

Voting for Malcolm X

Joel Olson

2004

Does it matter whether Bush or Kerry are president? Will Bush make things worse on ordinary people than Kerry would have? These are debates that many radicals have had before and after the election. Anarchists dogmatically insist that voting changes nothing and that voting for Kerry is voting for the system. Most of the rest of the left, however, turns social democratic every four years, stumping for the Democratic Party as the “best hope” for working people and to provide “space” for radicals to organize in. (As if the problem with radical organizing today is the lack of “space.”)

Having lost, most of the anti-Bush left now predicts a coming fascism. (The rest are packing their bags for Canada, muttering how “stupid” Americans are. Leaving the U.S. is fine if you want to live in a social democratic state, but if you want to struggle for a truly free society, this is the place to be.)

Are they right? Will the next four years be significantly worse than a Democratic administration would have been? Bush will certainly take the country in different directions than a Kerry administration would go. The war in Iraq will continue, the Supreme Court will likely overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the next twenty years, and gay marriage will be set back for years.

But seriously, people, would Kerry have ended the war on Iraq any sooner? His Iraq strategy was basically indistinguishable from Bush's, except he thought he could persuade the French and the Germans to send troops to get kidnapped and killed execution-style, too! He would have pursued the war with as much gusto as Bush, and his retreat would have been as hasty and destructive as Bush's will be. You could argue that Kerry wouldn't have gotten us into further wars and that Bush might. I doubt it. The military is already stretched way too thin. Bush can't attack Iran or North Korea even if he wanted to. And I dare them to institute a draft.

The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is likely whether a Republican wins this election or the next one, given the current political climate and the legal strategies of the pro-choice lobby, which is perpetually defensive rather than on the attack. Abortion and reproductive freedom will be ultimately settled in one place: the streets. Let's bring this battle on now rather than later. I love wearing heavy boots and stomping over anti-choice barricading clinic doors.

The gay marriage issue is ultimately going to be settled by amending state constitutions rather than the U.S. Constitution. The gay marriage lobby will wind selective lawsuits through the courts, most of them will fail, and then they will have to decide whether to take to the streets or wait a few more years for the political winds to shift. (Right now it seems like they're going to sit

and wait a while.) Bush is relevant in this only in that a more conservative Supreme Court will undoubtedly uphold the anti-gay marriage amendments, but even if Kerry could have appointed some liberals to the Court there's no guarantee that they'd act differently—or that Democrats would suddenly become pro-gay marriage (which they're not).

The economy is a non-issue. Both are free-trading peddlers in exploitation and alienation.

So I did what any person who just can't put political principles aside to vote for the lesser of two evils would do. Like I've done for every election since I started voting, I cast my ballot for the only person I'd truly support for president, Malcolm X.

Hey, someday he might win.

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