

FEELING BURNED

In regard to Kate Storm's article on Burning Man (5/27), I am sorry you had such a rough time out there and could not find the resources to tough it out until the burn. I would have to agree about some of the bad burners in recent years (you didn't mention which year you attended), but to generalize your own brief, but valid, experience as the norm did not sit well with me.

I am not sure where you found that quote about "no rules," but it is way off. The oldest rule at B.M. is to not interfere with anyone else's immediate experience. Apparently, the golden rule was broken around you more than once, but I feel it is up to individuals to decide if they take an agenda out there or if they choose to play the role of passive victim. Individuals have the opportunity to speak up for themselves out there (even if their voice quivers) and have the support of their community, which I have witnessed. That is part of the experiment in society.

The "Americans" thing was weird, too. I have met folks out there from Japan, England, Italy, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. You also failed to mention that the B.M. ice and water sales support local Nevada school activities. It is sad when individuals miss out on all the creative people, amazing art and good vibes that are plentiful on the playa. That is what happens when un-informed people attend.

Who are you really mad at? Maybe you



should direct all your issues at society, not an art festival. Are you aware that the picture used in your slam is a personal one of mine with me in it? So, who is being exploited now?

Saddest of all, I do not understand why such a negative piece would even appear in the "fun" under the sun. Your rant will only scare off the cool folks and invite the jerks, leaving a fragile balance even more fragile.

Michael Byrd
Eugene

VERY SCARY

During the course of the Iraqi invasion, U.S. troops have performed numerous atrocities, some of which barely received mention in the U.S. news. Last week, U.S. forces massacred an entire village of mostly women and children during a wedding ceremony when they mistook celebratory gunfire for enemy threat. They have abused Iraqi prisoners, some to the point of death, and posed for pictures with them. Yet last week, President Bush completely ignored these horrors and chose to publicly denounce the Iraqis for the death of Nicholas Berg, which, while truly brutal and barbaric, is, as both sides have clearly demonstrated, the cost of war.

It is deeply disconcerting that Americans, upon hearing Bush's speech, will receive such a skewed view of the situation. This is definitely not what the rest of the world is seeing. It is terribly disturbing that the Bush administration has the level of unmitigated authority to make subjectively moral decisions and judgments, act on them at will, then actively misrepresent them to the American people on national television. This, in my



view, is becoming a very scary version of democracy and one I hope not to pass along to my children.

Elizabeth Borelli
San Jose, CA

President Bush has the guts to do what's right and fire his Secretary of Defense as soon as possible.

Brian Schick
Ashland

BUSH HAVE GUTS?

The torture of Iraqi prisoners is so unbelievably reprehensible that it requires the immediate firing of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The torturing of prisoners under U.S. watch is not the type of military mishap that will be made OK by the court martial of a few underlings. The buck stops at the top of the Defense Department. I hope

FAKE ALERTS

I was listening to Tom Ridge, the head of Homeland Security, on "Jim Lehrer News Hour" this evening. Apparently there are vague, unspecific warnings of possible Al Qaeda attacks being planned this summer on the U.S. at the key political conventions and summits. I found myself in a conundrum. At first, the threat of impending Al

KUMBAYA DAMMIT BY DAN CAROL

Vote Swap '04

Let the games begin.



This column is all about love and voting. The stars of this romantic entanglement, however, are not Hugh Grant, Pierce Brosnan or Emma Thompson. No sirree, it's you, Ralph Nader, and some mysterious stranger you haven't even met. Disgusted? Confused? Turned on a little? Let me explain.

Perhaps you remember late in 2000, when an enterprising group of left-wing techies launched The Nader Trader site – allowing voters a chance to strategically "swap" Nader and Gore votes in states where the electoral outcome was obvious.

The theory was (and still is) pretty smart: Green voters want to show Democrats their true numbers, to get a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Vote swapping allows this to happen, without turning Green voters into spoilers. Everybody wins, except for George Bush.

Vote swapping doesn't involve arguing, yelling, or shaming Nader voters into holding their nose when they vote. What it does require are thoughtful peer-to-peer conversations, trust, and maybe just a little love between distant strangers who are basically kin-folk in the same tribe.

Sound good so far? You bet it does. Of course, the \$64,000 question still looms large: just how do you find a vote-swapping partner? And will doing that be as painful as your first dance in junior high?

Never fear.

As Oregon voters in a key swing state, I gotta tell you that we are pretty hot property on the vote swapping scene. The fact is Desperate Democrats in Dixie states will do just about anything to swap with a Duck who is ready to Ralph. Making multiple connections won't be hard either – websites will soon be popping up all over the place so you'll have your pick of partners (and most experts believe that legal roadblocks thrown up by some states in 2000 will be easily surmounted this year).

But why wait for Internet dates – you're creative and good-looking right? For example, why not find your special voting friend using the personal ads? Let me show you how. Here's a draft of my ad (now awaiting spousal sign-off):

LWM, 46, IS SEEKING OUT (ISO) GREEN VOTER FOR ONE-TIME SWAP, NO PERMANENT COMMITMENT NECESSARY. *Me: Into a smarter war on terrorism, living wage, The Apollo Alliance, a global commitment to girls' education and winning elections. Will consider three-way swaps under special circumstances. You: Live in a "red state" that the Democrats will never win, like Alabama or Kentucky. You can like Nader or Kerry, but mainly I need you to dislike Bush. I'll trust you to vote Nader. Trust me, I'm voting for John Kerry. No photo necessary – I'm happily married.*

Looking for a vote-swapping relationship with more long-term potential than I am? No worries. How about posting something a bit more mysterious like this:

BROADWAY BLUES. *I saw you at the corner of Willamette and Broadway. You were wearing a "Ralph Rules" hat. I was driving a Honda with a Kerry bumper sticker. Our eyes met for an instant – then you looked away. Can't we try again?*

Still feeling too shy to try? Remember it's also your job to encourage others to vote swap – no reason to keep a good thing secret.

Here's an ad I'm encouraging a friend of mine from Texas to post, to hook up with a hard-core Nader supporter in Oregon:

YDD (Yellow Dog Democrat) STUCK IN CRAWFORD ISO OREGON ANARCHIST FOR A VOTE SWAP QUICKIE. *You: are into breakfast at Keystone and vegan muffins but respect my love of grits and grazing animals. Together we're 53 million votes to Bush's 50 million. Whaddaya say?*

All kidding aside, vote swapping is an interesting mechanism worth considering in some cases (and some places) to ensure that Democrats and Greens do vote, and vote strategically. The idea won't work for everyone, but that's OK. We've got five months to work out the kinks, make friends and vote-swap if it feels right. In the meantime, love the one you're with.

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