

The Road Ahead After 2004: Building a Broad Nonpartisan Alliance Against Bush and the Far Right

By Carl Davidson & Marilyn Katz

We have been through a hell of a battle with the Bush regime in 2004. Each and every one of us engaged in this unprecedented electoral insurgency did all that we could to defeat him. But, by hook and by crook, George Bush narrowly pulled through. We didn't win it, but losing by slightly less than three points is still no mandate for the Bush agenda, however they try to spin it.

We have nothing to be ashamed about. We gave Bush and the hard right a good fight, discovered some of our weaknesses, but also gained important strengths for the struggles of the future.

This is not to say that the Kerry Campaign, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) shouldn't be called to account. Relying on a formula that has lost elections over and over again for the last quarter century (It is now 0 for 8! They didn't even really win Clinton's race; he won the first time out because Ross Perot was in the race.), the Candidate and the Party lacked compelling vision, discernable message and significant organization. The Republicans, on the other hand, skillfully combined an organizational apparatus built on fundamentalist churches with a message that brought out their core voters in larger numbers than expected.

Green activist Medea Benjamin put it well in an interview in the current issue of Progressive Magazine:

“Kerry lost because he never provided a clear message or an inspiring vision about the direction this country should take. And we have to admit that Bush's fear mongering and gay-bashing worked. Bush kept on message, while Kerry didn't. On Iraq, Kerry had a terribly mixed message. It was very confusing to people to understand where he stood on that issue.”

Or as we have often said: It's hard to be a pole of attraction if you don't stand for something. Over the next months there is sure to be great debate within the, DNC and DLC about 'notes for the next time', but there is an equally important discussion for those of us who came to the elections from a peace and justice perspective – a discussion of plans for our future.

From Protest to Politics – A Look at What Has Been Gained

Very early on, when Chicagoans Against War and Injustice (CAWI) first started our electoral work, we knew the country was sharply and narrowly divided. We told our people, "Look, we may or may not win this election. Obviously we believe that unseating Bush is critical for the well-being of the world, but winning that prize is not the only important thing. If we do it right, whatever the outcome, we will gain new skills, new strengths and new organization." And it appears we were correct.

The 2004 election, from a national perspective, was remarkable for the new and creative forms of self organization that emerged throughout the country. While some of the unprecedented organization was

directed by old elites, and while most was poorly utilized by the Kerry Campaign, there was an extraordinary flowering of mass participation and organizing, much of it generated independently, with few resources but great imagination. For example:

The “Democratic Wing of the Democratic Party.” This was the rallying cry of the Howard Dean campaign, which energized a large number of new campaign workers motivated mainly by opposition to the war in Iraq and the need for national health care. Based mainly among young people and the service worker unions, the “Deaniacs” served as an opposing pole to the center-to-right DLC within the Democratic Party. After losing the primary and then backing Kerry, Dean is now working to regroup these forces into a new formation, Democracy for America. Added to the fact that a majority of the delegates to the Democratic Convention were antiwar, this sets up an explosive conflict within the Democratic Party which, if properly developed, could provide an important ally to the overall peace movement.

Kucinich and the Progressive Caucus. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and Barbara Lee (D-CA), Co-Chairs of the 54-member Progressive Caucus in Congress, played a critical role in getting 125 votes against the 2002 \$87 Billion appropriation for the war in Iraq. As a presidential candidate, Kucinich continued campaigning, long after it was clear he would not win, mainly to build the mass base of the caucus and continue the opposition to the war within the party. Immediately after the Democratic Convention, Kucinich teamed up with a number of Dean Campaign activists and other left progressives to support the formation of a new organization, Progressive Democrats of America. This organization already has key connections with activists from the Green Party and other political independents outside the Democratic Party.

Leading independent Democrats like Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Ann Richards of Texas and many more, who committed to anti-war and anti-racist, pro-democracy principles and actions, continued to argue within the party for a more progressive, grass-roots based approach. Employing this outlook is what gave Schakowsky vote tallies in the 70s instead of the 40s. Their political wing within the party, while ignored by the DLC, continues to show it knows how Democrats can win.

