

OCTOBER 18

Two weeks to go – and one president to oust

We're at a moment in history when progressives must work together – not with a false kind of unity that papers over differences, but instead with a candid kind of unity that recognizes and fights for a vital common goal. Our collective task is to kick George Bush out of the White House.

The thousands of African-American women and men lining up at early-voting sites in Florida are sending a profound message across this country. After nearly four years of "Hail to the Thief," we have a chance to oust the Bush-Cheney gang. We're depending on each other.

An unprecedented grassroots mobilization has been gaining momentum all year. Around the United States, massive vortexes of individuals and groups – working on behalf of organized labor, civil rights, women's rights, the environment, gay rights, civil liberties, economic justice – are determined to keep doing the small things that can add up to one momentous thing: the defeat of Bush. What's going on is much more than the traditional hype that sets in every election year. This time the stakes are so huge – the specter of another four Bush years is so horrific – that a process of immense bottom-up power is underway.

At various times, since early this year, we've heard some silly rationales for staying aloof from the battle to defeat Bush. Some have said it won't matter what progressives do, because Bush is sure to lose. Others have said it won't matter what progressives do, because Bush is sure to win. (A few polemicists have even said one and then the other.) Wrong. Wrong. (And wrong.)

The polls are showing a dead heat between Bush-Cheney and Kerry-Edwards. What we do could make all the difference.

Nothing embodies the emerging spirit of progressive unity this fall more eloquently than the article that appeared a few days ago in the newspaper Indian Country Today under the headline "Winona LaDuke Endorsement of John Kerry for President." - www.commondreams.org/views04/1016-28.htm

LaDuke, currently program director of the national Native American environmental

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justice program Honor the Earth, was the Green Party vice presidential candidate in 1996 and 2000. Now she writes: "I am voting for John Kerry this November. I love this land, and I know that we need to make drastic changes in Washington if we are going to protect our land and our communities. I am committed to transforming the American democracy so that it is reflective of the diversity of this country. I believe in a multi-party system and a multi-racial democracy...."

More than a dozen swing states are on a razor's edge. In those states, the upcoming hard work and votes of progressives could decide the presidential election.

If Bush is beaten, we can – and must – immediately go on to strengthen movements for peace and social justice. One of our main tasks will be to confront President Kerry from the outset with an antiwar movement strong enough to force withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq and promote an evenhanded Middle East policy that respects Palestinian human rights. Then, as now, we'll need unified progressive action to get the job done.