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“President Obama’s Leadership Style”

I would like to speak primarily about my impressions of having participated personally in the grassroots movement to support Obama’s candidacy in 2008.

First, I was quite struck by the fact that the power of young people was the driving force for the grassroots-level campaign on Obama’s behalf. It was a new experience for me to see young people aged 18 to 29, whose values and perspectives differ greatly from those of older voter groups, to be willing even to take a break from university to participate in the grassroots campaign. The Obama camp employed various means for sending out messages and collecting donations to improve and sustain the motivation of these young people, and I felt that they were quite accomplished at these means.

Next, the Obama grassroots campaign could be characterized in sum as “active dialogue and listening.” Let me begin with the fact that the Obama campaign listened to what people had to say when conducting its grassroots campaign. There was no top-down imposition of views by the Obama team. They empathized with the people targeted by the campaign, listened to their opinions and ascertained their needs. Staff assignments, the active recruitment of campaign staff with native languages other than English, handouts translated into other languages and even the content of speeches all left me with the impression that the campaign was pursuing a thoroughgoing “strategy of diversity.”

Obama’s leadership style, discernable from the aforementioned characteristics of the grassroots campaign, might perhaps be considered a skillful interweaving and fusion of four elements: transformation, facilitation, adaptability to other cultures, and perpetual change. When considering the last element – perpetual change – it is important that attention be focused on the constituent and subordinate elements of morals, competition, practical use and cooperation.

Here let us attempt a comparison of the Obama grassroots campaign with the Tea Party movement, which can be said to contrast greatly in many respects.

First, the Tea Party movement features a cultural uniformity and strong ethnocentric attitudes, as

opposed to the Obama campaign's robust sense of cultural diversity. Unlike the youth-dominated Obama grassroots campaign, the Tea Party movement appears to be made up primarily of middle-aged and older persons. While the grassroots campaigners supporting Obama are presently seeing their unity diminish, the Tea Party movement is growing stronger in its opposition to Obama and reinforcing its solidarity. Another diverging aspect might be that the Tea Party movement is exceedingly emotional and aggressive when compared to the "active dialogue and listening" of Obama's grassroots campaign.