

Wednesday July 19, 2000

Bush and Gore Make Me Wanna Ralph: A Letter from Michael Moore to the Non-Voters of America

Dear friends,

DISCLAIMER: If you are planning to vote for Al Gore in November, good for you. Don't let what I'm about to say change your mind because I've been told by all the experts that if you do change your mind based on what I'm about to say, George W. Bush might win the election and I certainly couldn't live with myself if that connoisseur of pharmaceuticals (the kind you snort up your nose or the kind you inject on death row) won, in part, because of a letter I spit out over the Internet.

So let's review -- you like Gore, you vote for Gore. He's a decent guy. I met him last year at some benefit, he came up to me, big hug -- whoa, this veep is no stiff, I thought -- and thanked me for this and that. He even quoted lines from "The Awful Truth" -- whoa, scary, I thought, what's he doing watching cable channels above 40 on the box...not much to do on this veep gig, eh?

I told him I admired what he did when he came home to America as a Vietnam Vet and spoke out against the war. That took a lot of courage, I said (his dad lost his Senate seat for being an early opponent of the war).

So, if Al Gore is your man, go for it. In fact, I insist on it, even if you are just throwing your vote away.

What I am about to say, though, is not intended for any Al Gore (or George W.) voters. If you are one, please click off now.

To Whom It May Concern:

I address this letter to the largest political party in the United States -- the 55% of you in the voting public who are so disillusioned with politics and politicians, so sick and tired of all the broken promises, so disgusted with all the b.s. that you have absolutely no intention of voting in November.

You know who you are.

AND YOU ARE THE MAJORITY!

You rule. You are the Non-Voters, all 100 million of you!

Until now, you have been the subject of scorn and ridicule. You've been called apathetic, lazy, ignorant. Your actions have been viewed as unAmerican (I mean, what kind of citizen in the World's Greatest Democracy would not exercise his or her most important and cherished right -- the right to freely choose your leader!).

Well, may I be the first to tell you that, not only are you *NOT* stupid and apathetic, I believe you are smarter than all the rest of us combined. *YOU* figured it out. *YOU* uncovered the scam. And *YOU* had the guts to no longer participate in a lie. Way to go! In 1996, you helped set the all-time American record for lowest turnout ever at a presidential election.

The reason you, the majority, no longer vote in America is because you, the majority, realize there is no real choice on the ballot. The "two" parties both do the bidding of the wealthy and agree with each other on 90% of the issues. They take 90% of their money from people who make over a hundred-grand a year, and then enact over 90% of the laws those contributors want passed.

On the ballot this November, you already know there is no contest. The independent Cook Political Report in D.C. last week announced that, out of 435 House seats up for election in November, there are only 47 seats where there is a "true race" between opponents -- and, of those, only 14 seats have a race that is even "close" between the two candidates. 14 out of 435!

"Ninety-seven to ninety-nine percent of incumbents running for re-election will be returned to Congress in November," according to the Cook Report.

The Non-Voters already understand this. And they are not going to waste one iota of their day on November 7 driving to some smelly elementary school gymnasium to participate in a Soviet-style election with no friggin' choice on the ballot.

So, to you brave voter-resisters, I say congratulations on your act of civic disobedience! I joined you this primary season and refused to go along with this charade of "choice." Nearly 80% of those of us of voting age -- over 160 million Americans -- staged a sit-in on our living room couches during this year's primaries. *THAT* is the great untold story of this election year. How much longer will the punditocracy be able to get away with dismissing this massive no-show as "a sign Americans are content with the booming economy?"

Now that we have made our presence known (you all don't mind me speaking for us, do you? Good. In fact, I'll just assume the currently-vacant mantle of this

majority party and serve as your leader until you say otherwise...), it is time to find a way that says, loudly and clearly, just how mad as hell we are and how we are not going to take it anymore. We need to find a way where our vote screams "None of the Above!" A chance to act, like that Chinese guy in Tieneman Square, standing in front of a moving tank and stopping it in its path.

In November, we should find a way to follow in the footsteps of those intelligent Minnesotans who, even though they could care less about professional wrestling (and even less, I'm sure, for Jesse "The Body"), proved to the world that they not only have a sense of humor, but they know how to stick it to the whole bloody system. Think of just how high their level of anger must have been against the One-Party-With-Two-Heads monopoly! I mean, state government is no joke -- somebody's gotta build the roads, run the schools, catch the criminals. You don't want to turn the asylum over to the chief lunatic but, damn it, that's what the people of Minnesota did -- just to send a message! Wow. That took some guts.

So, for those of you who weren't going to vote anyway, well...what if you actually did? What if you drove down to that stinky gym where the little shell game behind the pretend curtains is taking place ("Pay no attention to the voters behind the curtains!"), walk in, sign in, take the ballot they hand you, and toss yourselves inside the booth like a political molotov cocktail.

Boom!

"You wanna tell me there's a choice here between two guys who both support NAFTA, WTO, the death penalty, the Cuban embargo, increased Pentagon spending, sleazy HMOs, greedy hospital chains, 250 million guns in our homes, more bombing of Iraq, the rich getting richer and the rest of us declaring bankruptcy?"

Boom!

Not me.

Boom!

I'm voting for Ralph Nader.

KAAAABOOM!

