



Government Girl: Young and Female in the White House

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A memoir of being young and female in the Clinton White House.

Stacy Parker Aab was born in Detroit in 1974, the only daughter of a white Kansas farm girl and a young black Detroiters fresh from two tours of Vietnam. An excellent student, Aab gravitated toward public service and moved to Washington, D.C., for college in the hopeful days of 1992.

Not only would Aab study political communication at The George Washington University, but she would also intern at the White House. For three years, she worked for George Stephanopoulos. In 1997 she became White House staff, serving as Paul Begala's special assistant.

At first, life was charmed, with nurturing mentors, superstar politicians, and handsome Secret Service agents. In January 1998, the world of the Clinton White House changed radically. Monica Lewinsky became a household name, and Aab learned quickly that in Washington, protectors can become predators, investigators will chase you like prey, and if you make mistakes with a powerful man, the world will turn your name into mud.

Government Girl is a window into the culture of the Clinton White House, as seen through the eyes of an idealistic young female aide. Stacy Parker Aab's intimate memoir tells of her coming-of-age in the lion's den. Her story provides a searing look at the dynamics between smart young women and the influential older men who often hold the keys to their dreams.

Government Girl: Young and Female in the White House Details

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From Reader Review *Government Girl: Young and Female in the White House* for online ebook

Sarahlynn says

This is really 3-1/2 stars. I really enjoyed reading *Government Girl*. But . . . there were a few things that drove me crazy about the book.

My biggest annoyance was with the structure. I've read memoir before, and I've taken creative nonfiction classes. I know that you're not supposed to write a strictly chronological account of a period of your life. I didn't mind Parker's flashbacks to childhood, or to events that weren't significant enough to mention at the time but gained significance later (e.g. Lewinsky, FBI testimony). I would have appreciated more flash-forwards throughout. But apart from that there was altogether too much skipping around for me, in a relatively short period of time. We skipped around between various years of working for the White House in the 1990s, and the different periods were similar enough to one another that I found myself flipping (well, clicking) back and forth a lot to remember when I was.

It feels weird to call the author Aab, because throughout the book she's Parker. And, now, apparently, she's Le Melle. Perhaps later she'll write another memoir covering the post-White House chapter in her life. My frustration with this is that we get to know so much about Parker's childhood and early adult life, and it's written recently, but then there's this big gap between Parker's work in the Clinton White House and when she wrote this book. This is especially awkward because so much of *GOVERNMENT GIRL* foreshadows Parker's bright, shiny future. She got this internship, that scholarship, this job, these mentorships, awards, honors, all with the suggestion that she is a leader of tomorrow! A shining star! Someone with a big future! And then . . . what? Obviously, some of my curiosity is natural reader curiosity about the author. But part of it is structural. The text sets the reader up to ask these questions and then stops.

One more thing. Parker Aab writes a bit about women she worked with and for. She writes about their help and their competence. But she does not refer to them as leaders or as mentors. Her mentors are all older men. The people with whom she networks are mostly older men. She's a young, attractive woman and the way she writes about her interactions with the (male) power players - professors, politicians, staffers, community leaders - makes her sound flirtatious. From a feminist perspective, this really bugged me. It felt like she was playing the game and profiting from it, all the while critiquing it from the perspective of an observer or victim rather than a participant. I'm not suggesting that Parker Aab is to blame for the advances she sometimes received from powerful men. Or that flirtation is always wrong. But it seems like Aab was creating part of a risque environment herself. For example, when Parker Aab was working for George Stephanopoulos and Rahm Emmanuel once came to see him, she told Rahm that George was out, but started a playful conversation with him, asking his birthday (on her own birthday) etc. It was just a really awkward vibe.

All these are negative points. But, really, I thought the book was well done. I very much appreciated Parker Aab/Le Melle's honesty, and the way she didn't shy from portraying herself negatively at times. I enjoyed reading the book. I flew through it in just a couple of days. I learned a lot. I'm glad I read it.

Serena says

Stacy Parker Aab's *Government Girl* chronicles her time in the White House during the Clinton Administration from the age of 18 to her early 20s. Expecting the bulk of the memoir to be about the Monica Lewinsky scandal or the like would be a mistake, although Monica's fall from grace could have just as well been Stacy's story if she did not have the personal drive to achieve more, live within the confines of her duties and principles, and focus on self-satisfaction.

