

Maciej Turek

2008 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES IN THE UNITED STATES FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA PERSPECTIVE

The 2008 Democratic Primaries were unique due to many factors. They will be remembered most of all for Democratic Party's clash between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The main stage of this extended race was Pennsylvania, traditionally one of the most crucial battleground states. During the 2008 primaries, however, Pennsylvania was unusually important in determining who would become one of the major party's presidential nominee. For six weeks, between March 11 and April 22, 2008, there was no other primary election held in the United States. Thus, the remaining candidates and their camps, as well as the eyes of the nation, were turned to the campaign that was conducted in the Keystone State. What this essay tries to present is the impact the primaries in Pennsylvania had on the presidential nomination process of the Democratic Party. The author argues that while technically appealing to voters of the Pennsylvania primary, candidates were actually running a national campaign. It was during these primaries that the national candidate for the Democratic Party emerged.

When many passages of this paper were first drafted, in the last week of April 2008, it was not certain yet not only who would win the presidency, but also which two candidates would be seeking it. At that time, the never-ending story of the Democratic primaries was to continue for several more weeks. After the 2008 presidential race some analysts indicated the long primary campaign as one of the keys to the general election win, but in spring many thought of the exhausting Clinton-Obama clash as a sign of deep divisions in the Democratic Party, both among its establishment and electorate, divisions that could not be overcome in a short period of time. The aim of this paper is to put the unique primaries in Pennsylvania in the context of the 2008 presidential primary season in the United States. This uniqueness was created due to candidates trying to appeal to primary voters in Pennsylvania, traditionally one of the crucial swing states in the fall, but technically running a national campaign, as at this stage the Democratic Party presidential nomination was thought to be decided by super-delegates, who can freely switch candidates they would support. As the nomination was secured, the Keystone State primary was indicated as the time when the national candidate emerged.

I

While at the time of the Pennsylvania primary there was a long way to conclude the drama of the 2008 presidential election cycle in the United States, the conventional wisdom was that the process would be unique, as it actually was, due to many factors. Most of all, for the first time in U.S. history an African-American candidate was one of the major party's presidential nominees, the candidate that eventually won the election. In addition, George W. Bush's spending record¹ from the 2004 campaign was broken, and political consultants came up with a brilliant strategy to ensure an overwhelming victory, both of which will be studied for ages. The new media involvement – with an even more extensive use of the Internet than we observed during the 2006 midterm election – was clearly broadened and has introduced the conducting of a political campaign to some new patterns. There certainly were many “firsts” in the 2008 electoral cycle. But it seems, among all these elements, either implied or real “new ones,” that one factor remained unchanged – by which I mean the advantage of certain kind of states over the others.

As it is widely known, U.S. citizens elect their presidents indirectly. The system of Electoral College requires receiving at least 270 electoral, not popular, votes to win the presidential election. Each state has a different number of these votes, which is decided on the population census basis. But it is wrong one to think that it is enough to campaign in the eleven states richest in electoral votes, carry all of them, get 271 votes, and become the President. Regions and states differ in terms of society, economy, and politics. All these contrasts, along with the historical, demographical, educational, etc., background, are behind the decision of which candidate to support. If still undecided, the local political and election machine is always there to help make the “right” decision.

However, if the only type of campaign inhabitants know is the one they see in the media, we are probably referring to the people living in the safe states. As for the electoral map for November 2008, it seemed unlikely to see a conservative Republican carrying the states of Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey or New York. Respectively, a Democratic Party candidate should not count on winning in Texas, Mississippi and South Carolina. This election geography has made the above-mentioned states almost dead in terms of the existence of any contemporary presidential campaigning events or efforts. If the polls indicate the candidate leads somewhere by 20 or so points, it is pointless to waste resources there. With the winner-takes-all-system in all of the states, with the exception only of Maine and Nebraska, there will probably not be a visible campaign in Texas in the foreseeable future, as winning in the Lone Star State by one vote, double digit or collecting every single vote means the same – 34 votes in the Electoral College. This is why in the 2004 presidential campaign, only one TV ad, worth \$127, was aired in Texas (*Who Picks the President* 2009: 4).

