

# McCain vs Obama: a student perspective

Door Mels de Zeeuw

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November the new American president will be elected. Two totally different candidates are running for office. But what do American people really think about John McCain and Barack Obama? Mels de Zeeuw studies a semester at UCLA (California) and interviewed Brennen and Kaylin, two students from this university to find out their opinions about the presidential candidates.

**F**irst Mels spoke to Brennen, a 20 year old student majoring in Economics at UCLA.

*Who are you voting for?*

I'm voting for McCain and Palin.

*Why are you voting for McCain?*

Basically I have more of a conservative mindset, and he's the more conservative of the two candidates. So I'm voting for that political ideology.

*What makes you a conservative?*

I think part of the way I was brought up. Both my parents and grandparents were conservatives and I grew up in a very conservative town, a very conservative area, so that sort of shaped my values and belief system.

*Can you explain what makes someone a conservative in the United States?*

A conservative is usually pro-life on the abortion issue, conservatives usually stand for lower taxes, less or smaller government, more local government. I would say a lot of religious people tend to go to the conservative side but there are a lot of religious people on the left side too.

*What are the most important issues for you this election?*

Taxes and government programs. Lower taxes, more freedom for business and less restrictions on what business can or can't do. I'm against universal education, like everyone should go to college. And I'm against universal healthcare because we don't have the capacity of

and stuff like that, but that's all economics. But as far as the other issues in this country are concerned, I still feel that we are a leader in freedom, whether or not we should be in Iraq, I'm not sure. You know, initially everyone was for it, and then as it went on longer and longer there came a lot of debate, so I think that's one of the

**“I'm against universal healthcare because we don't have the capacity of doctors”**

doctors to have a universal healthcare system. So I think that, even though the system we have now is unjust, converting to a system like that would be even more unjust because the quality of care and the quality of education will go down just because there's no incentive to do good; everybody's already been given it.

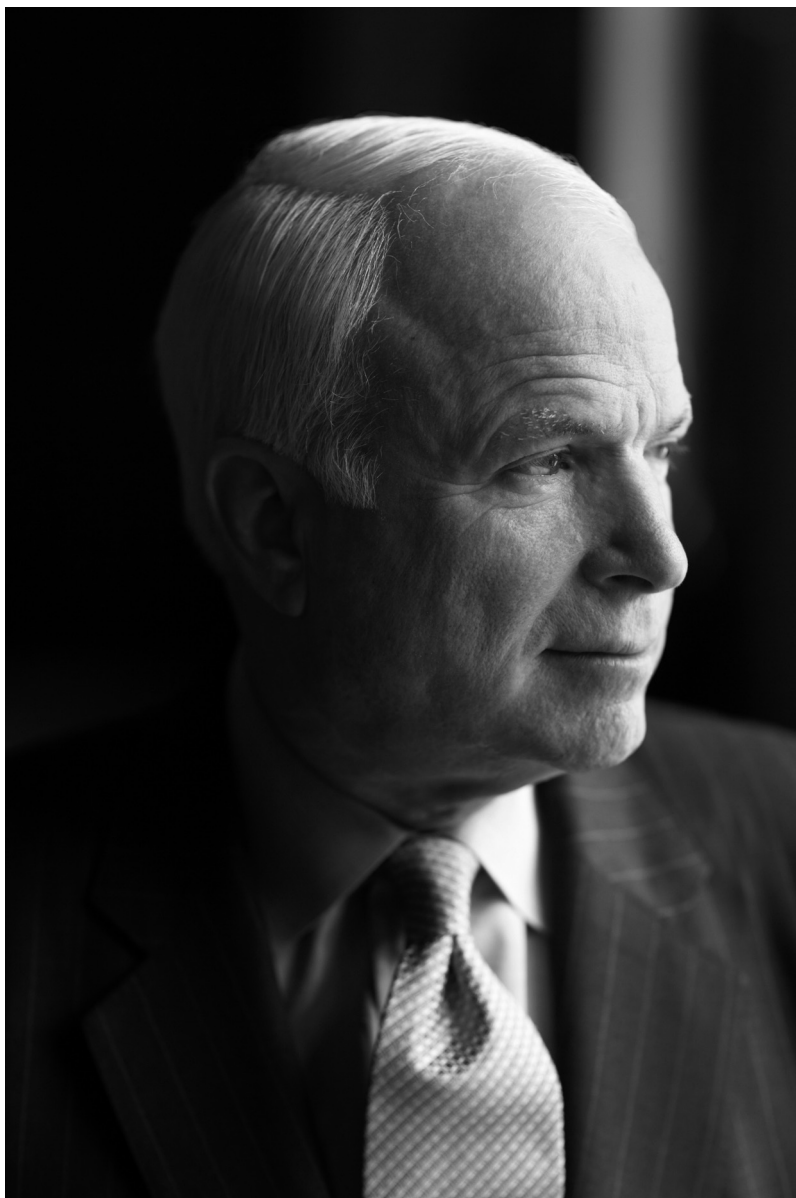
*What do you think of the direction this country is going in?*