"You want acknowledgment -- all that comes when you've done a good job, when you're so deserving. You want that light. That hand on your shoulder. At least if you're like me and this sort of loving affirmation from authority figures still feeds you, even if you wish it would not." (Page 13 of ARC)

Being young and in politics, Stacy had a daunting task of navigating an adult world when she was not quite secure in her self-identity and still evolving as a woman. She's a product of a single mother, an alcoholic father, and her mixed heritage as an African-American with a mostly unknown-to-her German ancestry. All of these elements come into play as she navigates the White House media and policy web and the knotted ropes of her possible career ladder.

"Maybe it was like going to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and seeing a rubber version of yourself blown up and 'walking' with the help of a dozen attendants, this version of you more than ten stories tall, knowing that your celebrity was just that, something outside you, something as big and as vulnerable as giant balloons" (Page 87 of ARC)

The narrative of this memoir is smooth in its transitions between her intern days and her past in Troy, Michigan. The struggles of family life and the dedication of her mother to help her out with schooling expenses and other costs clearly influenced Stacy's drive for financial independence, even if the job opportunities at the time were not the most fun. Politics is at the forefront of her work in the White House, but it often takes a backseat to her internal struggle to become a strong, independent woman with a clear idea of where she wishes to be and what she wishes to achieve.

"Working, I wanted that feeling of rowing on the Potomac River, that feeling in the eight with all of us pulling our oars. Sixteen arms and sixteen legs powering that slim boat forward, as we were lead by our coxswain, as our coach called out to us from his motorized boat nearby." (Page 39 of ARC)

In many ways, what drives Stacy is the hole inside her -- an absence of fatherly love -- as she falls into transient relationships with co-workers, fellow students, and others. While this desire to fill this emptiness does little to improve her romantic life, it does often push her to perfection in her work life. In terms of memoir, readers will find *Government Girl* is deliberate, vivid, and eye-opening -- especially in terms of behind-the-scenes politics. Readers will find Stacy's prose frank and honest, almost like a friend telling a portion of her life story to another friend.

Nicole Bonia says

Stacy Parker is just 18 years old and attending George Washington University when she starts as an intern in the office of George Stephanopolous. A native of Detroit, Stacy has always excelled at school, and she quickly falls into a routine riddled with varying levels of constant stress while she tries to do the best job

ever and find her place in life and on the scene in Washington, DC. Over the years Stacy finishes her schooling and goes on to a staff position as the special assistant to Paul Begala all while becoming acquainted with President Clinton, Vernon Jordan, Rahm Emmanuel (on whom she has a crush), and a bevy of other players on the Washington, DC scene. When the Monica Lewinsky scandal breaks, it changes everything that Stacy knows about her president, working in the White House and the dangers of any missteps, real or perceived, when dealing with powerful men.

This book really resonated with me because while Parker Aab does talk extensively about her life and experiences working in the White House and her interactions with powerful men- relevant because all women deal with this on varying scales and degrees- she also delves into and examines her personal life and what it was like for her to adjust to being a woman and what that meant in terms of being vulnerable, but also the power of it which she didn't fully understand. She explores her expectations of men and relationships and the naive ideas that she had about both and what they may have stemmed from in her childhood. She speaks candidly about what it meant to be an African American woman dating and building a life in predominantly white world. Parker Aab presents her views clearly, and makes no attempts to hide the ways that she trusted in her government and the men around her, even when it makes her seem painfully naive.

Government Girl is told in a loosely chronological fashion with the author dipping back and forward in time to provide further illumination and parallels to pertinent issues being discussed in the section. While I think the intention was to explain further the result was a bit distracting to keeping place within the story and keeping track of what was going on with different people and their presence in her life. Still, Parker Aab has recounted her experiences to create a riveting story which gives readers a backstage glance down the corridors of power from the point of view of one of its most vulnerable participants.

It never occurred to me when I was in high school or college that I could ever work in the White House. I think this is probably more because I didn't plan to go in any direction that a DC internship would have led, but it was interesting to hear about people involved in this world at such a young age. Parker Aab was also heavily involved on the President's advance staff and would travel to other countries ahead of time to prepare for a presidential stay- complete with close working relationships with the Secret Service, and all before she was 23. It's easy to see why it took me only a few short sittings to get through this book because once I started reading her story, I just didn't want to put it down.

