

# Javier & Barack

Interview between Barack Obama and Javier del Pino, from Radio Ser, which took place in Washington D.C., 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

<https://cadenaser.com/especiales/obama-el-hombre-que-un-dia-fue-presidente/>

READ THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW AND THINK OF THE WORD WHICH BEST FITS EACH GAP. USE ONLY WORD IN EACH GAP. THEN LISTEN AND CHECK.

*Hablamos en A Vivir, en la SER con Barack Obama, buenos días.*

Good Morning, how are you Javier?

*Hay una palabra que de alguna manera es su palabra, la palabra "cambio". En el libro que acaba de publicar "La Tierra Prometida" habla mucho de lo que un gobernante puede hacer y lo que no puede hacer. Cuando alguien asume el poder, ¿hay cosas que son imposibles de cambiar?*

0.22 Yeah, when I got to the White House I was in the middle \_\_\_\_\_ about five different crisis all at the \_\_\_\_\_ time. So I didn't have time too much to reflect. The ship was sinking and I was bailing water very fast to \_\_\_\_\_ sure we stayed afloat. I think that I maintained the optimism about was that even I was dealing \_\_\_\_\_ the immediate crisis, a financial crisis, two wars that I \_\_\_\_\_ inherited, that it was still important to address the larger structural changes but were having an impact even before we had \_\_\_\_\_ financial crisis.

1.18 Globalization had brought huge disruptions in the lives of a \_\_\_\_\_ of working people. You had ongoing problems in the US because we \_\_\_\_\_ not have a healthcare system that provided enough care to all people which was unique among advantaged countries.

1.41 The issue \_\_\_\_\_ climate change was an international crisis that was moving in a way that people didn't notice but in many ways it supposed \_\_\_\_\_ bigger threat than anything else to our long term wellbeing and so

1.56 I was insistent that we even as we dealt with the immediate crisis we had \_\_\_\_\_ deal with these long term problems.

2.09 What I describe in the book I think is true in all modern governments; surely it's true in \_\_\_\_\_ US is that they are big... I call them ocean liners, not speed boats. Turning the machinery of state in a better direction takes an enormous amount \_\_\_\_\_ effort.

2.39 In democracies there are a lot \_\_\_\_\_ pressure points to stop; special interest can stop the movement towards change. It's easier \_\_\_\_\_ stop things that to move next. Inertia builds up. And so the frustrations that I describe in the book, I think in some ways are unique to the US; our democracy is not a parliamentary system that allows you to immediately act everything you want, even if you are the party \_\_\_\_\_ control.

3.20 But I think all governments confront the complexities of modern societies and modern economics and many times when you're the leader you want things \_\_\_\_\_ happen; you want them to happen right away.

3.36 But you have to be very methodical \_\_\_\_\_ patient even to make small changes.

**READ THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW. USE THE WORD GIVEN IN CAPITALS IN BRACKET TO FORM A WORD THAT FITS IN THE GAP. THEN LISTEN AND CHECK.**

*Ha mencionado nada más empezar la conversación, el sistema sanitario en EEUU. Hay un pasaje en el libro que es conmovedor en el que cuenta cómo recuerda a su madre, en sus últimas semanas de vida, a punto de morir de cáncer preocupada por saber si podría o no pagar las facturas médicas. Y mucho tiempo después el destino hizo que desde la presidencia intentara acometer una reforma para evitar sufrimientos como el de su madre. Yo me pregunto si el talante de un político está marcado sobre todo por sus experiencias vitales, más que por su ambición. Si un político de origen humilde tiene, en principio, más facilidad para entender los problemas de la clase trabajadora o, al menos, más facilidad que un político que nació rico. Y ya sabe en quién estoy pensando...*

4.29 I think we are all shaped by what happens in our \_\_\_\_\_ (CHILD) , in our lives, hopefully, as we get older that power of books and literature, is to expand your capacity to feel compassion and \_\_\_\_\_ (CONNECT) to other people .

But for me, I was \_\_\_\_\_ (CONSTANT) drawing on the experiences of my own life when I thought about the issues in the policies that I wanted to pursue.

5.03 The fact that I witnessed my mother with cancer worrying about whether or not she \_\_\_\_\_ (CAN) pay her bills made me more conscious of the fear and \_\_\_\_\_ (SECURE) that people don't have with healthcare.

5.25 The fact that I came from modest means, that I wasn't born \_\_\_\_\_ (WEALTH) and that I had to take out loans in order to go to college made me more sympathetic to the

\_\_\_\_\_ (CHALLENGE) of Young people who want to make something of \_\_\_\_\_ (THEM) but may not have the resources.

