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Clinton, Obama press to show personal side in final days

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INDIANAPOLIS — Barack Obama told voters on Saturday the only way he can win the presidency is "if you decide that more than flag pins . . . or the comments of a former pastor" as he and rival Hillary Clinton began closing arguments in two Democratic primaries on Tuesday.

Clinton, in North Carolina, and Obama, in Indiana, hoped to pick up support in states where they're behind, by showing off their personalities.

They also continued to spar over a summer moratorium on the federal gas tax, an idea Obama says is a gimmick and consumers she gets their struggle.

Clinton said America needs a president who isn't "disconnected, living in an ivory tower." Obama said Clinton was the disconnected, to suggest that a promise to save 30 cents a day on gas would address people's economic woes.

On Sunday morning, both candidates were to have unusual hour-long showcases on network television - Obama on NBC and Clinton in a town-hall meeting on ABC's "This Week."

Clinton began Saturday with a meeting with young moms in Cary, N.C., before stops in Wake Forest, Gastonia, and the Racing Hall of Fame in Mooresville.

Clad in a Carolina Blue pantsuit, she fielded questions at her first stop about juggling motherhood, a career and politics.

"Among the decisions I made in the early years was to spend as much time as I could with my daughter and her friends that meant we didn't have much of a social life."

She recalled weekends with her then young daughter, watching old television shows and movies, and how Chelsea once called her favorite mother but my second favorite is Donna Reed." Clinton reminded the audience about the 1960s sitcom mom: "housework in high heels."

Clinton also recalled how she and her husband obliged Chelsea when she wanted to try a coconut for the first time: "When we were beating it with a hammer. It was so embarrassing."

Obama spent the day with his wife and daughters, Malia and Sasha, at his side. It was the girls' first series of public appearances at Iowa caucuses.

Obama emphasized the last time the primary election mattered in Indiana — 40 years ago when Bobby Kennedy won the key opponent, Eugene McCarthy. Obama also presented himself as a potential torchbearer to Kennedy, albeit a vulnerable one.

Obama still leads in North Carolina but polls show Clinton has narrowed the gap, and an unlikely win by her could signal a shift.

Likewise, a win by Obama in white, working-class Indiana could add significant pressure on Clinton, who is behind in the popular vote, to drop out. Polls had showed the race even, but after the most recent racially polarizing comments by Obama, Jeremiah Wright, Clinton could hold Indiana after all.

Clinton was to end Saturday back in Indiana, with native rocker John Mellencamp — who has not endorsed either Democrat — for her.

Speaking in Indianapolis midday, Obama quoted a Bobby Kennedy appearance in Fort Wayne in 1968, saying nations' values and principles, joined purposes and hopes." He spoke of past generations' willingness to lead social movements.

Calling himself "a black man named Barack Obama," he said, "That's the only way I can win this race: If you decide that the way things are. If you decide that this election is bigger than flag pins or sniper fire or the comments of a former president."

differences between what we look like or where we come from or what party we belong to."

After Indianapolis, the Obamas' itinerary included a picnic in Noblesville, a tour of the home built by Obama's great, grandfather in Kempton and an ice cream social for about 200 children and parents at a roller-skating rink in Lafayette.

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