

Reid Buckley Barring an act of God, or an ugly racist reaction among the white middle classes, Barack Obama will be the next president of the United States. In full premonition of which, I am voting for the McCain ticket.

Why this exercise in futility?

Loyalty, I suppose. In September 2007, I sent John McCain a check, with a note saying that though I disagreed with him on many issues, I admired his integrity. At that time, I thought Hillary Clinton was going to be the Democratic choice, and I preferred Senator McCain to the nakedness of Mrs. Clinton's ambition.

I am plenty mad at the Republican Party and would enjoy watching the entire double-talking leadership and its unctuous apparatus throughout the states fried in oil. I still disagree with maverick McCain plenty on the issues, and every time he says "my friends," I wince almost as wretchedly as when George W. Bush ends his sentences with that awful *moue* of his upper lip, producing a smirk which in turn suggests a revolting fullness of self-satisfaction.

A major gripe about the good senator is that he has not set forth a coherent agenda. What does he plan to do about anything? What vision does he have for our country? He is running on his decency, and though we Americans admire moral virtue, in the dragpit of Washington politics, decency can be an impediment.

Barack Obama, on the other hand, for all his muddy shifting with the political winds, has made his vision clear, and it is doctrinaire Democratic left-wing socialism and therefore too depressing for words. I hew to the belief that he is also a decent man and probably politically more savvy than John McCain. He may learn. He may be knocked off his horse on the way to Damascus. But I can't vote for the prospect of Obama's education. So I vote McCain. Unlike the Beltway snobs (an insular pathology that now defines the East Coast from Bangor, Maine to Key West), I place my trust in Sarah Palin. Dadgummit, by golly, she speaks the American language of the plains and the frontier. I trust it, and her. ■

REID BUCKLEY is founder of the Buckley School of Public Speaking and author, most recently, of *An American Family: The Buckleys*.

John Patrick Diggins The banking crisis is affecting the country in ways that no one predicted, except for the government regulators who were forced from their jobs for warning

about the consequences of deregulation. America has gambled with Wall Street and lost, yet neither presidential candidate sees fit to discuss the causes of the catastrophe. Political campaigns are not a time for reflection. Just as Americans express frustration with the war in Iraq when they should be angry with themselves for supporting it on the flimsiest of evidence, so it is with the economy. Neither McCain nor Obama has the slightest idea of what to do, and neither dares to acknowledge that substantial taxes may be necessary to pay for such massive spending. This election is, like so many others, a study in systematic evasion.

In foreign affairs, the choice between McCain and Obama is the choice between the frying pan and the fire. One aspirant to the presidency is happy to see America stay in Iraq for even a hundred years. The other would pull American troops out of Iraq in order to leap into Afghanistan, a land of pot growers, bandits, Taliban zealots, jihadist training camps, and ferocious Pashtun fighters that neither the British empire nor the Soviet Union could subdue.

Whoever wins the White House may carry on the cynical tradition of the Republican Party. In the '50s, candidate Eisenhower promised he knew what to do about the Korean War. Americans expected a military solution, only to discover that the general aimed to withdraw. In the '70s, Nixon and Kissinger charged the Democrats with losing Vietnam and assured us that they had turned the war around by leaving South Vietnam stable and militarily strong—only for the whole country to fall to communism weeks after America departed. In the '80s, Reagan withdrew from Lebanon with the same rationale: even though 241 Marines had been slaughtered in their barracks, the task force succeeded in doing the "job it was sent to do in Beirut."

Republicans have no trouble losing a war and calling it a victory, and some of them are voting for McCain for that reason. Obama, in contrast, is stuck with a war he opposed, and politics may force him to stay the course. Still, I prefer the professor to the warrior. McCain claims he is thinking only about the good of the country, then chooses as his running mate a gun-happy huntress who supported the Alaskan independence movement, which advocates secession from the United States. No wonder she is idolized by those who disdain the very federal government that built the Alaskan Highway. As Orwell observed, those receiving benefits always hate the benefactor. ■

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS is a professor of history at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and the author of *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*.

Rod Dreher This will be the first year since I was old enough to vote that I will not cast a ballot in a presidential election. I quote a character from Richard Linklater's "Slacker" in my defense: "Withdrawing in disgust is not the same thing as apathy."

I can't vote for Barack Obama. He is a pro-abortion zealot and wrong on all the issues that matter most to social conservatives. Mind you, one should not be under any illusion that things will markedly improve under another Republican administration. But there is no question that on issues related to the sanctity of life and traditional marriage, an Obama administration, with a Democratic Congress at its back, would be far worse.

The best case that can be made for John McCain is that he would serve as something of a brake on runaway liberalism. But the country would be at significantly greater risk of war with the intemperate and bellicose McCain in the White House. That was clear months ago, but his conduct during the fall campaign—especially contrasted with Obama's steadiness—has made me even more uneasy. His selection of Sarah Palin, while initially heartening to populist-minded social conservatives, has proved disastrous. Though plainly a politician of real talent, the parochial Palin is stunningly ill-suited for high office, and that's a terrible mark against McCain's judgment.

As both a conservative and a Republican, I confess that we deserve to lose this year. We have governed badly and have earned the wrath of voters, who will learn in due course how inadequate the nostrums of liberal Democrats are to the crisis of our times. If I cannot in good faith cast a vote against the Bush years by voting for Obama, I can at least do so by withholding my vote from McCain.

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While it is foolish to look forward to a decisive electoral defeat for one's side, I can't say that the coming rout will be a bad thing. The Right desperately needs to repent, rethink, and rebuild—and only the pain of a shattering loss will force conservatives to confront reality. Not only must there be a renewal of our political vision and message—and this time, dissenters from within the Right must be heard—but there

must also be a realization at the grassroots that we have long given too much importance to politics and not enough to building cultural institutions at the local level.

The present and future economic traumas brought upon the nation by elites in both parties will minimize the role politics will play in the lives of ordinary Americans. The binge spending that Democrats and Republicans alike engaged in over the past 30 years, and the concomitant failure to be good stewards of the country's long-term economic future, will enervate the government in the decades to come, though the growth of Leviathan in the short term is assured. Local, intermediate institutions—Burke's little platoons—will become more important to the survival of communities. There is a rich treasury of traditionalist conservative wisdom ready to be liberated from the hegemony of the conservative establishment that failed. ■

ROD DREHER is an editor at the Dallas Morning News and the author of *Crunchy Cons*.

Francis Fukuyama I'm voting for Barack Obama this November for a very simple reason. It is hard to imagine a more disastrous presidency than that of George W. Bush. It was bad enough that he launched an unnecessary war and undermined the standing of the United States throughout the world in his first term. But in the waning days of his administration, he is presiding over a collapse of the American financial system and broader economy that will have consequences for years to come. As a general rule, democracies don't work well if voters do not hold political parties accountable for failure. While John McCain is trying desperately to pretend that he never had anything to do with the Republican Party, I think it would be a travesty to reward the Republicans for failure on such a grand scale.

McCain's appeal was always that he could think for himself, but as the campaign has progressed, he has seemed simply erratic and hotheaded. His choice of Sarah Palin as a running mate was highly irresponsible; we have suffered under the current president who entered office without much knowledge of the world and was easily captured by the wrong advisers. McCain's lurching from Reaganite free-market to populist tribune makes one wonder whether he has any underlying principles at all.

America has been living in a dream world for the past few years, losing its basic values of thrift and prudence and living far beyond its means, even as it has lectured the rest of the