Their parents may love them as much as a rich person loves their kids but they don't have as much \_\_\_\_\_ (ABLE) to provide them that support. That means the \_\_\_\_\_ (GOVERN) has to provide that kind of help, a ladder into the future.

6.00 And so that inform everything I did I think I tried to record in the book, the fact I spent a lot of time in my childhood \_\_\_\_\_ (SEA) , in Indonesia, or the fact that my father was from Kenya, I'm sure it influenced my form in policy because it meant that had a perspective on how people live in other places that having \_\_\_\_\_ (GROW) up in Indonesia I was not somebody who was \_\_\_\_\_ (FEAR) of Islam because that's a majority \_\_\_\_\_ (ISLAM) country.

6.54 Having a family in Kenya, that has to deal with extreme \_\_\_\_\_ (POOR) in some areas meant that I understood why it is that in some parts of the world, not just in Africa, but in Asia, middle east and Latin America , you can get very disruptive political \_\_\_\_\_ (MOVE) because people are desperate and frustrated.

7.29 Then so I think that all these things end up in forming the \_\_\_\_\_ (DECIDE) you make, the \_\_\_\_\_ (JUDGE) I brought to bear to my office.

**READ THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW AND FIND SYNONYMS FOR THE WORDS GIVEN.**

*Cuenta en el libro, y se habló mucho de ello en su día cuando recibió la llamada en la que le comunicaron que había recibido el Premio Nobel de la Paz al poco de ser presidente, y usted mismo preguntó "¿Y por qué me lo han dado?" Hubo una auténtica "Obamamanía" durante su primera campaña electoral. Yo recuerdo que en sus mítines la gente se desmayaba de la emoción de solo verle. Me pregunto si cuando llegó a la Casa Blanca tenía miedo a defraudar, miedo a no estar a la altura de lo que esperaban sus seguidores...*

8.03 Yes, and I write about it in the book. On the one hand, obviously the excitement about my candidacy gave me a certain amount of political capital that I could spend. It made me more influential, potentially internationally than even a normal US president might have been. I could persuade rather than try to course other countries, other partners, to work with us on important issues.

Enthusiasm

Convince

Pay

Concerns

Globally

8.55 But, what it also meant was people was projecting hopes and dreams onto my candidacy. In the US the expectation was, well once we elect Obama then racism will go away. Or, you know, internationally people assumed that he was opposed to the war in Irak, we can immediately expect all the troops out of Irak and Afghanistan right away, and so when, they learnt that it takes time to do these kinds of ... to achieve these goals.

Fade

Fulfill, perform

Took for granted

9.40 We had a very quick... we had a short attention span in this new media age and I think people want to see results fast; and so I had to deal with that. The good news Javier is that I never believed my own hype and I understood my limitations. I think one of my better qualities is that I take my work seriously but I don't take myself so seriously; I don't think I ever lost my head in thinking some of what was being said about me before I took off is was you know, in fact true, I knew this would be a tough job and it would take time.

As soon as possible

Became successful, succeeded

Cope with, handle

Grueling, challenging

Constraints

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10.42 And the good news is because I didn't get too high or believe all the praise, that it also meant I didn't get too low and believe all the criticism when it came. And I think that's a valuable quality to have if you are gonna be president of the US.

Acclaim, recognition

Prized

Turned up

**READ THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES SO THAT THEY HAVE A SIMILAR MEANING TO THE UNDERLINED SENTENCES. USE YOUR OWN WORDS.**

En *A Vivir*, contamos con la compañía de Juanjo Millás que ha leído el libro con la mirada en un escritor. *Buenos días Javier. Todo en Orden.* Hay una reflexión que querías hacer que tiene que ver con esto que acabamos de escuchar. Algo que te ha provocado a ti cierta desazón en la lectura del libro. *Sí. Hay un momento de esta autobiografía cuya lectura la verdad es que cortó el aliento. Es cuando Obama dice "no era una sorpresa que parte de mi trabajo implicara ordenar que mataran a personas". Tuve que apartar el libro a un lado para digerir aquella*

