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### Transcript The Muslim Vote in Election 2004

**Ralph Nader**

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Council for the National Interest

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Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the sponsors, CAIR and CNI for making this event possible. The subject of the Muslim vote in the election of 2004 is one that is itself subject to stereotype. Stereotyped because the urgency of the times has to focus attention on issues related to civil liberties, on issues related to war in Iraq, on issues related to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. But before I make comments on those areas, it is important to know that there are many others that are all Americans issues. These include increased costs of higher education, lack of health care, growth of poverty in American society, the devastation of the environment, the unfairness of the tax system, which is shifting from wealth to work, and avoiding taxes on that which we like the least, such as pollution, stock regulations, or the addictive industry.

The American electorate is subverted by the commercial election process where money is king. Our elections are put on auction blocks for the highest bidder. Elections were never meant to be for sale; our government was never meant to be for sale; our politicians were never meant to be for sale. Just the reverse has become increasingly our pattern. Eighty percent of money contributed to candidates for federal office—congressional and white house—comes from corporations. Money now is increasingly dominating who runs in elections, who runs in which primary, how people will run, and where people run.

Not many presidential candidates run from a poor area of our country. Not many presidential candidates on the ground are seen connecting the citizen groups, fighting for civil rights, civil liberties, environmental issues, or consumer protection in the inner city where the gouging by companies is unmerciful and destructive to the quality of life. Pay-day loans, rent loans, loan rackets, landlord abuses, lack of municipal services, lead based paint poisoning of children, high levels of asthma, environmental racism, bread lining.

It's important that we pay attention to all these dimensions of life in the United States, as we should not have it, so it can be compared to life in the United States, as we should have it. You and I, and our constitutional protections, are pretentious as the most powerful and wealthy country in the world.

Yesterday the Supreme Court, in a split decision, began the process of putting restraints on the pattern of law enforcement that has violated civil rights and civil liberties of innocent people. These people are American citizens, permanent residents and immigrants who are in this country seeking status. This is a welcomed development. The patriot act, and its associated statutes have unleashed a pattern of law enforcement by John Ashcroft and George W. Bush that is disgracing the patterns of constitutionalism, the necessity of probable cause, the establishment of due process of law in out country.

Thousands of people were rounded up after 9/11. They were innocent; but they were mistreated in the prisons; they were held without identity; they were arrested in many cases without charges, incarcerated without lawyers; material witnesses were imprisoned and kept there indefinitely.

The inspector generals for the Justice Department, right under John Ashcroft, released a report that said that many of these people were arrested without charges and held in inhumane conditions. Conduct included being held in jail cells for twenty three hours a day, taunting of prisoners and slamming prisoners against walls. Security tapes of the bureau of prisons show over three hundred incidents of physical abuse by staff of federal prisoners. None of these hundreds of detainees were found to have links to terrorism.

This is what happens when the Justice Department and George W. Bush pursue a dragnet policy of enforcement. A dragnet policy is a waste of resources. It is inefficient enforcement, and it is enforcement designed not to maximize the selection of patterns that would lead to truly violent offenders. It is enforcement that harms the rights of thousands of innocent people. Dragnet enforcement leads to profiling, it leads to bigotry, and

it leads to the kind of talk that one hears on right wing talk radio. Such encouragement leads to caricaturing religions, chilling dissent, to the thwarting of any opposition politicians that might speak up, because they too don't want to be drawn into a dragnet which abuses due process and shatters of probable cause.

The right of our government to search offices and businesses without notifying their owners, the right of our government to go into the most personal information of us as human beings—medical, employment, financial, and genetic information—what we read, what we've read—these are not rights that are grounded in our constitution. What George W. Bush and John Ashcroft have done in the light of history is to massively transfer power to the executive branch away from the judiciary, and to demand that the congress relinquish its power to the executive branch.

