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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Election Day: It's Finally Up To You

Finally, Election Day is here — and the LEAST you can do at this point is vote.

In the ritual of democracy, this is inarguably the most important day of the year in America. It's the day when we the People make our voices heard, our feelings known and flex our collective muscle.

It's the day in which we choose. Finally.

This day is more than that now, however. It's the day that is the focus of the tsunami of money that has rolled into our presidential campaign alone. It's the day that some candidates and causes have pointed to for four years or more. It's the day in which all the hyperbole, drama, faux-hysterics and heated emotions reach their point.

Don't miss it.

By that, we mean don't blow off your opportunity to go to the polls and vote today (that is, if you haven't already voted early). Cast your ballot, then whisper a silent prayer of thanks that not only can we do this kind of thing in our country but also for the fact that the entire cycle is finally over.

Something has happened to this essential democratic process over the years that has turned the ritual into a relentless grind for many people. And we say that without the "benefit" of being in a swing state, where political campaigning has become an excessively monied and, thus, irritating affair.

But if nothing else, look past the high-profile presidential war and concentrate on the state and local races that you will be — or should be — influencing today.

This is where your voice can really make a difference. And this is where you need to be heard.

In South Dakota, not only is there a major statewide race for the U.S. House, there are significant ballot measures that really demand your opinion. They address issues such as education and business, both of which are vital to our future. How these measures fly or don't fly will have a significant bearing going forward.

There are legislative races across the state that will once again determine the makeup of the Legislature in Pierre and what roads are pursued there. Your voice can make a big difference in that direction.

Yankton County, for instance, even has races at the county level. People you probably know are asking for your support and, in effect, your guidance.

The thing is, it's too easy to just bypass the whole process. People do this even though, thanks to early voting laws, it's a lot harder to find reasons not to vote.

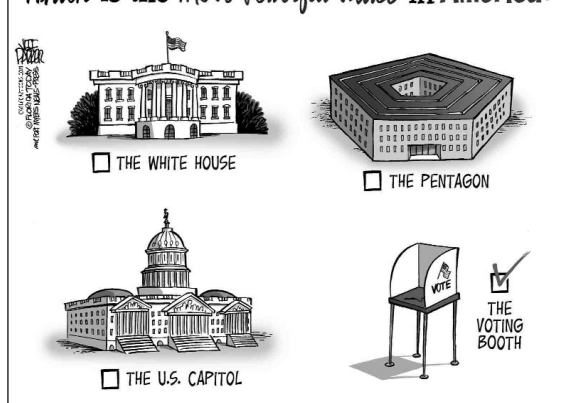
So, after the months of campaigns, forums, political advertisements and discussions, it's up to you today. This is the part of the process where YOU come in and where YOU do your thing. Because no matter how much money is poured into these races and no matter how many hours are devoted to wooing you, YOU have the final say.

This is your day. Seize it.

The polls in South Dakota are open until 7 p.m. local time, and in Nebraska, they are open until 8 p.m. CST. Take the time. Vote!

kmh

Which is the Most Powerful Place in America?



The Rez of the Story

The Uncommon Russell Means

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), Our prayers and thoughts go out to our relatives who are having a hard time because of the devastation up and down the East Coast. I urge you to donate to the Red Cross if you possibly can. Having been a victim in the Rapid City flood I know somewhat what those folks are going through. Halloween has come and gone and the "holiday season" is here once again — in particular Thanksgiving and Christmas. Let me be the first to wish everyone "Happy Holidays."



Vince TWO EAGLES

I wanted to take this time, if I may, to pay my last respects to my relative (who's mother is Ihanktowan Dakota) Russell Means. Regardless of whether any of us thinks Russell's tactics for his practicing activism was productive or not, in the larger scheme of things, one thing is for sure, many Native people saw his life as an example of involvement in the "what it means to be Indian" in the 21st century.

I think the following excerpt of a recorded speech of his captures the essence of his public philosophy especially during what folks now refer to as the AIM years: "... There is another way. There is the Traditional Lakota way and the ways of the American Indian peoples. It is the way that knows that humans do not have the right to degrade Mother Earth, that there are forces beyond anything the European mind has conceived, that humans must be in harmony with all relations and the relations will eventually eliminate the disharmony. A lopsided emphasis on humans by humans—the European's arrogance of acting as though they were beyond the nature of all related things—can only result in a total disharmony and a readjustment which cuts arrogant humans down to size, gives them a taste of reality beyond their grasp or control and restores the harmony. There is no need for a revolutionary theory to bring this about; it's beyond human control. The nature peoples of this planet know this and so they do not theorize about it. Theory is an abstract; our knowledge is real..."

Russell was by no means (pun not intended) a saint. Like the Kris Kristopherson song says, "He's a walking

contradiction, partly truth and partly fiction." He was simply a man, a Native American man, who tried to figure things out for himself. He was inspirational to many but was conversely highly controversial and nothing more than a "rabble rouser" to others. He brought awareness to Native issues forward while to others he set Indian people back by his violent activism. He was famous enough to be able to run for the office of the presidency of the United States yet was infamous for his drug and alcohol abuse.

He was many different things to many different people. He made an impression wherever he went — of that there was never any doubt. Perhaps it is the kind of impression one leaves the next generation that determines how one will be remembered. In the final analysis, all we truly leave behind are memories.

