

BookMarks!

You've got to read this!

Volume 4, Issue 2

October 17, 2008

Quick Picks

BookMarks Check List

Books I want to read:

Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism ****

Kafka Comes to America: Fighting for Justice in the War on Terror - A Public Defender's Inside Account ****

Armed Madhouse and The Best Democracy Money Can Buy ****

FactCheck.org ****

Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory ****

Animal Farm ***

The Assault on Reason ***

Ratings Scale

* - I would rather recount all of the dimpled and hanging chads.

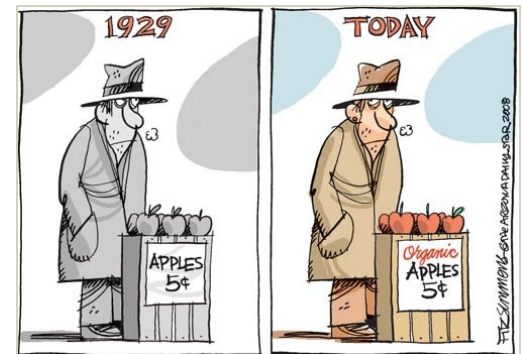
** - About as exciting as moderating a televised debate.

*** - As entertaining as "fake news" political reports.

**** - As wonderful as when your favorite candidate is elected President!

Everything's Political

Welcome to the political edition of BookMarks! With the upcoming election and major changes in the economy, it helps to really understand where we've come from and where we might be going. In this issue are reviews on books and websites that provide commentary and insight on a wide range of political and social issues. Take some time to find one or more that may suit your interests and spend some time learning. Most importantly, as we near important national and local elections, become an informed voter. Explore the websites of various candidates and also visit the reviewed Factcheck.org for truthful information on campaign ads. There are also many books available in the library and several about the current presidential candidates. Early voting begins on October 16th in North Carolina. Contact your Board of Elections to find out where you can vote early. So enjoy this issue. Learn about the old and the new and make your voice count in the elections. *Gena Craig*



A sign of the (organic) times?

BookMarks:

The Political Event

Join us to share your love of reading at [CPC Libraries' BookMarks](#) event from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m., Friday, October 17th, in LRC 205.

If you love books and are always in search of the next great read, you will want to attend. We will be sharing about books we've been reading that have a political or social issues theme. There will also be a prize drawing!

BookMarks isn't a book club, but rather an easy and fun way to get lots of book recommendations from your fellow booklovers.

Enjoy an atmosphere of fun and get some great book reviews. Drinks and snacks (red, white, and blue ones this time!) will be provided. Sign up for BookMarks in LearnerWeb for professional development credit.

Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of the Modern Conservatism

by William Link

Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism, by William Link. St. Martin's Press. 2008. 664 pages. So why should we read yet another biography of Jesse Helms? Righteous Warrior by William Link plows over familiar ground, detailing how Helms was involved in the most racist- and red-baiting campaign in modern N.C. history, the Dr. Frank Porter Graham-Willis Smith Democratic primary of 1950. Though Helms always denies accusations that he instigated the worst of these deceitful tactics, Link encourages the reader to examine his later campaigns. In his first U.S. Senate race in '72 against Nick Galifinakis, a U.S. Congressman of Greek descent, he brandished the slogan, "Jesse: He's One of Us." That Galifinakis was a Marine Corp veteran and Duke Law graduate did not prevent Jesse from questioning his Americanism and patriotism. Carolina residents may recall the controversial "white hands" TV ad, in which the Helms campaign falsely accused opponent Harvey Gantt of favoring minority hiring quotas. After a look-see at such ugly stuff, Link suggests, readers may draw their own conclusions about the accuracy of Jesse's denials. Link also probes Helms' cozy relationships with nearly all Central and South American dictators, such as General Pinochet of Chile and Robert D'Aubuisson of El Salvador. Despite the mountains of evidence these neo-fascists secured and maintained their power through mass murder, repression, and terror, N.C.'s senior Senator defended them and their death squads because he believed they were buffers against Communism. Even when a Socialist government was democratically elected, as in Chile, Helms would label it "Communist" and then support its opponents, often militaristic authoritarians. Perhaps one of the most disturbing episodes is how Helms exploited the Soviet downing of KAL 007 in 1983 as a political opportunity (KAL 007 was a Korean passenger plane the Soviets insisted they thought was a spy plane). The Senator had met two pre-school age girls in the airport before they boarded the fateful flight, and he gradually embellished the story of their brief encounter throughout that election year. Eventually Helms claimed he had played a child's game with the two girls, witnessed their mother read Bible stories to them, and that the youngsters had blown kisses to him as they boarded the plane. Jesse's conscience permitted him to use this much exaggerated and tear-jerking story in fund-raising letters in his 1984 Senate campaign as well as on the campaign trail. Link suggests that despite all his attention-getting bluster, Helms was not as effective as he appeared, as many of the issues he fought for over his many years in the Senate are no longer on the public radar. For examples, he opposed Martin Luther King Day, and he advocated putting prescribed prayer back in the public schools. In fairness to Helms, Link also reports how the former Senator's office admirably served his individual constituents and how Helms himself genuinely loved an adopted son, Charles, a victim of cerebral palsy. Indeed, Helms seems to possess a generous, pleasant, and even courtly personal side that conflicts with his public persona. In addition, Helms did seem to soften in his later years regarding his views on poverty in third-world countries, homosexuality, and the AIDS epidemic. However, Link hints these modifications in his positions are mere footnotes in a political career marred by intolerance and unapologetic appeals to racism. I read Righteous Warrior because a couple of questions had always nagged me about ole Jesse. First, how did Jesse get to be Jesse? Second, how could many North Carolinians who voted for progressive candidates like Terry Sanford and Jim Hunt support him, too? Link indicates Jesse got to be Jesse while a commentator at WRAL-TV in Raleigh in the 1960s. On several of his Viewpoints editorials, Helms accused a young UNC English instructor of attempting to morally corrupt his freshmen by teaching the classic poem, "To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell. Even after Helms knew an investigation that included interviewing each student had cleared the teacher of any wrongdoing, Helms continued to repeat the unfounded allegations on his TV program. Link concludes when Jesse realized he could get away with such falsehoods on the public airways, he was encouraged to continue the practice. How Jesse enjoyed getting votes from some folks who also supported more progressive candidates is partially explained in a poll taken after the 1984 Helms-Hunt Senate race. One question asked if Helms had run against Hunt for governor instead of Hunt running against Helms for Senate, how would they have voted? Surprisingly, Hunt would have won in double digits! Why? The poll concluded: "Voters liked having an ideologue for senator and an effective manager for governor." I suspect many fellow North Carolinians--both native Tar Heels and transplants--have similar questions that may have nagged them about this politician who represented us in the U.S. Senate for thirty years. Righteous Warrior is 643 pages of solid data, interestingly told, about one of the longest serving U.S. Senators in history. Furthermore, Link's biography reminds us that many of the issues Helms exploited during his three-decades will be with us in the 2008 election and beyond. May the Almighty have mercy on us! —Mike Shinn, *Academic Learning Center*



Kafka Comes to America: Fighting for Justice in the War on Terror - A Public Defender's Inside Account

by Steven T. Wax

Wax is a federal public defender in Oregon who details the effect of the 'war on terror' on two innocent men - Brandon Mayfield, the Portland attorney wrongfully accused of involvement in the Madrid train bombings, and Adel Hamad, a Sudanese relief worker wrongfully arrested in Pakistan and held for more than five years at Guantanamo. The book is part legal thriller (Wax does a good job explaining the complexities of his cases - he defends both men - and habeas corpus litigation) and part critique of civil liberties abuses. Wax has an unshaking belief in the rule of law and cannot comprehend why the government continues (despite multiple rebukes from the Supreme Court) to refuse to actually charge and try (the Kafka metaphor is an apt one) the men it claims are "the worst of the worst" (a claim that Wax illustrates as false, at least in the cases of his clients). No idealist, he knows that terrorism represents a real threat, he just argues for operating both within the legal system and the Constitutional system of checks and balances that has served the country well for over 200 years.

