

Class of 1994 Reflection Bill Clinton's First Election – November, 1992

Here are three different takes on an important election. All three highlight the distance we faced, either geographically or mentally on this event. It is interesting to note the different perspectives we were exposed to either during or after the event, and to think about how relationships help form our political views.

Mark Enfield '94:

Bill Clinton was elected as the 42nd President of the United States in 1992 during our junior year of college. Honestly, I could have cared less about politics as a 20-year old but I've had the privilege of working with Henry Cisneros, who served as Clinton's HUD Secretary from 1993 to 1997, for the last 10 years. I asked Henry to reflect on President Clinton's impact on college graduates in 1994 during a time that he portrays as the "Bridge to the Future." The Republican Party won control of the Congress in 1994 for the first time in 40 years which forced President Clinton to make tough decisions to effectuate a balanced budget. Clinton's bipartisanship triggered a positive response by the stock and bond markets and spurred the largest economic expansion in U.S. history. Our graduating class became integral building blocks of the growth and technology innovations in computers, cell phones, biotech and ".coms." We should feel very fortunate that the process of finding a good job in 1994 was a massively different experience than for those looking in 2008. The lesson, 20 years later for me: Public policy actually matters and can dramatically impact our personal lives.

Libby Alexander '94:

"I was studying abroad in Rome at the time and I remember watching election returns at a bar. As the night progressed, there were various discussions with Italians and other international students studying abroad, and I was surprised at how many had strong opinions about the election (and thought Bush would win.) This was my first "international" lesson in American politics - foreigners are generally intrigued by and interested in our political system. (Seriously, how many American teenagers have ever sat at a bar watching the election results for any country, ever?) While I studied government and history and conceptually understood America's place in the world, living abroad for just a few months caused me to see my country from a very different perspective."

Jillian Franciscovich '94:

"I was studying abroad in France during the election. I remember Cathy Francis '94 showed up at my French family's house at midnight- and the best part was, my French mom was not surprised. She had a knack for reading tarot cards and announced that she "saw Cathy coming" before she showed up on our doorstep. We huddled in front of the tv until 6am watching the returns and coverage. My French mother was all fired up and kept telling us that Clinton better win if we knew what was best for our future relations with Europe, and that the French were done with Bush. I just sat there feeling utterly lame because I had not bothered to send for an absentee ballot. It was my first chance at having a say in a Presidential election, and I was disappointed in my lack of planning. I have made it a point to vote in every election since. "