

# You've Got to Stop Voting

*Written by Mark E. Smith.*

*"So my question is – how does NOT voting change anything? I can see actually writing in someone you believe in – but not voting is simply giving up."*

South Africa endured many years of violence under the Apartheid regime. Many people and countries worldwide boycotted Apartheid, but the US government insisted on supporting the Apartheid regime, saying that while the US abhorred Apartheid, the regime was the legitimate government of South Africa. Then the Apartheid regime held another election. No more than 7% of South Africans voted. Suddenly everything changed. No longer could the US or anyone else say that the Apartheid regime had the consent of the governed. That was when the regime began to make concessions. Suddenly the ANC, formerly considered to be a terrorist group trying to overthrow a legitimate government, became freedom fighters against an illegitimate government. It made all the difference in the world, something that decades more of violence could never have done.

In Cuba, when Fidel Castro's small, ragged, tired band were in the mountains, the dictator Batista held an election (at the suggestion of the US, by the way). Only 10% of the population voted. Realizing that he had lost the support of 90% of the country, Batista fled. Castro then, knowing that he had the support of 90% of the country, proceeded to bring about a true revolution.

In Haiti, when the US and US-sponsored regimes removed the most popular party from the ballot, in many places only 3% voted. The US had to intervene militarily, kidnap Aristide, and withhold aid after the earthquake to continue to control Haiti, but nobody familiar with the situation thought that the US-backed Haitian government had the consent of the governed or was legitimate.

Boycotting elections alone will not oust the oligarchy, but it is the only proven non-violent way to delegitimize a government.

A lot of people here are complaining about the Citizens United decision. Some want to amend the Constitution because there is no appeal from a Supreme Court decision (their edicts have the same weight as the Divine Right of Kings), but getting enough states to ratify is a long drawn out and not always successful process, as I'm sure you recall from the ERA. But suppose that the corporations spent ten to fifteen billion dollars on an election

(they spent at least five billion on the last midterms, so that's not unreasonable) and almost nobody voted. Do you think their boards of directors would let them do it again?

Here are some of the most common canards that political party operatives use to argue against not voting:

### **1. Not voting is doing nothing.**

If you're doing something wrong, or something that is self-destructive or hurting others, stopping might be a good idea. If delegating your power to people you can't hold accountable has resulted in the devastation of your economy, do you really want to keep doing it? If granting your authority to people you can't hold accountable has resulted in wars based on lies that have killed over a million innocent people, do you really want to keep doing it? If granting your consent of the governed to people you can't hold accountable has resulted in government operating on behalf of big corporations and the wealthy instead of on behalf of the people, do you really want to keep doing it?

### **2. If we don't vote the bad guys will win.**

We've been voting. When did the good guys win? Besides, it is often hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys. Suppose Gore had won, and then died of a heart attack. Do you think the Democrats who voted for him would have been happy with Joe Lieberman as President? Besides, Gore actually did win the popular vote. The Supreme Court stopped the vote count and put Bush in office. So just because the good guys win doesn't mean that they get to take office. Kerry also won the popular vote, but before anyone could finish counting the votes, he had to break both his promises, that he wouldn't concede early and that he would ensure that every vote was counted, in order to get the bad guy back in office again. Our Constitution was written to ensure that those who owned the country would always rule it, so the popular vote can be overruled by the Electoral College, Congress, the Supreme Court, or by the winning candidate conceding, and is not the final say. Even if we had accurate, verifiable vote counts, and everyone who voted, voted for a good guy, it doesn't mean that good guy could take office unless the Electoral College, Congress, and the Supreme Court allowed it. Even then, the good guy might fear that the Security State might assassinate him the way they killed JFK, and either concede or stop being a good guy in order to survive. The Supreme Court, of course, has the Constitutional power to intervene on any pretext, and its decisions, no matter how unconstitutional, irrational, unprecedented, or even downright insane, can not be appealed, so they do have the final say.

### **3. If you don't vote, you can't complain.**

What good does complaining do? When successive administrations of both parties tell you that they will not allow public opinion to influence policy decisions, you can complain all

you want and it won't do you any good. But you don't need to vote to have the right to complain. The Declaration of Independence is a long list of complaints against a king by colonists who were not allowed to vote. The right to gripe is one of those unalienable rights that is not granted by governments or kings. If you're treated unjustly, you have the right to complain. A lot of people who voted for Obama are now angry with his policies and are complaining loudly. He couldn't care less.

#### **4. It is a citizen's responsibility and civic duty to vote.**

Only if the government holding the election has secured your civil and human rights. If it has not, if it has instead become destructive of your civil and human rights, "...it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." —Declaration of Independence

#### **5. Your vote is your voice in government.**

In a democratic form of government it would be. In a democratic form of government, such as a direct or participatory democracy, people can vote on things like budgets, wars, and other important issues, and have a voice in government. In our "representative" government, people can only vote for representatives who may or may not listen to them or act in their interests, and who cannot be held accountable during their terms of office, which is the only time they hold power and are needed to represent the interests of their constituents. Waiting until somebody has killed a million people in a war based on lies, destroyed the economy, and taken away your civil rights, and then trying to elect somebody else, is much too late because by then much of the damage cannot be undone and your grandchildren will still be paying for it.

