

Ruth - introduction
Thank Jan & Al Halper
for hosting ^{the} four of us
for two nights.

WAND

I am on a long journey to take a good, long last look at my beautiful country and to encourage as many people as I can to take up the ballot and to brighten up the colors in our fast fading democracy. It has been a long journey for me. ~~My back hurts like hell~~ ~~and~~, while I enjoy making so many new friends along the way, I would rather be back in my home in New Hampshire and walking for leisure instead of in desperate search for a few more good Americans to do the right and necessary thing.

I am tired but I have a ways to go. My life has been long and grand, and I am about done with it, but I am determined to not say goodbye to all of this until I can go to my rest in the soil of a good democracy.

I know that many of you are working hard to speak the truth and speak for justice, and to bring America back to some more sensible path. But I am asking you now to do something more. This advice comes from what I have seen along the 20,000 miles I have traveled since I left home in October.

The good news I bring you from a thousand places is that Americans who have resisted voting in the past do want to vote this year. They are motivated, and even in places where they are afraid their votes will not be fairly counted, they are determined to vote anyway. And here is some more good news: you do

not have to believe the polls that say the election will be close. It will not be close. The pollsters do not reach the many millions of people who do not have regular phones. Many of the people I met in housing projects, in workshops, in music clubs, have only cell phones or no phones at all to answer pollster questions. They all have strong opinions on the election and they all are preparing to vote.

Here is the bad news, however. In all my travels thus far, I have never run into anyone from a political party doing voter registration.

I remember when Will Rogers kidded that he wasn't a member of any organized political party—he was a Democrat. Well, we cannot afford that old joke anymore.

What little there is of the party seems focused on the careers of candidates, not on the needs of people. You can't come around to a housing project or a tough neighborhood just at election time and expect much, but that is what happens. When we walked through the Cabrini Greens housing project the other day in Chicago, we were the first people to do voter registration work there in some time. So said many who were grateful we had come. That is the story everywhere we have gone, from the Overtown and Little Haiti neighborhoods of Miami to the Great Lakes.

The correction for this is not to call your party officials and raise hell, because the political left is really not organizable. The Left is authority-averse and will never be organized like the authority-dependent political Right. But what we can do and must do is far more powerful, if we will but do it.

On my way here I stopped in Battle Creek to visit the grave of Sojourner Truth. There is also a statue of her downtown, and it bears her words: "Lord I have done my duty and I have told the truth and kept nothing back."

Now, friends, it is time for us to do our duty--to tell the truth and hold nothing back.

You all get so many emails and read so many good columns and articles that are sent to you—Krugman, Dowd, Cronkite, Ivins, Hightower, Palast and the few other heroes left in our otherwise ethically corrupted news media. You read them and send them to other members of our little choir.

That is not enough; You must print them out and give them to your neighbors and family members. You must run them off by the hundreds and give them out at bus and train stations until they ask you to leave. Then you must come back with more. The masses of our neighbors are not getting the truth and we cannot expect them to vote wisely unless we wise them up ourselves. No one can do this for us. No presidential

campaign can do more than spread around a few slogans and accusations. The news media will not do it for us, as they are no longer in the truth business. There is only you and me. We need to do a massive voter education project, starting right now. I will have many of these little fliers on my website soon for you to print off, or you can make your own from all the material that comes your way.

Remember that many of us lefties are, as I said, authority-averse and we like to make our own political decisions. Many others, however—including many of our neighbors and friends—are authority-dependent and, before changing their opinions, need to hear the truth coming from the pens and mouths of people they trust. So when Walter Cronkite writes a good piece, put his picture on it and take it around to everyone who remembers him from his days as the most trusted television newsman in America.

I worry that many of the expensive ads being run right now, by MoveOn and others, will not be effective because so many people are resistant to the facts, unless those facts are delivered by a known voice of authority.

There are a few more things we must do.

We must meet with our awakened friends weekly--and I suggest that Tuesday would be a good evening--to go out to the malls and the streets and the fast-

food restaurants to register young voters. It is a fun evening, and you will be making a bigger difference than you can imagine. Also take some of your issue fliers and you will do double duty. Don't get permission, don't set up a table, don't take a clip board if it gets you kicked out. Just go up to young workers and say you are distributing voter registration forms to the workers in the area, and ask them if they need to register to vote for president. And check out the situation regarding people with criminal convictions: many young people think they cannot vote, but they can. Many of the young people in Cabrini Greens were amazed to know that their police records would not prevent them from voting. We have tremendous work to do.

Yes, go to your candidate meet-ups, but that is for strategy and mutual admiration and cannot replace the shoe leather work that must be done right now.

There is another suggestion that I would like to share with you.

