Nixon Essay, Research Paper

Richard Nixon is usually depicted as the man you love to hate, glorified for being at the root of controversy in America?s history. But in Oliver Stone?s film Nixon, viewers begin to love the man that grew up in Whittier, California. As the son of a poor grocer, Nixon is depicted as a boy striving for acceptance, and the chance to use this acceptance to fulfill the American dream.

Without having any real previous knowledge about Richard Nixon, other than what I saw in All the Presidents Men, I feared this film, too, would bring even more confusion to the issues than what I already felt. To my surprise, the film seemed as if a documentary of the man, carefully depicting every area of his life and showing who he was, not what his image represented.

Nixon was a man of pure thought but he knew that he had to be more than just that to come out ahead. His life was based on determination and the will to win at any cost. Nixon came to a point where the decisions he would make would directly dictate his life. A point where the decision was to either remain a simple, honest man or to go that extra step in search for excellence. It was this confusion, this shadow over his ideals that, I believe, led to his alleged involvement in the scandal behind the break-in of the democratic office. The break in that cost Richard Nixon his dream of further greatness.

Nixon lived his life as a fairly honest man (as honest as a person can be). Values of honesty and the importance of the truth were instilled upon him at an early age by his mother. By living such a life he accomplished a great deal early on; becoming a congressman at the age of 33, a senator by age 37 and vice-president at the age of 39. But to him these feats were not enough. He wanted to live the American dream?to become president of the United States. In attempt to do so he ran against John F. Kennedy in the 1960 presidential campaign. Unfortunately he lost. He realized there was more to becoming president than just being qualified. There was the show needed to be played in front of the public eye, a show that he was not very good at. He needed to be passionate, playing on the desires of the voting public. He also needed to be composed at all times, answering questions that arose with no preparation beforehand. So when he ran again in 1962 for governor of California, he tried to play this game, be the man the public wanted. Again he failed. He failed not just because of the sweat always on his upper lip, but also because he was not represented in the press as he should have. In fact, after the loss in California he appeared at a press conference to comment on his defeat. It was there that he asked the press to print what he really said, implying his misrepresentation by them previously. His plea to these reporters displayed his quest for honesty. All he was asking was that the truth was told. Truth his opponents disregarded and twisted into personal attacks on him. Attacks that Nixon refused to partake in a response to.

After this release, Nixon vowed to wife Pat that he would get out of the game because of how trying it had become on his marriage and himself. But as many vows go, this one too was broken. He decided again to run for presidency in 1968. He achieved this honor basically because of default. Circumstances around the election such as Johnson?s refusal to run, and Robert Kennedy?s death gave the public no other choice but to grant Nixon presidency. . It was there that he realized that certain circumstances reaped certain value. It was not his qualifications, nor his desire that won him the presidency, but rather the specific outside circumstances. He realized that the circumstances that would have hindered him from becoming president were erased.

It was after his inauguration into office that, I believe, Nixon began to realize what was needed to come into power. First it was the need for favorable outside circumstances like the elimination of competition as he experienced in the 1968 election. Another factor he needed to gain and remain in power was the aggressive behaviors it took to win. This behavior was best reinforced in the trial of Alger Hiss, the trial that made Richard Nixon known.

This trial involved the prosecution of Hiss on grounds of communism. Nixon was the prosecuting lawyer and fought very aggressively to see a sentence brought forth. It was because, not only the importance of this case, but also the way he fought that Nixon became a household name. He did not fight as the wayward county boy in search of the truth, but rather an aggressive attorney, hungry for the win. It was this reaction to his fight that impressioned Nixon the most. He realized then that the country ran on more than just honesty and good intentions but also on the satisfaction of the publics? hunger for a fight.

By realizing what actions he needed to take to remain in his position?aggressive behaviors and favorable outside circumstances?the stage was set for Watergate. By ordering the break in of the democratic headquarters, Nixon showed such aggressive behaviors to make, rather than hope for, his desired circumstances to come to life.

His intentions were still as pure as the country boy?s dreams of becoming president. The only reason he took such extreme measures as he did, was to guarantee that he could continue his work for the good of the nation. Nixon?s position was jeopardized though with the 1972 elections because he had not ended the Vietnam War, so he sought to eliminate the risk for dismissal by any means necessary. This was the motivation for the Watergate break-in.

Nixon only saw the good that he did accomplish while in office and the honor that came from his decisions So many times in the film would we hear Nixon saying, ?I ended the war, I made peace with Russia and I opened up China.? He felt the nation needed him and his work. He did not want to miss out on his chance to continue. So he took a risk, a risk that showed he had surcomed to what so many before had also surcome to?corruption.

To evaluate a person on their actions is not entirely fair. Yes, Nixon should not have orchestrated such an event that had a sole intention lying in deception. But, his motives for doing so stemmed from what the nation had shown him?that aggressive behaviors pay off. Messages that to win some deception is needed. All along he carried his simple dream, but when circumstances threatened this dream, he took matters into his own hands. He was fooled by the system. He played by its rules and got burned. The film Nixon, directed by Oliver Stone, portrays this. Even within the film, Nixon?s realization is shown, ?What have I done?? he questions. ?Well the world is just a dark place,? he concludes. After the scandal of Nixon was revealed, the world became a dark place for all the nation.