But there were also many states with not even a single ad, event, or campaign office. “If a state is safe, it is not worth additional effort; if it is lost, further actions are not necessary” (Maisel, Buckley 2005: 335) Thus the majority of the resources are used in the purple states.² They are called purple because after the poll conducted before the general election they can be classified as neither red nor blue. Such a visualisa-

¹ \$345 million, as indicated by *The Center for Responsive Politics* website www.opensecrets.org, providing the fund-raising and fund-spending data in electoral processes in the United States.

² The other name is swing state or battleground state.

tion was first introduced in the election of 2000, “when the electoral map appeared in *The New York Times*, with the states carried by George W. Bush covered in red, and those supporting Al Gore in blue” (Ceaser, Busch 2005: 1). Ever since, if the state is predicted to vote Republican, it is called red, if Democrat, it is blue. States that are unsure are purple – simply the mixture of red and blue. It is in these purple states where the visits and events take place all the time, where candidates and surrogates mostly arrive, and where most phone calls with political agitation are made. It is in the purple states where a large number of TV ads are aired, and huge money is spent. According to FairVote – The Center for Voting and Democracy’s Presidential Election Reform Program, in the 2004 election, eleven states classified by the pollsters as battleground received 92% of the election visits, and 96% of all the TV ad money were spent there (*Who Picks the President* 2009: 3). However, even among those eleven, the most important ones were those with the highest number of electoral votes. Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania are traditionally the hardest fought campaigns, in particular in the elections that are supposed to be very close. In 2004 there were 55,477 ads aired in Florida, 44,131 in Ohio, and 30,228 in Pennsylvania, and their cost was 64, 47 and 36 million dollars respectively (*Who Picks the President* 2009: 13–14). Whether the effect of the ads was worth the money is quite a question. But the conventional wisdom before every presidential election has been that the winning candidate will be the one to carry at least two of these three most important swing states.

As for Florida, its importance has been demonstrated many times, for example during the 36 days in the fall of 2000, when it was too close to call a winner, keeping the nation and the world uncertain. The popular political saying is *As Ohio goes, so goes the nation* (*As Ohio Goes* 2008: A10). Indeed, the Buckeye State seems to be crucial if we consider that in the 20th century, the only election winners not to carry Ohio were Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944, and John F. Kennedy in 1960.

When it comes to Pennsylvania, many political strategists and analysts say the road to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue³ goes through the fields of the State of Independence. For a Democrat dreaming about the Oval Office it is an absolute must-win state, while Republicans claim that if they carry PA, they will win nationally. It was the Keystone State that turned out to be the key for Democrats in the 2008 primary season. For seven weeks – between March 11, and April 22 – it was a ground war, a battle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

II

Pennsylvania has always been important for determining who the White House host would be, and was even more important for the origins of the Republic. It was in Philadelphia that the Continental Congress convened, and the meeting of the Constitutional Convention took place. For ten years, at the end of the 18th century, the city served as the country’s first capital. It was the Keystone State that gave birth to the country’s greatest minds, such as Benjamin Franklin, Robert Morris, and Gouverneur Morris, to name only a few. Throughout American history, “the state’s contribution to the industrial, agricultural, social, artistic, religious and political well-being of the na-

³ Washington, DC, postal address of the White House.

tion have been extensive and continuous. The state is large, and its people and politics are as varied as its geography” (Treadway 2005: 1).