It is now up to the courts to assert the province of American Constitutionalism and due process. It's up to members of the bar, who number almost one million in our country, to stand up for the rule of law and due process, probable cause and observance of the bill of rights. They have not been doing that with very few distinguishable exceptions. Like Professor of law David Cole, of Georgetown law school. The American Bar Association is going to meet soon for its national convention. It needs to take a very strong stand. It's becoming increasingly clear that this country cannot rely on members of the bar, on attorneys of law, or on the legal profession, to defend our liberties under the stress of recent events and recent statutes and recent misuse of enforcement procedures.

Those of us who remember how dictatorial patters arose in Europe not many decades ago also remember that the lawyers in those countries looked the other way because they were too preoccupied to defend the defenseless, to stand up for the abused, indeed to stand up for the rule of law. It is time for the American people to demand higher expectations of lawyers in this country. It's time also for lawyers who are rising to their highest professional responsibilities--and they are few in number—to speak to their own colleagues and hold up professional standards of ethics for them to observe.

The second area I would like to discuss is the war in Iraq. This is a war that started without constitutional authority. The majority of congress war whooped a war resolution through in October of 2002. This anointed President Bush a wartime president and sealed the fate of the Congressional Democrats in the 2002 election. Sometimes I wonder why George W. Bush bothers with campaign consultants when he has the Democrats working for him.

Article one section eight of the Constitution is not a technicality. It was considered one of the highest wisdoms in the constitutional deliberations by James Madison. Because the framers of the constitution did not want one person in the White House to declare war for the United States of America, and put the declaration of war power in the hands of the deliberative body called the US congress. And since WWII, the US congress has been busy surrendering article one section eight authority. Someone said a few years ago, "The last war Congress declared was on poverty," and that was in the mid 60's.

Article one, section eight is not a technicality, and it has been overridden. And there is no American who has legal standing in the courts to challenge this notion. The framers of the Constitution never dreamed that any branch of government would willingly give up its powers. They did not provide any remedy for the citizens of this country to take that surrender of authority, and its unconstitutional transfer to another branch of government, to courts of law. The only citizen who has standing to challenge the government is the Attorney General of the United States, and don't wait for John Ashcroft, to sue his own President.

Our country was plunged into war with Iraq upon a platform of fabrications deceptions and lies now thoroughly and repeatedly documented. As brutal a dictator as Saddam Hussein was, and from 1979 to 1990 when he was entrenched with help from the United States and Britain, he was our government's brutal dictator. He slaughtered communists at our suggestion, and suspected communists. He went into the war in Iran with our logistical, economic, and military assistance, and our approval.

After the Kuwaiti war, US/UN economic sanctions themselves violated international law. Economic sanctions can never be imposed to destabilize dictatorships when the main suffering of those sanctions are innocent children, women and men, civilians all. Under those sanctions, at least half a million Iraqi children and infant's dies from contaminated water, lack of medicine, lack of medical supplies, and lack of chlorine to purify drinking water. Chlorine was a prohibited export to Iraq under those sanctions.

We do have a responsibility to the Iraqi people, but we also have a responsibility to peace and security in the world, and to the safety of our soldiers. In that vein, I'm urging the responsible withdrawal—both military and corporate—of US forces in Iraq over the next six months. Instead, I propose the introduction of peacekeeping forces of neutral countries that have experience in this matter, and nearby Islamic countries, until security can be secured. This would probably be accompanied by humanitarian aid until the Iraqi's can get on their feet. It would also be accompanied at the earliest time by internationally supervised elections with suitable autonomies for Sunni's, Shiites, and Kurds.

If the mainstream Iraqi's are to distance themselves from the insurgency, they must not be confronted with a permanent military and corporate US occupation with the construction of fourteen military bases and a puppet regime. If the Iraqi people are going to be encouraged to distance themselves from the regime, they must be given a sense that they will get their country back under democratic elections, not puppet governments, and the withdrawal of the US-military-corporate-oil-company-occupation of their land. This is not what we are going to see. Both George W. Bush and John Kerry have said we should "stay the course." In Washington DC, that phrase means an interminable fumbling, mumbling, grumbling, and humbling at the core of foreign policy.

