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Barack Obama laments his lost 'cool'

By **JULIE MASON**¹ | 6/26/11 10:33 PM EDT

Barack Obama's second presidential campaign seems destined to lack 2008's gleam of insurgency — and nobody knows it better than Obama.

At a series of recent fundraisers, the president lamented his loss of cool, his transformation from fresh to familiar, from edgy to establishment.

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"I'm sort of old news," he told supporters at a New York fundraiser last week.

"I know that it's not going to be exactly the same as when I was young and vibrant and new," he mused. "And there was — posters everywhere, hope. The logo was really fresh. And let's face it, it was cool to support me back then. At cocktail parties, you could sort of say, 'Yeah, this Obama guy, you haven't heard of him? Let me tell you about him.'"

Increasingly, Obama is confronting the difference between running as a relative unknown on the popular promise of hope and change and campaigning as a known commodity whose record reflects the inevitable compromises of governing in Washington.

"The old posters are all faded," Obama told supporters at the opulent Mandarin Oriental

Hotel in Washington last week. "People make fun of hope and change."

Obama has mourned his tattered coolness at about half a dozen recent fundraisers. A campaign spokesman declined to comment on the theme or what Obama is trying to convey, but his observations seem intended, in part, to prepare supporters for a different

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experience than his upstart campaign provided in 2008.

“The campaign is not going to feel exactly the same,” Obama said at a fundraiser in Washington last month. “It’s not going to be as fresh and new and trendy.”

“Oh, I’m supporting Obama,” he said, mimicking supporters’ attitudes when he was a new phenomenon. “Back in 2008, that was a cool thing. Now, he’s the president. We see him all the time.”

Karen Finney, a Democratic strategist and former Clinton administration communications staffer, said Obama is letting supporters know he understands their frustration.

“It’s an acknowledgement that part of the momentum last time came from the fact that people wanted a dramatic change,” Finney said. “Now we are in the middle of slogging through the work — which is less glamorous but just as, if not more, important.”

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