

Publisher's Letter

Contributed by PT Editors
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McCain v Obama: What we do still matters

As I was walking to the train last week, a lady who had been waiting for the bus suddenly matched my steps downhill to the station. She was troling a handcart and wanted to talk. She told me she was from Morocco, about her two daughters and a son, and that she was visiting her daughter in town. Her daughter had been married, but the husband ran off with another woman just as her grandchild was born. She wanted to know where I was from, and I said, "the U.S. - San Francisco."

As we neared our destination, she turned the conversation to politics. She had a hard time saying what she wanted, but managed, "I know you have three candidates, two men and a woman. I like the woman. She doesn't like war. I don't like war."

Whatever Senators Clinton and Obama are or aren't, they certainly got the world's attention. In truth, the candidates' real position on the war in Iraq is not all that clear. But, that a poor woman living in Cannes would know that much about our political system suggests many things, among them that what happens in the US matters elsewhere.

She was a day late - Mrs. Clinton had formally thrown in the towel the previous evening. An excellent article in the New York Times spelled out some of the reasons: arrogance, internal infighting, and a failed strategy on gaining the number of delegates to win the nomination. By contrast, Senator Obama tapped into the "ABC" (Anyone But Clinton) crowd, kept his campaign vague but timely, and proved he could count.

We don't know who will win in November - that's what campaigns are all about. More likely than not, the decision will rest with voters in the middle. Had Al Gore carried his home state of Tennessee in 2000, he would have won the election. And, while President Bush fooled us all in 2004, many of us went into the polling booths looking for a reason to vote for John Kerry. There weren't many.

We didn't think Obama would even run let alone win the nomination. And, McCain was given up for gone before his dramatic turnaround in the Iowa primary. The next five months should produce a good snapshot of what each candidate is about, who their key advisers and supporters are, and what we can expect for the next four years. One result is for sure, though: people will be listening. What we do still matters.