

THE SKINNY: MARCH

PRESCIENT

Boston-based speaking agent Jodi Solomon, for signing a certain *Harvard Law Review* president in 1990. With his unusual backstory and exceptional gift for oratory, the young Barack Obama was a natural pick for Solomon, who promotes progressive speakers. As she does with all new clients, Solomon (shown above with Obama) discussed possible topics and reviewed the outline for his first gig, at St. Mark's School in Southborough. She would go on to book his appearances for the next 14 years, until he entered the U.S. Senate. Looking to avoid the spotlight, Solomon kept mum on their connection during last year's campaign, but is now discussing it for the first time. "It gave [Obama] an opportunity to travel," she says, recalling how she arranged speeches for him nationwide, "and to understand the different places in the country and their different needs."



By the time Obama arrived in Boston for the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Solomon was of course well aware of his speaking prowess, and while others were stunned by his powerful address, she sat in the audience, unsurprised. "It was essentially a very similar speech [to what] he had been giving at the venues we had booked," she says.

Today Solomon is busy promoting new talents, like immigration activist Enrique Morones and environmental biologist Sandra Steingraber. Summing up her line of work, she borrows a phrase from the new president: "I see myself as an agent—and I use that as a pun—of change."

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