In 2000, Pennsylvania had 12.2 million⁴ citizens, the fifth highest number in the Union. The two biggest and most important cities – Philadelphia and Pittsburgh – were populated, respectively, by around 5 million and 400,000 people. 10% of habitants of the state are African-American, while 4% were born beyond the American borders. Of 12 million people, half are descendants of German, 2 million of Irish, and 1.5 million of Italian immigrants. There are about 3.9 million Catholics, 2.8 million of various kinds of Protestants, some Jews, Quakers, and Amish in PA. In 2000, the average income of Pennsylvanians was slightly over \$31,000, making it the 15th highest earning state. Still, 11% of the state’s residents live under the poverty line. At the beginning of the 20th century, the main revenue of the state was from coal, coke, steel, and agriculture. The latter decreased substantially – from the 19 million acres cultivated in 1900, all that was left a hundred years later was only 7,7 million acres. When it comes to coal, its contribution to the country’s extraction decreased from 57% in 1900 to 6% in 2000. Similarly, the contribution of steel production is 7% nowadays, compared with 60% at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

As Jack Treadway demonstrates, when it comes to state politics, at the beginning of the 20th century the Keystone State was governed by Republicans. The Grand Old Party politicians held the offices of governor, mayor, and other important state and local positions. Between 1900 and 1932, only two among 63 of the Democratic Party candidates running for various state posts were successful. This trend started to change in 1933, when the Democrats took control of Pittsburgh, after Republican domination in sixty-six of the previous eighty years. Finally, in 1951, they managed to regain power in Philadelphia, where the GOP had dominated in the previous eighty-one years. More or less since the 50s, “Pennsylvania has been perceived as a two-party, and therefore swing, state” (Treadway 2005: 11).

When it comes to electing the president, in the 20th century only Wilson in 1912 and 1916, Roosevelt in 1932, Nixon in 1968, and more recently, Bush in 2000 and 2004, have won the election without Pennsylvania. Though the game that was still in play in spring 2008 was closed only to registered Democrats, it could excellently serve as a great rehearsal for the candidates and their campaign organizations. It was also a kind of foretaste of how the campaign in the swing state might look in the fall.

III

In 2008 Democratic Party Primaries in Pennsylvania candidates were campaigning for 158 delegates for the Party Convention, which was held in August in Denver. However, in contrast to the general election, or the Republican Primaries, where the winner-takes-all system is in place, the Democratic Party delegates are won proportionally. In August 2008, the Keystone State also sent to Denver 26 super-delegates, who, unlike delegates, were not committed to any of the candidates.

Since the 70s, when the system of pledged delegates was introduced, the primary election in Pennsylvania has mattered only once – as local reporter reminds, “in 1976 Jimmy Carter carried 64 out of 67 counties to secure the Democratic Party presiden-

⁴ All of the data in the following (II) part of this essay is gathered from Treadway 2005: 1–23.

tial nomination" (Infield 2008: A01). Ever since, due to the process of front-loading presidential caucuses and primaries by other states, Pennsylvania residents have voted when the nomination had already been clinched. While other states set their voting day at as early a date as possible, the primaries in Pennsylvania were held on the traditional day, which is the fourth Tuesday in April.

The development of new media, or electronic media, requires a good result and strong standing in the polls after Iowa and New Hampshire vote – traditionally the first caucus and the primary elections, where the attention of the whole nation and the world is directed. A good result there almost guarantees the boost of a candidate. It can ensure name identification and recognition among voters, and free media coverage. It may strengthen the position of a frontrunner, or force a candidate to withdraw from the race. These factors may result in bringing new supporters – voters, volunteers, and people willing to contribute financially to the campaign. As fund-raising and fund-spending is a never-ending activity in the contemporary campaigns, the more new supporters a candidate has, the bigger chance more people will offer financial resources.

Money is also a reason for frontloading primaries for authorities in many states. If a candidate secures the nomination quickly, their willingness to campaign vigorously in the remaining states decreases. Less active campaigning in the state means less money for radio, TV and newspaper ads, fewer buttons and bumperstickers; it means no money for hotels, food and gas spent by staffers and media people covering the efforts, and no cheques for local political consultants and citizens involved in the election process. As a result, the state will be a black hole on the election map where each precinct wants to be considered important.