Amanda says

This book took me forever to finish. Maybe it was that it was an Advance Reader Copy (ARC) and I owned it, I'm not sure. Usually the deadline of a library helps me get a book moving along if it's feeling a bit like work. Either way, there were a thousand other things that interested me more than reading this particular memoir. I can't blame it all on the content and presentation, though that did have quite a bit to do with the big picture.

Stacy Parker Aab's (now a contributor for The Huffington Post) recount of her years working in the White House, both as an unpaid and later paid intern, were muffled at best and confusing at worst. Her main message, that I eventually got after about 250 of 300 pages, was honorable – the idea that there is a fine balance between integrity, passion, and power – but most of the other details were lost in non-chronological vignettes of her life. I'm not sure if her story would have been better served told in order, but the jumping around certainly contributed to my inability to pay attention more than 20 pages at a time. The book came out in January and I'm just now finishing, which is, I think, a record for me.

Parker Aab met a lot of famous people, had crushes on a few more, and threw in random stories of boyfriends and missteps with men of power. The crushes really detracted from my ability to take her seriously and the 'plight' she encountered as she tried to move up in the world of politics.

I wanted to hear her account of how she overcame struggles the struggle of being young and female in the White House as the title suggests, but instead felt drug along following empty promises of enlightenment. Maybe that is the politician in her coming out?

continued...

<http://stackofspines.com/2010/03/07/r...>

Kinksrock says

The memoirs of a young woman who worked in the Clinton White House, first as an intern, then as staff. She alternates between insecurity and egotism in a way that I believe will annoy most readers. The book is, for a large portion, about how she responded to correspondence. I really didn't care when she told about her background and her family. The book really didn't start to get interesting until she got to the Clinton sex scandal because she was able to give some insight into Monica Lewinsky and to describe her treatment by the Clinton enemies who assumed that she had to be another Monica. There is also some irony when she decries the objectification of women but also describes her fixation on Kate Capshaw's breasts.

Jennifer Heise says

I enjoyed this memoir and meditation on what it was like to be involved in the political life of the White House in the mid-1990s, specifically for a young woman of mixed race.

Among other things, it brings back the memories of what it meant to be a young woman in those days, working with older men who might be mentors, or who might be putting us down, or who might be coming on to us-- and we had to be prepared for, and concerned about, all three. For a young woman who worked in the Clinton White House from early in the Presidency and through the Monica Lewinsky scandal, that issue would thread through one's entire memories. (I really hope young women starting out in the world have less cause to consider and re-consider such things as we did.)

I was also interested in how Ms. Aab thought about her early professional experiences in the light of 'outsider syndrome' and the seductive glamour that writers before her have written about that surrounds the White House. In this way, her writing invites comparison with *Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Ladies*, though I admit it doesn't live up to that blockbuster, nor for that matter, *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*, another look at a conflict-torn White House administration.

Is this book slight? Yes. Does it cover only a few parts of the story? Yes. Does it apologize for President Clinton? No, not exactly. Does it explain why women who were young then could still value that presidency despite the revelations? Perhaps. Is there a lot of personal story? Yes, it's a memoir. Is it a different insight into being a 1990s bright young thing getting involved in politics? Yes.

Melissa Waldron says

I saw this on the Goodreads.com First Reads giveaways and thought that it sounded interesting for a memoir, especially from someone so young.

I enjoyed reading Ms. Aab's book very much. It was interesting to see how she wove experiences from her childhood with her experiences as an intern, and later as a staffer, in the Clinton White House, although the transition between the two times was not always an easy one.

FTC Disclosure: I received a free copy of this book through a Goodreads.com First Reads giveaway.

Amy says

In the open and thoughtful *Government Girl*, author Stacy Parker Aab describes her years working in the Clinton White House—first as an intern for George Stephanopoulos while studying at George Washington University-- then as staff when she became Special Assistant to Paul Begala. The memoir reads exactly as one imagines Stacy's experience to be: first a fresh, young wide-eyed 18-year-old becomes a White House intern. Powerful men [not many women about unfortunately] like President Clinton. George Stephanopoulos, Rahm Emanuel, Vernon Jordan are all in her midst. She ends up asking Jordan for a recommendation and has some interaction with the others. Nine years later, by the end of her experience, she doesn't particularly enjoy her job which is more administrative than using her skills as a writer [been there/ done that] and the sparkle and luster have fallen off The White House after the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

I realized then that I was just like those other dreamers at the president's sleeves that hoped to alchemize his power into success for themselves. Yet I had only wanted to share. To enjoy his nurturing approval. Look what I've done since I've left, Mr. President.