*afirmación tan dura. Me pregunté si se trataba de una frase muy valiente o muy cínica. Pensé que podía haberla omitido en un libro de casi 900 páginas sin que nadie la echara en falta. Pero algo dentro de él le obligó a ponerla. Me pregunto cómo llamar a ese algo: ¿contrición? ¿realismo? ¿sinceridad? ¿desfachatez? En todo caso, a partir de esa frase, queda muy claro que Obama opositó a ese puesto de trabajo, al de presidente de los Estados Unidos, a sabiendas de que ese puesto implicaba ordenar que mataran a personas. Iba en su sueldo. Y lo sabía. Me pregunto qué le habría dicho a una de sus hijas que le hubiera preguntado entonces ¿En qué consiste su trabajo? ¿Le habría dicho que si trabajo consistiría, entre otras, en la de ordenar que mataran a personas? ¿Me pregunto si recuerda a cuántas personas ordenó matar? ¿Me pregunto si sueña a veces con ello? Pero sobre todo, me pregunto ¿Cómo fue se momento en el que estaba en el ordenador a punto de escribir esa frase? ¿dudó si ponerla o no? Me parece imposible colocar una frase como esa de forma inconsciente.. pienso que tyvo que dudar porque es una frase muy dura, muy contundente...*

13.19 You know, I was very intentional about including that line because so often we describe war or fighting terrorism in aseptic terms. We try to distance ourselves from the realities and in fact I wrote about it in my Nobel speech: war is sometimes necessary. You know, I do not regret ordering the rape that resulted in the death of Osama Bin Laden for example, because he was plotting and planning to kill innocent people and had already done so. The same was true with many of these terrorist networks. So, one of the obligations, perhaps the first obligation of any leader of any country is to protect his own people.

War or fighting terrorism \_\_\_\_\_

English Tutor

Ángela Pintor

A leader of any country \_\_\_\_\_

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14.31 And yet, one of the things that I was trying to communicate there is the danger of ever feeling comfortable with that. Even necessary wars, and I don't by the way the Irak war was necessary, I think going into Afghanistan to drive up the Taliban and Al Qaeda after 9-11 was necessary. But even necessary wars still involve terrible terrible things. And that is something that weight on my conscience. And it should. And I would mistrust a leader who did not think about that and was not sober by that.

Whereas \_\_\_\_\_

15.30 Because I think that one of the things about being a grown up, being an adult is recognizing that life is messy and complicated and there are times when you have to do certain things that are not... That brings two values in contradiction. And in the case of being president of the US, one of those contradictions that I had to wrestle with is I need to protect American people from terrorist networks

that are actively trying to blow up buildings and hurt people. But I also believed in a world that is compassionate and ethical and governed more by cooperation than conflict.

When you are a grown up, not \_\_\_\_\_

American people are \_\_\_\_\_

16.38 And so how you resolve those things I think is part of the challenge. You can't ignore them and you can't pretend those contradictions don't exist. There were times when I would be criticized by my own supporters many of whom because they are on the left and progressive would say we should completely dismantle the military industrial complex and I would say to them: "yeah, that's in a world as I'd like it to be, there would be no need for these kinds of military operations".

He said \_\_\_\_\_

17.28 But the fact that matter is if your child is on a plane and it gets blown up , and you find out that the government could have prevented that from happening, whatever your ideology is, you want your child protected and you have to face up that contradiction, we all do, which is why, in the same passage you describe, I write that part of my goal was over time to get to a point where all the displaced, angry young people, whether it's in the middle East or other parts of the world, who may be attracted to an organization like Al Qaeda or Isis that we are reaching them earlier and giving them hope, and giving them school, and giving them jobs so that we don't find ourselves in these contradictions. But that takes time.

It takes time \_\_\_\_\_ in order to \_\_\_\_\_

*Yo creo que "Yes, we can" es el eslogan político más eficaz de la historia. ¿Es verdad que a usted le parecía cursi y que estaba seguro de que no iba a funcionar?*

18.50 That's true; I actually thought I don't know if it's all that good. It sounds better in Spanish, "Si se puede"; so that have been a popular slogan in organizing; César Chávez used it, the Mexican-American leader of the united farm workers here. In English, "Yes, we can", I thought I don't know. It doesn't excite me that much. But my friend and political advisor David Axerod said that no, no, this is good. He

asked Michelle and she said “Yeah, this is good”, so. It just goes to show that sometimes I was successfully politically despite myself, not because of my good judgement.

