



Why I will not vote in this US presidential election

Hamid Dabashi

May God protect the earth from "American democracy"

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Why would anyone want to vote in this toxic and ignominious US presidential election?

Participating in a democratic process is a privilege that must restore one's trust in public good. This particular election is the epitome of a disgraceful public spectacle of corruption on one side, and neo-fascism on the other.

Why would any self-respecting human being want to have anything to do with it?

There are those among the US citizens who are deeply concerned about the outcome of this election and who are planning to vote, for they fear a fascist takeover of their democracy by a deeply corrupt businessman. These are the most noble among those who will vote; and then there are diehard supporters of the two top competing candidates who are less so.

If I lived in a swing state I would have begrudgingly voted with those who have a legitimate fear of Donald Trump's fascist ideas.

But I live in New York, a solidly and safely blue state so I can afford the luxury of the following meditation, which I offer in humble solidarity with those who fear fascism, plan to vote for Hillary Clinton not because they approve of her but because they disapprove of Trump.

Electoral hoaxes

Three times in my adult life I have had reasons and occasions to vote in three presidential elections - two in Iran and one in the United States - and each one of them has been in solidarity and support with the social movements these elections represented.

In 1997, I voted for Mohammad Khatami in an absentee ballot in New York, in 2008 I voted for Barack Obama, and in 2009 I voted with another absentee ballot for Mir-Hossein Mousavi. I regret none of those three votes though I now look back at the two votes I cast for Khatami and Obama and cringe.

They were two nasty highfalutin hoaxes played on two genuine social movements: a reformist movement in Iran that has long since left Khatami behind, and like a fire is now hidden under the ashes of tyranny in the Islamic Republic; and a historic momentum to right malicious wrongs in the US that Obama decidedly betrayed.

After almost 40 years of living in the US, this particular election I consider a nasty confrontation between a rising fascism and an embattled liberal imperialism.

I am still proud of the vote I cast for Mir-Hossein Mousavi, who is under house arrest in Iran. Like him, his kindered soul Bernie Sanders has a snowball's chance in hell of being elected president.

After Sanders did not make it through the primaries, I no longer have any candidate in this US presidential election, nor indeed will I ever vote in any other election in the pathologically flawed Islamic Republic.

I have run out of any trust or hope in any electoral politics and consider it an exercise in futility. The ruling regime in Iran is increasingly drawn into the nasty geopolitics of its region, competing with Saudi Arabia in their equally illegitimate claims on regional political hegemony, with Russia and the United States as their respective patrons.

Here I must hasten to add that my politics was not formed in a democracy but in a monarchical dictatorship, followed by an even more sinister Islamic theocracy. I have no electoral political culture rooted or cultivated in me. I am committed to social movements that seek to uproot tyranny and corruption and only vote when I feel myself inside such a movement. Such movements are the indices of my democratic intuitions.

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These are not my fights. I detest them both. Judging by the latest "October Surprise" bombshell dropped by the FBI Director James Comey regarding the unending saga of Clinton's emails, the system is rapidly self-destructing.

Organised politics

At this stage I have become totally suspicious of all state-sponsored organised politics as I have always been of organised religion.

My solidarities are with the asymmetrical struggle of noble causes such as the Black Lives Matter movement, or the Standing Rock Sioux uprising against the Dakota Access Pipeline, and a fortiori with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, with the Palestinians against the Zionist settler colony, or with the Kobane Rojava resistance in Syria.

None of those movements is electoral. None of them can organise to topple the tyranny that rules over them. They dismantle that tyranny via an entirely different calculus of nations

against states.

To me a "Jewish" state is identical in its calamities with any "Islamic" Republic, both mirroring a "Christian" empire, in the neighbourhood of a "Hindu" fundamentalism and a "Buddhist" nationalism, contested by the "secular fanaticism" now led by the European and North American new atheists. To me the monstrosity called "ISIL" is the prototype of them all.

I am, therefore, not voting not because I am disillusioned about politics. Quite to the contrary: I am deeply invested and firmly rooted in a different political hope.

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I am more than ever convinced that this sham imperial politics and all its client states, from Israel to rich and poor tyrannies around the globe, have all categorically exhausted every ounce of legitimacy about them.

Nations have entered a whole new calculus of self-sovereignty far beyond the reach of the states that lay false claims on them. Nations are in de facto revolt against states.

From the Syrians who leave their homeland for other countries to Europeans who defy their racist political parties and help and welcome them, to millions of eligible voters in the US who refuse to vote (and I am proudly one of them): We are now all free from the delusion of electoral politics, refuse to lend credence to either of these two bankrupt factions of the single political party that, like the one in North Korea, wishes but cannot rule over us. They go their way and we go ours.

If I were to vote in New York I would have voted for Jill Stein. But at this stage voting for her is to lend credibility to a fundamentally flawed electoral system that has effectively barred her from being part of the national debates.

This as a result is an illegitimate and undignified election - every aspect of it, and walking into any voting booth on this November 8 is to be party to it.

Only 9 percent of Americans have predetermined the course of this election and given the world an option between a Clinton and a Trump, and the rest are being dragged into its tail end by hook and crook to put a democratic stamp of approval on a deeply corrupt plutocracy. The respective dangers of these two candidates to the world peace might not be identical, but they are certainly similar. And precisely for that reason there are millions of dignified, principled, hopeful, and uncompromising Americans who refuse to be party to this ignominy. I proudly stand with them.

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