

President Obama's Path to the Presidency

Obama's High School Academic Career Synopsis from:

<http://obamasneighborhood.com/punahou.html>

Punahou & Educational Factoids:

- Years Attended
 - **1971:** (5th grade) to 1979 (12th grade)
Extra Curricular Activities
 - **1975:** Plays intermediate football at Punahou as an eighth-grader.
 - **1976:** Sings in the Punahou Boys' Chorus One - 9th grade
 - **1977:** Sings in the Punahou Concert Choir as a 10th-grader; plays junior varsity basketball
 - **1978:** Makes the Punahou varsity basketball team as a junior
 - **1979:** Plays on the state championship basketball team as the only left-hander; writes for Ka Wai Ola, Punahou's high school literary journal
- **1979:** Graduates from Punahou

Comprehensive Education:

School	Years	Location	Final degree	Comments
Noelani Elementary School	Kindergarten	Honolulu, Hawaii		
St. Francis Assisi Catholic	First through third grade	Jakarta, Indonesia		
State Elementary School Menteng 01	Fourth grade	Jakarta, Indonesia		
Punahou School	Fifth through 12th grade	Honolulu, Hawaii	High School Diploma	
Occidental College	Freshman and sophomore years	Los Angeles, CA		Transferred to Columbia
Columbia College	Junior and senior years	New York, NY	B.A.	Political Science major with international relations focus
Harvard Law School	Three-year program	Cambridge, Mass.	J.D. magna cum laude	President, Harvard Law Review

Attended [Punahou School](#), a private [college preparatory school](#), from the fifth grade until his graduation from high school in 1979.

According to classmate Greg Orme '79, now a building contractor

"He was so smart," says teammate Darin Maurer '79, who is now a minister. According to Maurer, one day Obama had a term paper due, so he went home over lunch, typed it out and handed the finished paper in that afternoon. "He wrote it on the typewriter," Maurer marvels, still impressed by Obama's seemingly effortless ability to formulate and organize complex ideas. "It was just amazing he could think that coherently and not rewrite the paper." (A Kid Called Barry", <http://www.punahou.edu/page.cfm?p=1715>)

At the Neal Blaisdell Center in June, Obama graduated with 411 classmates from the Punahou Class of 1979.

From: Wikipedia

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama#University_of_Chicago_Law_School_and_civil_rights_attorney)

Following high school, Obama moved to Los Angeles in 1979 to attend [Occidental College](#).^[23] In February 1981, he made his first public speech, calling for Occidental's [disinvestment from South Africa](#) due to its policy of [apartheid](#).^[23] In mid-1981, Obama traveled to Indonesia to visit his mother and sister Maya, and visited the families of college friends in [Pakistan](#) and [India](#) for three weeks.^[23]

Later in 1981, he transferred to [Columbia University](#) in [New York City](#), where he majored in [political science](#) with a specialty in [international relations](#)^[24] and graduated with a [Bachelor of Arts](#) in 1983. He worked for a year at the [Business International Corporation](#),^[25] then at the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#).^{[26][27]}

Obama started his undergraduate education at Occidental College in Los Angeles, but he finished at New York City's Columbia University, where he majored in political science with a specialization in international relations.

(Boston.Com/ Magazine cover scan)

Obama furthered his education at Harvard Law School, where he earned his law degree in 1991.

Obama broke racial barriers early in his career when he was elected the first black president of the Harvard Law Review during his second year at the university.

(Lane Turner/ Globe Staff)

Obama served as a professor at the University of Chicago Law School for 12 years.

He published his memoirs, "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance," in 1995.

Before Barack Obama ascended to the pinnacle of American politics, he was a college professor, community organizer, and state senator.

Obama served as a community organizer at the Altgeld Gardens housing project in Chicago in one of his first jobs.

His political career began when he was elected to the Illinois State Senate in 1996. He was reelected in 1998 and 2002.

Obama ran for the US Senate in 2004. During his time as a senator, Obama published his second book, "The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream." He resigned his seat in November to prepare for his transition to president.

Obama was elected president on Nov. 5, defeating Republican contender John McCain after a lengthy campaign that began in early 2007.