Moveon.org, ‘Meetups’ and the Internet. Organized by a small core of internet-savvy progressive Democrats, Moveon.org gathered millions of activists to its email lists. It brought in nearly \$50 million in small donations to its PAC, which it distributed to Democratic candidates independently of the national leadership of the party. Through its decentralized network of local Moveon.org “meetups,” it helped mobilize mass actions against the war and brought in an estimated 400,000 new voters. The meetups are a new decentralized form, facilitated by a central web site that enabled local supporters of every candidate to find each other in local areas, and poll each other to determine the time and place of local face-to-face meetings. Every candidate and every issue had one, promoting a vast increase in grassroots participation.

Mass Actions in an Electoral Context. Early in 2004, over one million protestors, mainly women, turned out for the DC “March for Women’s Lives” aimed at the Bush Agenda. In August 2004, over 500,000 turned out for the United for Peace and Justice “The World Still Says No to War” march, also aimed at the Bush Agenda, at the GOP Convention in New York City. While not officially endorsing Kerry, these were powerful events that fueled the grassroots electoral insurgencies.

America Coming Together (ACT) and other ‘527’ Groups. Set up to conform with the new campaign finance laws, these groups gave a way for traditional electoral players--trade unions, corporate elites and wealthy individuals—to channel large sums of money into campaign activity

separately from regular party channels. ACT, for example, received millions from George Soros, SEIU and the Teamsters. Working in tandem with the League of Conservation Voters and others, ACT was able to finance large volunteer organizations in the “battleground states,” including fielding 40,000 ACT workers on Election Day itself. While the right wing squawked about liberal 527 money, in the end the conservative 527 groups still managed to get more in total dollars than those aligned with liberal causes. In a backhanded way, the 527s also revealed a weakness in the Democratic leadership. As Benjamin explained:

“The Democrats have really lost touch with their base. In this campaign, the ones who were out there going door to door for Kerry were the 527 groups....While these organizations galvanized thousands of activists, I witnessed a lot of duplicated efforts and wasted money by bringing in a lot of volunteers from out of state. Whereas when you look at the Republicans, they were more organized, united under a ‘central command’ in the party, and rooted in community through church networks. The Republicans emphasized local volunteers.”

Cities for Peace and against the Patriot Act. In a new development, more than 190 city councils, including large urban centers and many small ‘blue dots’ in seas of ‘red states,’ passed resolutions against the pending war in Iraq before it started. Later, a similar number took a stand to change the worst anti-civil liberties features of the Patriot Act. This helped establish a network of local elected officials that found ways to work together with those organizing voter registration drives and mass actions in the streets.

And that’s just the national list. In cities throughout the nation, creative groups emerged, such as New York’s Sunday In the Park Without George, or Runners Against Bush or the Swing (state) Sisters in Chicago. These involved thousands of people, many for the first time, in political action where they work, study, live and play.

How did this play out for progressives on our local level?

In Chicago, as we went into this campaign, we were initially a largely spontaneous movement that had popped up all over the place. While focused on the invasion of Iraq, we were made up of all kinds of people--people who were upset about the war, people who were upset about the Patriot Act and its threat to civil liberties, people angered by the rise in chauvinism towards immigrants, and a range of other issues. We represented a wide span of political views--leftists, progressives, liberals, even a few moderate Republicans. Some of these people formed citywide groups, while others formed groups in neighborhoods. Our citywide group, CAWI, especially encouraged the formation of these neighborhood-based groups—in the city, in the suburbs and in the surrounding counties. Along with promoting mass action in the streets, we also utilized these groups to succeed in our city council resolution work. Thus the “grassroots base community” was an important concept, and it was the way we tried to grow.

That's where we stood when we started our ‘Regime Change Begins at Home’ voter registration campaign. We began by recruiting people to become deputy registrars. Each time CAWI activists, together with the city and county officials working with us, had a session of 50 or so people to train, we would ask how many people in the room had worked in an election. Maybe two or three hands would go up. The vast majority had never worked in an election before. They had never registered voters before; they had never gone into a precinct and worked it, but they were clearly fired up and militantly enthusiastic to do so now.

So where are we at now?

In the end, CAWI alone deputized and trained nearly 1000 registrars in Chicago and the suburbs; and, working with some close allies, brought in nearly 20,000 new voters. Hundreds of CAWI members and affiliates traveled and made phone banking calls to other states – gaining valuable skills and experience. Additionally, we were able to form strong alliances with other youth, Black and Latino activists—all new relationships that could be built on in the future.