The President was handing me a cold bottle of water.

The moments slowed and brightened like a videotape flooded with light. I still felt I could finesse the situation. If at any moment something went wrong, if this somehow turned sexual and anybody knew, this would be nuclear. And people always knew. The Starr Report had shown us that the light investigators and journalists shined on this man burned away any lies. Stories like these died in half-lives. Just ask Monica. No one wanted to go through what she had. To live with the shame of not just adultery but worldwide humiliation. To always know what others imagined when they saw you.

Although she doesn't speak of sexism, there aren't very many women in positions of power at all. Although in some of her stories on the road, she gets hit on by married Secret Service men and has an awkward encounter with the President in 2000 in Japan. She doesn't speak of any contact with any women in particular besides some lower level staff members. This makes me sad and I hope that young women in the Obama White House aren't experiencing the same thing but guess what? Many of the young guys [Rahm Emanuel from the Clinton White House] now work the Obama White House. It most likely is just that she worked in communications with George. She spoke of Dee Dee Meyers but Meyers did not stay very long. As an African-American, she also says that she faced no racism, which is fairly easy to believe for the

Clinton White House.

Most of her challenges were due to her age and experience. How can a young woman be expected to take on these responsibilities? Stacy proved herself to the right people and had numerous unique and challenging experiences especially when she worked on the Advance Team and traveled with the President and his staff. She would go ahead to make sure the accommodations were just right: she traveled to Africa, Japan, and several other places including Steven Spielberg's home in the Hamptons.

Those stacks were like hay that needed to be spun into gold. No firstborn child was at stake, but my reputation was, and all my possibilities in politics, because, having been handed this assignment at eighteen, I believed that my whole future in government rested on how well I performed—for what else did these people have to judge me on? Just my performance.

I wish Stacy had touched more on what she learned while in The White House instead of the day to day. After finishing the memoir, I was jealous of her experience and knew she did a lot of constituent outreach [which I've done on a local level]—by answering letters. She did say she was excited to be part of anything to do with The White House and its administration. And I know that many of her responsibilities allowed her to take on greater challenges later on. However, I still didn't have enough of a grasp on her learning curve during her nine years there. But she chose *Government Girl* to be about her experience as a woman learning to navigate the intricacies and dangers of power and privilege. She entered The White House perhaps naïve and awe-struck at 18 and left at 26 with a completely different attitude. For anyone interested in politics or the inner sanctum of The White House, *Government Girl* is the ideal memoir.

Blake Crittenden says

So often when we speak of American politics, we speak of the political machine or the administration. We think of government as an entity unto itself. We imagine huge power brokers sitting, all powerful, in their offices at the White House making decisions about things that we can only watch on the news. What I truly loved about Stacy Parker Aab's *Government Girl* is how she brings humanity to these people of power that is so easy to overlook.

As the subtitle alludes, *Government Girl* biographically tells the reader what it was like to be "Young and Female in the White House" during the Clinton administration, not so much focusing on the policies and laws that were getting pushed through, nor even a who's who of the major players, but on what it felt like to be working in an environment surrounded by these major players.

Parker Aab, now 35, was born in Detroit, MI. Her family moved to the suburbs in her youth. From there she attended George Washington University and started as an intern under George Stephanopoulos when she was only 18. At the beginning we see Parker Aab wide eyed, looking to measure up and make a difference. She's detached from the personal aspects of working in the White House and, like many of us starting our own careers, looking to live up to the standard she sees people like Clinton and Stephanopoulos as having attained. She wants to do good for the people she sees as doing good for her country.

Parker Aab is just out of high school and star struck. And who can blame her? As the book moves on, she starts developing relationships with other White House interns, staff and advisers. In these passages of the book, she shows insecurity about being good enough for the job. Parker Aab talks about craving attention

from these powerful people. My first reaction was to scoff a little, but after brief contemplation, I had to be honest with myself. I do the same thing. We all do. When we see someone as brilliant, we crave their attention, whether they are politicians or musicians or authors, etc. We want them to see something in us that we aren't sure of or that we don't see at all. She brings up Kundera's concept of poetic memory: the place where our brain stores things that moves us. I certainly get moved by the uber programmers at work. I love when they take time to show me something cool because I can only assume they do it because they see me as becoming one of them. And in being honest, I have to admit, just as Parker Aab does, that there is a certain kind attraction to these people.