Invite your neighbors to an election night party, and do it soon. Call it a landslide party if you want to cheer up your Democrat neighbors and confuse your Republican friends. Start building toward that evening. Have them sign-up to bring food and drinks. Start sending them issue papers. Make sure everyone is registered. Make sure everyone has a ride to the polls, or has an absentee form. Help someone in a

lower income neighborhood or housing project organize a landslide party, too. Have your neighbors organize some food and maybe some school and art supplies for the children in that other neighborhood. Consider having some events soon to get people involved and thinking ahead to the election. This is what I mean when I sometimes say that we must put the party back in party politics. It has become so deadly. It is literally deadly, as we see in the news how people are dying all over the world for our lack of creative leadership and justice. It must come first from our hearts, then into our neighborhoods and outward from there.

No political party or candidate or government can do it for us. It is our democracy, but we must live it if we are to have it.

In spreading around the reprints of good newspaper articles, simply assume that voters want good information about the issues, and give it to them without feeling that you are being partisan. We are for the truth, not for the advantage of some narrow political interest.

I am as non-partisan as I can manage. I am for any candidate or party who will uphold the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, who would never use lies to lead us into war, who will use our common resources for the benefit of our children and all of our people, and who will keep our homeland secure by protecting its

mountains, streams, lakes, forests, and air, and who will make the United States of America a proper and respected symbol and an advocate for justice, freedom and peace in the world. How could anyone say that my specifications are anything but American, and that they should describe any candidate offered by any serious and reputable political party? If my specifications are partisan today, shame on any who made them so.

We must not think we are being partisan when we speak and share the truth with our fellow citizens, and when we help them register to vote. We will do so where we please as citizens, and let no corporation tell us that their aisles or sidewalks are not free speech zones where our Constitution somehow does not apply. The Articles of our Constitution trump their articles of incorporation. Let us take back our rights as citizens to create public space where we choose.

And choose we must, and choose to act now--this week, next week. We cannot live in peace and justice, love and prosperity if we sit on our plentiful asses reading email and shaking our heads in dismay. We must rise to our great positions as the women of the community, who organize, who see things, who speak the truth, who lay shame on those who would ruin our communities and our lives. We cannot go about the rotten business of being the pampered belles who live lives of luxury in the plantation house of the world, if that is what America has become. No, we don't shop

at shameful places like Wal-Mart because they ruin our family businesses and we don't spend our money at Disney parks or stores because they are trying to block the release of Michael Moore's new film, which is all about the truth.

We are the women of America and it is time some very bad-acting members of our society felt the sting of our mighty slap.

It is time we stopped waiting for government to bring love and justice into our communities and we began doing the work that needs to be done. The sooner we do this, the sooner the elections will go our way, because organizing is organizing, and it has a progressive result.

It is time we stopped hoping for a more effective party to do our work for us. Millions of people like you and I are now connecting with all the organizations that are working toward November. This is the evolution of a new kind of politics--a human-scaled politics--and it must extend long past the election and change the way we live. It must be the rise of human beings against institutions that have become useless or oppressive. So we reinvent the parties. We reinvent the news media, we reinvent the economy. And in this, the corrupted press, the big box stores, and the old and unrepresentative political systems can and will be rolled over into the soil as our new shoots emerge.

Many groups are doing great work right now, educating and registering millions of people with the help of people like you and me. It is an uprising of a kind—a good kind; it is part of the revolution we are privileged to have every four years.

Many organizations have received quite a bit of money from Mr. Soros and others to do voter work, and many of them need to get more people on the street. If I can be on the street, running on my poor credit cards, they ought to be out on the street, too—but I haven't seen much of them. My trek survives on small internet donations and I can't imagine the good we could do if we had real resources to match up with all the opportunities we see.

Finally, let me urge those who think Mr. Nader is a better candidate than Mr. Kerry not let their high opinions of their own political correctness cause the deaths of thousands of people in the world over the next four years, which would be the real result of such narcissism. According to Bruce Ackerman's wonderful editorial in the New York Times yesterday, Mr. Nader can avoid risking this outcome if he will name the same Electoral College electors as Mr. Kerry. Votes will register for Mr. Nader, but they will apply to Mr. Kerry if Mr. Nader has insufficient votes to win.

We all have work to do to get to November and to move into the years ahead. Let us make it joyful and selfless work.

On the night of November 2nd we will go to bed, and the next day the world will have gone one of two very different ways. I will be home in New Hampshire. And if it goes right, I will feel like resting. And I haven't felt like I could rest for a long while.

I hope my journey has resulted in some ideas that will be useful to you. I know you are dedicated to this better world we see ahead. It is not beyond our grasp.

Thank you.

as Sojourner Truth said
We are all together here now
and we must forth from here
to spread the truth. Thank you