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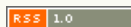
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Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle

Douglas Kellner

Abstract

In the contemporary era of media politics, the role of image and media spectacle has played an increasingly important role in presidential politics and other domains of society. As corporate journalism became increasingly tabloidized, the line between news and information and entertainment blurred and politics became a form of entertainment and spectacle. In this context, presidential candidates become celebrities and they are packaged and sold like the products of the culture industry. In this study, I will suggest some of the ways that the logic of the spectacle promoted the candidacy of Barack Obama and how he has become a master of the spectacle and global celebrity of the highest order. I will discuss how he became a supercelebrity in the presidential primaries and general election of 2008 and utilized media spectacle to help his win the presidency. Finally, I will discuss how Obama has so far in the first 100 Days of his presidency deployed his status as global supercelebrity and utilized media spectacle to advance his agenda.



Subsequently, it may be argued that Barack Obama utilised a form of 'liquid' celebrity in his 2008 US presidential campaign to reconnect with a disenfranchised electorate. However, this article will critically assess these types of celebrity politics to contend that aggregated forms of 'input' drawn from celebrity activism may more truly affect political outcomes. I argue that the Democratic primary race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama included a spectacle of race vs. gender and that Obama emerged as master of the spectacle during the primaries, a role he successfully carefully out in the Fall 2008 presidential election. Celebrity diplomacy, spectacle and Barack Obama 1939-2400 1939-2397 RCEL Celebrity Studies, Studies Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan 2010: pp. 00. Douglas Kellner*Celebrity D. Kellner Studies. University of California Los Angeles, USA. In an era when media culture is at the centre of politics, both in the sense of elections and governing, it is not surprising that celebrity diplomacy is growing in scope and perhaps significance. As celebrities assume more important roles in politics, I would argue that the phenomenon is highly ambiguous and difficult to generalise about or appraise at this point in time. The author, Douglas Kellner, suggests how Barack Obama grew as a global super celebrity by using media spectacle. He argues how Barack Obama's media techniques led the campaign in his favour in the United States' presidential election of 2008 (Kellner, 2009). With much publication, broadcasting and advertising resources, Barack Obama was able to attract supporters through his culture and race. The first democratic spectacle was that of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. In the first time in history, there had been an African American candidate and the first woman candidate. With both campaigner