

Psychological secession

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A blue print for half of the country's future after the devastation of November 2. In decades to come, historians will look back on the 2004 election " November 2, 2004 " as a turning point in the history of the United States. We crossed the Rubicon " or was it the River Styx? We are witnessing the beginning of the end of one country with the flashpoint as two divergent visions of morality and their implementation.

We have had a 229-year run, and history has taught us that nation-states are largely fragile, artificial constructs and finite. Within the context of human history, the United States' influence is disproportionate to its physical size, population and duration, and it may prove to be insignificant and waning in influence as it retreats from any consideration of progressive issues facing the world.

Indeed in a few decades, we may well have another American revolution with the residents of so-called blue states revolting against taxation without representation in the very red federal government and declaring their independence from religious tyranny. Maybe such will lead to the physical division of our nation through blue state secession. In the meantime, I argue for something subtler: a mental separation, a psychological secession.

If our pretense to democracy was put on life support in 2000, conservatives just pulled the plug, proving that the most corrupt of administrations can lie, spin and buy their way out of the direst of electoral predicaments. Even when most Americans think that the country is on the wrong track, the current president has done a lousy job, and that most of the current administration's policies have failed, some of those same Americans will still vote for him out of fear of something, whether it be terrorists or fags or feminists or gun-hating liberals or church-state separation or having to pay a fair share in taxes.

This year's election was supposed to be the one in which we made a cosmic correction. A few optimistic souls projected that more than 120 million would vote. Instead, roughly 115 million Americans voted out of nearly the 200 million eligible, meaning that about 40 percent of eligible voters did not vote in what was recognized as one of the most important elections in our lifetime. That is a travesty. Even more devastating is that we are celebrating the "high" turnout.

The Republicans' plan for the 2004 election was twofold: increase voter turnout among conservatives in the swing states and suppress Democratic voter turnout in the same. While Republicans may not have been successful in suppressing the "Detroit" (read: urban and minority) vote, their threat to challenge the rights of over 50,000 newly registered Democrats in Ohio almost surely had a chilling effect on voter turnout in poor and minority neighborhoods in that state and probably others, which was, of course, the desired effect.

Intent not to be left on the sidelines, the corporate-owned media did their part to discourage voting with unfounded rumors of terror alerts, unsupported reports of an election-day attack, constant reminders about paperless voting machines not subject to recounts, horror stories of widespread voter irregularities, and cautionary tales of 500,000 too few poll workers by federal estimates. Increased anxiety coupled with just enough predictable voter apathy made for the perfect election storm favoring an unpopular incumbent. Maybe many were so afraid of terrorist attacks that they went shopping instead.

Were the exit polls in Florida and Ohio (and other states) really that far off? I'm sure we will never know as we can rest assured that this is not a story that our country's media is interested in pursuing. As we witnessed in 2000, stability in election outcomes is more sacred than the accuracy or legitimacy of the election process itself. Four years ago, our country's political power structure learned how patient the electorate would be in the face of an election crisis. Not only were we willing to affirm the legitimacy of an election where every vote was not counted, we would even allow the Supreme Court to choose our president for us.

During the time since the previous election, our corporate and political elite never wasted an opportunity to remind us how important it is for Americans to accept whatever result our faulty election process spits out. Markets like stability; whether your vote was counted correctly or counted at all doesn't matter. The fact that we have a "clear" winner is more important than ensuring the integrity of the process that determined the winner. Despite the growing clamor for an investigation of the inconsistencies and potential fraud of November 2, 2004, none will be forthcoming. The proponents of transparency in our elections are now painted as poor losers or worse, conspiracy theorists.

Despite all their dirty tricks and the many who flouted their civic duty, the bottom line is the Republicans are still in charge. And if any doubt from 2000 lingered that we live in a deeply divided nation, it was vanquished on November 2. We now live in two countries, and rather than involving ourselves in the spectacle of the national Democrats' self-flagellation in hopes that Republicans won't treat them too unkindly, we need to think about moving in a new direction, our own direction. We must determine to decide our own destiny.

Abandon national politics

The national Democratic Party is now irrelevant and already scurrying to the right, dropping inconvenient progressive causes along the way, as if conservatives are ever going to choose a faux Republican when they can have the real thing. Make no mistake, we now have one national party, the GOP, which is set during the next four years to complete its work of crippling the federal government's ability to aid those in need; its decades-long goal of destroying the New Deal and any remnant of the Great Society will have been met.

