

CHAPTER 9

Campaigning in Chicago

'Change won't come from the top. It will come from the work we do with the community.'

After Harvard, Barack went back to Chicago to his job as a community worker. Life on the South Side was worse. More houses were falling down and more teenagers were in trouble. Families with enough money were moving away from the area. African-American voters wanted politicians to listen to them.

In 1993, Barack took a job as a lawyer. He worked with ordinary people and their problems. Michelle changed jobs too, and started work for the Mayor's office.

Over the next two years, Barack wrote his first book, *Dreams From My Father*. He was going to write a book about his work in Chicago, but he found himself writing about his life – and his family. Not many people bought it, but he enjoyed writing it.

Barack still wanted to change things for people like Ruby in Altgeld Gardens. He knew now that change mainly came from the top. The people with the real power were the politicians. Barack decided to join them.

In 1997, while he was campaigning for changes to the law, terrible news came from Hawaii. His mother had died, and he was thousands of miles away. It was the greatest sadness of his life, he said afterwards.

Barack campaigned hard. He talked to anyone who stopped to listen. He went to hundreds of meetings, to shops and churches. When he saw two men standing on a corner, he crossed the street to talk to them. He won

his first election in 1997 and he became a senator* in the Illinois State Senate.



In 1998, Barack and Michelle became parents when their daughter, Malia Ann, was born on 4th July, Independence Day. In the election of that year, he won his seat in the Senate for four more years.

Barack worked hard at his job in the Illinois Senate. He spent family time with his wife and daughter. He exercised, read books and slowed down for a while. The next year, on 7th June, Michelle and Barack's second daughter, Sasha, was born.

In 2009, Barack wrote a letter to his daughters. He said, 'When I was a young man, I thought life was all about me. But then you two came into my world ... with those smiles that light up my day. And suddenly, all my big plans for myself didn't seem so important anymore ...'.

* See page 44 ('How the government works')