

ACED MAGAZINE

A New Way of Thinking

Celebs Speak Out About Upcoming Election

Interviews

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With the Presidential Election right around the corner, there are more than a few people speaking their mind about the election process, how to choose the right candidate and their opinion on what is needed to provide a better electoral system in the United States.

Some of the individuals that spoke to us had some very valid and interesting view points, including those from Jesse Laz of Locksley, Andy Deane of Bella Morte, Jack O'Shea of Bayside, Ben Grant of The Status, Wendy Carrillo from Si TV, actress Erica Durance, Blaise Beyhan of Ionia, political artist Lauren Bergman, The Perfects, David Lynam from LYNAM, Christopher (aka Mansions), tattoo artist Zulu, and Chad Moore from ReelComp.

It seems the entire world is holding their breath as this U.S. Presidential race continues to escalate in the final days. What once might have been considered an inconvenient national task has suddenly turned into an obsession-driven need-to-do. Why?

"I think people are looking for change and they are looking for genuine honesty from the person who is going to be leading them; someone who will follow through on what their promises are, and what their platforms are. I think people are tired of hearing that something will change, and then it doesn't happen. It is a pretty desperate situation for the economy right now with people losing their homes and things going on with the war. There are some huge issues, and we're looking for honesty. People want their voices heard," says Erica Durance.

What are some of the most important issues in this election? Many people are focusing on a few major things: the economy, energy independence, health care and the war in Iraq.

"On the one hand I feel that this is the most critical election in this country's history. The potential economic and environmental devastation of a McCain victory could be irreversible. On the other hand, I see people looking beyond race and gender in their choice of leaders, I see people who have never entered the political fray not only registering to vote but getting out on the street and taking action. For the first time in my adult life I feel like the entire country has become impassioned," says political artist Lauren Bergman.

Wendy Carrillo offers, "The economy is by far the most important issue. Historically, this is not the first time that we have seen the American economy fall, and it's not the first time that an economic crisis has occurred during an election. While our government fights over bailing out corporate giants who have taken millions as bonuses, the average American is losing their home, their savings, their jobs and is struggling to make ends meet. Following a close second for issues, is the war in Iraq, while we spend trillions building a democracy overseas, our own is falling apart."

"As a musician who doesn't have much, but still pays 30 percent of my income to taxes, it's insane to think that our government refuses to socialize health care. It's an insult to live in a country that prides itself in its accomplishments and refuses to care for its citizens. Imagine being a self-employed American who is making a decent living but can't afford the extra hundreds of dollars a month to get health insurance. Now imagine getting sick or injured and ringing up a \$100,000 medical bill (not hard to do) and having that destroy your credit. Now the credit companies are coming after you. All of your percentage rates go up to the maximum. You fall behind in your payments, and can't get a loan because of bad credit. Your business folds and they repossess your house and car. That's what you get for 30 percent of your income," says Jack O'Shea.

Pushing the envelope even further, we asked some of our participants to tell us where they stood with regards to some of this election's issues.

"The government wants to take more of my money to pay for the errors of CEOs that don't care about students, families, farmers and soldiers? NO THANK YOU. If the financial giants committed economic fraud, I want to see them in jail. White collar crime should not be rewarded with a bailout paid for by hardworking Americans, just like we should not be in a war in a country that doesn't want us to be there. We all know the war in Iraq is an oil war benefiting the Bush Administration. ENOUGH is ENOUGH," says Wendy Carrillo.

Lauren Bergman agrees, "I stand to end the Iraq war ASAP. Elect someone who believes that a woman deserves equal pay for equal work and has control over her reproductive choices, and create policies that protect the environment from destruction."

World renowned tattoo artist Zulu chimes in, "This war and the neglecting of our environment are a disgrace that exemplify the greed and corruption that infests the change purse of dictators who hold high office in this country. Every soldier I tattoo (there have been many) who returns from Iraq tells me this war is all about money and greed and that our president has no clue, nor cares, to know what is happening on the front line."

The Perfects had quite a few bases to touch on. "America's standing in the world: For the past eight years we've experienced a rouge cowboy way of diplomacy that has changed the image of the United States for the worse. We were once looked upon as a beacon of hope and promise. Now we've become a beacon of fear and mistrust. It's very important that we are able to mend the relations that are vital to our ability to connect with the rest of the world. Not doing so only isolates us more and that is something we cannot afford to do because isolation breeds chaos. It's time to have a real statesman back in the White House who will lead with a level head and get us back on track of becoming that beacon of hope and inspiration again.