All of these people now know how to go door to door on the issues; they know how to work their precincts and identify inclinations of the voters. They have thousands of new people on their mailing lists. They also know how to get out their voters and protect their votes, and know how to build alliances with new people and other groups. They found that they couldn't mount a credible campaign alone; they had to go out and find other people and groups in their neighborhoods they hadn't known before and make alliances with them, not only for this election, but for other struggles as well.

So look back at where we started from and where we are now. It is a very different world, in terms of how well organized we are and the experience that we have gained. We have moved some distance from all these small anti-war circles that we initially started with, to the kinds of experience, connections, alliances and the consciousness of the battle that we have now.

The level of political consciousness is also an important factor even if it's harder to measure. One sign, for instance, following the election, is the discussion and activity on the internet and in other media, among hundreds of thousands of people outraged about how the election was stolen, or manipulated, or whatever.

There is a lot truth to it. Some of us older, more hardened hands, when we heard people say, "The Republicans did this! The Republicans did that!" we often replied, "Yes, well, so what else is new?" But for a lot of people, for whom this was the very first election they worked in, they were shocked by the shenanigans of business-as-usual elections.

CAWI sent hundreds of people out to Wisconsin, Ohio, Missouri, and Iowa. It was a radicalizing experience for them because they came up against Republican goons who were out there doing this 'depress the vote' stuff. They met up with the GOP intimidation of young, poor and minority voters first hand, and to counter it and protect the vote, they quickly had to learn the tactics of counter-intimidation. It was quite a learning experience.

So we are now in a very interesting political space.

These changes in consciousness and organization are the fruits of the struggle. Even though we narrowly lost removing Bush from the Presidency, we still have all these fruits.

Bringing in the Harvest

What is the most important thing about fruits? We have to harvest them. If we don't harvest them, if we just leave them in the fields or on the ground, shame on us! If we don't consolidate these gains, all of our ultraleft critics who opposed the election as a big diversion will be largely correct. If we allow all these gains to slip through our fingers, we will have been little more than a tail on the Democratic Party.

We have to find new ways to consolidate these gains into new and stronger forms of organization.

We have a good start in Chicago, because we were community-based to begin with and the work we did during the elections just strengthened that base. We used the opportunity of the elections to enhance peoples' organizing skills – and there's nothing like door-to-door leafleting or doing voter registration on the issues to sharpen those skills. Our deputy registrar trainings, development of voter lists, even our coalition work added to mailing and phone lists, which in turn were used to recruit people to participate in everything from antiwar rallies and voter registration to trips to neighboring states. And in fact CAWI's consistent identification with both the issues and the elections meant that at our first post-election meeting, we had nearly 40 new people in our core group. We are clearly a pole of attraction in our area.

But if we are going to consolidate our gains and move forward, we also have to be bolder and more visionary about our prospects for the future. We especially have to be creative in fashioning new instruments and programs for social change. In Chicago – and we hope elsewhere, we think it is time to build on what we have done and create a new organization – one that is:

- 1) Rooted in the anti-war politics that spurred the creation of CAWI (and other entities) and will continue to give it energy, but over time manages to develop a more holistic vision;
- 2) Committed to grass-roots organizing on issues, particularly the war, but with a willingness to work both within and outside the electoral arena, recognizing that there is strength in 'walking on both feet'.
- 3) Value-based and nonpartisan by design, with a willingness to work with progressive issues and candidates within and outside of the Democratic Party, the Greens and others.
- 4) Local in origins but aggressively works to create a national federation of groups with similar interests and strategies.
- 5) A poll of attraction and center for people whatever their level of activity. Activists may be at its core, but our experience tells us that it is important to create spaces where people can participate at their own level.

This is the context of both our electoral work and our prospects for mass direct action. How, then, do we build the new forms of organization appropriate to the tasks at hand? Here's how we would elaborate on the key points:

We need to be value-centered. Our starting point is the idea of expanding the core values of peace, justice and democracy in the political, economic and social spheres. We are not candidate-centered, single-issue centered or party-centered. Our commitment is to finding the ways to translate our core values into effective programs, sustainable policies and life-enhancing changes here and around the world. We are not anti-capitalist, anti-socialist or even necessarily anti-corporate. We understand that meaningful and gainful employment, the anchor of a decent livelihood, requires the high-road expansion of high-value, high-skill productive industry and wealth creation, even as we oppose the race-to-the-bottom rapaciousness of low-road corporate raiders and polluters. We thus seek allies in all classes in society.

