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Memorandum

To:
From: Terrance R. Kelly
Date: January 7, 2008
Re: Barack My Soul in the Bosom of Iowa

Barack Obama's candidacy gradually came upon me. I was originally drawn by the story of his youth, his families, his opportunities, his choices. I was also impressed by those who knew him well, for years or months, and deeply believed in him. Chuck Barnhill was a Heber Smith Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1968. After he graduated from Harvard Law School, Barack joined the Chicago law firm that Chuck had co-founded. Chuck's firm built a big time national reputation in the prickly areas of plaintiff representation in civil rights, employment rights, voting rights—David v. Goliath type stuff. Chuck is the type of lawyer who makes Goliath call in sick.

Federico Peña served two terms as Denver's mayor, then served in two cabinet positions in the Clinton Administration, Transportation and Energy. There are several parallels between Barack's and Federico's political histories. Federico joined the Obama Campaign as a National Co-Chair this past summer, and by November he was making campaign trips for Barack to Iowa almost every weekend. Barnhill's and Peña's spirited belief in Barack meant something to me.

When Senator Obama came to Denver, I went to see him at Jim and Pam Crowe's Level 3 bungalow. Interesting collection of about 500 people congregated in what I guess was the Crowe's living room. One of them was Jeannie Ritter, Colorado's irrepressible First Lady. Another was Denver's Mayor Hickenlooper, who has interesting historical roots in Iowa politics. Obama had two appearances that day, and damn near half of Denver was at one or the other. Later I went to the opening of the Colorado Obama headquarters. I spent a morning doing data entry work, challenging the "Get Out the Vote" software's capacity to deal with "Entry Error." I tried to get to Iowa a few times with Secretary Peña. It was clear that the early action was in Iowa, and it was increasingly clear that Iowa was going to be big.

