacherous times of my life. That I had been really crossed out or double-crossed. I don't just attribute it to Obama and his ambition. I attribute it to those who were whispering in his ear, that you should take Bobby Rush out, that you could be a better congressman. And it wasn't based on my voting record in congress, my position on issues, because my position on issues was in line with those who ultimately opposed to me. Obama could not really debate me on issues because we had similar positions on issues. It was all based on the fact that I was born on the wrong side of the tracks. I was not a part of the quote, "liberal elite." I represent street people, common people, poor people, you know? The hungry, the outcasts. I represent those people. People who are in debt and distressed, I represent those people. And they

wanted someone—and I guess I can understand it, whose only credentials was not experience, not hard work, not commitment, not legacy in terms of community, but someone who had a Harvard education. And I don't—look, I respect a lot of people from Harvard, you know? And so I'm not—but when you come with me—come to me and quantify yourself as being a Harvard educated individual, and that you are saying that because I graduated from Roosevelt University here in Chicago and you graduated from Harvard in Massachusetts, that I'm less than you are? Nah, that ain't gonna work man, that ain't gonna work. You need more than that to come up against me, alright? You really do. At that time, I thought that was the — that was the epitome of the double cross.

Framing Obama as not Black enough

01:30:36:01

BOBBY RUSH:

That's political. That's—that's, you know—I had to define him. Others had to define him. He didn't have the same experiences, that's all. He didn't come from a poverty-based foundation, you know? That's really what it was about. Obama was just as black as anybody else in terms of culturally black. But experientially black, that's what—if there was anything to that, that's what that was all about. It was a way that we kind of separated ourselves from the elite, that's really what it was.

Bobby Rush wins election for Congress

01:31:23:06

BOBBY RUSH:

I was assured that I was going to win. Now one—the weekend before, it's been my practice—I had to have it on a Sunday before I was going to ride through the district, and this particular Sunday night, I—one o'clock in the morning, I—me and—I had my team, we were riding through the district. I rode through what they call—when the 19th Ward was a ward with Irish Catholics in it, and there was a fellow who's now the current sheriff, Tom Dart. Tom Dart was a state rep at that time, and one of Barack's close friends, buddies out in Springfield. And he was supportive of Obama. I was fairly surprised because the Ward organization had declared fealty to me—fealty to me. They had said that they were supporting me and I went on and I saw these Obama signs and it really kind of heightened my sense of concern. And we had to do some things that—that—that—on that Monday before the election, I certainly didn't know that I would meet—win that race with 61% of the—of the vote. There was another State Senator by the name of Donny Trotter who also ran against me, and I mean—he and Obama, with their relationship, I got 61% of the vote and I guess they got 39% of the vote between the two of them. And I think Obama came in—Donny came in third I believe, and Obama came in second. I was very well pleased. I—it just completely confirmed to me that my life and the things that I—the way I live my life, in terms of my commitment to the aspirations of my community, that really meant something. So I was very—I was much delighted. I didn't realize that I had just defeated a guy who was gonna become the 44th president of

the United States. I'm glad I won. And—and I think he's glad that I won. 'Cause, had I—had he won, he would've been still a member of Congress trying to figure whether or not on Tuesday this upcoming election whether or not he'll be the chairman of a subcommittee in—in Congress, whether or not they was—the Dems would take the congress back. He's—God has really blessed Obama.

Moving forward after the campaign

01:34:37:04

BOBBY RUSH:

There was—was an attempt by one of his friends, by—a fellow by the name of Jim Reynolds to re—try to repair the breach between he and Obama. And so—between me and Obama. And so he invited me and Obama to have lunch together on a number of occasions just so that we could develop the rapport, and I thank God for Jim Reynolds because he certainly did—was successful in Obama and I developing a speaking relationship again, you know, and putting the campaign behind us. I think Jim Reynolds should be given credit for repairing the breach—for helping to repair the breach between Obama and I. You know, politics means something to me, but it ain't everything, alright? It's all about relationships, you know? And I'm not somebody that's gonna hold a grudge if it don't make sense. I can hold a grudge, but if it don't make sense, then I'm not gonna hold a grudge or I'm gonna be open to trying to repair the breach—the breach.

Obama's political progress as divinely ordered

01:35:51:08

BOBBY RUSH:

I tried to discipline myself to—before I really make a move, make a major decision, to always consult with—in my faith, we call it the holy ghost, with the bible, and with God. When Obama ran, I was really torn when he ran for the Senate. I was torn because of what he had done to me. And the time that he did it—you know, again when my family was in a very hurtful and harmful place. I went to the bible, and I did a word search with the name Bharuch, it's the Hebrew name for Barack. The name Bharuch, as I recall, means one who God delivers. That told me that Obama was divinely ordered. When I made a decision not to support Obama, I wasn't aligning myself with the word of God, you know, because of the pain and suffering that I had. So I supported someone; Blair Hull who was running against Obama. And I knew that Obama had what we call in the black church Holy Ghost power. He was divinely ordered, because there was no way he was supposed to win that election. He won because of—in the last minute of controversy regarding Blair Hull and his wife—something that, you know, you would probably laugh about because it was just so insignificant. He's operating with supernatural sentiments on his side. How do you fight that? I felt as though Barack has an anointing from heaven with him and on him.