In this context it's easy to understand how Parker Aab could at one time crave the attention and question the motives of people like FBI Special Agents, Vernon Jordon or even President Clinton. Even after marrying a completely brilliant woman, I can't say that having the President think to grab me a slice of pizza or Vernon Jordan invite me to dinner wouldn't totally throw me.

This is what takes this Government Girl from being a run of the mill telling of life in politics to a compelling understanding of something most of us will never experience. Parker Aab brings humanity to the White House. Her own journey is not about becoming disillusioned with politics, but about demystifying herself as well as these public figures that have become so big that it's hard to see them as regular people who may have flaws. In the end, there are no regrets, but certainly a new understanding and even empathy for what goes through the brain of someone like President Clinton on a daily basis.

As much as Government Girl is about what it feels like to be a young, black woman working in politics, it's more about what it feels like to be human, whether you are a young, black woman working in politics, a senior White House staff member defending your boss when he does something that you don't agree with or even the President himself.

Stacy Parker Aab currently blogs for The Huffington Post, where among other things she keeps us informed about the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

For more information, please visit the Government Girl fan page on Facebook.

CS says

I won a First Read copy, but *Government Girl* would have caught my eye anyway. I was intrigued by the promise of a first-hand view behind the scenes of the Clinton White House, from the perspective of a bright, talented young woman who was proud to be an intern before Monica Lewinsky made the job the butt of a thousand late night talk show jokes.

And it is obvious that Parker Aab is a smart, together female who excelled at academics and her White House jobs. Unfortunately, Parker Aab isn't - yet - a skilled storyteller. *Government Girl* is neither an in-depth peek into the hallowed halls of power, nor an insightful memoir. It's a curious hybrid, trying but failing at both.

Part of Parker Aab's problem as a writer is that she refuses to go deep or dark. Nor has Parker Aab structured a narrative for her experiences. She doesn't appear to learn anything from her experiences in the White House: at the end of her tale, she is still the same over-achieving bright young thing she was at beginning. Even in non-fiction, the subject needs to change and/or grow, or at least learn a life-changing lesson; Parker

Aab settles for some facile observations on power, the men who have it and the young women who surround them, as if this hasn't been a key theme in literature since the Old Testament.

Parker Aab is so reluctant to share anything that might cast her in less than a positive light, it took me three careful readings to figure out why she was investigated for lying on her security clearance application (I think, but I'm not sure, the problem is that she failed to disclose drug use on her intern application, but detailed everything on her staff application, thus leading to the discrepancy caught by the investigators. I think. I'm not sure, because Parker Aab is so darn obtuse about it.)

Parker Aab is similarly coy when it comes to her personal life; she talks for pages about her yearning for a boyfriend, but when she does get one, he's dealt with in a paragraph. The same is true for her time at the White House - she says she resigns from her staff position in 1998, but she meets her husband (off page, of course) in 2000 while doing advance work for the Clintons' travel abroad. So she was obviously still part of the trusted guard two years after she gave notice, even though according to the book she was off to a brand new life. The details Parker Aab chooses to share versus those she doesn't feel arbitrary - and it also feels like the truly interesting stuff never made it anywhere near the printer.

Notice I haven't said anything about Parker Aab's insights into the Clinton White House. That's because there's just not that much. Despite being deposed in the Lewinsky scandal, Parker Aab has little to add and no new light to shed on the 42nd President. While she worked for such luminaries as George Stephanopolous and Paul Begala, her job was limited to answering phones and correspondence, and Parker Aab is as circumspect in her memoir as she must have been as an assistant. Which makes her an exemplary professional and trusted employee, but a boring writer.

There are a few passages where Parker Aab lets down her guard and the prose takes off. Her description of canvassing the Spielberg Hamptons compound, and her respect for the Secret Service officer she inadvertently assigns to sleeping in a child's bunk bed, was truly engaging. But overall, the impression Parker Aab leaves behind is of a smart, talented and loyal young woman - but one who is far too self-conscious, and far too desperate to come off as a "good girl," to write an effective memoir.

