

PERSPECTIVES

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Clashing views electrify candidate debates

GUEST COMMENTARY

Kitty Piercy

The real truth about what is at stake in this election is much more important than a personality contest. It is about our lives, our rights and our future.

I have had the opportunity to meet Vice President Al Gore on three different occasions. I found him to be an accessible, principled person with a good sense of humor. He is committed to creating public policy that will benefit our county and all its people. He has worked diligently and successfully on our behalf as vice president. We can believe with assurance that he will build on this record as our president.

It simply does make a crucial difference who wins this election. If George Bush wins, we will lose environmental regulations that protect us and reproductive rights that enable women to fully participate in our society. Our public schools will be further undercut by the move toward vouchers. Affirmative action will be at great risk, access to high-quality health care will be eroded and Social Security will be jeopardized.

These are just a few of the policies at stake, and yet some of our most concerned citizens are willing to risk all because Gore is not as appealing to them as Ralph Nader. I am under no illusion that Gore is perfect, but I have yet to meet someone who is. Everyone in political office is constrained by the views of those they work with and the power of those they oppose. In spite of these constraints, good public figures keep working to improve policy and to ensure that the rights of others are upheld. I believe Gore to be a good public figure and deserving of your vote.

Here in Oregon, if you disliked the divisive, partisan, anti-public education lead-

ership in the last legislative session, then you will want to be sure that Lynn Snodgrass does not become our next secretary of state. Bill Bradbury is known for his ability to work across party lines. My experience as House minority leader in the last session was that Lynn Snodgrass did her utmost to undermine Gov. John Kitzhaber, to punish moderation in the Republican ranks and to avoid working with those she disagreed with. Bill Bradbury will be a secretary of state who will rise above partisan policies and keep his eye on serving all of us.

Kitty Piercy is finishing her last term as state representative from District 39, which covers North and West Eugene.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Tony Chiotti

All right, you buncha doe-eyed, namby-pamby, fair-weather liberals, listen up. I'm done smoothing your ruffled feathers and calming you, trying to convince you it's OK to vote for Ralphie. I'm sick of hearing about how you want to vote for Nader but are scared to death of George II.

Yes, there is a lot at stake. Yes, this is probably the most important ballot you will ever cast. And yes, it's agonizing.

But the stakes are higher than Al Gore's surrogate attack dogs let on. They show EKGs of the liberal Supreme Court justices and shivers run through the room. They show photos of Dick Cheney and children cry. They try to leverage our own values against us but fail to mention what is really on the line: our democracy and the future of the left.

I freely admit the differences between Gore and Bush. They are different dogs — on the same leash. But the distinction between Neo- and Non-Neo-Democrats cannot be overemphasized. That tiny, Orwellian prefix threatens to change forever the party it modifies.

You cannot influence a party to do right if you support it when it does

wrong.

Gloria Steinem suggests we elect Gore, whom she admits is no great shakes on women's issues, and then pressure him once he is in office. Pressure him with what? A nasty letter? Politicians only understand a loss of votes. I know that by voting for Ralph Nader, I am taking a vote away from Gore. Why swap votes? Denying Gore my vote is half the point.

The other half is that I many never again have a chance to vote for a citizen such as Nader. I want my kids to be interested enough in politics to ask about the 2000 election, and I don't want them to kick me in the shins when I tell them I voted against Bush.

Nader has dedicated his life to reclaiming the citizen power inherent in a true democracy and he represents my values better than any candidate to ever seek the office. Call me naïve, idealistic or just old-fashioned, but I'm voting for Nader because I believe he's the best man for the job.

For me to vote for anyone other than Ralph Nader is for me to throw in the towel on democracy, and I am not prepared to do that just yet. Ballots are still bullets, and to vote against your conscience is to shoot yourself in the head.