The slogan wasn't \_\_\_\_\_

**READ THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW. THEN DECIDE WHICH ANSWER BEST FITS EACH GAP**

*Claramente hay que dejarse aconsejar. Mis hijas son de la edad de las tuyas, nacieron aquí en Washington, estuvieron en la ceremonia en la que juró su cargo como presidente. Son muy fans de su carrera, fans de Obama. Y resulta que hablo con ellas hace unos días, y les digo: “voy a entrevistar a vuestro político favorito” Y las dos gritan, súper emocionadas: “!Bernie Sanders!” Sin que se tome esto a mal, eso me hace preguntarme ¿Qué tiene que aprender la izquierda convencional, en muchos países entre ellos en España o EEUU, para atraer a votantes jóvenes como consiguen hacerlos aquí Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio Cortez?*

20.24 Well, look; I think that when I think about my PERSONAL / PARTICULAR / OWN daughters, when I think about this younger generation, they are feeling, I think, an understandable impatience with the RHYTHM / PACE / PEACE of change. They have grown up seeing that the existent political structures have been slow to deal with issues LIKE / SIMILAR / AS racism and police abuses as we saw this summer with George Floyd. They are troubled by their huge and growing inequality in our society; and they are correctly concerned about climate change and the EVENT / FACT / ECHO that we haven't done with it seriously as we should.

21.34 And so I think that whether it's Bernie Sanders or Alexandria Ocasio Cortes, OR / NOR / SO I'm sure the equivalent politicians in Spain WHO / WHICH / WHOSE speak to that sense of urgency, that's always gonna attract young people. What I like to tell myself is that for my time when I came in office in 2008, I inspired THOSE / THIS / THESE young people and moved expectations forward, a certain amount; and it's precisely because we were successful with the Paris accords, healthcare or other reforms that then, we consolidated some progress and then the next set of politicians come WITH / ALONG / OVER and they raise expectations even further and that's how we make progress. So I don't mind people expecting and wanting to always go further than I was able to achieve because I myself would've gone further if it hadn't BEEN / BE / BEING for the challenges of Mitch McConnell and the US Senate. The only caution I think we all had, have to keep WITHIN / ON / IN mind and I say this because now we have my vice president Joe Biden is now president, many of the people who worked for me are now in the administration and you'll see more of these expectations.

23.30 You still have to govern; and America still, HALF / MIDDLE / BETWEEN the country voted for Donald Trump, almost half the country and so the truth of the matter is that in big democracies is very rare where you have a complete mandate for change and you can move and do everything you want as fast SO / AS / THAN maybe your daughters or my daughters want. And I think that, I always want to

remind them, THEN / THE / AT least is what I tell my daughters “Don’t be discouraged because you don’t get everything; UNLESS / IF / WHETHER you get something, that’s progress” and so you take the example of healthcare; I didn’t get healthcare for all Americans; I got healthcare for twenty five million Americans and now Joe Biden comes in and maybe he’ll get for another 10 or 15, and then finally we’ll get all of it.

24.44 And you take as much progress as you can get any given HOUR / DAY / TIME, but one of the joys, also frustrations of democracy is that you have to compromise and you can’t get 100% of what you want. And the good news is that BECAUSE / DUE / DESPITE of that democracy, Donald Trump didn’t get one hundred percent of what he wanted, which is a good thing from my perspective.

**LISTEN TO THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW AND COMPLETE THE SENTENCES.**

*Estamos hablando con Barack Obama en A vivir, en la Ser; que quede constancia que ha sido usted el primero en pronunciar el nombre de Donald Trump. Mantuvo silencio sobre su gestión como presidente durante los primeros tres años de mandato, supongo que tuvo que morderse la lengua en muchas ocasiones, y ahora, en un capítulo del libro, Una Tierra Prometida, cuenta un poco como se gestó el fenómeno Trump: Usted, en el libro, que se publicó ha e unos meses, hace varias referencias a las transiciones pacíficas de poder. Yo por un lado me pregunto si no ha tenido la tentación de reescribir algún capítulo del libro después del asalto al Capitolio. Y sobre todo querría saber su opinión sobre lo que todos nos preguntamos: ¿Hasta qué punto Trump y el trumpismo son fenómenos no pasajeros?*

Ángela Pintor

26.00 Well, I have a \_\_\_\_\_ of my memoirs that’ll come out so that I’ll have a lot of time to talk about it in the second half of my story. But you know Javier, one of the things that I tried to show in this first volume is how much the larger problem of \_\_\_\_\_ and resurgent racism, of antiimmigrant sentiment, of a lack of interest in democratic processes and rule of law; how much of that was already in the air before Donald Trump came along?

27.00 Sarah Palin spoke in much the same way Donald Trump did and tried to appeal to the same \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that you saw then allow Donald Trump to become president. Some of the same media forces, in terms of Fox News, and right way media and Rush Limbaugh on the \_\_\_\_\_; all that existed before Donald Trump ever started \_\_\_\_\_, before Twitter existed. So, I think we \_\_\_\_\_ in thinking that somehow Donald Trump is unique.

