

MILAN TRENC

# THE DISPUTED PRESIDENCY

INTERVIEWS BY MICHAEL McCUSKER

The following four pages are responses by a few Oregon northcoast residents to the recent Presidential election. They were asked essentially two questions:

*Do you think the extraordinary Year 2000 Presidential Election was legitimate and fair?  
What do you think might be the consequences of the election?*

These interviews have been with essentially northern European descendants of immigrants to the Pacific Northwest. Hispanic residents have not been interviewed even though they are rapidly becoming an ethnic majority in this formerly Chinook inhabited (also not interviewed) wilderness. Asians, long settled and recent, are not represented; nor are black Americans who are the bicameral mainstream of this schismed society.

The reason for this neglect is that on the days and nights interviewees were stalked, none were abroad but members of the ethnic population being uneasily supplanted by those not represented in this survey.

This survey is unintentionally biased. Those interviewed were not personally sought but happily welcomed for their cogent responses to the future that awaits us.

## KEN DEMPS

*(He is a bartender and a rock musician as well as impresario)*

During the summer and fall of 2000 I traveled across the USA two times, 20 states and about 13,000 miles.

I enjoyed myself. It was a cleansing of the soul. But I did see some racism.

While in Tennessee (Al Gore's homestate and campaign headquarters) working in a tavern I experienced a situation that affected me deeply. It was a Sunday evening and NFL football was on the bar TV. A couple of fellows came in and asked me, "Is that Afro-American NFL nigger football? Put on Nascar, there ain't no niggers in Nascar...!"

After work that night I started planning to return to the West Coast.

Once I returned to the "liberal" West Coast I found yet another bartending job in Washington. On Martin Luther King Day I heard a customer call the holiday *Nigger Monday*.

This country is still plagued with racism, and I can't help but wonder if that is the reason George Bush won the election for President.

It was reported that Florida's Afro-American polling places were filled with inferior voting apparatus and that blacks were harassed near polling places.

Remember the old saying, "There's something wrong in Denmark?" It should be changed to "There's something wrong in Florida!" I believe the Florida racism is a reason we have George Bush as our new President. I wish him well, but there's something wrong in Florida.

I wish I had the power to clone a President. A little DNA from Teddy Roosevelt for his environmental stand. Some DNA from JFK for his courage — if he had listened to his generals during the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis it would have led to World War 3. A little DNA from FDR, the middle class working person's President. And a little DNA from LBJ for his civil rights views. I think the total would make a good President.

## JONATHAN LINGEL

*(He is a scientist and actor. He plays a sailor in 'Shanghaied in Astoria')*

I wasn't very excited about the Presidential election but I felt I wouldn't be worried whoever was elected. I voted for Harry Brown of the Liberation Party, but I personally believe in Al Gore's causes, especially the environment. I feel, however, that George Bush is best for the country. I don't believe in either of the two major political parties because I think they are out of control and I feel what has happened is not good for the country.

## MICHAEL (aka 'SASHA') MILLER

*(He is a political gadfly who challenged marijuana laws by flagrantly selling it publicly. He was arrested in a few Oregon cities but has never been tried.)*

It's nice to live in a country where change of power is not overtly violent, but it's not nice to live in a country where money steals every election.

Perhaps there was no violence because the issues between Bush and Gore were so stale — They don't touch on what most proactive Americans are worried about. Genetic engineering and its manipulation is probably the hottest issue of the Millennium but it was never brought up in their debates or campaigns. Global warming was never brought up, yet I would think something that poses extinction of the species might be a topic of debate. NAFTA and GATT were not brought up — yet we had this huge protest against the WTO in Seattle (and also in Washington, D.C.), but none of this was brought up in the 2000 campaign.

Now that 'baby boomers' are getting old the campaigns concentrated on the price of their medication.

None of their issues were long term. Nothing to check our rapid decline into a 3rd world economy. Nothing about campaign

finance reform. And nothing concise about racism until after the election — and that was because black voters were deliberately cheated of their votes even though they voted in record numbers.

The media failed to challenge the candidates with intelligent questions.

People have to question and challenge their leaders to get back to the real issues.

I think people feel they have been defrauded out of a rightful election process. They know all the votes weren't counted, that blacks were denied their voting rights and the Supreme Court stopped a legitimate vote count. We saw the actual corruption of the voting process and I think people are angry enough to be galvanized into reforming the process.

A lot of people live in denial and don't understand how this country works but this might open their eyes.

It's easy enough to look at the figures and say Gore should have won — and if the press manages to get an honest and accurate recount that shows he did win, it might show that Bush stole the election. But if Gore had won he would have stolen the election because of the money. The Supreme Court has ruled that money represents freedom of speech, so some people obviously possess more freedom than others.