On Jan. 20, Obama was sworn in as the 44th president. He became the first African-American to serve in the nation's highest post.

[Chicago community organizer and Harvard Law School](#)

Two years after graduating, Obama was hired in Chicago as director of the Developing Communities Project (DCP), a church-based community organization originally comprising eight Catholic parishes in Greater Roseland ([Roseland](#), [West Pullman](#) and [Riverdale](#)) on Chicago's far [South Side](#). He worked there as a community organizer from June 1985 to May 1988.^{[27][28]} During his three years as the DCP's director, its staff grew from one to thirteen. He helped set up a job training program, a college preparatory tutoring program, and a tenants' rights organization in [Altgeld Gardens](#).^[29] Obama also worked as a consultant and instructor for the [Gamaliel Foundation](#), a community organizing institute.^[30] In mid-1988, he traveled for the first time in Europe for three weeks and then for five weeks in Kenya, where he met many of his [paternal relatives](#) for the first time.^[31] He returned in August 2006 for a visit to his father's birthplace, a village near [Kisumu](#) in rural western Kenya.^[32]

In late 1988, Obama entered [Harvard Law School](#). He was selected as an editor of the [Harvard Law Review](#) at the end of his first year,^[33] and president of the journal in his second year.^{[29][34]} During his summers, he returned to Chicago, where he worked as a [summer associate](#) at the law firms of [Sidley Austin](#) in 1989 and [Hopkins & Sutter](#) in 1990.^[35]

After graduating with a [J.D. magna cum laude](#)^[36] from Harvard in 1991, he returned to Chicago.^[33] Obama's election as the [first black president of the Harvard Law Review](#) gained national media attention^{[29][34]} and led to a publishing contract and advance for a book about race relations,^[37] which evolved into a personal memoir. The manuscript was published in mid-1995 as [Dreams from My Father](#).^[37]

- *summa cum laude*, meaning "with highest honor" - is for those who have attained ninety percent on the general scale, or have received Highest Honors in any department, and carries with it the assignment of an oration on the list of Commencement parts;

Verified at:

1. Merriner, James L. (June 2008). "The friends of O". *Chicago* 57 (6): 74–79, 97–99. ISSN 0362-4595. <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/June-2008/Obamas-Chicago-Posse/The-Friends-of-O/index.php?cp=2&si=1>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.
 - Zengerle, Jason (July 30, 2008). "Con law; What the University of Chicago right thinks of Obama". *The New Republic* 239 (1): 7–8. ISSN 0028-6583. <http://www.tnr.com/article/con-law?id=86dd0277-c6ee-4e3c-83e9-0bb468c5c40d&p=1>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.

Douglas Baird, a bankruptcy expert and a law-and-economics devotee. "Michael's a very smart guy who's basically a very good judge of horse flesh--he wouldn't typically recommend people," says Baird.

Baird approached Obama about a teaching job at Chicago during his third and final year as a student at Harvard. "You look at his background--*Harvard Law Review* president, magna cum laude, and he's African American," Baird says. "This is a no-brainer hiring decision at the entry level of any law school in the country."

- Kantor, Jodi (July 30, 2008). "Teaching law, testing ideas, Obama stood slightly apart". *The New York Times*: p. A1. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/30/us/politics/30law.html?pagewanted=all>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.
- Gray, Steven (September 10, 2008). "Taking professor Obama's class". Time.com. <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1835238-2,00.html>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.
- Starr, Alexandra (September 21, 2008). "Case study". *The New York Times Magazine*: p. 76. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/21/magazine/21obama-t.html?pagewanted=all>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.

Baird had recruited him (Obama) from [Harvard Law School](#), where Obama was the first African-American president of the law review. Baird arranged for the promising graduating student to become a law and government fellow at Chicago, providing Obama with a stipend and office so he could complete his first book, "Dreams From My Father."

- Hundley, Tom (March 22, 2009). "Ivory tower of power". *Chicago Tribune Magazine*: p. 6. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/chi-mxa0322magazineobamapg6mar22,0,4802888,full.story>. Retrieved January 30, 2010.

