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Documentary Review: "Crashing the States" A Journey into the Netroots

By Kim Grant

Gary Abramson and Dante Atkins embarked on a mission into netroots anthropology: track netroots candidates and supporters in their native habitat. "Crashing the States," a documentary slated for release in early 2008 is more of a study in the power of the netroots movement than a documentary.

2006's mid-term election victories for progressive candidates signalled what should comfortably be referred to as a second coming of American democracy in the digital age. Across America -- on computers, in living rooms-turned war rooms, hotels, conventions, and banquet halls -- open political dialogues between candidates and their prospective constituencies rolled along at a comfortable pace. Candidates in the run-up to Election Day did something that most currently seated officials regularly avoid even today - they spoke to voters and listened intently to their feedback.

Abramson and Atkins managed to capture one of the most suspenseful moments of the 2006 elections; the slim victory of Jim Webb over Senator George "Macaca" Allen in Virgia. In a scene of complex, real emotions that Hollywood could only dream of recreating, a crowd of Webb supporters are captured in a crowded celebration hall agonizing, hoping, doubting, and exhausted as the final precinct tallies crawled across a projection screen. In a sea of optimism, even key players on Webb's team felt their hearts sink as the night crept along. On the internet, on sites such as DailyKos, blogs and comments briskly posted along congratulating efforts, and hoping meekly for victory against incumbent candidate Allen.

Resounding shouts of joy and disbelief punctuated the moment as Webb's campaign caught the first glimpse of victory, and at the same time, the changes to come in the future. Immediately, the netroots gained

additional and significant momentum and began its fast pace into political legitimacy and away from what conservatives had dismissed as "noise in the blogosphere."

"Crashing the States" Abramson and Atkins captured not only the political movement, but the source of the power behind the netroots; the people. Across the country, bloggers only known to the team previously under their usernames opened their homes and hearts to the team, providing couches and guest rooms for the team to stay along the journey. In "Crashing", people-powered politics is revealed as much more than simple political strength, but as the natural outcome of average men and women with integrity and civic courage to stand up and be counted. For this reason alone, "Crashing the States" is a must-see for anyone harboring doubt in the ability of citizens to take back their democracy.

Surprisingly, a majority of the candidates profiled in the documentary won. "Crashing the States" features the following candidates throughout the 2006 elections: Jim Webb, Joe Sestak, Patrick Murphy, Linda Stender, Brian Keeler, Ned Lamont, Paul Hodes, Eric Massa, Barry Welsh, Dan Seals, John Courage, Jay Fawcett, Bill Winter, Jon Tester, Darcy Burner, Jerry McNerney, Francine Busby, and Jack Carter.

www.CrashingtheStates.com is the official website for the documentary. A map with video of selected campaign stops can be seen here at NetrootsNetwork.com.

Authors Website: www.NetrootsNetwork.com

Authors Bio:

Kim Grant is the founder of www.NetrootsNetwork.com

[Back](#)