Tony Chiotti is a journalism major.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Vote not out of obligation, but out of good judgment



LONE VOICE IN THE WOODS

BRET JACOBSON

Contrary to what you may hear, it is not every citizen's duty to vote, unless he or she has the mental faculties and are informed on the issues and the candidates up for election. People should not feel inclined to vote simply based on a

misplaced sense of duty and the issue of possible voter-means testing should be examined.

The notion that it is every citizen's duty to vote is interesting. Most take that to mean that every few years they should take an hour off work and go pull levers for issues they haven't mastered. If this is, as it seems for too many Americans, the sense of duty they feel, forget it.

The real duty is to do the research and cast an informed vote. That doesn't seem to happen all that often, when one examines

how many measures passed by the public are thrown out by the courts, or if one looks at the number of undecided or "don't know" answers given to polls.

It is not the place of the uninformed to decide elections just because they were taught in third grade that they must. At some point, the question of whether it is appropriate to institute some form of voter testing will have to be addressed.

America's founding fathers did not intend for everyone to vote. While their criteria for voting eligi-

bility were wrong — using race, gender and land ownership is not acceptable — the principle for some sort of means testing has a precedent.

Some like to argue that it is the death of a democracy when the majority of its citizens don't turn out to have a say in the running of the state. But that simply doesn't hold true when one realizes that there are widely varying levels of knowledge and wisdom that make some opinions more valuable than others. While every individual has the same innate value under the

law, their opinions do not, as evidenced by the fact that America elects representatives to use their wisdom on a daily basis for the betterment of the country.

In conclusion, elections are very important and shouldn't be taken lightly, as it often seems many do. It is your duty to cast an informed ballot or none at all. Make the right choice this year.

Bret Jacobson is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at bjacobso@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the editor

Seeing the real enemy

As election season winds into its 11th hour, desperation hangs in the air around the issue of whether those of us who actually vote our principles will be enabling "the enemy."

It amazes me how readily Americans give away their natural power. We pretend that we only have a shot at real power every four years; that if we blow it at the ballot box, we have to wait until the next electoral circus to recover our power. Then, of course, there's all the power we'll "lose" to the "wrong" Supreme Court.

A Bush presidency and Supreme Court is not really the disaster. The disaster we actually face is the relinquishing of our spirit to a politics of despair, a politics of second-guessing and hedging bets and a politics that accedes our natural power to create both local and global change day to day and week to week: Bottom-up change, in defiance of whatever hierarchy pretends to wield definitive power in this land.

When, exactly, do we intend to start living and behaving in accordance with our actual highest beliefs and principles? Is it just after we cast one more vote for the guy we don't really believe in — because we're afraid?

Living life, and doing politics, in this hopeless and fear-based fashion is the paralyzing sickness which we need to see as the real enemy. Too many "Greens for Gore" have lost their vision, and now preach a politics of reactivity, disempowerment, appeasement and despair.

Vip Short
Eugene

Putting youth first

Born in the summer of 1950, in the small town of Eugene, I was the product of a home filled with love and support. My mom was always there to talk to me after school and dad came home every night, anxious to hear all about my day.

Most parents are still trying to fill those roles — but they are finding themselves stretched beyond belief by the demands and stresses of needing to work to make ends meet. There are many single parent homes who are even more challenged to find positive alternatives for their children before and after school hours.

As a lifelong Eugene resident and a graduate from the University School of Community Services and Public Affairs, I have long believed that we, as a society, need to prioritize prevention programs. That means spending money up front to teach life skills and not waiting until a young person makes a really poor decision that

forces us to begin their connection with the juvenile justice system.

Measure 20-37 is the first true prevention measure I have ever seen. It was developed by a very thoughtful and caring group of non-profit agencies who worked with the city recreation department staff to plan, survey, document gaps and develop a proposal that reaches out to as many youth as possible. It definitely put the young people first — right where they belong!

Please join me in voting yes on Measure 20-37. We need to start prioritizing youth right now.

Marilyn Kalstad
class of '74