I'm still not sure. I think we're in a tough economic situation right now. As far as Iraq is concerned, I think it's bleeding our resources dry. I think the Americans are buying too many loans from China

big issues in this coming election among universal healthcare and education. So I think that the state of affairs is still good, but they could be better.

*You just mentioned the most important things to you, like lower taxes, less government, no universal healthcare. Do you believe McCain will accomplish these things?*

Uhm, well Bush said he was going to spend less too, and he did not. Instead he expanded the budget. McCain is not an ultraconservative, so I think he will be more to the moderate side and be a little more liberal. So I don't think he will accomplish these things to the extent



*"McCain is not an ultraconservative"*

to which some people want him too. But I think he will do better than Obama will.

*What do you think about the current election cycle and the way of campaigning?*

I don't like it because campaigns are bought through big business contributions and stuff like that. I think it is a bad system because it makes a candidate responsible to the people who funded their campaign. I wish each candidate was given a set amount of money

from the government to campaign so they wouldn't have to borrow from big business. That would take out all the private interest, because I think private interest is a big deal in our government. If they could do that, and find a way to isolate the special interest from the campaigns, I think that would be good. That's my take on that.

*How would you political characterize yourself? Independent, Democrat, Republican or something else?*

Republican. No doubt about it.

**Afterwards, Mels interviewed Kaylin. She is 18 years old and currently undeclared in her studies. She takes history and political science classes.**

*Who will you be voting for this election?*  
Barrack Obama.

*Why are you voting for Obama?*

Because I believe Obama has the most potential to bring this country out of the crisis that it is currently in.

*What are his positions that you agree with?*

He is an idealist. He won't be able to completely fix what this administration has done and can't completely change the course of this country. But I think he has a lot more potential to do so than someone like McCain who's coming in with 'old world views', established perspectives and policies.

I especially agree with Obama's policy on the war in Iraq. We didn't have a plan to go in and he's not saying: 'Pull the troops out right away'. He's saying: "Create a plan to pull the troops out", and McCain's idea to keep the troops in will essentially be another Vietnam. That's not to say it's leaving them in the best situation, that's not to say it's right, but I think it's the only option. We don't understand their society. They're a theocracy, not a democracy. They don't want to be a democracy, so why are we forcing it on them? They didn't want a dictatorship and Saddam Hussein was a bad man, but by staying in Iraq we will only cause more resentment and possibly a war with Iran. Which is not exactly what we need right now...

Obama is also a champion for the middle class. The middle class are always the people who pay for everything, and always will be. They



*“Obama is an idealist”*

are the backbone of this country. Obama has a background, the typical rags to riches story, so therefore he has more of an understanding than McCain.

And right now the middle class is the one which is going to pull us out of this crisis, in terms of taxes, we're going pay for it. Since the middle class is the majority of this society, the middle class must support the administration, its foreign policy and the domestic policies. If the middle class is not behind the administration then it will fail no matter how good it is.

*What do you think about Hillary Clinton?*

I like Hillary. Hillary will be a big part of Obama's administration. She will probably get secretary of state or something like that. She has a big influence, big roots, and she knows a lot of people. So she will have that influence and experience that the Republicans are talking about Obama doesn't have. Well she has that. And anyone is stupid to say that he won't go to her for something. He's smart enough to realize that he has to rely on the experience of others.