— Jennifer Arnold, *Library Services*

Factcheck.org

by Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

I haven't read many political books lately, but Factcheck.org is invaluable for cutting through the misleading statements and statistics that our politicians are constantly feeding us. The site is run by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, who are non-partisan and consider themselves a "consumer advocate for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics". They fact check political speeches, ads, and even the recent presidential debates. Some of the errors are outright lies and may change your opinion on a particular candidate. Other times, you may just chuckle at an apparent goof on the part of the candidate or a simple error. For example, FactCheck corrected Obama for mis-stating the year the computer was invented. For shame, Obama! For shame! - Steve Osler, *Library Services*

by George Orwell

In the book *Animal Farm*, George Orwell presents to us important themes in the development of social stratification and political corruption. His story is an allegorical representation of the power struggle that took place in the Soviet Union between political figures Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Essentially in *Animal Farm*, George Orwell has turned a bunch of farm animals into civic characters, each symbolizing a different part of communist society (the Soviet Union was communist back then). The two main characters of interest, however, are the pigs Snowball (who stands for Leon Trotsky: intelligent, passionate, determined) and Napoleon (who stands for Stalin: militaristic, cunning, confident). In the end, the plot focuses solely on the conflict between the two pigs and their manipulation of the innocent farm animals. I highly recommend George Orwell's masterpiece. *Animal Farm* is not only intriguing but also possesses the exhilarating plot of a fantasy novel.

- Gary Li, *Myers Park High School*

Armed Madhouse and the Best Democracy Money Can Buy

by Greg Palast

Greg Palast started out as a Chicago School of Economics educated forensic economist, championing the common folk against the energy conglomerates who ran up the cost of heating their homes, and negotiating contracts for steel and iron workers. Through his work he became a nationally recognized expert on government regulation and acquired an office on the 50th floor of the World Trade Center. He is probably best known in the United States for investigations and breaking reports of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Enron meltdown, and the voting irregularities of the 2000 presidential election. Palast spares no one in either of these books, taking to task both party members and officials, as well as domestic and multinational corporations, in their eternal quest for wealth and power. He follows the money which, in turn, explains the relationships of power brokers in both the public and private spheres, and describes the complexities of their manipulations with a sharp wit and ironic delivery that makes an extremely convoluted and abstruse subject accessible and wryly humorous. These books fill an important gap between consumer-oriented news and political history with in-depth, fully documented investigative journalism. This information will arm the constituency to make more carefully considered judgments about our administrative practices and policies, and promote an understanding of a certain intangible, "values" framework surrounding our national culture that hampers our achieving those inalienable rights held so dear--life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness--for all. - Kimberley Balcos, *Library Services*

Animal Farm



Our Website

<http://www1.cpcc.edu/library>

Want to submit a review? Go to

<http://www.cpcc.edu/forms/library/bookreview1.asp>

Check out the [BookMarks Blog](#)

Want to look at back issues?

Click [here](#).



The Assault on Reason

by Al Gore

I really enjoyed this book. Gore talks a great deal about the politics of fear and how the present administration has used this practice, cloaked by religious language, to basically get the American people to give up some of their rights and allow Bush to sign laws into practice but immediately say he would not follow them. Gore brings up the Iraq war and the Bush administration's insistence that there was a connection with Iraq, Saddam, and 9/11 despite reports from many agencies and people within the government that said there was absolutely no proof of a connection. Gore then explains that the next step was to turn the talk toward Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction which polls showed people would support as a reason to go to war. Again, there was no proof, but the propaganda worked and the country went to war. The book's basic premise is that the government and country need to return to being a country of laws and not men and that reason should return to being the centerpiece of decision-making. More reasonable discussion and less emotional reaction. By using this method, Gore believes the US can regain it's standing in the international community. A standing, of course, that is currently in jeopardy. Also touching on big oil, the environment, government spying, and supreme court nominations, this book will really make you re-evaluate a lot of past and present government decisions.—**Gena Craig, *Library Services***

Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory

by Mike Wallace

Very readable, eye-opening essay on how Disney, museums, parks, etc. not only display history, but interpret (define?) the culture of Americana. By their choices of what to display, how they display them, and the descriptions given, they emphasize certain aspects of society and culture while giving a rose-colored glasses view of history and/or an inspirational, what to strive for message. Using Disneyland's theme park, Henry Ford's park, and others, Wallace explains the image portrayed and how that image can warp perception and influence the viewer, both by what is there and what was left out. In today's world of political ads and debates, Mickey Mouse History shows that politicians are not the only ones to distort or gloss over history. -

Abby Rovner, *Library Services*

