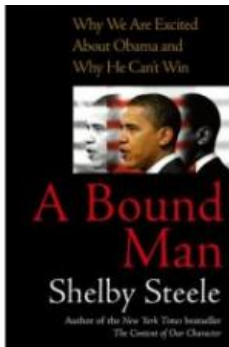


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Understanding Barack Obama — “A Bound Man”

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Sen. Barack Obama has quickly emerged as a major political force in America, and if predictions and polling projections hold, he will emerge the big winner of today's New Hampshire primary. This means that many Americans are trying to understand this man and the meaning of his candidacy. Few persons can match Shelby Steele in terms of cultural analysis. A research fellow at the Hoover Institution, Steele is one of the nation's most insightful analysts on a host of issues, including race. His earlier book, *The Content of our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* is one of the most significant works on race to emerge in this generation. That book was brave, insightful, and deservedly influential.

In *A Bound Man* [The Free Press], Steele looks at the meaning of Barack Obama and his political career. Shelby Steele writes from a unique perspective, as he is also the son of a black father and a white mother. Steele writes with deep insight, arguing that Obama stands between two worlds, and between two stereotyped roles in the black community. Steele clearly respects Obama's obvious political talent and personal achievements, but he also registers significant concerns about Obama and his quest for the presidency.

Shelby Steele helped me to think about the phenomenon of Barack Obama in a new light in this insightful book — but, as always, he helped me to think about much more as well. Few books are as timely as *A Bound Man*.

An excerpt:

The point is that Obama has separated himself from the deadly stigmas of black inferiority and white paternalism. He is seen as untainted by the former and in no need of the latter. This does not mean that people won't consider his race in some way as they ponder his candidacy. It only means that they can consider his candidacy without feeling guilty, intimidated, or otherwise manipulated by his race. And this is what makes him the first plausible black candidate in American history.

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