

The Social Justice Column

Democracy, Jobs, and Social Justice

By Fadhel Kaboub, Denison University



As we approach the November 2010 elections, many voters will head to the polls hoping to vote for public officials who will work on social and economic policies that will positively impact their lives and their communities. Many voters worry about their jobs, their debt burden, their healthcare, their children’s education, their retirement, and their community’s overall well-being. Successful politicians are capable of inspiring citizens during the electoral campaigns, and mobilizing them to get out and vote. After all, voting is a fundamental cornerstone in a democratic society. Voters get very excited about the prospects of change, new ideas, and most importantly hope for a better future.

The failure of elections begins to materialize in the weeks and months after the successful elected officials take office. That is to say that democracy is weakened

the most when citizens limit their participation to voting. On a good year, voter turnout can reach 60%, and midterm elections typically attract 35-45% of the voters in the United States. Elected officials who genuinely believe in social justice need their constituents the most after they take office. The grassroots social movements that help elect progressive officials tend to lose their momentum when they declare victory on Election Day. Public officials need to be engaged, challenged, and pushed in the right direction by progressive social movements because isolated public officials are easy prey for powerful special interest groups.

The common sense view of the vast majority of the population is a desire for social justice and shared prosperity. The demands that we hear from the masses today are loud and clear: “Jobs and Social Justice.” About 175,000

people gathered in Washington D.C. at the Lincoln Memorial on October 2, 2010 to rally the forces of more than 400 progressive organizations under the banner of One Nation Working Together. Speaking to the crowd, social activist Harry Belafonte put it very clearly when he said, “Americans know that Dr. King’s dream is not dead. Let us vote on November 2nd for jobs, for jobs, for jobs, for peace, for justice, for human rights, for our children and the future of America.” I do not think that this is a cliché statement. This is the true feeling of the majority of the population. However, this feeling must not rest on November 2nd; it must gain even more momentum after the elections to make sure that public officials are committed to implementing a true full employment program.

Even financial speculator turned philanthropist George Soros understands that government stimulus to create jobs is a must in the United States today. Writing in the Financial Times on October 5, 2010, Soros explained that “financial markets anticipate deflation, not inflation.” So, why are politicians unwilling to commit government money for direct job creation? I think that voting public officials out of office because they failed to deliver social justice is not the answer if we just replace them with new public officials without the continuous grassroots call for jobs and social justice. November 2nd is the day Americans vote for jobs and social justice, and November 3rd is the day when the real hard work begins to achieve full employment and social justice.

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2 Coats by Randall Jordan

Sometimes I have to sleep outside,
so I wear two coats.
* When it’s hard to rest, I let my mind wander to dreams of fulfillment; dreams of a home, with heat,
cable and internet, food in the fridge, a woman . . .
and so I wear two coats.

I don’t worry too much in the summer – not about primal survival anyway.
I’ve tried sleeping in the park in the summertime, but the mosquitoes and bugs territorially drive me away.

but hypothermia in the winter,
it threatens the realization of my hopes, my dreams
so I wear two coats.

Once or twice I didn’t wear 2 coats;
I was drained, apathetic,
I just wanted to rest, and rest, . . . rest.
But the dreams came back, haunting,
security, satiation, acceptance, a woman.
And so I had to find 2 coats. Again.
My God is my strength and my fortress,

It’s She who whispers in my heart: 2 coats, 2 coats . . .

I was at a homeless ministry today. Breakfast, sink bath, clothing pantry, and a volunteer accused me of stealing charity.

I was hurt and offended – embarrassed. I angrily objected to her accusation.
But the old lady was adamant. She said she knew I was a thief because I had on 2 coats.
She made me remember many years ago when I judged a coat’s value by whether or not it kept
me warm from the foyer to the car.
In all her many years, it was inconceivable to the old lady that anyone would need to
wear 2 coats.

But I wear 2 coats.
If I don’t wear 2 coats, I’ll die of exposure to the elements;
And when I die, my dreams, my hopes, my desires,
they die, too.

And so I wear 2 coats.

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 2. I will purchase papers only from the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless at \$0.25 per paper. I will not sell to or buy papers from other vendors.
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