

Electoral Guide 2016

May 16, 2015



Any discussion of this subject needs to be based on the understanding that, at present, voting is carefully designed to, in Chomsky's words "reduce the population to apathy and obedience", putting us in a position where we are forced to demonstrate our fealty to the corporate state by actively endorsing one of its two anointed representatives.

It doesn't have to be that way: Greek voters had an alternative to vote against neoliberal austerity and they exercised it putting Syriza in office. Same with the upcoming elections in Spain where Podemos will offer a similar alternative. And, of course, over the past two decades, voters in Latin America had real choices and made the right decision in electing Morales, Correa, Chavez, Kirchner and other populist left candidates, to the great displeasure of the U.S. State Department.

We are not at that point and so we need to be doing the on-the-ground work which is necessary to get us there. That work involves

- 1) strongly supporting mass protest movements such as Black Lives Matter, Fight for 15, System Change Not Climate Change and the remnants of OWS the consolidation of which could eventually evolve into an electoral alternative at some point in the future.

and

- 2) strongly supporting viable local third party campaigns such as those of Kshama Sawant and the candidates from the Richmond Progressive Alliance helping these scale up to statewide and eventually national organizations.

In the meantime, it does no good to pretend that running marginal national candidates is a substitute for 1) and 2). Only once we have satisfied ourselves that we have done the work can we begin to play the rigged game which is the party primary system and the national "electoral extravaganza" in November 2016. We should do so, in my opinion, via one of the following four paths.

Path 1) Support Sanders in the Democratic primaries.

Caveat: Those exercising this option need to be fully aware of Sanders's likely "sheepdog" role. They should make clear to others involved in the campaign that they plan to return to the fold of independent activists once Sanders is obliterated by Clinton, rejecting DP operatives and Sanders's own efforts to herd left voters into the toxic Clinton campaign and the graveyard which is Democratic Party Politics.

Path 2) Support Jill Stein, the likely Green Party nominee.

Caveat: The Green Party lacks a sufficient level of organization where it can mount a credible campaign and even achieving ballot access will require a substantial investment of activist energy which (arguably) might be better channeled into option 1 or 2 above. A possible poor showing (Stein received less than 500,000 votes in 2012-down from Nader's 2,882,995 in 2000) will marginalize rather than legitimate the politics we are trying to advance.

Path 3) Not voting.

Caveat: Lack of participation will be perceived as indicating that the public is satisfied with both corporate options. We know otherwise, of course, but we will be unable to get that message out.

Staying uninvolved and uncommitted also prevents the development of organized networks of supporters which can become the nucleus of local campaigns and activist organizations, as happened in the wake of the Nader Green Party 2000 run.

Path 4) One of the above and then voting for the lesser evil in November.

Caveat: This option should only be exercised in a swing state and even then some leftists will regard voting for what may turn out to be not the lesser, but the more effective evil, as indefensible.

What's important is that we should not allow the Sanders issue become yet another left circular firing squad of mutual recriminations and personal animosity-as the Democrats are strategizing that it will. We might not agree with lesser-evilism, but we shouldn't demonize those who do. Nor should lesser evilists condescend to those who refuse to be constrained by the worm's eye, world weary pragmatism of those who have resigned themselves to the Democratic Party as our only hope for change-a dangerous delusion as we should have learned in 2008 and 2012.

We need keep all that in mind to get the best possible results from the fatally compromised, corrupt and cynical electoral system in 2016.