So when 24 states decided to hold their caucuses and primaries on the earliest possible date – February 5 – Pennsylvania Democrats also suggested a similar move. However, the idea was rejected by both state Republicans and the Democratic National Committee, and primaries were held on the traditional day. With this decision in place, it seemed the Keystone State would not matter in the 2008 primary season. But after February 5 – Super Tuesday – neither candidate emerged as the presumptive nominee.⁵ At the beginning of March, when primaries ended in Texas and Ohio, only Republican John McCain gained the required number of delegates to secure the nomination. In the Democrat camp the ball was still in play. The early front-runner, the winner of the so-called *exhibition season*, or *invisible primary*, the senator representing the state of New York and former First Lady Hillary Clinton, was surprisingly matched by the Illinois senator, Barack Obama. Both candidates, the only ones remaining in the race, almost equally shared the popular vote, as well as delegate and super-delegate gains.

It seems reasonable to argue that Clinton's strategists simply did not believe anyone could be a threat on her way to the nomination. But the charismatic Illinois senator, formerly first African-American Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious Harvard Law Review, turned out to be a *dark horse*. Obama won in Iowa, lost in New Hampshire by a very slim margin (37-39 to Clinton), then again won, this time in South Carolina, by 30 points. While during Super Tuesday Hillary won the so-called large states (rich in electoral votes in the general election, i.e. California, New York, New Jersey, Mas-

⁵ Presumptive nominee is a term given the person who was a winner of their party's presidential primaries, but to whom the nomination has not yet been given by the Convention.

sachusetts), Obama won more small states, and it was him to gain momentum after February 5. After Super Tuesday, Obama won eleven caucus and primary battles, ten by large margins. The momentum let him take the fund-raising offensive and brought new supporters. More importantly, a shift in super-delegates could be observed. Increased media attention made him a new front-runner for the Democratic Party nomination.

At the same time Clinton's organisation was in collapse. After losing eleven states, the Empire State senator was forced to change key people in her camp. She had to face the departure of supporters and close allies (e.g. Bill Richardson), as well as the need of borrowing money for her campaign. Despite these dramatic events, Clinton won Texas and crucial for the general election, Ohio, which let her become a comeback kid, the same way her husband Bill did after the 1992 New Hampshire primary. As there was no other state to vote between March 11 and April 22, after 145 years another crucial battle was to be fought on the fields of Pennsylvania. For a period of seven weeks, "the Keystone State was supposed to be a key" (Skiba 2008: 27).

Surveys taken between March 10 and 16 by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute indicated Clinton's 12-point-lead in Pennsylvania. But Obama had no intention of giving the states up without a fight, and in the fifth week of the campaign alone, the Illinois senator spent 2.2 million dollars on TV ads (Drobnyk 2008: A1). Despite good standings, also Hillary, along with her family – daughter Chelsea, and husband, former President Bill Clinton – campaigned hard in Pennsylvania. Hillary met mainly with women, Chelsea was active on the college and university campuses, while Bill travelled around giving several speeches a day. Almost the whole of the state's Democratic Party machine started working for the candidate Clinton – "Hillary received endorsement from the state Party Chairman J.T. Rooney, and state Executive Director Mary Isenhour was put in charge of Clinton's organization in the state" (Seelye 2008: A16). But probably the biggest asset was the support Clinton gained from the Governor of the Keystone State, Ed Rendell. This charismatic chief executive of the state, former Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, campaigned with passion on Clinton behalf. As *Time* magazine's correspondent indicates, "his fund-raising talents, along with the very effective election machine, are legendary in the Pennsylvania politics" (Tumulty 2008: 42). The Obama camp received endorsement only from Senator Bob Casey, Jr., son of the former popular governor and senator, Bob Casey, who died in 2000.