We need grassroots participation. Our organizations must be community-centered. They must be neighborhood based, workplace based, faith based and school based. We need thousands upon thousands of local activists and supporters. They must be independent with their own finances, donors and resources. It is not sufficient simply to make "coalitions of letterhead advisory boards" that represent millions of people on paper but can't get more than a hundred or so folks in the streets or a

handful of volunteers at events. This requires a practice of mass action in the streets as well as electoral activity. It also requires a commitment to diversity, tolerance, non-sectarianism, and a democratic style of working with people who agree on some issues but disagree on others.

We need to be nonpartisan and seek broad alliances. Just ending the war in Iraq will require a tremendous mobilization of progressive forces, winning over of moderate forces and isolating Bush and his Neocon hegemonists. It will also require the defeat of pro-war forces in both major parties. Likewise, electoral reform is going to require the participation of Greens, Libertarians, Progressive Democrats, Civil Libertarian Republicans, the fledgling Labor Party and other minor parties and political independents.

Nonpartisan alliances are not new to American politics. In the early part of the 1900s through the 1920s, the Nonpartisan Leagues were formed throughout the Midwest, from Wisconsin to the Rockies. They rallied the rural population against the Robber Barons and railroad owners by running their own candidates, as well as running slates of NPL candidates in both Democratic and Republican primaries. They managed to take over several state legislatures and win important reforms as a result.

Today, the GOP rightists are pursuing their own broad ‘encirclement’ alliance of uniting the rural areas, winning over the suburbs, and dividing the urban centers by appealing to a new version of “white male identity politics.” We need to oppose it with a counter-hegemonic, broad alliance of our own that exists as a new organization. We can call it the Progressive Nonpartisan Alliance of Illinois, Progressive Illinois, the Network of Peace and Justice Voters of Illinois, or whatever. The concept is what is important, but serious workers and serious funding must be found to start growing it now. Finally, by starting it here, we will be in the best position to use it as an example or ally of similar efforts across the country. In this way, we can prepare for 2006, where we can selectively work to defeat pro-war candidates and elect antiwar candidates.

We need to keep our ability to focus. We can connect and relate to a wide range of issues, but we need to keep our focus on the critical issues that brought us into being in the first place. This is primarily ending the war in Iraq, opposing wider war elsewhere, and opposing the impact of war, especially its racist and chauvinist threats to democratic rights, on the home front. We are most effective as a broad front against Bush and the policies of his War Party, rather than as an anti-imperialist bloc that equally takes up every conflict or issue against all Republicans and Democrats.

David Frum, one of Bush’s top speechwriters, has an interesting piece in the Nov 9 Wall Street Journal in this regard. He fretted about ‘ferocious partisan dissension’ hurting the war effort; but if we are wise tactically, we are in a good position to expand this dissension, and likewise oppose all the ‘bipartisan reaching out’ and ‘healing the wounds’ rhetoric coming from the DLC types. Frum’s also upset about Bush’s opponents possibly taking advantage of the ‘inevitable mistakes’ in war; but we are also in a good position to do just that. Finally, he worried about ‘partisan wrangling’ when much of the Patriot Act come up next year; but we have the ability to encourage ‘partisan wrangling’ over the Patriot Act and work to change and repeal at least some of its worse features.

The Shape of Future Battles

What would this organization – locally, and together with others, nationally, do? It would address the issues at hand – from the particulars of the War in Iraq and other new follies of Empire, to the consolidation of power of the far right, and even to changing the electoral system itself.

Bush and the far right believe they have a mandate. They believe it even though the GOP margin of victory was slim and their support is disproportionately based on an unstable insecurity among white male voters. They are not likely to stop with Iraq. They have their eyes on Iran and a lot of other places. They have this incredible delusion that they are going to bring democracy throughout the Islamic world by using the Special Forces and the 82nd Airborne as instruments of social change.

In the real world, American GIs are finding themselves fighting urban guerilla war against people who claim to "love death more than life" when it comes to fighting "the infidel". This is not going to be a cake walk. This is not going to be Grenada. Bush and his Neocons are not going to get their victory on the cheap. This is going to be a horrible, drawn-out and unjust struggle. The longer it goes on, the worse it will get. What is more, the hard right will be pushing its "culture war" on the home front, trying to repeal the 1960s, taking aim at civil rights, women's rights, gay rights and many other progressive programs.

