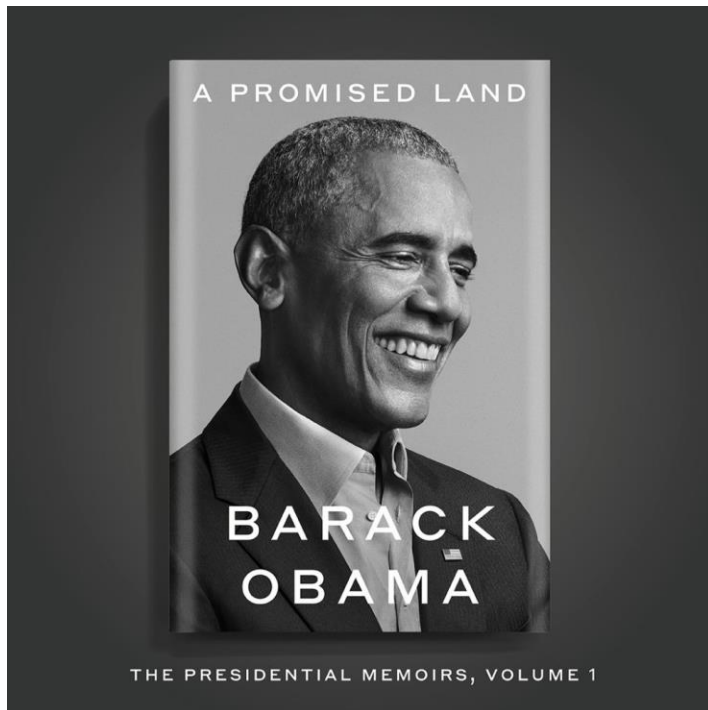


## Allison's Book Corner January 2021

***A Promised Land*** by Barack Obama  
(Crown 2020)

After the violence we all witnessed at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, the days of the Obama administration seem like they took place in a land far, far away.

This is a 700-page memoir that really needs to be read by history lovers. This cannot be read quickly. I am recommending *A Promised Land* after having read only half of the book so far, because I believe it is a very important historical record.



President Obama takes us behind the scenes and gives fascinating, detailed accounts of the financial and automobile industry crises that he confronted at the beginning of his presidency. He answers questions that you, as a citizen, may have had at that time. *Were* the banks too big to fail? Obama explains. This is not just his opinion; with all of the critics and political pundits, the public would know any errors by now. Also, he writes about events that took place in front of many

witnesses who are still alive to dispute anything he has said about their actions.

One of the great things about this memoir is that it is able to build anticipation within the reader, although we all know the ending. We know Barack Obama won his historic campaign and was in office for two terms. But as I start at the beginning with the young community organizer in Chicago (with a hole in the floor of his car) and read his eloquent writing, I get butterflies in my stomach.

It is that feeling that many African Americans had when we finally believed it was possible that he could win, after the 2008 Democratic Iowa Caucus. That excitement -- that *yes, we can* and *yes, we did*. Absolutely nothing happened in the last four years that can take erase or change the history: Barack Hussein Obama was the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. And I am so grateful that I lived to witness it and even help out in a small way with his campaign.

Contrary to popular assumption, I was a John Edwards supporter at the beginning of 2008. However, once I believed Barack Obama had a chance to become President, I wanted to help with his campaign. I was home with young kids at the time. The campaign was very innovative and using strategies that other campaigns had not done before using social media. Through a Mom group connection, I learned that one could go to the Obama campaign website and sign up to call people nationwide and ask them to vote for Obama. The campaign would give the phone volunteers a phone script and blocks of phone numbers from certain states. I had a great cell phone plan that allowed me to make these calls for free. I was off to the races. While it is very hard to believe now, I rarely had a negative phone call. The majority of people I spoke to were willing to listen. And I changed a few minds. No one hung up on me, and I called all across America.

Another particularly important part of this book is Obama revealing the vital role that President-elect Joe Biden played as his Vice President. The two men did not start out as close friends. However, President Obama always saw Biden's value as a former senior Senator with many connections on Capitol Hill. Biden's advice proved to be valuable on several occasions, which are well-detailed within these pages.

If you were a keen observer of the Obama years, there is a familiarity with the many political players in this memoir. You can picture them as they race through the halls of the White House and as they attend meetings. We find out more about the family lives of some of these people.

And, of course, there are the Obamas themselves. Remember, when they moved into the White House, Mrs. Obama's mother, Marian Robinson, accompanied them. I remember at the time thinking how unusual that was, but of course it was a personal decision that benefited the entire family.

There is way too much here for me to cover in this review. Obama ends this memoir with a full account of the days leading up to and including

the killing of Osama bin Laden. I am looking forward to reading every line of this account very closely.

My tears while reading this memoir are for my grandmother and for all the African Americans before her who did not witness this history. I can hear her voice: "Allisee [my nickname], "I cannot believe it, a Black man as President of the United States, Lord Jesus, really?" Yes, beloved Grammy, really. **And he made us proud not with perfection, but with dignity and grace and a beautiful loving family.**

The more I think about it, those eight years were really the "Camelot" of our time. The semi-calm before the huge wave of white supremacy and hatred that most of us did not see coming in the way that it arrived and culminating in violence at the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

I want to end by emphasizing that President Obama is a man full of hope for our country - hence the title *A Promised Land*. In an interview on 60 Minutes about the memoir in November 2020, Obama said, "Even though we may not get there in our lifetimes, even if we experience hardships and disappointments along the way, I still have faith we can create a more perfect union - not a perfect union, but more of a perfect union."

These words touch each of us in a particular way after January 6, don't they?