Resentment against elites

01:38:33:07

BOBBY RUSH:

You know, his civil rights credentials were almost nonexistent. His—and there was—there's an—an aristocracy of civil rights political leadership. Was, is, even today, and he didn't come from that aristocracy. And so, he's an outsider. There were a lot of people then, still there, that felt as though he was being a tool of others political aspirations or poli—that they were seeking power through him for themselves, and some people resented that. We—we have this problem in America, and we started having it in the African American community, but all communities, of how do we deal with elites? Obama represented the elite rather than the ordinary person. Political campaigns for higher office, especially in the highest office in the land is always a battle most of all between the elites. And the elites have this capacity to—and it is in their interest to utilize common people in order—as—as—as weapons in their fight for which elite is going to control, be it the right or the left, you know? It's always a matter between those two elites. Alright? And my—and some people think that Obama represented the left elite. Part of the joy of victory, but also the pain and defeat comes in there.

Reverend Jeremiah Wright

01:40:56:06

BOBBY RUSH:

Reverend Wright hitched his wagon to Obama. I think that had—he was another person who was hurt by his treatment of Obama. I think that Reverend Wright would have been very good to Obama—good for Obama,

and really given the opportunity for him to give and take to discuss—to a discussion—discussion. What it would take for him to be associated with Obama at that level. His relationship with Obama was severed—when he was kicked to the curb, and the manner he was kicked to the curb, that created a lot of problems, you know, in the spirit of the African American community. You know, look—I am a minister, I am a pastor, I’m a believer in the gospel of Jesus—in the bible. Every president needs a prophet. Every president needs a prophet. Every leader needs a prophet, every pastor needs a prophet. You need someone who would tell you things that you might not want to hear or those who are associated with being your—with the—your public output. But you need somebody who’s gonna tell you the truth, and I think that O— Reverend Wright would have told Obama the truth, some of the truth that he needed to hear. If Reverend Wright had been there as a prophet to the president, speaking a prophetic voice to the president, then I think Obama would have been a more effective president. And his summit—the result— his results, his legacy would have been much more profound, and he’s got a profound legacy, especially as it relates to Obamacare. But it would have made such a difference in the life aspirations of so many poor people across the nation.

Obama wins the presidential election

01:43:40:02

BOBBY RUSH:

On the one hand, it was hard to believe, but on the other—other hand, I was just so excited. The level of excitement. I mean to see him and Michelle and his daughters on that platform, he is being the president of the United States, that was a moment that you'll never forget. I have felt that moment, something akin to that moment with Harold Washington, when Harold Washington was elected Mayor of the city of Chicago. So the trajectory between Harold and Obama in Chicago, I mean it was just euphoric. I felt very, very empowered, excited, had a high sense of expectation. Heaven had spoke—spoken.

Current relationship with Obama

01:44:47:05

BOBBY RUSH:

It's not a close relationship, but I think it's a good relationship. You know, I've—I've had my problems with his administration, with how he's conducting himself. I mean, I look out and look at the communities that I care about and I—I wonder why not—why are they still in bad as shape or even worse off than they were eight years—eight and a half, nine years ago. When are they gonna get their shot at the American dream? And what happened that, you know, they're still unemployed, uneducated, ill-housed, hope is still non-existent for too many of them. What happened? What happened? That's a question that history is gonna have to answer, but what happened to the promise?

Republican opposition

01:46:11:10

BOBBY RUSH:

I wasn't so surprised as I was angry, disappointed. And look, the Republicans were hell bent on not giving him no respect, no consideration, not giving him any support at all. But sometimes your hope and inspiration through public policy can make a difference. You can change someone's attitude about hope by engaging them in the battle to upgrade themselves. That's the beauty of Dr. King, in terms of what he called the beloved community. You both need—oppressed is transformed because in the fight against the oppressor, but the oppressor also is transformed because they—you are pulled into the humanity of the oppressor and somewhere deep down in that—those layers of privilege is a human being. So out of that comes a new person, a new creation. Rather than engaging through inspiring leadership, you know, we found ourselves being neglected too. We found ourselves looking at—trying to position ourselves as supporters of some—of an African American president who was under assault by the right wing of the nation, the racist element who had accomplished something that had never been done in the history of the nation. President of the United States. And so somehow that became protecting him, became the priority rather than, you know, whether or not I've got a decent job, or whether or not I've got a decent school, or whether or not I—it became more of a—. The portrait in the White House of a Black man and a Black family living in the White House as president of the United States, that portrait became more important to us than our prophetic

drive in the prophetic pool. We got the portrait, but we're still living in poverty. So we settled for a portrait. We became a presidential people and stopped being a prophetic people. As a prophetic people, you're demonstrating, you're marching, you're—you're fighting, you're fighting injustice wherever you are. We didn't want to embarrass the president, so we became a presidential people rather than a prophetic people. We abdicate—abdicated our—the prophetic power that had brought us over the years in the history of this nat—we abdicated that because we felt as though we had arrived, and we had not arrived.

