

CHINESE-AMERICAN STRATEGIC ADVISOR

CHRIS LU ASSISTS OBAMA

Harvard Classmate: Central Decision-Making Role

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Special Report by Christine Chiu

In the more than two hundred years history of the United States since her founding, Asian-Americans have never played a crucial role in the election contest for President. But since the start of this year, as Barack Obama has won successive victories in primary battles, there is one Chinese-American, Chris Lu, who has been playing a central decision-making role on Obama's team.

Joining the Team - Serves As Legislative Director

The formal title of Chris Lu is Legislative Director of Obama's Senate Office. Lu was Obama's classmate at Harvard Law School. At the beginning of 2005, when Obama first entered the Senate as a Senator from Illinois, he invited Lu to join his team, and Lu has served as Obama's Legislative Director since that time.

Obama himself is a lawyer of uncommon intelligence and unquestioned eloquence, and he has chosen Lu to be his legal advisor in the Senate, responsible for Obama's legislative work in Congress. Lu leads a 15-person group that is responsible for doing the most important work of a Senator during his time in office-- making laws. The legal ability and personal integrity of this top first-generation Chinese-American are quite evident. In the last year and half, Lu has also served as a core member of the team for Obama's campaign for the Democratic nomination for President.

* Draft translation by T.K. Chang

Chris Lu is 41 years old, was born in New Jersey and grew up in Maryland. He graduated college from Princeton University, and graduated in 1991 from Harvard Law School.

Lu, who is trusted and relied upon by Obama, comes from a family of jurists. His grandfather, Wang Ren-Yuan, had graduated from Chaoyang University in Beijing, and then obtained a degree from Meiji University in Japan. Wang was the Attorney General of the Republic of China from 1960 to 1966. He was also the first Representative of the Legislative Yuan from Tianjin District during the period of Kuomintang rule in China.

Following graduation from Harvard Law School, Lu served as a law clerk to Judge Robert E. Cowen of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He then joined the prominent law firm of Sidley & Austin in Washington, D.C., where he worked for four and half years.

This major law firm has over one thousand eight hundred lawyers worldwide. It was at the Chicago Office of this law firm that Obama and his wife, Michelle, first met and came to know each other. Coincidentally, Lu and his wife, Katie Thomson, also met at this law firm in its Washington Office, where they fell in love and eventually married.

Lu's parents are Eileen and Chien-Yang Lu, both of whom were graduate students in the U.S. from Taiwan during the 1960's. Lu said that he was influenced as a child by his father who, though an electrical engineer, loved literature and history. Every night, Lu used to watch the evening news with his father, and they also read biographies of famous statesmen together.

Lu is grateful to his parents for respecting his interests. Lu said that during the late 1980's and early 1990's, the number of Chinese-Americans who studied law was

much smaller than that of Chinese-Americans who studied medicine or engineering, yet his parents did not force him to follow the crowd.

Giving Up Lawyer High Salary - Enters Political Arena

In 1997, Lu gave up his high-paying law firm job and entered the political arena. His first job was as Deputy Chief Counsel for the Democratic staff of the Governmental Reform Committee of the House of Representatives. During the 2004 Presidential election, Lu served as a Special Advisor to the Kerry campaign.

Between 1988 and 1991, Lu and Obama were both studying at Harvard Law School, the preeminent law school in the U.S. In a recent telephone interview with this newspaper, Lu said that each entering class of the Law School had 550 students, so because of the large number of students, Lu did not know Obama well at that time. But Obama had already exhibited his exceptional intelligence and leadership ability. Lu said: "I have admired his talents for a long time."

To most Americans, the first time that Obama appeared on the national political stage was in 2004, when he gave a moving address to the Democratic Party National Convention. But to his Harvard Law School classmates and schoolmates, Obama was already a renowned alumnus. When Obama was elected in 1990 as President of the Harvard Law Review, the event was momentous, because Obama was the first black student to be elected President of the Harvard Law Review in the then 104-year history of this most authoritative law publication in the U.S.

When news of Obama's Presidential bid first became known, in addition to regular members of Obama's team such as Lu, many Asian-American fellow-graduates of Harvard Law School also came out in support of Obama. Although they are all quite

busy with their own work as lawyers or professors, they have stepped forward without hesitation at this crucial moment to devote significant time and effort to helping in the campaign.

Asian-Americans who are assisting enthusiastically in the Obama campaign include: Obama's classmates from Harvard Law School, Terrence Yang and Grande Lum, fellow-graduate T.K. Chang, and schoolmate Tim Wu, who is a professor at Columbia Law School.

Fighting Together Shoulder to Shoulder - Deeply Admires Obama

Lu expresses deep admiration for Obama, with whom he has worked shoulder to shoulder for more than three years. Lu is articulate and has a stentorian voice, but when he talks about Obama's talents, his voice fills with emotion. He said, "In terms of intelligence and talent, Obama is without comparison. If he does win the White House, he will be one of the most brilliant Presidents in American history." Lu said that during the eleven years that he has spent in the political arena, he has met many people: "With his quick and incisive mind, Obama is the most intelligent person that I have ever met in this circle of people."

Lu also has high praise for Obama's talent for writing. According to Lu, Obama shows profound sensitivity in his feel for the language. At the same time, Obama has the ability to string together different ideas into a coherent theme, making both his writing and his speeches stirring and moving. According to Lu, Obama writes beautifully and speaks eloquently, which is truly rare in Washington, where most politicians have whole troops of ghost writers laboring for them.

Obama also has another even more phenomenal ability that Lu greatly admires, and that his natural talent as a conciliator. Obama possesses a special charisma and is a natural-born politician.

Even though Obama received the best education from the best schools, and is an intellectual who loves to think, read and write, he also has the ability to develop a rapport with people of very different backgrounds. No matter who it is, Obama is able to share a common language with them, and to communicate with them in a way that they can accept. According to Lu, this special charisma enables Obama to reach across the boundaries of race, and to bridge differences in social and economic position.

According to Lu: "With his extraordinary ability and vision, Obama can help to repair American society, which has become extremely polarized in the last twenty years. If Obama wins the White House, he will not only benefit Asian-Americans, but he will improve the lives of all Americans."