*So you think that counters the experience argument McCain is using against him? Palin counters the experience argument McCain is using. Palin didn't know anything about Bush' foreign policy...*

*Would Palin be bad for this country?*

She's too far to the right and she has little to no experience. They picked her to sway the Hillary voters who were disgruntled about the way the Democratic Party handled the primaries. The Republicans have managed to make her a big celebrity, without focusing on the fact that she has very little experience. She is so narrow-minded in her views, in the way she talks about things, with her views on abortion and her policies on gun control.

I'm afraid she would exploit her power. Bush has blown up the power of the presidency to astronomical proportions and I'm afraid that she would use that power and not listen to anyone, not let the three branches of government work in the way they're supposed to. I've heard her speak and I wasn't impressed. I think she has intelligence, and she obviously has something people like, but I don't think there's any fresh perspective. She has no new ideas and by relying on old policies and old ideas this country can't get out of this crisis. We need some fresh thinking and she doesn't offer it.

*With the crisis you mean the financial crisis?*

The financial crisis, the moral crisis, the division of the country.

*Can you explain what you mean with the term 'moral crisis'?*

I guess more the division of the country. We are a two party system and we are much divided. The

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Republicans rely on Karl Rove's (Republican political strategist) policies of division and that's how they win things, they divide people. Obama is more of a unifier, that's what his campaign has stood for; uniting people, working together. When are we the strongest? When we work together. In the past McCain has offered some of it. Some of that idea of unification, of being a moderate, being willing to work with both sides. But Palin never even claims to. There's a whole other side of the country you have to think about. Obama has said; "I'll work with them". He has

### "By relying on old policies and old ideas this country can't get out of this crisis"

to appease, like I said, he's in the position where he has to appease everyone. By having to appease so many people he'll unify the nation and I think that's the only way to get out of this.

*What does really have to change in this country?*

The war in Iraq obviously. We need a better foreign policy in the way that we deal with nations and the way we communicate with nations. I like Obama because he's a good orator. He presents a good image, a very positive image.

But also the economy. The economy is in a horrible, horrible situation. As a college student, it will be very difficult to get a job coming out of college. So I would like to see steps to change that.

I'm always a women rights person. I think the feminist movement is sadly lacking in this country. That is why I'm excited at the prospect of having Hillary on board.

Healthcare is also a problem. I'm not sure if universal healthcare is

the way to go. It's a scary proposition, but something must be done. And I don't think keeping the healthcare system the way it is, which is what McCain advocates, is the best solution.

And education. Bush' policies need to be abolished. 'No child left behind' (a policy from the Bush administration) does not work. We are dealing with an immigrant society, especially in California, which does not speak English, and doesn't want to speak English. I think the education system should get a handle on that and instead of making everything bilingual and making it

okay for them to not speak English, I think policies should be put in place to change that.

*What do you think about Joe Biden?*

I think he brings a lot of experience to the table. Another argument against Obama's inexperience. That's why they picked him; it was very much a strategic move, on both sides. I like the things that he has done in the past. He has a history of advocating for the middle class in the court systems and in the policies he has passed and the policies he has worked for. He's against the lobby groups. He's passed lots of things against them.

*What do you think about the current election cycle, about the campaigning?*

They spend too much. I think the campaign is difficult because the media takes it over, and it's very hard to figure out who stands for what and to get past the fact that Palin has a baby with Down syndrome, and that Obama stands for change. I'm not sure either candi-

date should be responsible for saying something about that. I wish the media didn't cover the elections quite as they do, but CNN is pretty good.

*So that's your tip for the Dutch readers?*

Yeah, watch CNN, don't watch FOX. FOX is bad!

*Finally, how would you characterize yourself politically speaking?*

I'm fairly liberal. I would characterize myself as a Democrat. But not so far to the left that I don't understand or see the Republican side. I enjoy learning what people think and why they believe the way they do, because I don't have all the answers and the Democratic Party hasn't got all the answers. I think the Democratic Party is a hell of a lot better than the Republican Party right now. And I think that they are the people with the party platform that will do better things for our country. But I don't think we can do it without the Republicans, and their capitalist ideas. Like it or not, we are a capitalist country, and as much as we want it to be the ideal or perfect, it won't be. ■