

## international/national

### Obama Visits Southeast with Plans to 'Change the Odds'

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Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama's much touted presence was not lost on a group of mostly Black seniors and teens last week, as he outlined his plan to combat urban poverty in a speech at the Town Hall Education, Arts and Recreation Campus (THEARC) in Southeast Washington.

The Illinois senator promoted a mix of prospective programs that he said would attack economic stagnation in inner cities by offering universal healthcare, more tax assistance for poor families and increased job training under his administration.

"Let's change the odds in urban America by focusing on what works," Obama said. "These Americans cannot write thousand-dollar checks to make their voices heard. They suffer most from a politics that has been tipped in favor of those with the most money and influence and power."

Obama began his post-collegiate career as an organizer for a group of churches in Chicago's South Side in the mid-80s, an experience he recalled in his speech.

"This kind of poverty is not an issue I just discovered for the purposes of a campaign, it is the cause that led me to a life of public service almost 25 years ago," he said.

"He has the experience to address the unique challenges facing our inner cities," said Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D), who formally endorsed Obama's campaign Tuesday and introduced the senator for his speech Wednesday.

In his opening remarks, Fenty said that he decided to endorse Obama, who has advocated for the District's voting rights in Congress, partly because of the senator's sympathy for "our fight for our city's democracy."

En route from an all-night Senate debate on the war in Iraq, the senator met with groups of children and teens from the Covenant House, a nonprofit organization that serves



▲ Democratic candidate for president, Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) delivered a speech outlining his agenda to combat poverty in urban America at Southeast D.C.'s THEARC, a combined social, cultural and health services campus that has become a national prototype for inner-city improvement. He poses with Covenant House participating teens.

at-risk and homeless youth.

The children presented Obama with a carved, wooden gift box with an engraving that read, "Good luck on your journey from Covenant House to the White House."

The fortunes of America's inner-city youth was a central theme of the

candidate's speech as he attacked various conditions that he said often denied poor children of color of the resources needed to advance in today's economy.

"If you are an African American child unlucky enough to be born into one of the poorer neighbor-

hoods," Obama said, "...opportunity is scarce, role models are few and there is little contact with the normalcy of life outside those streets."

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Photo By Victor Holt