In such a tense and dramatic set of events, in an important race and the strategic state, some tension was inevitable. The Obama camp held a case against the Clinton people for not calling their candidate "Obama" or "Senator Obama," but instead using the phrase "my opponent." In their turn, Obama's people called Clinton to resign because of Obama winning more caucuses and primaries (27 to 14). This opinion was instantly raised by Obama supporters in the media and in Congress. They argued that Clinton had fewer delegates, had won in fewer states, had received fewer popular votes, and with the high numbers of negative electorates she would not be ready for a successful run in the general election against the GOP candidate.

During the Pennsylvania campaign, with more scrutiny on the candidate Obama, some new controversies began surrounding the Illinois senator. The influence on him of Reverend Jeremiah Wright, whom Obama was so long not too determined to denounce, or too general watchwords of his campaign (what does the candidate mean

exactly by “CHANGE” and “HOPE”). Finally, there was a bitter comment that Obama made at the venue near San Francisco at the beginning of April. During the fund-raising event, Obama stated,

You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone for 25 years and nothing's replaced them. And it's not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations (Zeleny 2008: A15).

Analysts were saying that “the words were likely to hurt Obama with working-class voters and to allow his political opponents, Democratic and Republican, to portray him as a snob” (Eichel, Fitzgerald, Couloumbis 2008: A01). Apart from the words, inhabitants of Pennsylvania also did not like the context in which they were said. The senator expressed this opinion outside the state, after a few days of campaigning there. The words from the speech at a closed event were not supposed to be quoted anywhere. Interestingly, the transcript was leaked to the press by an anonymous Obama staffer, who thought it was not alright. To make matters worse, at the time of the statement, or rather misstatement, the polls were showing Hillary Clinton was dropping her lead in the Keystone State to only six points (Quinnipiac University poll, 3–6 April). After the above words were revealed, however, Obama was unable to carry on closing the gap. Many commentators and analysts argued that Obama's slip, along with Clinton's intensive campaign and Rendell's endorsement and service, were the main reasons for Hillary Clinton beating Barack Obama in the 2008 Pennsylvania primary. This time, Clinton managed to extend her fight at the very last moment again. Such a claim seems to be quite reasonable, as even some state Democratic Party officials admitted that, “if Hillary Clinton shall win with less than a 5-point difference it would be a time to withdraw from the race, endorse senator Obama, and appeal to her supporters to vote for Obama in the general election.”⁶

IV

In the 2008 Pennsylvania Democratic Party primaries Hillary Clinton defeated Barack Obama by a clear margin. Eventually, however, this win was not big enough to gain the nomination. Despite Obama's final victory only a few days after the Keystone State primaries, the election math was not so clear – due to the Democratic Party's system of proportional delegate allocation, it was quite possible that no candidate would obtain the required number of delegates, and the nomination would be decided at the Democratic Party Convention. Then, the super-delegates, 796 Democratic Party insiders, not pledged to any candidate, would have been under enormous pressure. If the party officials, and not the voters, would make a choice, whoever the eventual nominee would be, the defeated one would argue that the nomination was stolen from them. Definitely they would say the decision indicated no respect for their supporters, followers, or voters. As history has shown, this might have been the fastest way to divide

⁶ Anonymous official of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party, in conversation with the author, April 17, 2008.

the party only a few months before the election. While some compromise would still be possible, the perfect solution simply was hard to imagine at this point of the race.

A perfect solution for the Democrats would have been a ticket combined of Senator Clinton and Senator Obama. Party conventions nominate not only the presidential contender, but also a candidate for the second office, the vice-presidency. The so-called dream ticket almost happened once, when after clinching the GOP 1980 presidential nomination, Ronald Reagan intended the former vice-president and President Gerald Ford to run with him. Eventually, however, Reagan's view that Ford had wanted too much prevailed, and he proposed the second spot to his main primary rival, George H. W. Bush. Such a combination would be more reasonable, especially after breaking down votes in Pennsylvania, where "Clinton had received strong support from whites – especially white women – while Obama excelled among African-Americans and young voters" ("Primary toll;..." 2008: A22). Appealing to all these groups of voters is of a great importance in every election.

