

Producing *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* in a Modern Political Landscape America's Original Anti-Establishment President

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Abstract

Many of the thematic and political elements present in the musical (and the historical story within) remain prevalent today, especially with the current U.S. political climate. The early 19th century was the adolescence of America, and Andrew Jackson was the first president "of the people", not an aristocrat. The show heavily features the concept of populism, a political ideology that argues for the power of the people rather than the power of (often corrupt) government officials. This movement is still rampant in our country today, and could be seen in the most recent election cycle. We cannot ignore the plight of historically underrepresented groups in our country. Jackson left a bloody legacy of genocide of Native Americans, which is a focus of the production. He also never stated any discomfort with slavery and, as President, he used his power to quiet the voices of those who did. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "Jackson had many faults...but...with the exception of Washington and Lincoln, no man has left a deeper mark on American history".



Research

Research was conducted at The Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson and his wife Rachel. The visit coincided with the 100th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. This victory propelled Jackson to Rock Star status in the fledgling United States. Photos by A. Bacarisse



The Presidential Election of 1824 is referred to in song as "The Corrupt Bargain", as Jackson won the majority of the popular vote, but lost the electoral vote. The vote swung his way in 1828.

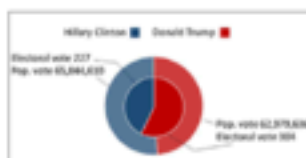


Andrew Jackson believed that since the President was elected by "all of the people", he was the only member of government who represented "all of the people". There was friction immediately. Jackson's opponents saw this as proof that he was a tyrant and no better than the kings in Europe.



References

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Is any of this sounding familiar? Populism survives on both the Right and the Left. In today's society ordinary people are fed up and ready for change just like 1824 and 1828. Could something more long-lived and troubling be rearing its head? Are we just repeating history?

The play and the President

It should be noted that *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* is ultimately for the purpose of entertainment, and is by no means a historically accurate depiction of our 7th President. It is also a means for social commentary. When describing the election of 1828 you could be talking about 2016, a group of squabbling, lackluster candidates known as "Washington insiders" are disrupted by a "common man". The ideas of rebellion, how we protect our borders, the privilege of the upper class, banking being the root of all our problems, the frontier spirit and the importance of charisma in politics are all explored, with a rock music underscore. Jackson was also a wealthy slave owner and infamous for the genocide of Cherokee, Creek and Seminole Peoples. His vision of America had no room for people of color, and his policy on Native American Removal was fueled by his supporter's desire for more land. It remains the darkest period in the Cherokee Nation's history.

Our Production

We produced the play in October 2016, not knowing what the outcome of the election would be. My intention as director was to make people think a little more deeply about what was going on in our world at the time. Donald Trump's campaign message was similar to that of Andrew Jackson in 1828: He would return to the values of the Founders and limit the federal government. He would get rid of the political insiders who abused their positions. He would protect individual liberty and give the common man a voice in the government of "We the People."

One of the intentions of the playwrights was to explore our collective national responsibility towards the genocide of Native Americans that occurred under Andrew Jackson. As we were going into production protests were erupting over the Dakota Access Pipeline. Our choice was to humanize the stereotypical representation of Native Americans (as written in the script) by using contemporary images emphasizing that the fight for rights of these Nations has not diminished.



Production Photos By Hardy Meredith



The Arts in Society