

# A NEW START

*'Can we change? Yes, we can!'*



On January 20th, 2009, Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States of America. He is the first African-American\* to be president of the richest and strongest country in the world.

Everyone knows his face. Everyone knows his name. But who is the real Barack Obama? And where did his road to the White House start?

\* An 'African-American' is a black person who was born in the USA.

# CHAPTER 1

## Family

*'My story is only possible in America – not in any other country.'*

Barack Obama's story starts in a little town in America and a village on the edge of Lake Victoria in Africa.

### **A mother from Kansas**

Ann Dunham was born in a small town in Kansas. It was 1941. There was a world war, and the United States joined the war in the same year. Ann's father went to Europe to fight. Her mother helped to build war planes in Kansas. After the war, Ann's parents moved west all the way to Hawaii. They wanted to start a new life.

### **A father from Kenya**

Barack's father, also called Barack Obama, was born in a small village in Kenya. He came from the Luo tribe. He helped to look after the family's animals and he went to the local school. He found school too easy because he was clever and he didn't listen.

At eighteen, Barack's father had a boring job in a shop in Nairobi. He didn't have much money. He had a wife, Kezia, with one child and another on the way. Then he met two American women. They saw how clever he was. 'Why don't you try to get a place at an American university?' they said. 'They pay for good students from Africa.'

He sent letters to thirty universities. Twenty-nine wrote back and said no. One said yes. It was the University of Hawaii. Barack arrived there as the university's first African student.

## Meeting

Ann and Barack met at the University of Hawaii. It was unusual for a black man to go out with a white girl in America in those days. It was even against the law in some states. But not in Hawaii – many races lived together there. Barack and Ann married and on 4th August, 1961, they had a son. They gave him his father's African name, Barack.



## Leaving

Then Harvard University offered Barack's father a place to study law. Harvard is America's most famous university, and he couldn't say no. But there wasn't enough money for Ann and their young son to go too, so they stayed in Hawaii. Ann didn't see Barack for a long time and their love died. After three years at Harvard, Barack went back to Kenya alone. He became an important man. Barack didn't see his father again until he was twelve years old.