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The Barack Obama not in those of Abraham Lincoln

As Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama began his political career in the State of Illinois, and it refers constantly to this illustrious predecessor, in particular to call for national unity

The march towards the White House Barack Obama began two years ago in a small town in Illinois. Springfield, the capital of a rural sparseness, was chosen by the young senator to launch his bold gamble on 10 February 2007. It is also here that he had come to announce in July 2008, the choice of Joe Biden for it, if successful, to Washington as vice president. "He had no reason to come back here," says Thomas Schwartz, a historian of the State in Springfield. Except one: Abraham Lincoln. "

Springfield is the city of former Republican president. If he was born in Kentucky, he made his career here - like Barack Obama, who served seven years in the Illinois Senate before going to Congress in Washington in 2004. Since then, the new president was placed under the figure of his illustrious predecessor ... until you reach the capital Saturday in the process - as Lincoln. Until yesterday swear on the Bible used by Abraham Lincoln and remained for a local museum.

"The political calculation is obvious: Lincoln is one of Americans' favorite presidents," continues Thomas Schwartz. He allowed the country to avoid the division, at the price of hard decisions. He ended slavery. For Americans, and even beyond, it is a symbol of freedom. After all, if Barack Obama is now the White House, he must also in Lincoln. "This is historical, in Illinois where the plates are minted slogan" State of Lincoln, "a figure imposed.

"A real close-mindedness"

Luis Arroyo, who represents the third district of Illinois in the House of Representatives in Springfield, originally from Puerto Rico, has a portrait of former President in his office. "We are in Lincoln, it's normal to have it in his office," cowardly Does shrugged. Before adding that he does not know much about the former president ...

The calculation does not explain everything. "There were between Obama and Lincoln real closeness of spirit, continues Thomas Schwartz. Both consider the important educational role of Head of State. Very good speakers, they are attached to the words and want to convince, inspire people. They also have a very sharp analytical intelligence. "

When Barack Obama announced his candidacy in front of the old seat of the Parliament of Illinois, he chose the form of a public speech, taking time to explain at length the reasons for its decision.

At the same time, Hillary Clinton broadcast a brief message on the internet and John McCain went to a show in primetime television to launch his campaign ... Barack Obama repeats also

consider how the country is divided and how it is time to pursue a new policy, bipartisan. He cites his distant predecessor: "A house divided can not stand. "It does more than take up arms against secession. But the argument flies in a country exhausted by a Bush administration that has relied on all the levers, starting with patriotism, to oppose American red - the color of the Republican Party - the American blue - color Democrats.

Illinois is also home to Al Capone

Putting Lincoln provides a better slide on the other side of Illinois, the dark face, that of a political system renowned for its corruption scandals. Because Abraham Lincoln is not the only local fame known worldwide: Illinois is also home to Al Capone, which put an end to many lives.

Ancient history? Not really: here, the political scandals continue to fuel the headlines. Rod Blagojevich, the current governor is under a removal procedure for trying to monetize a power conferred by the Constitution, appoint a senator in the event of a vacancy in Washington.

Barack Obama moving to the White House, his seat becomes free ... and Rod Blagojevich had clearly ensure that the choice would bring big. If the accusations are confirmed, he could join his predecessor George Ryan sentenced to 6 ½ years in prison for racketeering and conspiracy ... "Over the last 50 years we have had four governors in prison, a lawyer at slides of an evening marking the inauguration of the new Parliament of Illinois. Local politicians, lawyers, lobbyists and coexist happily welcome and celebrate all night clubs in the late Dusty Springfield.

In the capital, few are those who criticize Barack Obama, even among his political opponents. "I worked with him when he sat on the Judiciary Committee and he wanted to reform the death penalty," remembers Pete Baroni. I was a Republican consultant. Barack Obama has always been bipartisan, it has always been good spirit. Those who say otherwise just want to distinguish themselves to be quoted in the *New York Times*. "

"Passing off"

"What is impressive about him, has a local journalist, is that despite the political climate here, he emerged without pans. In Illinois, political power is concentrated in the hands of three men - the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House. It must pass a compromise, because we can not move alone. Especially when you arrived, like him. But with skill, he quickly crossed it without trouble. "

The skill is now to lead the country through the economic storm and two wars that he will need. "As with Lincoln, we are in a world in transition, says Dennis, guide of the previous Parliament. This has cost the lives of over a million people during the Civil War. Today it is the emergence of new powers, pollution, global recession. In the middle of national crisis, Lincoln said dreaming of the moment when America would again be "the last best chance to land." Today, Barack Obama is perhaps the last best chance. "

Gilles BIASSETTE, Springfield