I remember a man who profoundly influenced many young people and older Native people who had given up on our Indian identity, including myself, to embrace our "Indianness" with pride and purpose. I remember a man who was not afraid of "voting with his body" as he used to put it — who would lay his life on the line if needed for the Native

cause.

I remember a man who kept the people mindful and informed about our treaties and treaty rights. A man who kept us aware of the dangers of not paying attention to environmental issues. I remember a man who was one of the first Natives to participate in the return of our sacred Sun Dance by becoming a Sundancer. I remember a man who was a leader, a mentor, and an advisor to some while feared and shunned by others.

Perhaps in time our memories fade away like the setting sun, but I believe it will be a long time before we forget this uncommon person's courageous battle with cancer and the contribution he made to the human condition and the human journey forward in history. Have a swift journey to the other side my relative, doksha, I'll catch you later my relative.

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

America Goes Poll Dancing

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — This is the un-calleable election. Between daily tracking polls, punditry, intrade gambles, Nate Silver predictions, RealClearPolitics averages — and hurricanes — heads are spinning with anticipation and angst.

Who's going to be the next president? Maybe Barack Obama; maybe Mitt Romney. It could be a landslide! For either one. Or not.

Such are the discussions along sidewalks, over cocktails, in corridors and in checkout lines. What the heck is going on? It's anybody's guess.

One thing going on is information saturation that reflects but also shapes reality. To what extent may not be knowable, but it can't be denied that the constant barrage of analysis, projection and prediction influences the very thing — human behavior — that the quantifiers attempt to capture.

As of Friday, Romney and Obama were within a decimal point of one another — 47.4 Obama to 47.3 Romney — in the national polling average posted by RealClearPolitics. Over at Intrade, the prediction market, odds favored the president 66.6 percent to Romney's 33.5 percent. RealClear put Romney's favorability rating at 6.3 to Obama's 3.7.

Then there's political polling guru Silver, who consistently shows Obama in the lead for the Electoral College and puts his chances of winning at 79 percent.

Combining all the above in some sort of meta-analysis, facing East while balancing on one foot and slicing carrots on the diagonal, you have to figure Obama will be our president for another four years.

Then again, people are unpredictable. Things happen. Weather happens. Ball teams win and lose. Moods swing. Humans fib. Babies cry.

One thing we know without a study or a poll is that people tend to like winners. Thus, when one individual seems to be leading, people don't want to identify with the loser and so align themselves with the top dog. The perception of loser-ness lends momentum to the apparent winner.

But what if the sentiment is only toward winning-ness and not a true preference? Ever been surprised to find yourself hesitating in the voting booth? In the moment of truth, we don't so much change our mind as recognize it.

Doing the right thing is easier when you're alone with your thoughts than when someone is in your face or ear,

probing your innermost thoughts. Humans don't always want their private feelings known and may respond in ways they think will cause them the least discomfort.

Even though most people's votes may indeed be predictable owing to party affiliation, ideology or some other reason, other more-nebulous factors also come into play.

As Paul Farhi reported in Friday's Washington Post, studies show that emotional events related to a variety of things — even a favorite team's recent performance — can influence voting patterns to a small but measurable extent. Researchers found, for example, that when a hometown team wins, so does the incumbent.

Basically, when people feel good, they go with the status quo.

One study cited found that in every election between 1964 and 2008, on average, a hometown victory meant a 1.61 percentage point margin for the incumbent in the team's county. That's not a huge number, obviously, but when the difference between candidates is a single decimal point, it can be significant.

Thus, Farhi proffers that should Obama win a second term, he may owe a thank you note to Ohio State's football team.

The mega-storm Sandy that is still afflicting several states, including especially New York and New Jersey, where people are hungry and bodies are still being recovered, can't be discounted as a factor. Notwithstanding New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's praise for Obama, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's surprise endorsement of the president, (and unearthing of Romney's suddenly unwelcome promise to dismantle FEMA), the mood of voters come Tuesday may not be coherent by any previous standard.

Anger at feeling underserved, no matter the logistical implausibility of government agencies meeting so many victims' needs at once, could turn emotions in unexpected ways. Unhappy people may even vote against their own best interests as an expression of frustration. This is, of course, assuming these people can even get to the polls.

Any or none of the above could shift the course of this election. We'll know when we know. As for the two fine men vying for this impossible job, each should remember that no mandate comes with this victory. The winner of the pie-eating contest gets more pie.

Vote — and good luck, America.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleenparker@washpost.com.



Kathleen PARKER

YOUR LETTERS

Thank You!

Carol Becker, Yankton Lions Club President, and Jean Prater, Secretary

The Yankton Lions Club would like to thank everyone with their donations that helped to make our "Make A Difference Day" project a success. The items for the Baby Shower for the Contact Center and the Shower for the Homeless Shelter will now be able to help more individuals.

As Lions our motto is "We Serve". Thank you for helping us fulfill this motto.

Safe Travels

Daniel Fields, Pierre
South Dakota Highway Patrol Motor Carrier Services

It's my job to help keep you safe. And it's a whole lot easier to do my job if you help me out. I'm not asking for much, I'm asking you to buckle up. Every trip. Every time. I'm also asking you to make sure the rest of your family is buckled up every trip. Every time.

It will make my job easier and help you and your family stay safe.

Thanks and safe travels.

FROM THE BIBLE

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. Luke 18:17. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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