On the Fight against War and Occupation

In regard to the war, Tom Hayden recently summed up our tasks as well as anyone. In a piece published on Altnet.org, "How to End the War in Iraq," he prescribes a focused 'Plan of Action' for us. Here is a shortened version:

"One, the first step is to build pressure at congressional district levels to oppose any further funding or additional troops for war. If members of Congress balk at cutting off all assistance and want to propose "conditions" for further aid, it is a small step toward threatening funding. If only 75 members of Congress go on record against any further funding, that's a step in the right direction - towards the exit.

"Two, we need to build a Progressive Democratic movement which will pressure the Democrats to become an anti-war opposition party. The anti-war movement has done enough for the Democratic Party this year. It is time for the Democratic leadership to end its collaboration with the Bush administration - with its endorsement of the offensive on Fallujah, the talk of "victory" and "killing the terrorists" - and now play the role of the opposition. The progressive activists of the party should refuse to contribute any more resources - volunteers, money, etc. - to candidates or incumbents who act as collaborators.

"Three, we need to build alliances with Republican anti-war conservatives. Non-partisan anti-war groups (such as Win Without War) should reach out to conservatives who, according to the New York Times, are "ready to rumble" against Iraq. Pillars of the American right, including Paul Weyrich, Pat Buchanan and William F. Buckley, are seriously questioning the quagmire created by the neoconservatives.

"Four, we must build solidarity with dissenting combat veterans, reservists, their families and those who suffered in 9/11. Just as wars cannot be fought without taxpayer funding, wars cannot be fought without soldiers willing to die, even for a mistake....Groups like Iraqi Veterans Against the War deserve all the support the rest of the peace movement can give. This approach opens the door to much-needed organizing in both the so-called "red" states and inner cities, which give disproportionate levels of the lives lost in Iraq.

"Five, we need to defeat the U.S. strategy of 'Iraqization.' "Clearly, it's better for us if they're in the front-line," Paul Wolfowitz explained last February. This cynical strategy is based on

putting an Iraqi "face" on the U.S. occupation in order to reduce the number of American casualties, neutralize opposition in other Arab countries, and slowly legitimize the puppet regime. In truth, it means changing the color of the body count... There is no sign, aside from Pentagon spin, that an Iraqi force can replace the American occupation in the foreseeable future. Pressure for funding cuts and for an early American troop withdrawal will expose the emptiness of the promise of "Iraqization."

"Six, we should work to dismantle the U.S. war "Coalition" by building a "Peace Coalition" by means of the global anti-war movement. Groups with international links (such as Global Exchange or other solidarity groups) could organize conferences and exchanges aimed at uniting public opinion against any regimes with troops supporting the U.S. in Iraq. Every time an American official shows up in Europe demanding support, there should be speakers from the American anti-war movement offering a rebuttal to the official line.

"In short: pinch the funding arteries, push the Democrats to become an opposition party, ally with anti-war Republicans, support dissenting soldiers, make "Iraqization" more difficult, and build a peace coalition against the war coalition. If the politicians are too frightened or ideologically incapable of implementing an exit strategy, the only alternative is for the people to pull the plug."

On the Prospect of Right Wing Consolidation and an Ever-More-Repressive State at Home

Many are nervous about the prospects of a fascist state emerging in the U.S. The remarks made by former AFL-CIO Education Director and current CEO of TransAfrica, Bill Fletcher, at a recent antiwar conference in Connecticut, are probably a better estimate of reality:

"What we do not see, at least at this moment, is a mass movement that is attempting to end the party-system and end bourgeois democratic capitalism. What we do see, is a highly repressive State that is overseeing massive wealth redistribution from those at the bottom to those at the top, reducing civil liberties, tolerating limited terms of resistance and which is supported by a well-funded and highly organized, reactionary, theocratic movement. This reactionary, theocratic movement is grounded in a form of right-wing populism and as such could probably evolve into fascism, but at this juncture there is no indication that the capitalist class is in the midst of a political crisis that they believe that they cannot resolve through existing means and mechanisms.

"This should NOT make us feel warm and fuzzy....What is particularly dangerous is that this authoritarian-theocratic state is seizing upon the broad insecurities of the population, but particularly the white section of the population. We must keep this in mind since the November elections were not only a victory for political reaction in general, but also for racial politics.

"The insecurity much of white America feels is, in my opinion, not simply or solely about terrorism. Terrorism, in some respects, has become the focal point for the societal anxieties felt by white America as their world collapses--the collapse of the American Dream, the collapse of the notion that the lives of our children will improve over our own, the collapse of the bubble of ignorance that has surrounded us and within which we all too often found comfort.

