

Americans languished on the political agenda for long periods? A good deal of politics and policy on questions of race seem to be legislative and bureaucratic efflorescences of a brief moment of presidential success in the 1960s.

In broader terms, signaling as a research strategy imposes a series of constraints of which it is important to be aware. One of the basic premises of signaling is its focus on speech acts themselves and their repetition rather than content (other than positive or negative cues). Thus, for example, if one were to analyze Abraham Lincoln from a signaling standpoint, the effort would turn on the number and direction of his comments on civil rights. The Second Inaugural could be categorized as both a strong enforcement signal (slavery “having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove”) and a lenient one (“with malice toward none, with charity toward all”). A comprehensive signaling approach to the presidency would thus have to take into account a myriad of signals such as mixed ones, unclear ones, deceptive ones, and tentative ones (the “trial balloon”) and incorporate how each is received and under what conditions. Thus, a research strategy that promises parsimony may actually expand to hermeneutic excess. In fairness, the author seems aware of the complexity of signaling as a political act. He asks at the close of the book: “Is signaling as unidirectional as I present it? Do presidents simply talk about policy and influence it?” (p. 169). Nevertheless, *The President’s Speeches* is an innovative and responsible attempt to recast the “going public” option in presidential politics.

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Strom: The Complicated Personal and Political Life of Strom Thurmond
by Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson. New York, Public Affairs, 2005.
415 pp. \$27.50.

This book is a superb biography of the late Senator Strom Thurmond. It provides systematic and comprehensive coverage of both his personal and political life that does not omit and/or marginalize the unpleasant and risqué aspects of his life. This work is especially to be praised for its balanced treatment of Senator Thurmond’s secret relationship with his African American daughter. Yet, this political man is the center. Jack Bass and Marilyn Thompson write: “Thurmond’s career was more complicated than almost [that of] any other modern-day politician. It ran the gamut from Roosevelt New Dealer and progressive Southern governor to Dixiecrat segregationist, from first successful Senate write-in candidate to champion of the filibuster. He survived a party switch, abandoning the Democratic Party once and for all in 1964 to emerge a few years later as kingmaker for Richard Nixon” (p. xv). Their evaluation of him is that “he mastered the art of expediency, shifting with the changing winds and never stopping to apologize to those hurt by his actions” (p. xiv). And in these switches,

he somehow convinced “himself and his electorate that he had never based his positions on racial animosity, only on the principles of states rights” (p. xv).

The book starts with Thurmond’s acquisition of his political motivations, the roots of which lay in Edgefield County, South Carolina, the home of the most “rousing race-baiters” in the region, state, and nation. Among these were the notorious Ben “Pitchfork” Tillman, Confederate war hero M.C. Butler, and Cole Blease. The United Daughters of the Confederacy have a shrine, monuments, and a museum there to Confederates, including Thurmond’s grandfather, and to the “Redshirts,” an organization responsible for the bloody “Hamburg Massacre.” Linking Thurmond to this racist past was his father, a judge and state legislator, as well as attorney and advisor for Tillman. Thurmond’s father took him to meet Tillman, to observe Blease’s gubernatorial campaign (from which Thurmond received the inspiration to become a politician), and to the state capitol to meet and see defiant states-righters past and present.

At Clemson University, which is located on the former estate of John C. Calhoun, theorist of nullification, interposition, and secession, Thurmond received more indoctrination. Soon, he moved as quickly as possible into the political arena. In 1928, he won the post of county school superintendent. In 1932, he won the first of two terms to the state Senate; in 1938, the state legislature elected him circuit judge. Although he went away to World War II and landed at Normandy, his heroics there kept his name in the newspapers, and before he returned home, the state legislature “reelected him in absentia” (p. 74). In 1946, he won his first two terms as governor, and in 1948, he ran on the Dixiecrat ticket for president. In 1950, he ran for the Senate and lost, but in 1954, he entered as a write-in candidate and won.

Bass and Thompson find that despite his longevity in the Senate, his legislative achievements are “thin” (p. 331). But in the American political process and party system, his influence and legacy are nearly immeasurable. Not only did he switch parties, he circumscribed and undercut the 1968 third-party presidential bid of George Wallace while saving Nixon’s nomination at the convention. Together, Thurmond (“Mr. Inside”) and Wallace (“Mr. Outside”) induced the white Democratic electorate to switch to the Republican Party. I highly recommend this book to party, leadership, and African American studies scholars.

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Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States by Daniel P. Franklin. Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006. 223 pp. Cloth, \$70.00; paper, \$26.95.

I confess that I was reluctant to take this book to the beach with me as light summer reading because it had all of the trappings of a serious work, including