Christine says

For all political junkies, or anyone just plain curious about what it means to work in the White House, Stacy provides a vivid look behind the scenes of the Clinton White House. She offers a candid look at the players of the day, including George Stephanopoulos and Paul Begala, both of whom she worked for, and Clinton himself.

Thankfully this is not a steamy, slimy, shock-value tell all. Instead this is an interesting, fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable read. No dry telling of day-to-day tasks here, Stacy share interesting accounts from her several years in the White House--from intern to paid staffer to volunteer RON (coordinating travel for the President)--with insights on the major players of the day. It is most interesting to learn how the various staffers relate to one another, especially those on different levels. At heart this is a story of a young woman who made the most of the opportunities before her, in all the right ways, and as she might say, if only Monica had made the same choices, for it is always about choices...

I really loved this book! How wonderful that Stacy shared so much of herself in this book--it adds depth as we read and "watch" Stacy come of age through the pages and root for her all the way watching her make the

right choices and becoming the wonderful young woman we feel we know by the end of the book. I look forward to reading more by Stacy Park Aab.

Elevate Difference says

In the 1940s, thousands of adventurous young women flocked to Washington, DC to take wartime jobs in federal agencies. The media dubbed them “government girls.” More than fifty years later, when Stacy Aab née Parker entered the White House as an 18-year-old student intern, she was similarly primed—eager both to serve the nation and to improve her social standing by elbowing in on the country’s movers and shakers.

As a devoted champion of then-President Bill Clinton, this biracial, working class, daughter of the Detroit suburbs was smitten by her proximity to power, and her prattle-filled, if shockingly apolitical, memoir of those years is a fun read. At the same time, it sheds little light on the Clinton years, focusing almost-exclusively on the day-to-day machinations of those within the president’s orbit. Oddly, neither Hillary Rodham Clinton nor first daughter Chelsea are central figures in the text; instead they appear as blips in an otherwise male-centric tale. Indeed, *Government Girl* is, first and foremost, an insider’s peek at the President’s Men: Paul Begala, Rahm Emanuel, George Stephanopoulos, Vernon Jordan, and numerous Secret Service and FBI agents. Nonetheless, Parker’s writing is extremely descriptive and it is disturbing to glimpse the sexually-charged White House in which women—usually in subordinate positions—were, and perhaps still are, caught in the collision between their own ambitions and the abuse of authority by those who employed them.

Of course, Monica Lewinsky is part of the fray, since Parker and Lewinsky were interns at the same time. While the two were not well acquainted, Parker describes the victim blaming that ensued once Lewinsky’s affair with President Clinton became public: “Monica developed a reputation beyond the office. After the story broke I heard the ‘c’ word used—the kiss of death for an aspiring staffer. She was a clutch, they said. To be a clutch was to be so blinded by desire to be near the principal that you didn’t care who saw you and you didn’t let gossip slow you down...Monica managed to be wherever the president was, whenever she could. She always vied for attention, for time. Clutch.”

Parker further describes the protocol that interns and staff were expected to follow, complete with the wearing of panty hose and suits on even the hottest days of DC summer. Challenging rules was anathema to interns and staff alike. The overriding ethos? Be grateful that you are in the inner circle, no matter if the expectations are absurd, and no matter if there is rampant workplace harassment.

And Parker was thankful. In fact, she makes race, class, gender, and sexual preference seem beside the point when she moves from intern to low-level staffer. As she makes the transition, she offers cringe-worthy revelations. For example, her wide-eyed crushes on the many men with whom she toiled reveal her to be little more than a lovesick teenager. What’s more, as she expounds on her incessant crushes I found her racial politics simultaneously repugnant and shocking. To wit: “Black boys scared me,” she writes. “They got into my space... Maybe because my father was black and no one was going to hurt me as he did, leaving me for good at such a young age.”

In addition, Parker Aab’s political naivete, demonstrated by her blind acceptance of Clinton-era shifts that have decimated communities of color—from the North American Free Trade Agreement to the abolition of

Aid to Families with Dependent Children—make Government Girl little more than a guilty pleasure, a juicy morsel that, in the end, is utterly disappointing.

Review by Eleanor J. Bader

Nancy says

First, let me say that I usually do not pick up autobiographies for pleasure reading.