“And while we forge an alternative vision and entity that hopes to address positively the insecurity from a progressive point of view, it is clear that all organizations that emerge, must battle to preserve civil rights, public space, women’s rights, gay rights and fight against the tide of racism, sexism, homophobia and jingoism that is inherent in the Bush agenda and critical to the Rove strategy.”

On Reforming the Electoral System Itself.

Here is the basic starting point of the American political battleground that we have to deal with: Until now, we have been stuck with the two-party system. There is nothing in the Constitution that says we have to be limited to a two party system. It is not chiseled in legal stone that we must have a two party system, but we nonetheless have it for a reason. It didn't used to be this way; we used to have the Populist Party, the mass Socialist Party of Eugene Debs and lots of other popular tools for change. During hard times, people made use of a variety of tactics like fusion and nonpartisan voting to build insurgent parties and candidacies and win a substantial number of elections. But the ruling class of this country was threatened by these expansions of democracy. That’s precisely why they rewrote and changed the electoral laws, state by state, to make it difficult for the broader people's voice to be heard.

Electoral law biased towards two parties has rotten consequences. Every two years for the last 40 years we have been involved in politics, the discussion goes this way: "How can you work with the Democratic Party- these people will sell you out! Work with the Democratic Party is the death of the mass movements!" Then the other side says "Third parties are diversions, irrelevant and marginal! The best thing you can do is become a spoiler and elect somebody worse!" Here’s the rub: both sides of this argument are absolutely right about each other! So how do we get out of that bind?

There is only one way to get out of it. We have to change the election laws. We have to build a massive grassroots citizen’s initiative, state by state, to change our election system from an anti-democratic polyarchy to a popular participatory democracy.

The election law has to be reformed to allow for instant runoff, preferential balloting, fusion tactics and other measures encouraging broader participation. These are not weird ideas. In every industrial democracy in the world, except this one, this is the normal way they do things. It is the American system that is weird! In nearly every state, there are already groups and committees dedicated to this work, but they usually have only a handful of people and allies working with them. This has to change. We have to take the energy and anger from 2000 and 2004 and get busy working with them in a big way, especially in the periods between elections.

It can make a significant difference. For example, in New York City, they have the left-progressive Working Families Party, which has won a number of local seats now. The reason why it’s having the impact it has is because in the state of New York, fusion is legal. Fusion means your party can cross-endorse and vote for somebody on another ticket - like the Working Families Party put Hillary Clinton on their ticket as their Senate candidate when she was running against a Republican. People could vote the Working Families ticket and, for better or worse, also vote for Hillary. But they also had their own local candidates, and in that way they could show and grow their strength. That is what fusion means. That way you do away with the spoiler effect. Fusion used to be legal throughout the whole Midwest; the Populist Party and the Socialist Party both used it to build themselves. That’s precisely why the ruling class took it away, and that’s why we have to fight to get it back.

Nor is fusion necessarily the main or even the best reform in the arsenal we need to gather. Preferential balloting, which now operates in San Francisco, made a huge difference in the last mayor's race, where the Greens nearly defeated the Democrats and moved the entire political climate and debate in a progressive direction. Even non-partisan voting, like we have in Chicago in the City Council races, makes independent organization more feasible than otherwise. There are other simpler measures that can also increase participation, like same-day registration or having elections on a weekend.

One thing is certain. It will be an incredibly tough fight, since both the Republican right incumbents and the Democratic center-right incumbents have every reason to oppose election-law reform. Still, our next steps are clear-cut: Consolidate the gains of the election battles by forming new organizations, energize the grassroots by a wide range of decentralized local actions against the war and the Bush agenda (there are many events planned already for the holiday season), build a major protest around the Bush Inauguration, and come together as a newly organized network of activists from cities and towns throughout the nation.

History is not static. The United States is a changing landscape, with the young, Latinos, Blacks, immigrants and women becoming an ever-increasing majority in the nation. The demography of the nation points towards a progressive politics – but it will become dominant only if we have the vision, the breadth, and the energy to crystallize and organize it.

If the election of 2004 has demonstrated anything, it is that there is no one to do what needs to be done other than the millions of us who fueled the energy of the anti-war movement and the grass-roots activities the past 18 months. Sustaining that moment and movement may well determine the future of the nation. The task is daunting, but the alternative is not acceptable.

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