

Everybody but Bush

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2004

Don LaCoss

The election is already over and we have lost. The name of the president for the next four years won't be announced until November 3, but I know right now that the guy who won is a white male millionaire from Yale who is drunk on arrogant feelings of self entitlement and privilege.

The asshole who has already won this election is a statist insider who has conspired with his colleagues to kill and rob more people around the world in the name of American exceptionalism. He's pro-war (even worse, pro-“War on Terrorism” & pro-Iraqi invasion), pro-PATRIOT act, pro-No Child Left Behind, and pro-Israeli free-for-all militarism.

I'm not saying that Bush & Kerry are the same. They may echo each other an awful lot, but there are some little differences-Kerry's moderate Catholicism vs. Bush's apocalyptic Christian Zionism, his anti-globalization position against outsourcing, his (somewhat vague) support for reproductive choice. I don't hate Kerry (yet), whereas I've been irrationally & venomously opposed to the Bush-Cheney crew since they all had their first jobs under Reagan. Bush is a unilateral capitalist warmonger; Kerry is a multilateral one. But basically I feel like I'm in a hospital being asked if I want my left arm amputated or my right one.

A cute Kerry kid said to me in all seriousness: “I believe that this may be the most important election of my life.” Maybe he's right...maybe it could make all the difference in the world to block Bush from four more years of power. But, goddammit, what does it mean that the most important election in a LIFETIME is a choice between Bush & Kerry?? Doesn't that say something about how rotten this whole thing is? A couple of weeks ago, the Bush people were taking the public temperature with rumors about fatherland security “suspending” election if “actionable intelligence” revealed that terrorists were planning an attack. A lot of people were outraged—“man, if that happens, people will go crazy. There'll be rioting in the streets. We're not gonna take that!”

If it is true that this is THE most important election of our lifetime, then I think that it is even MORE important for us to stubbornly, dogmatically, and unequivocally maintain the anti-voting position. If not now, then when?

Sun Frog

Whoever wins, we lose. Stolen from the trailer for the sci-fi thriller Alien vs. Predator, this could be our slogan for the election season. When we first heard the slogan “Anybody but Bush,” some of us were tempted to offer an unabashed endorsement. No one with half a heart or mind misunderstood the idea that Bush was so bad, so dangerous, and so vile that we'd do just about anything to send him back to Texas.

The word was on the street: "I'd vote for my dog." "I'd put my broken toaster-oven in the White House before I'd elect that guy again." We'd opt for anybody. So would we draw straws at the local soup kitchen? Open the phone book, dial randomly, and choose any American couch potato?

Unfortunately, we didn't get just anybody. We got John Kerry.

Though "Bush-Satan" and "Bush-Orwell" bumperstickers offer visceral appeal and comic relief, sad truth is Bush vs. Kerry might as well be "Bush-Kerry." Although ostensibly polar opposites, these comrades from Skull and Bones are mere reflections of one another. Kerry is just as much a lying, corrupt, opportunistic, war-monger, though unlike Bush, he is adept at couching his language to sedate the liberal base. (Bush knows his base, too, and uses rhetoric to pump his troops full of proto-fascistic patriotism and grotesque evangelism). For the ethically and ideologically anti-war, we cannot suffer Dubya's militaristic millenarianism or Kerry's internationalist interventionism.

It's clear the united, anti-Bush front has fashioned a vast and visionary cultural arsenal to crush W. From fringe to mainstream, the Anybody But team is amped for action. With his bumbling incumbency matched only by his fanatic certitude, the policies of a second Bush regime promise such unprecedented terror, ratcheted-up fear, and institutionalized poverty for the entire planet that we cannot assume the posture of arrogant privilege that "it doesn't matter" who wins. It does. Is it possible that both camps are correct? Those who contend we must vote and the doctrinaire abstainers?

Yet Anybody But Bush is not enough. Sure, some of us will gladly suffer the momentary humiliation of casting a ballot as a frantic tactic, fraught with remorse. But we cannot call this act of self-defense a strategy or breathe more than a single sigh of relief on November 3. The amazing proliferation of songs, films, websites, and comedy routines of the anti-Bush moment is enough in itself without the implication that all this great art should lead us to the ballot box (punkvoter.com talks about overcoming the "apathy and anarchy" of young people). We know the empire survives this season, no matter who is in the White House to lead "us." As some Australian anarchists admonish us, it's time to think outside the ballot box.

Whoever wins, we lose. Yes, but one loss will hurt more than the other. What about this: whoever wins, let the revolution begin. Whoever wins, we might remember what Italian ultra-leftist Jacques Camatte wrote more than thirty years ago: "We are faced today with the following alternatives: either there is actual revolution or there is destruction of the human species." This choice has confronted the global citizen for a generation and the circumstances that require this to be true have only multiplied. But there's another part that Camatte talks about, which is more difficult for us to understand: we need to become revolutionaries.