Obama's presidency in retrospect

01:50:40:00

BOBBY RUSH:

Oh, I think that he ultimately would be viewed as being a great president for the nation. I think that Obamacare, or the Affordable Care Act, I mean, that is—that is turning to be a phenomenal success. He did not embarrass the nation. He laid the foundation for the economic strength that we are now experien—that we've experienced. So I think he'd be considered to be a great American president. I think that history will also say that he could've been more productive to solving some of the problems of poor people. Not just blacks, but whites and other poor people all across the nation. I think that Obama was trying to be accepted for much too long of his presidency by his enemies. There's a passage in Proverbs that says if you are sitting at the King's banquet table, cut your throat. And I think in some sense, Obama

consumed too much of the delicacies and then speak. Sometimes I think about if Obama had come and had rallies a la Trump to his base, engaging and fighting over and over in those kinds of numbers. Challenging on at some levels that maybe don't require presidential action or congressional action or governmental action, but leadership action. The acts of a leader.

Trayvon Martin

01:53:32:15

BOBBY RUSH:

Something was missing in his response. I think that he—again, he was prioritizing his responses to keeping a balance in the White House, in his presidency, and not venturing too far. So he was taking a safe position. I was—what I did on the floor was symbolically—was challenging the status quo. I walked on the floor of the House with a hoodie, sunglasses on, violating all the rules, breaking those traditions, the status quo. My statement broke through all of the ceremonial pretensions, the rules that the House was—over the years had surrounded itself with, breaking through it and speaking directly to those young people out there who was demonstrating and saying there's some of us here who know and identify with whatever you are doing, whatever you're saying, you're marching, you're challenging. You know, you're kicking down walls. You're—you're—you're saying, giving a collective 'no more.' You're responding. You know, some of us feel as though that's what we need. You know, you can't forget that for the early—early period of Obama's presidency, you know, this phenomenon that we were living in a

post-racial society. All that—where'd all that stupid rhetoric come from? Who hoisted that up on the body politics, and who accepted that nonsense? You know, how do you erase history like that? And people who are suffering because of racism, institutional racism and individual racism who are suffering. How do you try to erase that? You know, where—what kind of pollyannaish approach called for that? Discuss it, put it on the front burner, set it at the table, and we need to move—you know, my dream and go—it's like Dr. King, move beyond the racial divide. Let poor whites from Virginia and other places, let them know that poor blacks, we're all suffering from the same economic exploitation. Together, we're suffering from it. And let us move beyond the color of our skin and—and appreciate our common DNA, our common genetic foundation. And let us really not only have a rainbow coalition, but let's have a rainbow nation. You know? But we are fighting for one another based on a love that we have of one another. The love of each other and the fact that we're all supposed to live a righteously good life. We can do it, but not if we have—if we have these elites dividing us and declaring—having us, influencing us, persuading us that we should be at war with one another, that is so insane.

01:58:21:06

BOBBY RUSH:

When he was elected Senator, he was not so centered in the elite. But you got to understand, the elite picked him up and projected him as their champion, and that's when he became more of an—more of a product of the elites. But that was a decision that he made. I talk about being a prophet, but the

lifespan of a prophet is short. It's a lethal occupation or profession. So he had to make a choice. Most prophets die at a very early age. So there's always a sacrifice to being a prophet. He has a prophetic heart. His prophetic heart is why he joined Jeremiah Wright's church in the first place. That prophetic spirit. Somewhere along the line in terms of them being a politician and president, one became dominant over the other.

Donald Trump

02:00:04:16

BOBBY RUSH:

I think that Trump is the—was—is the right-wing elite's antidote to the Obama administration. They decided that they would not cooperate, help, recognize, respect a Black president. Especially someone who had a progressive populist viewpoint. He appealed to an element that is in much pain as any segment of this society that's not that well off. They're hurting. They are economically deprived. They are poor. The only thing that they have that gives them a sense of humanity is in their white—the color of their skin. They're hungry. They can't feed their families. They have no work. They're living in shacks. They're being told that just because they're white, they're better off.

END TC: 02:02:12:04