"The economy: We've become a bloated fat pig living on borrowed money from the top down. Most of this has to do with deregulation and no one minding the store so to speak. Many people went crazy living off credit. Not to mention the wealth in this country has been disproportionately distributed. We see the cost of living rise but not the income. There needs to be a means of making it possible for every American to experience the American dream but right now it's getting harder and harder. The ones that control the cash flow and dictate salaries and costs of living don't want to give up what they feel are rightfully theirs. This can be adjusted by reforming our tax code to make it fairer for the average person: cut taxes where it'll be more beneficial and have the most impact, and raise taxes on those making larger incomes.

"Energy independence: This will be vital to our future, as is moving towards a cleaner way of running our cars, homes and businesses. This will open the path to allow the upstart of new businesses, which will create more jobs within the United States. Hopefully this will also lead the world towards a more efficient way to reuse energy.

"Ending our illegal occupation of Iraq: This ties in with our standing in the world and it affects the other points I've brought up. We invaded a country under false premises. We spent trillions of dollars that could have been used back here at home. We killed many innocent Iraqis and put our own soldiers in harm's way, leaving many families without a son, daughter, husband or wife. We sent many of our soldiers back home with life debilitating injuries ... all this for what? Lies? The whole war was based on false information and had nothing to do with what got us there to begin with: 9/11. The war is a mistake and it's time to put an end to it now and bring our troops home," concludes the Perfects.

Jesse Laz throws in, "We're very partial to education. Many people might say the environment, which is unquestionably in imminent danger and an issue that needs to be

addressed immediately. But luckily it has become such a prominent issue (and rightly so) that I don't know it needs its profile raised. The government will respond, because it's what the majority of their constituents want them to do. Public education isn't nearly as prominent or sexy."

The last few days can be critical to a campaign. What things might be helpful for either candidate in their political battle, what do we want to see more of or less of? Most people want to see less fluff and finger-pointing and more honesty and down-to-the-bone issue addresses.

"I would like John McCain to remove the silence barrier he has over his running mate Sarah Palin. I believe it is ridiculous the media has no access to her or that we cannot treat her like a viable candidate. It is not empowering to her nor to women for her to be treated as incapable of speaking her mind or discussing national and international policy. If she is capable to be the next VP and potentially the next President of the United States, she should be able to answer questions from the press.

"I would like Barack Obama to realize there is huge potential to lose the campaign if he does not employ some counter attacks on John McCain. I understand that while he wants to run an honest campaign, the truth is the American people are not as engaged as we would like them to be. More people vote on American Idol than they do in political elections. It would be crucial for him to not make the same mistakes as Al Gore and John Kerry. Lastly, I would like BOTH candidates to speak about education and most importantly, the Federal Dream Act, something which both have co-authored," says Wendy Carrillo.

Lauren Bergman seems to agree on these notes, "I wish McCain would stop being such an insidious and devious liar and remove himself from the Carl Rove playbook of campaigning. I can't even begin to describe my anger and horror over the choice of Sarah Palin as his running mate. As far as Obama goes I think he is running an intelligent campaign. As much as I respect him for taking the high road and not generally responding to the negative – maybe he needs to do some mudslinging of his own."

"I wish the two major party candidates would stop using catch phrases instead of actually answering questions. It seems that McCain and Obama are both masters at talking a lot while not saying anything," says Andy Deane.

Still others asked would have the candidates unite the people rather than divide them (which sadly will most likely never happen between opposing parties), do more hometown debates, get rid of the lies and spin, and add a little eloquence to their speech giving.

As Jesse Laz puts it, "We would like to see Barack Obama continue with the kind of inspiring speeches he gave initially. Eloquence has been made the butt of jokes in this election, but when you think about it, a good portion of the president's job is to inspire trust in the American people. He's the face of the government and SHOULD be inspiring.

All of the most successful and/or beloved presidents had a way with words, either written or spoken. And I think it is important. Not the sole reason to vote for a candidate, but certainly a positive and not a negative."