27.45 You see Orban in Hungary, Erdogan in Turkey, Duterte in Philippines, Putin in Russia, and right wing parties that are resurgent across Europe; the fact is that \_\_\_\_\_, the new information ecosystem, that \_\_\_\_\_ that’s resulted from market forces becoming so much more \_\_\_\_\_ then government can’t regulate in many cases, all those things have contributed to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.



28.39 One thing that we've learnt is that the appeals of nationalism of tribe, \_\_\_\_\_, religious chauvinism and of strong men politics; that has appealed when people are afraid and people are \_\_\_\_\_ when they think they're losing status; so, if we want to \_\_\_\_\_ that I believe in, that democracy, equality and participation, and economy that provides everybody an \_\_\_\_\_.

29.34 If we want that, then we have to try to alleviate those fears and those resentments; and that's gonna be a \_\_\_\_\_ that Donald Trump represented – but he's not unique, won't be the last and I think that those of us who care about a liberal democratic order, we have to \_\_\_\_\_ to stand up for an alternate set of \_\_\_\_\_ and be able to articulate those in a very clear forceful way.

*Yo recuerdo que en su libro anterior, que publicó antes del despegue de su carrera política, fue muy sincero sobre los claro-oscuros de su biografía; durante la campaña, por ejemplo, le echaron mucho en cara algo que contaba en ese libro: su afición a fumar porros cuando era joven. Ahora en este libro es muy interesante leer los pasajes en los que cuenta como sus fracasó como marido, como padre, por falta de tiempo, por falta de control, cuenta cómo Michelle es la personal que más ha dado forma a su manera de ver el mundo, y cómo sus hijas, como las mías, le enseñan cada día lo que significa ser mujer en este mundo, las complicaciones añadidas. Si le pregunto ¿Qué parte de su éxito se lo debe a Michelle?*

30.57 Oh well, I don't know, \_\_\_\_\_, 90 %, depends on... if you're talking about my \_\_\_\_\_ and my satisfaction then a very great deal because, as I describe in the book, part of the reason I was able I believe to do a good job as president is because I felt \_\_\_\_\_; I felt I had a home and a place of love and support; the gift of my daughters , they joy they brought me, even on my worst days, that was like armor, it was like that I could go back in \_\_\_\_\_ because I've been fortified by their love and I owe all that to Michelle. We've been \_\_\_\_\_. She's not somebody who spent a lot of time talking to me about policy or specific issues on the economy or \_\_\_\_\_; she's more instinctual and emotional in the best sense, not in the sense of irrational, but in the sense of understanding that it's the heart and not just the head that \_\_\_\_\_ and I think that's one of the reasons why she became \_\_\_\_\_ herself as a figure, because people sensed that heart in her.

**LISTEN TO THIS PART OF THE INTERVIEW AND CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER FOR THESE QUESTIONS.**

*Hay algo más de lo que me gustaría hablar: cuando terminó de escribir el último capítulo del libro, el año pasado, la cifra de víctimas mortales en USA por Covid-19 estaba en torno a 100.000. Ahora estamos cerca del medio millón. En todo este tiempo, se ha preguntado alguna vez ¿por qué el gobierno de Trump, por qué mi gobierno no se está tomando esto en serio?*

1. At the beginning of his role as president he had to deal with
  - a. Ebola
  - b. A problem with scientists.
  - c. A virus called H1n1
2. Dealing with the Ebola has been
  - a. A great success
  - b. One of the chapters of his book
  - c. A good way to isolate Africa.
3. Why is the government important?
  - a. They will be able to mishandle pandemics much better.
  - b. They can prevent deaths.
  - c. It has a devastating impact.
4. What do some parties believe about the public sector?
  - a. IT's very important to all of us.
  - b. It's corrupt and useless.
  - c. It's competent.



English Tutor  
Angela Pintor

*Ha pasado cuatro años sin pisar la Casa Blanca, en la que vio crecer a sus hijas de pequeñas ¿Le ha invitado ya a cenar allí el presidente Joe Biden?*

37.05 Right now he's got a lot to do but I'm sure at some point we will be able to have lunch as we used to.

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*Barack Obama, expresidente de los EEUU, seguramente la figura política más importante de este siglo le agradezco mucho el tiempo y la cordialidad en este diálogo en A Vivir, en la Ser.*

37.21 I enjoyed the conversation Javier; tell your daughters I say hello.