

## Perspectives Issues

# The forgotten version of America

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Before we begin, let's establish one ground rule: note and remember that I am not endorsing any presidential candidates today. I'm writing about an "alternative" ticket that's been widely ignored by the media: Libertarian Party candidates Andre Marrou for President and Nancy Lord for Vice-President are on the ballot in every state and in D.C.

I don't particularly care for them, but I'm going to try to present them as fairly as I can — primarily because nobody else is even acknowledging their existence, but also because they offer some unique and theoretically sound (if risky and naive) solutions to long-term problems of economic decline, militarism, and environmental degradation.

The essence of Libertarian ideology is "live and let live," or at least "leave me alone." In political terms, this means that government is too big and powerful, and is always forcing you to do stuff you don't want to do (e.g., pay taxes) or to refrain from doing stuff you want to do (e.g., 90 mph on Holden Road).

The ideal Libertarian government would serve only to protect the rights to private property, free

expression, and free conduct, and to enforce the judgements of civil courts; human behavior would be restrained by litigation rather than by regulation — a pound of cure, when necessary, being preferable to an ounce of unwanted prevention.

This belief is well-grounded in American political philosophy; simply put, it is pervasive freedom in the extreme. Yes, it naturally appeals to big corporate slime — if adopted for slimy reasons. But to those who have a durable faith in essential human goodness, who believe that the forbidden fruit is the most delectable and that people unspoiled by artificial prohibitions will tend naturally toward charity and goodness, Libertarianism offers the political structure that least corrupts people and society.

As a practical matter, the extent to which the Marrou platform seeks to implement this vision is: broad deregulation of domestic and international trade; massive tax cuts and the introduction of itemized or voluntary taxes; removal of such controversies as abortion, guns, pornography, and nuclear power from the purview of law; and privatization of all services and natural resources.

That's asking for trouble. Radical deregulation may, in the long term, provide a society of trusting

and sharing people contributing voluntarily to the common good; indeed, A.S. Neill, Bertrand Russell, and others in the British education reform movement of the early 1900's proved this phenomenon — at least on a small scale — in boarding schools. They also showed, however, that this healthy state of affairs is attained only after a period of chaotic indulgence in greed and exploitative power.

On the social scale, the analogy conjures images of unchecked pollution, waste, oppression, and corruption — lasting for generations, until people "get it out of their systems," i.e., until We The People outgrow greed. (The catch-22 is that we might never do that unless everyone has access to, and chooses to pursue, high-quality education; in a Libertarian state, that might never happen.)

In the most optimistic projection, though, deregulation offers the key to sustainability and social justice. It is, by now, incontrovertible that a pro-business government ruins everything, including business; the alternatives are to regulate business *more or not at all*. While regulation may be all that currently stands between Corporate America and runaway racism, sexism, and environmental destruction, its economic effects are no more desirable.

The key, according to Libertarian thought, is to remove regulation and make social injustice and environmental irresponsibility *economically impossible* through consumer incentive — in other words, let Coors and G.E. do as they wish, but don't buy their products, and see how long they keep wishing irresponsibly.

I have publicly condemned the Reagan-Bush-Quayle Administration for its free-trade gadgets (GATT, NAFTA, and the Council on Competitiveness), and these are Libertarian at heart; the difference between Bush and Marrou, however, is that Bush is trying to remove *all* protection of people and the environment — including access to the courts — from our economic policies, while Marrou would rely upon individuals and interest groups (the same entities Bush wants to shut out) to defend the public and the planet.

The problem is that market-based regulation depends on the universality of social conscience, which in turn depends on the universality of education and social awareness. Marrou offers nothing to encourage that, apart from the hope that increased competition in the absence of regulation would increase incomes and decrease the cost of education. It's a big gamble.

But many voters this year would

prefer to gamble (by voting for Perot, for instance) than to support either Bill Clinton, who promises to be painfully slow about converting our economy from a waste-oriented military-industrial base to a growth-oriented sustainability base, or George Bush, who promises to redouble his efforts to dedicate our economy to short-term, high-waste, unsustainable profit for the most privileged echelon of our society at everyone else's expense. Granted, none of these choices is acceptable, and the votership is near unanimity in its frustration; but some may view the most dangerous social experiment ever proposed still less dangerous than the "dominant paradigm" politics of the two-party establishment.

That's why the media are reluctant to cover those third-party freaks — they're scary and their adherents aren't what Archie Bunker would call "regular Americans." I would not sleep soundly in a Libertarian state; but then, I haven't slept soundly in 12 years.

