


Words mattered more in the 2008 presidential election than in any other.

Americans chose Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, a man of radical views and little experience, largely on the strength of his soaring speeches. His rival, Senator John McCain of Arizona, was a war hero with a history of bipartisan cooperation, as well as his own, plain-speaking rhetorical style. In the twilight of the unpopular presidency of George W. Bush, the two candidates stood for starkly different values, as well as different solutions to war abroad and economic crisis at home. Both claimed the mantle of change, yet only one would prevail, bringing to the White House a new style of charismatic politics. As America had come to understand its own failings as the failures of one single individual, so now it began to see its salvation through the elevated and exaggerated virtues of another, who had offered little but his own words as proof of his intentions and abilities. *Don't Tell Me Words Don't Matter* tells the story of the 2008 campaign through the rhetoric of the men and women who fought it.



Joel B. Pollak was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and grew up in Skokie, Illinois. He graduated with honors from Harvard College in 1999 and returned to South Africa as a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholar in 2000. He worked as a freelance journalist in Cape Town before serving as a speechwriter for Tony Leon, then-leader of the South African opposition, from 2002 to 2006. After earning a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies from the University of Cape Town in 2006, he returned to the United States and graduated from Harvard Law School in 2009. His first book, *The Kasrils Affair: Jews and Minority Politics in South Africa* (University of Cape Town Press, 2008) was a critical and commercial success. He served as a volunteer writer for the McCain campaign, and has also worked as a research assistant for Alan Dershowitz.

 Imagicom Media Graphics Inc.
8700 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue
Suite 800 South
Chicago, IL 60631


9 780195 132694
ISBN 0-19-513269-6

DON'T TELL ME WORDS DON'T MATTER

JOEL B. POLLAK



HC Press

DON'T TELL ME WORDS DON'T MATTER

HOW RHETORIC WON THE 2008
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

JOEL B. POLLAK