Friends, we are losing our democratic control over our country. We may have already lost it. I hope not. But in the last 20 years of the Reagan administration, Corporate America has merged and morphed itself to such an extent that just a handful of companies now call all the shots. They own Congress. They own us. In order to work for them, we have to take urine tests and lie detectors and wear bar codes on chains around our necks. In order to keep our jobs we have had to give up decent health care, the 8-hour day (and time with our kids), the security that we'll even have a job next year, and any unwillingness we may have to

compete with a 14-year old Indonesian girl who gets a dollar a day.

And how frightening (and great) is it that the last place we can freely try to inform and communicate with each other is on this very Web? Six companies run by six men control the majority of the news we now get from newspapers, television, radio and the Internet. One out of every two books is bought at a bookstore owned by one of only two companies. Is it safe in a "free society" to have the sources of our information and mass communication in the hands of just a few wealthy men who have a *VESTED* interest in keeping us as stupid as possible -- or at least in keeping us thinking like them so that we vote for *THEIR* candidates?

I fear the cement on this new oligarchy of power is quickly drying, and when it is finished hardening, we are finished. The democracy, the one that's supposed to be of, by, and for the people, will cease to exist.

We must not let this happen, no matter how cynical and disgusted we've become at the whole electoral process.

Ralph Nader, to me, represents a chance for us to at least temporarily stop the cement from drying. We need him in there kicking things up, stirring the pot and forcing a real debate about the issues. Whether it's Ralph as Candidate or Ralph as President, he may represent our last hope to get our country back from the clutches of the powerful few.

I am not writing these words lightly. I am hoping to sound a siren and rally the majority who, for good reason, have given up -- but might just have it in them to find the will for one last fight against the bastards.

Can Ralph win? Well, stranger things have happened in the past decade. C'mon, think about it, not a single one of us ever thought we'd see the Berlin Wall come down or Nelson Mandela as President of South Africa. After those two things happened, I joined a new school of thought that said *ANYTHING* was possible. Jesse Ventura started with 3% in the polls and won. Ross Perot in '92 started with 6% and, after proving to everyone that he was certifiably insane, still got nearly 20% of the vote.

Ralph already has between 7% and 10% in the polls -- before he's done any serious campaigning. He's gone from 3% to 8% in my home state of Michigan. These are amazing numbers and the pundits and lobbyists and Republicrats are running scared. Hey, you like to watch scared Republicrats running? Tell a pollster you're voting for Ralph.

Now, look, before you all send me a lot of mail about how weird Ralph is 'cause he doesn't own a car or is a "sell-out" 'cause he's got a few million dollars, let me say this: I used to work out of his office, and Ralph is definitely one of a kind. In a future letter I will write of those experiences but, for now, let's just agree that Ralph is at least half as crazy as Jesse Ventura -- and about a hundred

times as smart. I'd say he's also saved about a million or so lives, thanks to the consumer and environmental legislation he has devoted his life to.

And between Gore, Bush, and himself, he's the only person running who would guarantee universal health care for all, the only candidate who would raise the minimum wage to a decent level, the only one who would get up each morning asking himself the question, "What can I do today to serve all the people of this country?"

The list goes on and on. You can read more about what Ralph stands for by going to his website (<http://www.votenader.org/>). You'll agree, I'm sure, there's lots of common sense there, regardless of what political stripe you are.

But remember. If you are even *THINKING* of voting for Al Gore, vote for Al Gore. Ralph Nader does not need a single Gore vote. There are a hundred million of us out there who are uncommitted and currently not voting. Right now, Gore and Bush are each hoping to win by getting only 40 million votes.

If you are in the Non-Voting majority and want to let 'em all have it, if you want to get our country back in our hands...well, if even half of you show up and vote November 7 then you won't be held responsible for Bush winning the White House.

In fact, you won't be held responsible for putting Gore in the White House, either.

Rather, you will have made history by putting a true American hero at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

And you will have given every company, every boss who's done ya wrong, the worst nightmare of their lives.

November 7. Payback Time.

The revenge of the Non-Voters!

So sayeth their unappointed leader,
yours truly,
Michael Moore
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PS. Come to think of it, Democrats should be on their knees thanking Ralph for running. Rather than taking votes from Gore, Ralph's going to be the one responsible for turning the House back over to the Democrats.

When millions of these Non-Voters enter that booth to vote for Ralph, and they come across their local race for Congress, they will find no Green Party candidate in most of the 435 Congressional districts. So who do you think Ralph's army of Non-Voters will plunk down for Congress? The Republican? I don't think so.

The Democrats are only six seats short of regaining control of the House. Ralph Nader will be the reason the Democrats get the House back for the first time since Newt's Contract on America in 1994.

Democrats should send their checks to

Nader 2000
P.O. Box 18002
Washington, DC 20035

(Or, better yet, let's try to elect enough Greens to Congress -- a dozen or so -- and they'll hold the deciding votes because neither the Democrats nor the Republicans will have the majority. It'll be a friggin' Knesset!)

PPS. If you're still worried this letter might convince a weak-kneed Gore voter to flip over to Nader -- and thus lead to President George W. stacking the Supreme Court to make abortion illegal, well, it's all a bunch of hooey. Please read my latest grassroots.com column entitled, "I Ain't Fallin for That One Again" at: <http://www.michaelmoore.com/aint.html>

PPPS. Tonight, Wednesday July 19, on "The Awful Truth" (Bravo, 10 p.m. ET/PT), Crackers the Corporate Crime Fighting Chicken makes a surprise return visit. Don't miss it!

**PLEASE PASS THIS LETTER ON TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.
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