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# I'm Mad as Hell Your Vote Could Make a Difference

by Stu Segal

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I am mad as hell - you know, I'm always mad as hell about something. Billy Joel once sang a song about people like me - "Angry Young Man", but I've stayed mad so long that now I'm an angry old man. I read recently that grumpy crotchety guys have a higher incidence of heart attack - even with empirical data that says being angry is bad for me, I still get mad. I don't know about you - me, I just can't help it.

I once upon a time thought that as I got older I would leave the anger behind - my parents told me this and I believed it. Unfortunately it's not true. I remember first being really angry at society when I was about 13, when "they" killed our President. I didn't know who "they" were, so I was just hurt and angry in general. Then "they" killed our President's brother. Then "they" sent American boys off to fight in a God-forsaken country in Asia. Then "they" . . . . . well, I could go on and on.

We live in a great country. We are maybe living in the best place at the best time in the history of the world. So why am I pissed off all the time at something or other? I guess it's because whether we want to or not we're compelled to accept some really stupid shit that we, and others in our society, do.

This month - what else could it be - the Presidential election. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not a faggot for politics. I don't watch C-Span, I don't watch Face the Nation, and I don't make a hobby of politics. I treat politics a lot like I treat baseball and football - I don't really have the time or inclination to follow either sport, but when it gets to World Series or Superbowl time I get interested, bring myself up to speed on the players, the teams, the coaches, and I become a fan for the Series or the Bowl. Same with politics.

So this time around I got interested in maybe May, and followed the candidates' progress and positions as best I could while living the rest of my life. Now (and I know this is judgmental) the election looked kind of like this to me:

The Incumbent - Our President, who according to all the best polls, is *dis-trusted* by over 60% of the people in this country, ran on a platform that seemed to change every day. The man will say whatever the public wants to hear to get votes. Is he a conservative? Is he a liberal? Who knows - he changes policies as often as I change underwear (which is, incidentally, daily). He certainly does look good, and he speaks well. He has a winning smile and he has charisma. But, after the Gennifer Flowers allegations, the Whitewater mess, and his general "Haha I pulled one over on you" attitude, 60% of Americans don't trust the man.

The Challenger - (if you could call him that) Bob Dole, the king of Boring. Where did they get this guy? I remember when he ran for Vice President a couple decades ago, and he sliced and diced his opponent in the debate - he *was* real sharp, and real mean about it. I always got the feeling that the nastiness, meanness and grumpiness was still there, being held in check, til he got elected. OK, so everybody knows that the Party ran him cause they "owed" it to him, but hey, give us a break, give us a candidate we can vote for.

The "Other" Challenger - Ross Perot. The Republicans and Democrats did everything they could to squash this guy, and they succeeded. Keeping him out of the Presidential Debate never let him have a chance to face Fiddle Dee and Fiddle Dum - they knew damn well if he got on a stage with them he'd embarrass the hell out of them, and he'd get more votes than he did last time around. So they froze him out.

OK - so what am I mad about. The President for being a shifty-eyed liar (the only difference between him and Tricky Dick is, Nixon *looked* dishonest)? - no, how can I be mad at him for being what he is. The Republicans for being stupid enough to run Rip Van Winkle? - no, it's impossible to get mad at a political machine that by its' very nature is corrupt. Ross Perot for not getting in the race earlier? - c'mon, this guy has spent more of his own money than you or I will ever earn trying to get his message out.

Nope - I'm mad as hell at *you*, or at least *half of you*. Only half the people in this country voted. The other half were - - well, I don't know where they were. They were obviously doing something else very important - more important than voting. And what happened? - a man who over 60% of you don't trust was re-elected to represent us, to defend us, to ensure the future for our children. I can't imagine what anybody in this country could be doing that would be more important than electing our public officials.

Why am I mad as hell? I remember when as a kid I could ride my bicycle *without a helmet*, in my teens I could buy gas for *28 cents a gallon*, I could ride my motorcycle *without a helmet*, I could make my own decision about whether or not I should have *car insurance*, I could go to work at a job (just me, not my wife) and cause the government didn't rape me on taxes and cause the dollar was strong I could raise my family *on one salary*.

This country has gotten economically worse and worse over the course of my life (and I'm under 50). When I was a kid, my Mom was at home - she was there to send us off to school and to give us cookies and milk when we got home. Most of my friends Mom's were home too. Look around you at young couples raising kids - do you know any who are doing it on one income, or are they all forced to have two salaries to make ends meet? This is the single most powerful example of how our standard of living has slipped in the last forty years - it now takes two salaries to buy the goods, products and services that our parents could buy with one salary in the 50's.

In addition there's been a steady erosion of the freedom of choice - helmets, insurance, seatbelts, etc., etc. What's going to happen in the next forty years - how are our kids and their kids going to make ends meet? Will they need a permit to do things you and I do freely today? I don't know the answers, but I know this - if we don't get out and vote (all of us), then the decisions that affect our children and our children's children will be left in the hands of politicians and special interest groups, and we'll all be sorry.

This is not one of those things that can be undone later - you have to vote to ensure that the freedoms, privileges and standard of living we have today are preserved for our children. Elections are always in

May and November, and the Presidential election is always November. Next time around, give up one night (to watch the debate), and get up 15 minutes early to cast your vote. Your vote does make a difference; it can make *all* the difference.