

Bashing Greens Won't Help

by Winona LaDuke (published in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on November 22, 2003)

'Tis the season to bash Greens. David Sarasohn's Nov. 14 commentary about Nader/LaDuke's impact on the 2000 presidential election falls far short on facts, and relies on lies, rhetoric and a really mean undercurrent to make a few points. Sarasohn's suggestion that Ralph Nader is "the worst thing to happen to civil liberties and poor people in quite a while," is insane, and fails not only to put the blame where it should be but also to talk about where we need to go.

Start with that George W. Bush didn't win the election. That would be an important fact, along with Al Gore getting more votes than any presidential candidate in history. To point to the 97,000 votes cast for Ralph and me in Florida as the straw that broke the camel's back misses a few other facts. Some 250,000 voters didn't even get to vote because Gov. Jeb Bush was able to deny their basic constitutional rights. Most of those voters, it seems, were Democrats and blacks.

Then there may have been (lest I be beat for saying it) a few errors on Al Gore's part. Later media recounts of the Florida election, indeed, suggest that a full recount would have found Al Gore was the victor, but Gore pushed only for a partial recount. Then there was "drift" in the Democrats; put another way, later surveys indicated that up to 300,000 Florida Democrats cast votes for Bush in the election.

Enough of chads, butterfly ballots and the whole lot. Let's say that we should have a democracy, and that it should work. After all, people died for the right to vote, and everyone's vote should count. I also happen to think that people should be able to vote their conscience, and vote for what they believe in. I'd like to work on making a democracy that lives up to that potential, which means that even third parties should be able to participate (remember that the Greens had to litigate to get on the ballot in nine states, which is somewhat of a challenge to democracy in itself).

I believe in making America better, and refuse to be called unpatriotic, or have it suggested that "Nader not only elects Republicans, he's starting to sound like them." (I would assume that some of this flak is supposed to carry over to me.) While Ralph

may run, I don't plan on it, at least this election. But here's a bit of advice for those who don't support Nader or other Greens. If you don't like the Green candidates, don't vote for them. And if you want to win an election, go out and get some folks to vote for you—like that 50 percent of the American voters who represent the largest party in America, the non-voters. On the way, you might build a party and a platform with some integrity, not just insults.

Don't Believe the Lies

Lie #1: "This is a two-party system!"

Nothing in the US Constitution limits the number of political parties. Democracy means free participation in the party of your choice.

Lie #2: "Green candidates steal votes from Democrats!"

Greens will continue to affect election outcomes—and sometimes win. But Greens have no power to steal votes from Democratic candidates, because no candidate owns anyone else's vote.

Lie #3: "If Nader hadn't run, everyone who voted for him would have voted for Gore!"

According to exit polls, Nader's support came from Democrats, Republicans, independents, and others. Many would not have voted for Gore if Nader hadn't run, and some voters might not have voted at all.



***Vote your conscience and your hopes,
not your fears.***

Democracy means joining the party of your choice, and voting for candidates who best represent your interests and ideals.

Support Fair Elections

Support Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)

IRV allows voters to rank their first, second, and third choices on the ballot. IRV ensures that whoever wins the election has the support of a majority of voters. Many cities and towns have adopted IRV because it allows voters a real choice. Read more about IRV, Proportional Representation, and other democratic ways to reform our spoiled two-party, winner-take-all system, which bars people from representation and participation, at FairVote.org.

Support public financing of election campaigns

"Clean Election" campaign laws in Maine, Massachusetts, and Arizona help candidates who don't take contributions from corporate lobbies.

Support free air time and inclusion in public debates for all candidates

Voters have the right to know about all candidates whose names will appear on the ballot. Democracy means the power to make informed choices.

Repeal unfair election laws

In many states, Democrats and Republicans have blocked other parties and candidates by passing antidemocratic ballot access laws. Some states have rules to disqualify voters whose votes they don't want counted—as we saw happen in Florida in 2000.



Part of an 1848 Whig Party banner for the Taylor-Fillmore US Presidential campaign.

Q. What's the difference between the Democratic and Republican parties?

A. Not enough.

If you look at where the candidates and parties stand on the issues (during the 2000 election and today) you can see that the Democratic and Republican parties are in basic agreement on most issues. During the 2000 campaign, Ralph Nader claimed that the two major parties were functionally equivalent servants of corporate power and greed.

Contrary to what some people have claimed recently, Ralph Nader and the Green Party do not say that there's no difference between the Democratic Party and Republican Party, **just not nearly enough.**

**Join the party
that fights for democracy instead of empire,
peace instead of endless war,
working people instead of corporations,
and the health of our planet.**

**The Green Party and its candidates take no
money from corporations.**

The Green Party's Ten Key Values:

Grassroots Democracy
Social Justice
Ecological Wisdom
Nonviolence
Community-Based Economics
Decentralization
Respect for Diversity
Gender Equity
Personal and Global Responsibility
Future Focus



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For more information, visit:

The Real Difference:
<<http://www.therealdifference.org>>

Green Party of the US:
<<http://www.gp.org>>

Center for Voting and Democracy:
<<http://www.fairvote.org>>

For more information, contact:



Who Really SPOILED in 2000?

The Supreme Court Spoiled:

Al Gore won the 2000 election. George W Bush became President when a biased US Supreme Court allowed election manipulation by Florida Republicans.

Al Gore Spoiled:

Gore ran a weak campaign with no clear message. He failed to defeat Bush in the debates and lost even in his home state of Tennessee. Millions of Democrats voted for Bush compared to the few hundred thousand who voted for Nader.

Democratic Senators Spoiled:

When the Black Caucus challenged Bush's election victory in January 2001, not one Democratic Senator stood up in support. Senate Democrats failed to push for an investigation of the Florida vote debacle.

The Democratic Party Spoiled:

For many years, Democrats never objected when officials removed African Americans and other voters from the voter rolls in Florida and other states. Why didn't the Democrats sue when 90,000 Florida voters were disqualified earlier in 2000? Why were Democrats (including Gore) silent about disqualified votes in the weeks after the election?

Top Democrats Know That the "Spoiler" Charge is a Lie

Al From, chair of the Democratic Leadership Council, wrote in *Blueprint Magazine* (1/24/01) that, according to their own exit polls, Bush would have beaten Gore by one percentage point if Nader hadn't run in 2000.