The entire electoral process has been compared to bad reality TV, the Miss USA Pageant and a case of bad gas after a long night of beer and greasy food. The general consensus from most everyone is they want the truth. They want the candidates to focus on what they can do and stop wasting time with attacks on others running -- and why aren't the independents allowed to debate again?

"It really bothers me when candidates purposely mislead the public, and unfortunately it happens all the time. Issues are oversimplified and geared toward knee-jerk reactions, quotes are taken out of context and exploited, and human beings are portrayed as one-dimensional figures. I wish that candidates could be honest. I'm tired of candidates saying they have the utmost respect for the other candidate and using that to claim that they're fighting clean, while in attack ads they act quite the opposite. If you think you are better suited to be the President, then show me why. Show me what's good about you and what you plan to accomplish. Don't waste my time telling me what sucks about your opponent. I want to vote for someone because I think they should be president, not because I don't think their opponent should be," says Christopher aka Mansions.

Another thing that has major a role in the election is race and gender. Scoff all you want, it is a factor, and racism, however unfortunate and embarrassing, is still a hater-player in the United States. It drives me insane when I hear people say they aren't going to vote for someone because they have a certain skin tone, a particular middle name or because they are female. What -- are these people two years old? It's despicable. While this is a definite factor for some, it isn't for everyone. There are however, strong views on the subject.

"Most definitely. Remember Rodney King, Roe v. Wade, separation of church and state, the KKK, Farrakahn? I could go on. These are but a few very influential bits and pieces of American culture that strongly effect the voting populous. I feel ALL factors should influence one's EDUCATED vote; unfortunately most Americans are spoon-fed sheep led to the slaughter who draw their conclusions based on one or two bits of hearsay gleaned between reality TV shows," says Zulu.

Lauren Bergman has slightly more hope, "I think as a society we have come a long way in terms of racial and gender equality, though of course there's still a long way to go. It is a terrible irony that Sarah Palin is so completely antithetical to everything that Feminists have fought so long and hard for. I sincerely hope when people enter the voting booth they are focused on the future of this country and this planet, not on the color of someone's skin."

Chad Moore offers, "It is very unfortunate that race, gender and age are factors. It just so happens that all of these factors are playing a major role in decisions made by voters in this next election, which has not been an issue in the past. Of course we need to make our

decisions off of plans, character and belief however I do not believe that it is going to be the case this election year."

Blaise Beyhan points out, "I don't think government should be a popularity contest. It should be about who can bring us in to a future that is sustainable." And that is about it in a nutshell.

Our country is not totally lost though. There is still hope. Hope in the unprejudiced youth that will participate in building a better tomorrow. Hope from loved ones and friends that enable us to feel comfortable in our own skins. Hope that one day people will look beyond color, religion and gender and instead see an individual full of wonderful and curious facets all their own ... that person who is a piece of art or music or theater that is all of their own creation.

The important thing is to make a choice. To have your say. To get off your lazy ass and go vote or shut up and stop whining.

As David Lynam puts it, "I've had it with people bitching constantly but in the end don't even get out and vote. I feel pretty strongly about it. If you're not going to vote, then you forfeit your right to bitch. The ol' I don't vote b/c my vote doesn't matter. I always lose my vote. Yep, and you will continue to if you don't go to the polls and speak your mind."

"Everyone has a responsibility to at least be aware of the issues and state of the country. Whether you're passionate about politics or annoyed, it's still your responsibility to know! It might be hard to feel your voice being heard, but every vote counts so there's your chance to have a voice," adds Ben Grant.

Although everyone has their own idea of what they would do if they were running for president; like give out free gas in water balloons, free cake and ice cream for everyone, or reveal all of their flaws for all to see; one thing is certain, everyone would try their hand at being honest and speak their mind. Lets face it, we're all tired of the B.S.

We all have an idea of what we look for in a president, and most of the time we are not presented with that role model we so desperately desire to lead our country, but that does not excuse us from being ignorant. All votes count. And we, as a people of the United States, must decide what we stand for and who we want to stand up and represent us to the world. Who will be our leader? Who will take us into the future and roll us forward rather than pull us back?

That is a choice only you can make, just make sure you educate yourself before you walk into that voting booth.

--Artwork by Lauren Bergman

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