

# Was an Obama Vote a Vote for or Against the 1%?

by David Keil

I asked a breakfast companion, "How did you vote?" He said, "Green." "How would you have voted in a swing state?" "Green," he said. "Why?" I asked. "I voted for Obama in 2008, and I regretted it almost immediately. And the Greens are on the ballot."

A dinner companion asked me, "Who did the Socialists run?" I told her about Stewart Alexander's campaign. She was glad to hear.

As a Socialist Party member, I feel big pride in the Alexander and Mendoza campaign. Our candidates spoke for us and for the part of the 99% that produces for everyone, including what the 1% consume wastefully. I was proud to write in the names, "Alexander and Mendoza." I voted for what I wanted, not against what I was afraid of.

If Romney had been elected, those who didn't vote for Obama would have heard complaints from some of those who did. Two days before the election, Michael Moore wrote: "Despite all the legitimate criticisms of Obama, he is nothing like the tsunami of hate and corporate thievery that will take place if Mitt Romney is president ... I can't promise you that your life will get better, easier under Barack Obama. I do think he cares and I know for sure that if the other guy is sitting in the Oval Office, I can guarantee you that not only will your life not get better, it will get much, much worse" ([www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com)).

If life gets worse in Obama's second term, those who voted for him may reconsider their decision. If a deadly new U.S. war starts in the next four years, many people will begin a new thinking process. When I was a teen, LBJ's escalation of the Vietnam war started me on a new thinking process. Lots of people were as afraid of the Republican candidate, Goldwater, as Michael Moore was afraid of Mitt Romney. Their vote for LBJ against Goldwater helped bring the rest of the Vietnam war with all its horrors.

*The Nation* editorialized before the election that a Romney victory "would strike a devastating blow to progressive values and movements, locking us in rear-guard actions on a range of issues ..." I don't agree. I don't like that kind of pro-Democratic Party rhetoric, even if I'm happy to see the weight of women, African Americans, Latinos, and LGBTQ people weighing in to decide an election that followed a campaign that included some discussion about oppression -- even if I'm glad to see that the electorate was willing to consider returning to office the first Black president and not to bow before the four-year hate campaign directed against him.

I like the idea, expressed by a member of *The Socialist's* editorial group, of approaching the election from two angles at once: a common-sense approach and a theoretical approach, a blend of heart and mind. I was happy to vote for my ideas and not to vote for a candidate of a party that represents war for me.

I was happy to see what Scott Tucker wrote on *TruthDig.com*: "No one expects the Green and Socialist parties to sweep into the highest offices in the next election. But if we vote with courage and conscience only when we are assured that a majority will vote along with us, then what can we possibly mean by either courage or conscience? If a good cause is worth a fair fight, then we are obliged to act now in creating the future majority."

But there are times in my life when I choose between two evils, and I try to choose the lesser. Why not vote for Obama, then, as a lesser evil to an obvious big evil, the politics of the Republican ultra-right? Lots of people on the left in my state, Massachusetts, for example, would consider voting Green or Socialist for President only because the state is "safe" for Obama. But they would vote for Obama in a swing state, and they might vote for the Democrat in a close Congressional or Senate race.

Is it possible that an Alexander-Mendoza vote gave more support to progressive causes than an Obama vote; that an Obama vote was not a vote for a lesser evil? That a Democrat/Republican cannot be a lesser evil to another Democrat/Republican?

The following gives my thought process on why to write in my vote for the Socialist Party slate and not to support Obama as the lesser of two evils -- not even in a swing state in 2012 -- some reasons never to vote for Democrats or Republicans.

Let's look at Citizens United. The Democrats and Republicans are more dependent than ever on money from the 1%, most of which comes from the top 0.1%. This means that in office, they will do what the 1% want. What the 1% want is not decided in Congress or in the White House, but privately. The only power we in the 99% have over Obama or Romney as President will be exercised in the streets, not in the voting booth. The money wasted by the unions on candidates of either party of the right has no effect except to boost further their pro-1% policies.

That is why it took the Occupy movement to change the political conversation in the U.S. and why no number of left, or youth, or female, or

oppressed-minority votes for Obama could have the slightest effect on what the President will actually do in office.

It is because the two candidates were like two sides of the same coin. Neither answered to the 99%. A vote for Obama was thrown away. A vote for Alexander was a voice for socialism, democratic rights, and the interests of working families.

The interests of the 1% and those of the 99% are incompatible, so a President or a Congress member can only choose one or the other when making decisions in office. When we vote, we are voting to hand power to a class – either to the 1% or to the working people.

Those targeted openly by Romney will be targeted in a different way by Obama, because the wealth behind Romney and Obama is the same. I like the way the web articles at *Black Agenda Report* explain this.

Those in the 99% who produce what all consume are targeted not only by the decisions of the rich, but by the functioning of the system that benefits the rich. This system creates crisis after crisis for itself. The disasters of these crises fall on those with least resources to withstand disaster.

Those targeted by the rich began to give an answer when they responded so favorably to the Occupy movement. When they went into the streets in Chicago during Occupy. When they went into the streets in Wisconsin. These movements changed the political terrain of the U.S. and are likely to change it again. They are likely to give rise to new electoral alternatives based on the organizations of working people.

The Socialist campaign of Alexander and Mendoza pointed in that direction. It broke out of the multiple silos of issue-oriented strategies, bringing all the issues together. Socialists do not see and do not confront issues as independent battles. The battles are part of a broader struggle with big corporations and big capital.

Unemployment does not occur because Republicans are greedy. It is the result of the inherent chaotic and unstable system of capitalism. Attacks on women's and GLBTQ rights aren't only a problem of bigotry and religious extremism. Rather, they are a symptom of capitalist inequality, expressed through patriarchy and hatred for families that practice gender equality.

These are reasons why I not only felt good voting for Stewart Alexander and Alejandro Mendoza, but I also believe that no more net benefit would result from voting for a Democrat over a Republican than for a Republican over a Democrat.