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.hoverbot{position: relative;z-index: 0;}#10.hoverbot: hover{background-color:
transparent;z-index: 50;}.hoverbot span{ /*CSS for enlarged image*/position:
absolute;background-color: lightyellow;padding: 5px;left: -1000px;border: 1px dashed
gray;visibility: hidden;color: black;text-decoration: none;}.hoverbot span img{ /*CSS for enlarged
image*/border-width: 0;padding: 2px;}.hoverbot: hover span{ /*CSS for enlarged image on
hover*/visibility: visible;top: 0;left: 60px; /*position where enlarged image should offset
horizontally */} if (document.addEventListener) {
document.addEventListener("DOMContentLoaded", window.print(), false); } // for Internet
Explorer (using conditional comments) /*@cc_on @*/ /*@if (@_win32) document.write("");
var script = document.getElementById("__ie_onload"); script.onreadystatechange = function() {
if (this.readyState == "complete") { window.print(); // call the onload handler } }; /*@end
@*/
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## Governing from the center - Chicago style

Posted by: Joel in [Politics & Government](#) on Nov 6, 2008

When I delivered the three absentee ballots from my household to my polling place on Tuesday morning, November 4, I told the election workers I was from Chicago and so I was following the adage, "vote early and often." At first they weren't sure whether to laugh or call the cops.

Barack Obama's choice for his chief of staff of fellow Chicagoan, Congressman Rahm Emmanuel, known for his tough, competitive, but smart style, reminds me that for good or ill, all the presidents in my memory have relied upon an inner circle of aides from their region -- people they knew or knew about and felt they could trust. Kennedy had his Ivy Leaguers and large family, Johnson his Texans, Nixon and Reagan their Orange County crews, Jimmy Carter -- alas, Ham Jordan and Bert Lance, Bush 41 establishment conservatives and Bush 43 Texans and neocons. The Clintons drew both from their Ivy education and Arkansan experience, which may account for their many paradoxical qualities. The political culture of the president's people is rooted in their place of origin, and shapes the political culture of the nation for the term of that presidency.

While in truth I'm not actually from Chicago, I did live there for over a year as a young adult and I paid attention. Carl Sandberg's Chicago as, "hog butcher to the World" was gone but some of the tang of the stockyards lingered. Chicago is that anomaly, a truly Midwestern city -- city on the scale and urbanity of New York, London, Paris or Rome but with none of the pretensions. Broad-shouldered, flat voiced, pragmatic, but worldly - home of world-class art, music (classical, jazz and rhythm & blues), academia, sports, entertainment and culture that came of age with the World's Fair of 1933.

It was, and probably mostly still is, both incredibly ethnically diverse (unlike much of the rest of the Midwest) and highly segregated. You knew which neighborhoods were Swedish or German, Polish, Italian, Jewish, Hungarian, Korean, Puerto Rican, etc. Neighborhoods in Chicago corresponded with towns and counties in the South or Appalachia. People went to and settled in a part of Chicago because someone else from wherever it was they were from had gone there first and maybe could help them find their footing in this alien new place. Riding the "L" (for elevated train) through the South Side was like (I imagined) seeing Berlin after World War II. On the North Side, the area with high-rises arrayed along the shore of Lake Michigan is called the Gold Coast, and could be Miami, except, of course, for the bitter cold winters sweeping in off the Lake and arctic Canada beyond.

Politics in Chicago was the machine, with Richard J. Daley as the living anachronism at its head, that left a legacy of political culture apart from its general reputation for corruption. Identity mattered. Relationships were critical, with organization and connections that ranged from the block to the ward to City Hall and beyond. The chief virtue was to get things done and to take care of those who helped take care of you.

I witnessed an officer of the infamously tough Chicago police stop a redneck from harassing a black man who was shoveling a load of coal from the street into a basement storeroom in a northside neighborhood, by loudly confirming (perhaps facetiously) the black man's southside neighborhood gang affiliation and then telling the redneck they would not come back when he called for help.

Barack Obama is not really from Chicago, either. Despite his mother and grandparents' Kansan roots he wasn't even a midwesterner, but brought an exotic blend of his father's Kenyan genes, Hawaiian, Indonesian, New York and Ivy experiences to working the streets as a community

organizer, trained in the methodology of another tough, pragmatic midwesterner, Saul Alinsky. He could work the streets, but have the intellectual chops to teach Constitutional Law at the University of Chicago. This brilliant but essentially rootless man searching for his identity found it and his connection, comfort and engagement with the American experience, in work, church, marriage and family in Chicago.

Chicago - somewhat north and a little east of the geographic center of the lower 48 continental United States - big city tough, but almost naively American despite its complexity and contradictions-- sets the style for the new administration. The next administration will be governing from the center -- the center of the United States -- Chicago style.