So, I present Marrou and Lord not as good people to vote for, but as examples of the fact that there are a lot of non-traditional ideas out there, most of which have some merit and most of which you'll never know about unless you pay careful and constant attention to the world around you.

# AIDS blanket brings tragedy home

By Heather Carreiro  
Staff Writer

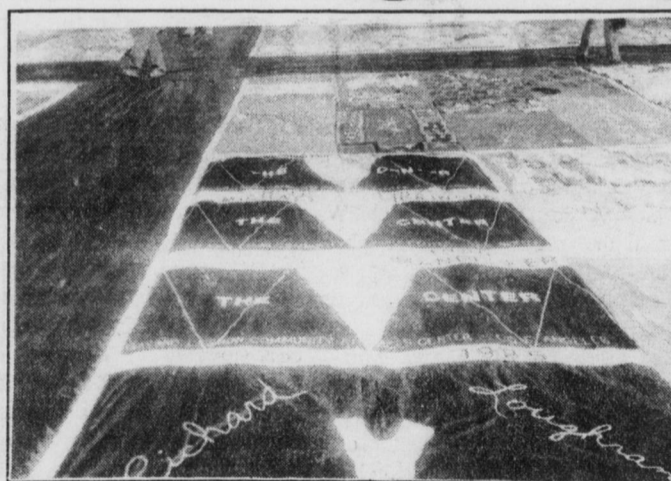
Cleve Jones founded the Names Project and started the quilt as a way for people everywhere, moved by their grief, anger and frustration, to tell the story of those who were lost to AIDS by making quilt panels. Near 12,000 people have created panels measuring three by six feet, the size of a human grave. The panels are sewn onto squares containing eight panels. Now, the quilt, with over 15,000 panels, is growing too large to be shown, and will be cut and separated, with pieces given to each state.

But these are just statistics. After seeing the quilt, I believe that the true enormity and horror of the AIDS epidemic cannot be fully realized through statistics alone. Walking on the quilt for two hours, and still not getting to every square; hearing the names of people who have died from AIDS this year read for over four hours; hearing people speak of knowing five of

six people who have died from AIDS; seeing children, teenagers, parents, and grandparents weeping at the panel of a loved one—all of this drives the tragedy of the AIDS virus home.

When I arrived beside the Washington Monument, I was overwhelmed by the sheer number and diversity of the people. Tens of thousands of people swamped the area. And for anyone who thinks AIDS is just a gay disease, I have news for you: the people were of every sexual, religious, economic, racial and age denomination you can imagine.

And everyone was there for the same reason—they had lost someone to the AIDS virus, or were



A portion of the AIDS blanket in Washington, D.C.

concerned enough to lend their support. I wish that George Bush, who has not increased funds for programs to prevent AIDS, allowed funds for existing prevention programs to drop \$17 million since 1991 and knocked down several AIDS bills; had been there. He would have seen that this country is in terrible trouble with AIDS, and that people care enough to do something about it.

quilt. Walking along the rows of squares, reading some of the panels, I began to cry. To me, who has never lost anyone to AIDS, the disease had just been some terrible specter. But suddenly, it became real. I saw panels for children, parents, and lovers. I kept thinking of my brothers, and the terrifying thought hit me that I could have been out here looking for their panels. I felt like I had been walk-

ing along the quilt for days, and I hadn't even seen half of it yet. I walked past married couples, gay lovers, and groups of teenagers kneeling at panels, holding each other, crying. I saw a panel which had in childish writing, "I miss you, Daddy." The tears kept falling as I passed a boy who looked no more than nine, kneeling at a panel, silently, running his hands over it. Ten minutes later, he was still there. The tears fell harder, and I realized that AIDS affects us all, and that not one of us can afford not to do something to help prevent the spread of this horrible disease.

Soon after the opening ceremonies, the crowd was let out on the

quilt. Walking along the rows of squares, reading some of the panels, I began to cry. To me, who has never lost anyone to AIDS, the disease had just been some terrible specter. But suddenly, it became real. I saw panels for children, parents, and lovers. I kept thinking of my brothers, and the terrifying thought hit me that I could have been out here looking for their panels. I felt like I had been walk-

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So, at the risk of sounding like a Public Service Announcement practice safe sex, get the facts about AIDS, and educate others. George Bush is not going to do it, so it's up to us. You don't want to have to look for someone you know on the quilt, and you don't want someone to be looking for you.

Photo by Heather Carreiro