The American people are turning against the war in Iraq. They realize they have been lied to and deceived. Two elderly cab drivers—lifelong republicans—in New York told me a few weeks ago, without my even asking, that they were going to vote against George W. Bush. They were both veterans in the army. And when I asked them why, they both said the same thing; "He lied to us about the war." There's a button going around the country that people are wearing. "He lied and they died." Tomorrow I'm sending an open letter to President Bush asking him to make a full accounting of the fatalities, injuries, sicknesses, and mental damages in Iraq. It would be too much to hope that he would make an accounting of the tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians who have lost their lives, men, women, and children.

The Pentagon only reports 'combat zone' deaths and injuries. Non-combat zone deaths and injuries, diseases (and there are many of them), and severe mental health problems are not reported. And I'm calling on President Bush to at least have the decency and respect to report the full numbers that make up the human casualty total for his folly, for his tragedy, his political narcissism, and his messianic militarism that led us into this illegal war, and quagmire, in Iraq. For the short term it may have served his political interest by chilling dissent, silencing democrats, distracting attention from the necessities of the American people, providing great contracts for his corporate friends, and concentrating power in the white house.

The American people now are beginning to realize what happened to them and what was done to them. Forty-two percent want our troops out immediately. Over fifty-five percent think sending troops there was a mistake. Perhaps they realize that Saddam Hussein was a tottering, tuttering dictator presiding over a dilapidated army who wasn't ready to fight for him, and surrounded by far more powerful countries such as Turkey, Israel, and Iran toward whom, if he made one aggressive move, they would have obliterated his regime.

The tide of public opinion is turning. Duplicity is the trademark of the Bush administration. We all remember when he stood before microphones in 2000 and made statements against the use of secret evidence in immigration proceedings. So instead of secret evidence now he has given us secret imprisonment, secret arrests, secret detention, and secret evidence. Of all hundreds of people imprisoned in Guantanamo in Cuba, they have just made two charges against two prisoners. What are they keeping them there for? Nigh on three years. What kind of law enforcement is it that the US government takes action against a lawyer in Portland, OR, or a doctor in Guantanamo, and then is embarrassed and has to drop charges.

Not long ago, hundreds of Israeli combat officers and soldiers signed a proclamation which stated among others that they would refuse to fight beyond the 1967 borders because they would no longer participate in any effort to "dominate, expel, starve, or humiliate an entire people." Those were their exact words. The full proclamation can be found on their website, at [www.seruv.org.il](http://www.seruv.org.il). There is more freedom to discuss the Israeli/Palestinian issue in Israel by far than there is in the United States.

It is time for the US government to realize that this is not a local conflict anymore; it is not just a regional conflict anymore. It is a conflict that is producing flashpoints throughout much of the world and endangering US Citizens in those countries, US businesses in those countries, US workers in those countries, and endangering our own national security here. It is time for the US government to stand up and think for itself.

What has been happening over the years is a predictable routine from the head of the Israeli government. The Israeli puppeteer travels to Washington. The Israeli puppeteer meets with the puppet in the White House, and then moves down Pennsylvania Avenue and meets with the puppets in Congress, and then takes back billions of taxpayer dollars. It is time for the Washington puppet show to be replaced by the Washington peace show. In that, we will enhance the freedom and security of both Palestinian and Israeli people, peoples around the world, and the American people here and abroad.

Let me conclude on this note: the pillorying of Islam is in the nefarious tradition of pillorying of religions. Every major religion has been misused by its own violators for violent purposes. We should remember the crusades. We should remember over 200 years between 1095 and the following 200 years. Armies from Christendom moved in to Asia Minor, slaughtering as they went. In one conflict, the Christian generals took out 2500 Muslim prisoners and beheaded them—just one conflict.