[University of Chicago Law School and civil rights attorney](#)

In 1991, Obama accepted a two-year position as Visiting Law and Government Fellow at the [University of Chicago Law School](#) to work on his first book.^{[37][38]} He then served as a professor

at the University of Chicago Law School for twelve years—as a Lecturer from 1992 to 1996, and as a Senior Lecturer from 1996 to 2004—teaching [constitutional law](#).^[39]

From April to October 1992, Obama directed Illinois's [Project Vote](#), a voter registration drive with ten staffers and seven hundred volunteer registrars; it achieved its goal of registering 150,000 of 400,000 unregistered African Americans in the state, and led to *Crain's Chicago Business* naming Obama to its 1993 list of "40 under Forty" powers to be.^[40] In 1993 he joined Davis, Miner, Barnhill & Galland, a 13-attorney law firm specializing in civil rights litigation and neighborhood economic development, where he was an associate for three years from 1993 to 1996, then [of counsel](#) from 1996 to 2004, with his law license becoming inactive in 2002.^[41]

From 1994 to 2002, Obama served on the boards of directors of the [Woods Fund of Chicago](#), which in 1985 had been the first foundation to fund the Developing Communities Project, and of the [Joyce Foundation](#).^[27] He served on the board of directors of the [Chicago Annenberg Challenge](#) from 1995 to 2002, as founding president and chairman of the board of directors from 1995 to 1999.^[27]

George W. Bush

In 2000 George W. Bush (1946–) became the forty-third president of the United States, marking a rise to the top American political office in a relatively short political career. Bush's victory was the second time in American history that the son of a former president took on the world's most powerful political job.

A privileged childhood

George Walker Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut, on July 6, 1946, to Barbara and George Herbert Walker Bush. His parents moved the family to Texas when George W. was two years old. There his father made a fortune in the oil business. As the eldest of six children, George W. was expected to shine. He was an all-around athlete, a fair student, and an occasional troublemaker in school—he was once punished for painting a mustache on his face during music class. In seventh grade, he ran for class president and won.

While his family lived in Houston, Texas, George W. was sent back east to enroll at Phillips Academy, a private school in Andover, Massachusetts. Although George W. became actively involved in sports, playing baseball, basketball, and football, **his high school academic record was far from exceptional. However, through his family's powerful connections, Bush landed a spot at Yale University in Connecticut, where both his father and grandfather had attended.**

At Yale, Bush was a popular student. He became president of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and enjoyed socializing, watching and playing football, and dating. Grades were not a high priority, and because of his mischievous behavior, Bush had a few minor run-ins with the law. Despite his background of privilege, Bush became more at ease with all kinds of people in college. "I was never one to feel guilty," he said about his wealth and family connections. "I feel lucky."

After Yale

After graduating from Yale in 1968, Bush moved back to Houston where he worked for an agribusiness company (a company that produces farm products and equipment) and for a mentoring program (a program in which people counsel or guide others). But the recent graduate was unfocused. Later, after beginning his political career, questions arose about how he had managed to avoid serving in the Vietnam War (1965–75; a war fought in Vietnam in which the United States supported South Vietnam in its fight against a takeover by North Vietnam). He was a member of a Texas Air National Guard unit stationed at Ellington Air Force Base. The unit included other sons of powerful people. At the time, the National Guard had a long waiting list of young men eager to avoid combat service in Vietnam during the war, but Bush managed to sail through easily.

Texas oilman and the beginning of a political career

Eventually Bush decided to continue his education. **He was not accepted by the University of Texas Law School.** Instead, he entered Harvard's Business School. After graduation, he retraced his father's footsteps and returned to Midland, Texas, in

1975 to try his luck in the oil business. Bush's first attempt to strike oil was not successful.

In 1977, after the unsuccessful business venture, Bush became interested in politics

Read more: [George W. Bush Biography - family, childhood, children, parents, history, school, young, son, old, information, born http://www.notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Bush-George-W.html#ixzz1U4N0ILq4](http://www.notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Bush-George-W.html#ixzz1U4N0ILq4)