#### **6. Just because things didn't work out the way we wanted last time, and the time before that, and the time before that, doesn't mean that they won't this time.**

Some say that Einstein defined insanity as repeating the same experiment over and over and expecting different results.

#### **7. If we don't vote, the Tea Party, the Breivik-types, and all the lunatics will, and they'll run the country.**

They're a minority, no more than 10% at the very most. Of the approximately 50% of our electorate that votes, fewer than 10% vote for 3rd parties. The Apartheid regime in South Africa tried to seat the winning candidates after a successful election boycott where there was only a 7% turnout, but nobody thought they were legitimate or took them seriously.

#### **8. You don't have the numbers to pull off an election boycott.**

There are already more people who don't vote, who either don't think our government is relevant to them, don't think their vote matters, or don't think that anyone on the ballot would represent them or could, since anyone who represented the people would be a small minority with no seniority in government, than there are registered Democrats or Republicans. We have greater numbers than either major party, but they haven't given up so why should we?

## **9. People who don't vote are apathetic.**

When you vote, you are granting your consent of the governed. That's what voting is all about. If you knowingly vote for people you can't hold accountable, it means that you don't really care what they do once they're in office. All you care about is your right to vote, not whether or not you will actually be represented or if the government will secure your rights. Prior to the '08 election, when Obama had already joined McCain in supporting the bailouts that most people opposed, and had expressed his intention to expand the war in Afghanistan, I begged every progressive peace activist I knew not to vote for bailouts and war. They didn't care and they voted for Obama anyway. That's apathy. But it's worse than that. Once I had learned how rigged our elections are, I started asking election integrity activists if they would still vote if the only federally approved voting mechanism was a flush toilet. About half just laughed and said that of course they wouldn't. But the other half got indignant and accused me of trying to take away their precious right to vote. When I finished asking everyone I could, I ran an online poll and got the same results. Half of all voters really are so apathetic that they don't care if their vote is flushed down a toilet, as long as they can vote. They really don't know the difference between a voice in government, and an uncounted or miscounted, unverifiable vote for somebody they can't hold accountable. They never bothered to find out what voting is supposed to be about and yet they think that they're not apathetic because they belong to a political party and vote.

## **10. If you don't vote, you're helping the other party.**

No, *you* are. By voting for an opposition party, a third party, an independent, or even writing in None of the Above, Nobody, Mickey Mouse, your own name, or yo mama, you are granting your consent of the governed to be governed by whoever wins, not by the candidate you voted for. If there is a 50% turnout, the winning candidate can claim that 50% of the electorate had enough faith in the system to consent to their governance.

## **11. If we don't vote, our votes will never be counted and we'll have no leverage.**

True, if we don't vote, our votes will never be counted. But how does hoping that our votes *might sometimes* be counted, provide leverage? The election just held in the UK had only a 32% turnout. Where people did vote at all, since UK votes actually have to be counted, they threw out major party candidates and voted for third parties (George Galloway's

Respect Party for one, the Pirate Party for another) and in Edinburgh, a guy who ran dressed as a penguin, calling himself Professor Pongoo, got more votes than leading major party candidates. That's leverage, but it is only possible when the votes have to be counted and are verifiable. Those conditions do not apply in the US.

## **12. The choice is bullets or ballots, so it's a no-brainer.**

The Department of Homeland Security has just used the authority that you delegated to the government when you voted, to purchase 450 million rounds of hollow-point ammunition that cannot be used in combat by law and therefore can only be used against US citizens. Your ballots authorized those bullets. There is a third option: not voting, not fighting, but simply withholding our consent. That has the result of delegitimizing a government that doesn't represent us and demonstrating that it does not have the consent of the governed. It is a legal, nonviolent, effective option called noncompliance. Noncompliance can take other forms, such as not paying taxes or creating alternative systems, but these cannot delegitimize a government. Since governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed," withholding our consent is the only way to nonviolently delegitimize a government that fails to represent us.

## **13. Evil people are spending millions of dollars on voter suppression to deny minorities the vote, and people have fought and died for the right to vote, so the vote must be valuable.**

Nobody fought and died for an uncounted vote. While corporations do spend millions of dollars pushing through Voter ID laws and other voter suppression legislation, they spend billions of dollars funding election campaigns to get out the vote for the major parties so that they can claim the consent of the governed for their wholly-owned political puppets. If they didn't want people to vote, those proportions would be reversed and they'd be spending more suppressing the vote than getting out the vote. Voter suppression efforts are aimed at trying to fool the ignorant into thinking that just because somebody is trying to take their vote away from them, their uncounted, unverifiable votes for oligarchs who won't represent them, must be valuable.

Originally published at [FubarAndGrill.org](http://FubarAndGrill.org).