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THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Political Strategists Stone and Schoen Led Spirited Discussion on Changes to U.S. Political Landscape

“Grant Park, 40 Years Later” Examines from the 1968 Democratic National Convention to Obama’s Election

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Atlantic City, NJ- “Grant Park, 40 Years Later,” a spirited discussion program featuring nationally known political strategists Doug Schoen and Roger Stone recently examined the changing political landscape in the United States over the last four decades. The December 11 event, hosted by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, packed the lecture hall at Stockton’s historic Carnegie Library Center. The talk was moderated by Michael Aron of New Jersey Network News.

The program’s theme is derived from two crucial moments in the nation’s history that occurred in Chicago’s Grant Park. In 1968, the Park was the scene of violent protests against the Vietnam War at the turbulent Democratic National Convention. Some 40 years later, hundreds of thousands of Americans turned out at Grant Park for a much different kind of demonstration: a celebration in support for the election of President-elect Barack Obama.

The discussion began with each speaker stating what they believed in 1968. Stone said that at the age of 16 he had hitchhiked his way to the Republican National Convention in order to volunteer for the party. He wanted to see Nixon elected. Schoen said that he was still forming his political views then, but that he knew he was against Nixon.

When Aron asked about the McCain campaign strategy in the 2008 election,

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Stone replied, "I would argue the McCain campaign had no strategy at all." Stone also postulated that we may see the end of the GOP sooner than later in light of the recent election, saying "We just don't know yet." Although he was quick to cite newspapers in 1965 that reported the Republican Party was done and four years later, a Republican was back in the White House.

Late in the discussion, the floor was opened to questions from the audience. When Stockton faculty member Marilyn Vito asked if there was room for a third centralist party, both speakers agreed that while there is room, it is highly unlikely since the two major parties dominate the current system and would make it extremely difficult for third-party efforts.

"...What went on in Grant Park in '68, as opposed to 2008 was a tragic mistake," said Schoen, who has worked as a campaign consultant for President Bill Clinton and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The discussion was well-attended by members of the community including: the Center's namesake, William J. Hughes, Stockton's President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. and Former New Jersey State Senator William Gormley.

Sponsored by Atlantic City Electric Company, DLA Piper, Revel Entertainment and South Jersey Industries, the event was the most recent one in the Hughes Center's lecture series.

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing southern New Jersey.

The Center serves as a forum for public discussion of policy issues to engage both citizens and policy makers, frames policy issues in a manner that encourages broader civic engagement and strengthens the voice of southern New Jersey in the public debate. It strives to uphold and instill in our citizenry the ethical standards of bipartisan collaboration that Ambassador Hughes has accomplished in his own public service.

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