## ROGER MARTIN

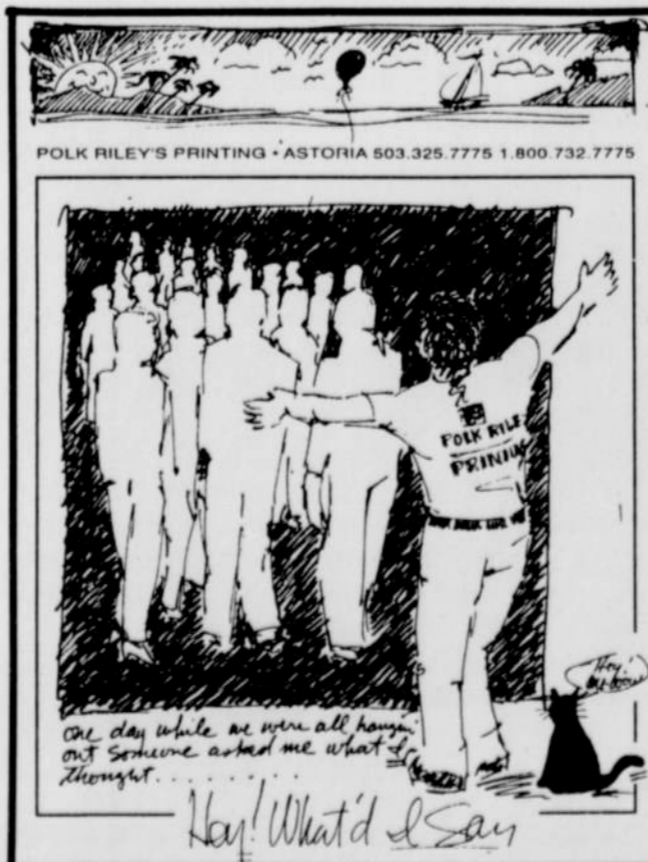
*(He is a florist as well as a carpenter. And an actor: he is Captain Jack in 'Shanghaied in Astoria')*

I liken the idea of limbo to third parties that were excluded from the big Presidential debates. Obviously there are only two parties — a vote for Nader was a vote for Gore; a vote for Buchanan was possibly a vote for Bush.

The Libertarians have tried the past 35 years for a firm footing but received a very minor percentage of the vote in the last Presidential election.

So I believe Gore might have been elected and the status quo of the Clinton administration remained intact.

I voted for Bush.



## JERE LANGSTON

*(He is a recent immigrant to Astoria from Garbersville, California)*

I wasn't entirely pleased or displeased. I was, I suppose, curious — like looking at life through a microscope and trying to determine different shapes moving along the slide. I didn't think Gore would be very good, but I assumed Bush would be bad (simply because his father was CIA director) but now it seems like a game show. Everybody is a celebrity rather than genuinely qualified for tribal leadership. I guess Bush makes an upstanding celebrity. He seems qualified for that. It's too much like coming in on the middle of a movie and not knowing where we are. As much as most of us read we really don't know where we're at socially and economically. It's like I felt the American Dream was betrayed a few years ago but I'm not sure any more what the American Dream is.

I didn't really get educated in school about how the political system works, so when I see its machinations I'm really in awe. I never fully understand it until I see it at play, and it's never quite what you read about it. Ideas look good on paper but they're totally different when you live it.

You want something enough to work and save for, and when you get it, it seems to depreciate. Life looks better in the store window.

This is the first time I've ever really looked at myself in response to an election year. As I said I'm not displeased. I'm in awe. Voting is like church: we only vote on Sundays. It's detached from the rest of life.

## DEBRA SEYMOUR

*(She is a political activist who walks her talk.)*

I think it's a very sad situation we have now. I think we have lost touch with our planet because we are too technologically advanced. We have lost contact with the earth beneath our feet. We have separated ourselves for technology. The people in power seem the most separated.

I am really frightened for the children. I am personally feeling the corporate thumb tightening on my child (7 year old Cedar). It's overwhelming as a mother and as a woman to live in this corporate fog that is over everything.

The only way out I can see is keeping my daughter out of public school and I am struggling with my whole being to do just that.

I felt so hopeful when I saw Ralph Nader and Winona LaDuke in Portland. My vote was really for her because she was really there for the 7th generation — thinking ahead 7 generations into the future. Bush was the opposite side of the spectrum. She was native and woman contrasted with Star Wars.

## DAVID HOROWITZ

*(He is a professor of history and piano and a writer of books and papers.)*

The problem in Florida and throughout much of the country is an antiquated balloting process in which the worst outrages often arise in poorer districts. The Supreme Court seems to be saying that there must be a uniform process of casting and counting votes. Not a bad idea although constitutionally that might have to confine uniform standards to each state. Still, not a bad idea. The confusing Florida ballots were a national embarrassment. Yet it should be acknowledged that Democratic activists failed to devote enough attention to what the civil rights movement used to call voter education: teaching first-time voters how to fill out a ballot, etc.

The Supreme Court, of course, did not address the explosive racial subtext to the Florida Fiasco. The fact that some African-American voters were denied their franchise because a private company's data bank confused their names with those of convicts ineligible to vote, is one of the most outrageous