Then, let me say that I found this one quite pleasurable.

Ms. Aab gives us a unique perspective of the inner workings of the White House during the Clinton years. What intrigued me - and what I found refreshing,-was the view through the innocent eyes of an intern, as she gains the maturing eyes of the seasoned staffer.

Although the ARC I received was unproofed, it was evident that the author was well educated, well-spoken, and well written. (A blessing! I find it hard to get past poor grammar. And there is never an excuse for poor spelling, if one wishes to write for a living...)

Ms. Aab shares with us the joys and enthusiasm of finding herself, at eighteen, in charge of the interns responsible for handling the daily correspondence of George Stephanopolous' office. We also share in the anxiety and trepidation of her growing responsibilities, and the pride as her "can do" attitude rises to the occasion.

The author paints a picture of our highest elected officials as ultimately real, ultimately human. Some we come to admire a bit more, others might tarnish for the reader. We even feel a little sorry about the lack of privacy, and the media scrutiny these people have to endure as a part of their everyday lives. She includes her own personal anecdotes, and her own personal questionings by the FBI, as a matter of course.

Perhaps my only criticism can be that that the author, at times, comes off as too naive. Then, I realize, that IS the whole charm of this book. She IS young. She IS attractive. And that's what makes the whole package work here.

A quite decent read, indeed!

Jennifer Ciotta says

Parker provides a thorough account of what it was like to be a young, female intern in the Clinton administration. She gives the reader her unique insight into the Lewinsky scandal, and into Monica Lewinsky

in particular. She also comments on how powerful men in Washington often take advantage of their power by enticing young, naive women. Along the way, Parker, as an 18-year-old black intern, learns the dangers of working alongside certain male counterparts, including the secret service. As for Parker's personal life and childhood, I did not find these sections that interesting, because her story came across as generic and I had read it many times before. When reading memoirs from young, ethnic women (such as myself), I find it hard to embrace the recounting of discrimination through the childhood years--perhaps because it's a story I've lived...however, others may find it interesting.

Ari says

If I have one wish for America, it is my hope that when our leaders stumble, as they will, when they hurt others and themselves, which is inevitable, that we will be as compassionate to them as we sense they would be with us if the faults were our own. Our leaders are not gods, and they are not our fathers. But they can be our best hope for peace among nations", pgs. 291-292

It didn't reveal much about gender relations in the Clinton White House but it did provide a look at the daily atmosphere. However the stories shared are not that interesting, while I didn't want scandalous tidbits (indeed it took me awhile to recover from the story of Vernon Jordan sexually harassing her because I admire that man immensely) I did hope this memoir would provide some interesting anecdotes. Instead since Aab was never that high up this book is more of a day-by-day look at the work of young staffers, people who are important to the functioning of our government but who don't interact with that many people of name-recognition. I also thought that the author spent a lot of time bragging about herself, making sure we knew how loved she was in Stephanopoulos' and Begala's office. Furthermore she was determined to gloss over any issues that might have made her more interesting, instead she focused on portraying herself as the perfect staffer (there was about 2 sentences about drug use that held up her security clearance but she doesn't go into further detail). It just rubbed me the wrong way which I grant is a matter of personal taste. I also wish she had went into more detail about her life post-White House, especially meeting her husband, since she goes on and on about wanting a boyfriend but then rarely talks about her relationships (which she doesn't have to do but then why talk about how important having a boyfriend was to her?). Finally, the end part about the Obamas fit oddly into the book and seemed more like her way of sharing her thoughts about their presidency rather than connecting the dots to her time in the White House (except for mentioning that they hired some veteran Clinton staff).

I did find it fascinating to read about the inner-workings of the staff (for a time and then it got old) such as "RON"s (remain overnight), people who were in charge of paving the way for the president at whatever hotel or celebrity home he stayed at on his travel. Those are roles that we definitely don't think about and I was also appreciative at the glimpses of humanity displayed in the Secret Service men she talked about since they seem like daunting, mysterious figures (which is their job to do but still). Overall Government Girl left me disappointed because I had expected it to be more exciting, at the very least, I wish the protagonist had focused more on being genuine and less on presenting a perfect good girl image. It does a good job though of giving people an idea of daily life for the young men and women who are so helpful to the 'big names' and really keep our government running, I am grateful to them.