In the belly of imperial privilege, we need more than desperate pleas and manipulative pandering to wake the popular anger held at bay by pop culture delusions, chronic overwork, collective denial, and epidemic depression. While the fragile ecology that keeps the planet livable hangs in the balance, the character armor of mass society is cracking everywhere.

We need people who can see through the pathetic platforms of party politics to forge a new and inclusive politics of desire, fearlessly taking the keys from the dry-drunk driver pummeling the whole planet over the abyss in an SUV without brakes and giving everything away to everybody for free. Enough with bargains, negotiations, and injunctions; let's end injustice without petition, request, or demand.

Enough of "Anybody But Bush"; we need everybody.

Walker Lane

I intend to vote for the Democratic candidate for president in the November election. Or, rather, I will participate in a national referendum that asks, will you affirm the policies of the white man's war party, the party of rage and fear, of misogyny and homophobia, of class war against the poor, of racism and the destruction of the environment? Will you vote for a party led by an evil moron who says a god speaks through him and who surrounds himself with religious psychos, appoints bigots and extremists as judges, fights endless wars, and brings back the possibility of nuclear conflict?

A yes vote in this referendum will be a disaster.

If it was solely a matter of replacing one slightly better stooge of big capital with that of a lesser one as in previous electoral contests, it wouldn't occur to me to enter a voting booth. But there is much more at stake this time. One need only go to a web site like thousandreasons.org to realize that the current political criminals in office represent a major divergence from the usual deadly policies and culture of the American empire.

Everything the left says about Kerry is true, as is everything we say about elections. Ralph Nader has said that between the two capitalist party candidates he would prefer the Democrat only because he would slightly "slow the deterioration." Not much of an endorsement, but these small differences between the parties can be matters of life and death for millions of people and the planet.

Clinton and Gore, contrary to liberal mythology, were terrible and committed enough crimes against people and the planet to justify being dragged before the World Court, but their tenure was the ordinary functioning of the empire as will be Kerry's. However, Bush's electoral coup in 2000 hastened in an extraordinary worsening of conditions in every aspect of life both at home and abroad.

An example of the "small" differences between Bush and a Kerry presidency can be seen when Bush sent a delegate to the July international AIDS conference in Bangkok for the express purpose of stopping the availability of generic anti-retroviral drugs at the behest of the large pharmaceutical companies. This one act alone may condemn millions with HIV to death.

Another example is a former mining industry lobbyist, now in charge of the federal agency regulating mine safety, implementing a regulation that would allow coal companies to generate more dust during the extraction process meaning more workers in the pits will contract black lung disease. These are just two examples of Bush crimes from an endless list.

Many anarchists and usually third party voting leftists admit that it does matter who wins. So, if it matters, why is anyone hesitating about turning out these current devils to put in at least a lesser order of demons?

One FE collective member said she thought voting would be a "humiliation" even if it is warranted given what a surrender of anarchist principles such an act entails. However, isn't it a conceit bordering on arrogance born of class and race privilege for us to be unwilling to accept a little humiliation if that's what it takes to get the boot off the world's throat if even slightly?

Still, this is a particularly difficult conclusion to, come to especially after writing an anti-voting essay for our Spring edition and having penned virtually every other such statement in this paper over the last thirty years. The real problem is the degree to which electoralism has been elevated and direct action diminished. I made up my mind about this question after returning from an anti-war demonstration in suburban Detroit where only about 75 stalwarts attended in a metropolitan area of three million. So, in part, it is out of desperation and despair that I am reduced to voting for a candidate who won't kill everything so fast.

Why is debate about mine health standards, for one instance, being taken up by people at the polls, rather than the workers in this hideous industry calling a general strike, using the militancy of their compatriots in Ecuador as an example? Why isn't an army of mothers leading huge marches to protest Bush's revocation of mercury standards, hence, endangering their kids? Or, in a thousand other areas where we are under assault?

Missing huge movements of contestation, I don't think I could stand in front of an AIDS-infected mother from Burundi and explain to her why my anarchist principles prevent me from voting against a man who wants to deny her medicine that could save her life. At worst, I know voting is a capitulation; at best, a Kerry administration will be a stopgap measure, some breathing space for those suffering the most, allowing the real work of creating uprisings everywhere against the rulers to proceed.

Also, once all the arguments are in, the final one for me is, it'll be a pleasure to wipe the smirk off the chimp's face. *

* With apologies, of course, to our simian cousins for the comparison.

Note: We at the FE collective make no explicit suggestion about what our readers should or should not do November 2.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/366-fall-2004/everybody-but-bush>
Fifth Estate #366, Fall, 2004

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