While Senate Democrats could filibuster proposed regressive legislation or votes on ultra-conservative judicial nominees, they won't. There are just enough senators from red states who will be so frightened of losing their seats (a la Tom Daschle), that they will be quite compliant. Any way you look at it, the Republicans have a comfortable majority with which to bring about their revolution. They may not be passing constitutional amendments banning flag burning or gay marriage (at least not before the elections of 2006), but judicial nominees will sail through, our tax system will be reformed and what's left of the social safety net will be unraveled.

The most useless act you can commit at this point in our nation's history is to vote in a national election. And by the way, stop giving money to national political parties. Your time and money are better spent supporting the various charities and civic organizations that will have to expend their scant resources fighting back the red tide on every issue from civil liberties to environmental protection and filling the vacuum of leadership in Washington.

We must learn to expect nothing from the federal government except its disdain. Many say that we are now heading towards a theocracy, but I would argue that we are living in a corporate theocracy. The corporate powers that be that are running our government have promised conservative Christians a theocratic social agenda in exchange for their political support. So the corporate oligarchy gets less public regulation while the social conservatives get their desire for more regulation in the private sphere, which is the opposite of our clear blue vision for the country. Personal freedom is out; corporate freedom is in.

Support state and local organizations financially

If you are one of the lucky few to benefit from the current administration's tax cuts, then your state government had better become your new favorite charity, especially if you live in a blue state. State governments will have to fund any public policy program that does not dovetail with our national government's extremist agenda. And while the red states may be in for a federal tax-dollar bonanza, the blue states will be picking up the tab.

Most certainly, environmental protection will fall completely to the states, always subject of course to the feds overriding anything they don't like; state's rights only apply to the red states. States will have to replace Medicaid/Medicare and, eventually, social security. Corporate oversight, disaster relief, housing assistance, education assistance, and protections of civil rights and civil liberties will become the burden of the states as the funding for the federal agencies historically charged with such will be diverted to deeper tax cuts, defense and faith-based (read, Christian) charities.

The way Bush has insidiously interwoven faith-based initiatives throughout cabinet level departments is nothing short of ingenious. It can claim that the Department of Education's budget has been increased without acknowledging that all of the increase will be earmarked for faith-based initiatives only. The same is true for Health and Human Services, the Commerce Department, and a host of others.

Thinking about ourselves in a new way

We must look to alternatives by buttressing the independence of our state and local governments and increasing our support for organizations that will be forced to absorb the responsibilities that the feds are and will be shirking or creating some sort of extra-federal system or regional systems of government or coalitions of blue states to supplant the role of the federal government.

We must also get more involved state activism and do whatever we need to do to make blue states a haven for those fleeing the theocratic tyranny of the red states, and to create a bulwark against encroachments by our federal corporate theocracy. We must ignore the national media outlets with their democracy plazas and glib talking heads.

As media become more consolidated under the control of a handful of corporate interests with Bush's dismantling of Federal Communications Commission corporate oversight, getting your news and information from independent and varied sources becomes paramount. Corporate media in the United States have the journalistic integrity of Pravda during

the Soviet era. They act as a mouthpiece for the government, which in turn rewards them with further tax breaks coupled with less regulation of their corporate structure.

Possibly the most important task will be reigning in corporate influence in state and local politics as the failure to do so on the federal level has been a significant contributor to the demise of responsive government. We must not allow our states to follow suit; they are our last hope.

We need to overturn the most undemocratic of initiatives: term limits. On the state level, such as in a large, complex state like California, they wreak havoc on our representatives' ability to legislate effectively and intelligently. A six or eight-year term is barely enough time for a new representative to understand fully the intricacies of a handful of issues before being banned from the statehouse. And with new representatives unable to look to veteran legislators for mentoring, the friendly neighborhood lobbyist will be more than happy to explain legislation to them and even tell them how to vote. Lobbyists, by the way, are not subject to term limits. Can you imagine firing your doctor every six years because she has been practicing too long and knows you too well?

True campaign finance reform in the blue states will have to come from the ground with our demanding the end of corporate influence money. A start would be limiting campaign contributions to natural persons only and not corporate "persons" granted personage through the pernicious legal fiction of corporate citizenship. This would not cease corporate influence completely, but it would severely restrict the flow of corporate money into politicians' coffers. Coupled with a ban on in-kind contributions, we could forestall in the blue states what has happened in Washington and see the beginning of a new era of responsive government.

Be patient, but vigilant

Our new blue state revolution will not happen within a few months, or even years. The first step is easing into the mindset that we are on our own and will now need to fight to preserve the rights and liberties we value. And remember, you have not abandoned your country " it has abandoned you.

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President Bush's plan

URL: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/>

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