We should remember that the way to honor any religion is to practice what its practitioners preach. And there's no better way to practice what its practitioners preach, then for the practitioners to preach what they practice. Its time for the American people to realize that Muslim Americans are only the latest religious ethnic group to feel the brunt of political hysteria and abuse. The Japanese Americans were put into camps in California during WWII, no due process. Men, women, children, families, hustled out of their homes and into these concentration camps. Internments, they called them. Years ago Jewish American's were stereotyped during the communist witch hunt, as having more than their share of that ideology. Another profiling. Another abuse. Earlier, Italian American's were profiled as anarchists carrying bombs underneath their big coats. Another profiling. Another abuse. Irish Americans suffered during the civil war. It's now the turn of Muslim American's. African Americans, of course, have always suffered.

But the lessons the resistance and challenge and steadfastness of all these groups, using our courts, mobilizing, getting out the vote, communicating with one another, and their fellow citizens not of their persuasion, have improved the civil rights and civil liberties of all of us. Many a Supreme Court decision, taken by an African American, teenagers thwarted from sitting at the lunch counter in North Carolina, black engineering students, won a major Supreme Court decision. These decisions have expanded the civil rights and civil liberties of all Americans. And that is the challenge of Muslim Americans today. That they not only stand strong and organize, and remain steadfast, for their own rights, but in so doing they are reaffirming the fundamental constitutional rights of due process, probable cause, and other manifestations of respect for the dignity of the human being, while securing the security of all human beings.

In conclusion, I want to point out that in nature, a monoculture is not stable. The strength of our country is made through the contribution of many ethnic groups. Many traditions, many ways to survive, many ways to thrive, many ways to do the arts, many ways to enjoy life, many ways to eat, many cuisines, many forms of music, and Islamic culture has much to contribute in that respect. Not only ancient Islamic culture, the kind of arts, the kind of cultural innovations, architecture, music, that are now being renewed by the peoples of the Islamic world.

We must always remember that in the development of the economies of the third world, where children no longer die from tuberculosis or aids or malaria, where adults can have a decent standard of living, we must recognize that the answers are not going to come from the IMF or the World Bank. They're going to come from the genius of the peoples of the third world. They're going to come from people like the late Hassan Fathi, the people's architect of Egypt who taught in Cairo Egyptian peasants to build small homes from the soil under their feet. It will come from Hamad Unis, of Bangladesh who started the micro-credit movement with small loans, many to women to start small businesses in their villages of that impoverished country. We should recognize that the genius of the third world will only flower by the removal of the militarized foreign policy of the west who sees the third world primarily as a quarry for natural resources beneath and above the ground, from the oil wells to the tropical forests.

We need a sane foreign policy in this country. We need a dialogue in the presidential campaigns, where people will ask other than the routine questions of hegemony and military power. We need a dialogue that asks why the worlds leading military superpower has not become the worlds leading humanitarian superpower. We need to ask why our foreign and military policies are made by small cliques and multinational corporations rather than by the deliberative involvement and engagement of the American People.

We need in other words voters to look to ourselves and hold us up, all of us, to higher standards of engagement and performance as voters. I ask you to look at our website [www.votenader.org](http://www.votenader.org) for further elaborations of these subjects and all these areas in the coming weeks, and make the deliberation in your vote as to what is in the best interest of the American people and the peoples of the world. Whether it is better to support the two party duopoly that is in the grip of concentrated power and wealth, or is it better to have more voices, more choices, more leverage, over the two parties by concentrating your vote on your conscience, by voting for someone you believe in. The only way to vote where you don't waste your vote is by voting for someone you believe in. Someone who has a record, and is key on strengthening as a first prerequisite of a political movement--strengthening the people of this country. Thank you.

**Council for the National Interest**

1250 4th Street SW, Suite WG-1 Washington, DC 20024

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