

# AMERICA'S ELECTION

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By Avedis Kevorkian, Philadelphia PA, 25 September 2008

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"Well," he said, "de Democrats, dey done give me five dollars to vote Democrat, and," he continued, "de Republicans, dey done give me ten dollars to vote Republican."

"So," said the journalist, "you will be voting Republican."

"No," said the old Negro, "I'se a gonna vote Democrat, 'cause dey's less corrupt."

On the other hand, earlier this year, a friend and I attended a talk by a Washington "insider" who was telling us what really is going on there. As we left, my friend literally bumped into a friend in the crowded aisle. They started talking as we left the hall and continued when we where outside. I was introduced, but remained silent. The conversation eventually got around to the November election, and the woman said that she was going to vote for the candidate who was best for Israel.

Rather naively, I said, "I thought that the election was for the President of the United States." If looks could kill, I would have been in a pool of blood. She said, rather scathingly, "As far as I am concerned, Israel is the important issue and who is best for Israel is my concern." I said nothing, but I thought, "I know that all politics is local, but this is going a bit too far."

These two stories come to mind, because someone has asked how I will be voting. I haven't fully made up my mind but I know which direction I am leaning, so I am going to think out loud, with your permission.

The two candidates for the Dummycrats have professed their love for Armenia and have said "all the right things." On the other hand, the candidate at the top of the Repugnant Party ticket has consistency voted against all things Armenian, and his running mate probably has no idea of what an Armenian is or where Armenia is.

So, if I follow my friend's friend who puts Israel first, and I put Armenia first, I should be voting for the Dummycrats. However, I

know, also, that all politicians lie and that strange things happen between a November victory and a January inaugural, and the Dummycratic Party winner could well forget his promises. By that token (broken promises, or the lack of them in his case) it is possible that the Repugnant Party candidate (though certainly honest about his views on matters-Armenian) could turn out to be the "maverick" he is calling himself and could surprise, and act Armenian. Dilemma.

However, if I use the measuring rod of that old Negro, and consider what is best for America, then I am on safer--but unsure--ground. I know how great America was once; I know how much America was respected. I know that what made America great was the principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence and leaders who really believed it, and in the Constitution with its guarantee of rights and its obeying by our leaders who respected it. But, alas, no more.

I know that the Declaration is the most radical document ever created by Man and, speaking as a public-relations consultant, the greatest Press Release ever written. (Among other things, it says that if you don't like the government you are under, it is your right to change it!) I know, also, that the present leaders of this country have never read it and would not sign their names to it were it presented to them.

I know that the rights enshrined in the Constitution were once the envy of all people. I have a law-professor friend in England who never failed to tell me how lucky I was to be a citizen of a country whose Constitution begins with "We the People." He would wax rhapsodic and say (to me and anyone who would listen), "Just think of it, 'We the People'" and he would go on and on, as I listened with a broad smile.

As a measure of how low America has fallen, ask yourself (Americans only take this one-question quiz): "Are there 39 people in this country to whom you would entrust a new Constitution?" *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

Of course, there is a third choice. Don't vote. But, that is out of the question, because I had the greatest civics lesson anyone can get, not at university, not in any book, not in any newspaper, not in any television or radio program, not in any meeting hall, but at the dinner table. I was just 21, had my degree, and an election was nearing, and my younger brother asked if I was going to vote.

With all the wisdom of a 21-year-old (and there aren't too many wiser persons around than a 21-year-old) I waxed eloquently about the futility of elections, of the waste of time of voting, "if voting meant anything it would be outlawed," and so on. Even now, I remember with what eloquence I pooh-poohed the subject. When I proudly finished, my father stopped eating, turned to me, and said quietly: "Tomorrow morning you are going to City Hall, you are going to register, and you are going to vote." He returned to his eating. The looks on the faces of my mother and my brother (and mine, if it copied theirs) should have been captured on film.

However, tomorrow morning I went to City Hall, I registered, and I returned to our printing shop, where my father was at the Linotype. I showed him the registration card; he glanced at, and resumed setting type. He didn't bother to read how I was registered, and he said nothing. I was registered, and that was enough. And I have voted in every election since.

Much later, on another occasion, while discussing the Armenian Church, he was to say that what set the Church apart, among other things, was that its Catholicos was elected by the people as well as the clergy. "Think of that," he said, "by the people, also."

Stupid as I am, even I got the message of the importance of voting.

America is my country, and I owe it the best that I can give it. I must think and act in what I think is in the best interest of the country.

America is also every American's country, and they, too, must think and act in what they think is in the best interests of the country.

If the hundred-million or so voters take their rights and responsibilities seriously, maybe our children will have the good fortune of living in yesterday's America.

When the Boer War was going badly for Britain, and the guerilla-fighting Boers were defeating the best that Britain could offer, A. E. Housman wrote: "Get you the sons your fathers got, and God will save the Queen." We have no Queen to be saved; we have much more: America. If only we can get ourselves the fathers our fathers got.

