Primary Colors By Annoynomus Essay, Research Paper

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Government 1

8 April 1999

Primary Colors

Primary Colors opens with a quote be Machiavelli, ?Men as a whole

judge more with their eyes than with their hands.? This is a great statement

that sums up a good deal about Jack Stanton, the presidential candidate that

this book follows. The handshake is the threshold act of politics and Jack

Stanton knows it. He loves to go out, meet the people and shake hands with

them. When he lost the New Hampshire primary he was not upset at all. A

large number of voters on leaving the polls said the deciding factor was that

they had met Stanton. Unfortunately though the people began to judge

Stanton by what they had read in the papers. If the voters had judged Jack

Stanton with their hands, a handshake, instead of their eyes, he would have

easily become President because everyone that met him loved him.

The book is told through the eyes of Henry Burton. He is a young, well

educated and brilliant political strategist who formally served as a

Congressional aide. He is also well know for being the grandson of a

beloved Martian Luther King like figure of the civil rights era. Burton had

resigned as a Congressional aide because he longed to work for someone he

could believe in. He is consistently searching to rise above cynicism and

make a positive and lasting political and social contribution. He reluctantly

serves as the campaign manager for unknown southern Governor Jack

Stanton. Susan Stanton convinces Burton that the fight will be uphill, but

worth it. Throughout the Presidential race Burton flip-flops between

enthusiasm and disillusionment. Each time Burton?s faith in Stanton was

tested, it was soon renewed when he saw the way Stanton could mesmerize

a crowd.

Jack Stanton does have his faults, but he does seem to be the person

that Burton and other Americans can believe in. He is sincerely dedicated to

making American lives ?just a little bit better? and he truly feels everyone?s

pain. So what, if he is a womanizer and has more skeletons in his closet then

his staffers dare find out about? And so Burton and many others join the

crusade to make Jack Stanton President. Richard Jemmons is a loud

political strategist who proudly proclaims that he?s a redneck and tells Burton

that he is blacker then him. Libby Holden, ?the dustbuster,? has recently

been released from a mental hospital and has shown up to clean up the

Governor?s mess. She is lesbian who has a loud mouth and occasionally

carries a gun to back up her opinions. Libby is dedicated to the Stanton?s

and is just as idealistic as Burton. It was no wonder the two quickly became

friends. Daisy Green is a nicotine-puffing New York media consultant who

remains Henry Burton?s girlfriend even after Stanton fires her.

Throughout the campaign mud is constantly being hurled at Jack

Stanton. His faithful staff are kept busy around the clock trying to access the

damage and prevent future atrocities. As the campaign heats up Stanton?s

clan are beset with a number of moral and ethical dilemmas.

Many people considered Primary Colors reminiscent of President Bill

Clinton?s initial presidential campaign in 1992. The book was such a

phenomenal best-seller, partially because so many journalists inside and

outside of Washington, D.C. were running around trying to find the identity of

the author. Besides the fact that each of Stanton?s staffers are very much like

those of Clinton?s there are inside touches that are quit accurate to Clinton?s.

The way Jack handles Susan Stanton when she is upset is pretty much the

way Bill handles Hilary. Also the conversations between Stanton and NY

Governor Orlando Ozio are almost the same as between Clinton and Mario

Cuomo. But most important is that the book captures Clinton?s complexity.

The book is generous about his enthusiasm for politics and there are precise

observations about the Clinton technique, like the handshake. Primary

Colors was published three years ago and told us a good deal about Clinton

that we knew. On the other hand it told us elements of Clinton? character that

we did not know, like his womanizing. Today we know more intimate details

of Clinton?s sex life then we do of some of our friends.

When it comes down to it, whether or not the book is about Clinton is

irrelevant. What is important is that the book is educational as it shows how

political campaigns are run and how candidates and those around them

handle unimaginable adversity on an almost daily basis. I knew a campaign

would be chaotic but I never imagined it to be like this.. Stanley Kauffmann of

The New Republic said ? isn?t it worthwhile to elect an imperfect man of good

intent, even if by imperfect means, so that his intent can operate?? This

poses a question that only a couple of decades ago we did not have to

answer. This question repeatedly comes up in the book. Jack Stanton had

good intent, but was not so perfect. Matthew Cooper put it perfectly when he

said, ?whoever wrote it, thanks —finally, the modern campaign – and Clinton -

have the novelist that they deserve.? This book shows the true side to

political campaigns. Suddenly you look at Stanton/Clinton in a different light

when you know the way he acts when there are no voters around.

I would recommend Primary Colors to those that already know the

political life of America. This book shows a side of politicians and their aides

that is not so pleasant. People that are not used to this sort of thing might be

disgusted by the way politicians hide their bad side and suddenly brighten up

when they walk into a room filled with voters. This book could very easily

place suspicion in everything that a political candidate says. Then again you

do not have to worry about this book having that effect on people because

President Clinton has already given us reason to be suspect of everything he

does or says.

Primary Colors is a great book that taught me a good deal about

political campaigns. I was really taken with the character of Henry Burton.

Burton was a good guy that just wanted ?someone to believe in? and I felt like

I could believe anything he said. Jack Stanton at times seemed just like

another politician telling us anything to get him in office. But then there was

Henry Burton who worked for and believed in Stanton and so I felt compelled

to do the same. A constant theme in the book was Burton?s search within

Stanton to see if he really was a good guy. The only problem I had with the

book was that it left me hanging. It just ended, sort of like the author forgot to

send the last chapter to the publisher. It ends with Burton trying to resign

from the campaign, but Stanton not accepting it. We never find out if Burton

rejoins the campaign and better yet was it worth it. One question boggled my

mind for a few days after reading the book. Did Jack Stanton win the

Presidency and was Henry Burton able to believe in him?

Book Reviews

Cooper, Matthew. The New Republic. January 29,1996 v214 n5 p11

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Kauffmann, Stanley. The New Republic. April 20, 1998 v218 n16

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