It is not certain whether Obama actually asked Hillary to join the ticket. Anyway, all he could expect to hear might be "Thanks, but no thanks." Her political ambitions have been widely known since her graduation from the Yale Law School, some 35 years ago. A successful lawyer, First Lady, and senator, all she wanted was the Presidency. Accepting a second office meant postponing her Oval Office ambitions for another eight years, which is an eternity in American politics. In addition, in 2016 Hillary Clinton will be close to her seventies, delivering another argument for her numerous opponents.

At the time of the 2008 Pennsylvania primary, a more credible construction was one where Hillary topped the ballot, and Barack Obama was the vice-presidential candidate. Such a ticket was a perfect solution to unify Democratic Party, both base and differing factions, and appeal to some independent voters. Born in 1961 and with little Washington experience, Obama was perceived as almost a kid in politics, at least according to American standards. Many argued that the vice-presidency could be a great opportunity for him to "grow up" politically – to observe and participate in the decision-making process, and gained the required D.C. and executive branch experience. On the other hand, the vice-presidency, while much more important than at the beginning of the century, can equally turn out to be a springboard to the Oval Office or a dead end. It can be noticed that since 1804, when the existing system of presidential election was established, only Martin Van Buren and George H.W. Bush have won the presidential election while being sitting vice-presidents. "Another issue against the Clinton-Obama or Obama-Clinton ticket, was *the Bill Clinton factor*" (Balz 2008: A4). While it is the vice-president in the last few decades who has become a chief advisor of the President, it is easy to imagine the former federal executive branch leader as the "third one" in this political marriage. After all, the Clintons have been discussing politics for some forty years. But many bitter things were said on both sides. On the other hand, during the 1980 Republican Party primaries, even though George Bush frequently called his main rival's economic program *voodoo economics*, this was not an obstacle for Reagan to nominate him for the second spot.

What was known at the end of April 2008 was that the majority of Democratic Party registered voters in the Keystone State opted for Hillary Clinton in the state primary. The key question then was how the seven-week battle might affect the general election. It might have become an issue because out of two still-running candidates,

the long primary season could have possibly strengthened the third contender – Republican Party presumptive nominee John McCain. “In an exit-poll interview, 16% of Obama supporters and 26% of Clinton backers said they would have abandoned the party in November had their candidate not secured the nomination” (“Primary toll;...” 2008: A22). However, the Democrats were able to unify and come together after the Convention, and their great expectations before November were entirely legitimate. As Bob Herbert argued in the *New York Times* as early as in April,

(...) the table is set for the Democrats. Nearly all issues are lined up in their favor. The national economy has cratered. The war in Iraq, after all these years, is still not going well. The Republicans have chosen a candidate who is neither charismatic nor inspirational, and who certainly does not represent change in what has shaped up to be a change election. If ever there was a race tailor-made for the Democratic, this is it (Herbert 2008: A27).

Herbert’s views also seemed to be supported by the model of forecasting which party would install their candidate in the White House, developed by Allan Lichtman and Ken DeCell. This model is based on two criteria: the incumbent party in the White House, and political trends of the previous four years and the election year. The model is constructed on thirteen questions: “if the incumbent party has five or fewer keys turned against it, then the party is re-elected; if the party has more than five keys against it, the incumbent party loses the presidency. The key questions are as follows:

- 1) After the midterm elections, the incumbent party holds more seats in the U.S. House than it did before the previous election.
- 2) There is no serious contest for the incumbent party’s nomination.
- 3) The incumbent’s party’s candidate is the sitting president.
- 4) There is no significant third party or independent campaign.
- 5) The economy is not in recession during the election campaign.
- 6) Real per capita economic growth during the term equals or exceeds mean growth during the previous two terms.
- 7) The incumbent administration effects major change in national policy.
- 8) There is no sustained social unrest during the term.
- 9) The incumbent administration is untainted by major scandal.
- 10) The incumbent administration suffers no major failure in foreign policy or military affairs.
- 11) The incumbent administration achieves a major success in foreign or military affairs.
- 12) The incumbent party candidate is charismatic or a national hero.
- 13) The challenging party candidate is not charismatic or a national hero” (Lichtman 2008: 3).

If the model is correct, the majority of these questions and answers worked rather against the incumbent administration of 2008. Therefore, some might argue Obama’s path to the Presidency was actually easier in November than in the primaries. And the Pennsylvania primary can be considered as a first chapter, or a preface, to the fall season.

First of all, there were no other contests between March 11, the day of the Mississippi primary, and April 22. It seems reasonable to argue that during these six weeks both candidates were actually running a national campaign. While the ground effort

was conducted mainly on the fields of the Keystone State, the state campaign was reported widely in the national media for two reasons: with Republicans nominating John McCain, eyes were turned towards the Democrats, and Pennsylvania was a must-win race, if Hillary Clinton wanted her campaign to be continued. With attention on that primary, the whole nation was watching Obama's ability to spend three times as much as Hillary in the state. As it was spent mainly on ads, and more importantly, in the western counties of the state, which are in the Ohio media market, many voters whose decision was crucial in the fall were able to observe Obama's organizational strength and fund-raising talents. Moreover, Obama showed great leadership potential and free-media generating skills, especially after the so-called *A More Perfect Union Speech*, when on April 8 in the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, he gave an emotional talk on race. For more than a week, every conversation, either on a bus, in a gym, in the bank, or in the classroom, started with *Did you hear about THE SPEECH?*

Finally, that primary demonstrated the real strength of Obama as a serious contender, and the bouncing back and forth theme was the claim, both in the media and in people's conversations, that Hillary remained very divisive as a politician and as a person. For a candidate who was physically present in the state only for a couple of days, losing by ten points against an opponent who had moved to Pennsylvania for six weeks, was campaigning with all her family, and was actively supported by the former U.S. President, state governor, and the party's local machine, but most of all had lived in Pennsylvania for a few years as a child, in the long term might not have necessarily been seen as a defeat. During the Pennsylvania primary, Senator Barack Obama truly emerged as a national candidate who strengthened his organization, and convinced many super-delegates and media people to support his candidacy. And if we consider that a long primary season does not necessarily mean less chance in the general election, the epic battle on the fields of the Keystone State could actually do more good than harm for him. As John McCain had clinched his nomination relatively quickly, he did not campaign hard in Pennsylvania, and did not have to do so in the remaining states. Thus he might have been less known as a candidate than Obama, especially to voters who do not follow politics in their everyday life, and show interest in it only during the first few days of November. With the extended primary, and higher rate of presence on TV and radio of the remaining contenders, this fact might have been a harmful factor for the McCain campaign, in particular when we consider that the election was projected to be close. In addition, "of 8.3 million voters who registered to vote in the Pennsylvania primary, 4.2 million registered as Democrats, and 3.2 million as Republicans" (Skiba 2008: 27). Democrats were also able to register four times more new voters, and ten times more independents and people with different party registration (however, the bias of the cross-over voters – "the practice of members of one political party voting in the other party's primary, presumably to nominate the weaker candidate" (Maisel, Buckley 2005: 216) – should be taken into consideration). Even after the November results it is hard to assess whether it was better to have longer primaries, for there is no argument that Obama's chief strategist David Axelrod used the primary season to build the organization that also proved its efficiency in the fall. What impact, if any, the Pennsylvania primary had on the November results, is a question for another paper.

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