

## HOLLY NEAR TO DAVID MIXNER, SEPTEMBER 2008

To read this interview on David Mixner's blog, go to <http://www.davidmixner.com>

### 1. Who did you support in the primaries and why?

I didn't work for any of the candidates. I don't like either party much and have always worked outside of the mainstream political system. But I do vote. Kucinich's ideas were probably the closest to my own. I have a friend who voted for Edwards by absentee ballot but by the time the actual California Primary happened, he had withdrawn so her vote was wasted. Clinton would have been her second choice. It is crazy her vote didn't count. We need a new system. I voted for Obama in the primary.

I feel frustration during an election year. I can't stand flag waving and phrases that suggest this country was built on the principles of democracy and equality when in truth our "for-folks" had slaves, lynched people, and terrorized indentured servants including little northern European girls who looked like me working in sweat shops. Millions of indigenous people were killed - so the whole show un-nerves me.

That said, I'm not stupid. I think critically and strategically. I like Obama and McCain scares me to death. If Clinton had won the primary I would be supporting her as well. I am a long time activist - always left of the democrats - but I like to choose with whom I am going to struggle. I did NOT vote for Nader last time nor would I vote 3rd party this time. I like the idea of building a third party from local level up but I am startled by the thought that experienced political organizers would vote 3rd party this time around at the presidential level.

I don't feel I'm voting for an icon or a politically perfect social feminist candidate. How could I? No one with my politics would make it through the primaries. Senator Clinton did not represent my all my perspectives either. But now, like she is, I am voting for someone who is running for president of the largest power in the world, albeit dwindling. It is time to get very clear about the nature of our job. We are not just voting for people in the United States. Because of the role the US plays in the world, our vote has global ramifications.

Our job is to choose the leader that we think will be the most reasonable in the face of contradictions, the most tolerant in the face of diversity, the wisest in the face of danger, the calmest in the face of crisis and the one who is most likely to listen before making a decision. To me there is absolutely no question that Obama is the safer and more responsible choice, by far.

## 2. Do you believe the progressive left and feminist should work hard for Obama?

Yes I do - fast and furious. I have many leftist/feminist friends who just did Camp Obama and are heading for Nevada. Obama is impressive and inspirational and a diplomat in style. Hey, he is not a socialist, never has been, and has run his campaign to reach out to a large circle. Why is anyone surprised? He is running for president of the empire. But given that, he seems open minded and skilled and he will inherit a disastrous economy, a murderous war. As far as I can tell, he wont be able to get much done without a powerful social change movement in place to counteract the right wing pressure that is mobilizing full force right now. I like Obama. I can actually listen to him speak which is more than I can say for the current President.

In these coming weeks, the ones I'm concerned about are those who are deeply tied to a single issue, are clinging to some old notion of political purity or are sunk in cynicism. How do we reach them and say, "You don't have to vote naively, but I beg you to vote strategically." I'm guessing people in Chile would have preferred a centralist to Pinochet!

## 3. How about his stand on marriage equality? Should the LGBT Community support him?

Absolutely. Look how far marriage equality has come under right wing Bush/Chaney. Imagine the leaps it can take under Obama. There will be some doors opened, some alliances made. And no doubt some Supreme Court justices appointed. Again, strategy. I think McCain/Palin are building a huge wall to obstruct equality in order to satisfy their extremist supporters. I would choose an open door to a huge wall any day.

I think Palin has given permission for hate and fear based thinking to surface full force. It has been a mighty wake up call. Any of us who can counteract that hate with a creative expression of tolerance and love must do so right now - at work, in places of worship, on your car bumper sticker. I see this as an historic window of opportunity.

The success of marriage equality will come not top down but community up. Obama knows that. He is a community organizer. He also knows that he is running for president of *everyone* and in these next few weeks he will try to draw the largest circle possible. And if we in the GLBTQ community are so

unsophisticated as to think he will play this any other way, then we need a talking to. Once he is president, then the door is open to keep organizing public opinion and state opinion so that eventually equality wins out. Think about it. Who do you want to struggle with? Obama or McCain? It is a no brainer. Get Obama elected so we can get on with the business of repairing this world. And it isn't just marriage equality. It is everything. GLBTQ people have other problems beside equality in marriage. Class, race, prison, housing, jobs, health, immigration.

#### 4. Is he the anti-War candidate?

No, neither was Clinton. Democrats have voted money for war in the most disgusting fashion. But I don't think they are trigger-happy. I don't think they are rage-aholics. And I think Obama will actually do very well in negotiations. He is calm, a diplomat. I think he will make decisions I disagree with so I will keep going to anti-war demonstrations.

Some indigenous tribes say that the clan mothers pick the ones who will serve different aspects of the community. They would never put a warrior as chief. They would only put a diplomat. So, when I imagine that red blinking button and a cinder box moment involving nuclear weapons, it terrifies me to think of McCain or Palin representing our national security. Obama is not an anti war candidate but he is thoughtful and seems to know how to listen. And he makes room for an anti war movement in his belief system. I don't feel hated by Obama. I feel hated by McCain.

#### 5. Is he really different from McCain on the issues?

Who knows what they believe at this point? Between now and the election they will say what they need to say to win. But look at them. Obama is calm and strong and focused. McCain seems all over the map, confused and uneven. Obama will have lots of advisors as do all presidents and he will make some decisions I like, some I don't. But his job as president is also to be the figurehead. He must *stand* for something greater than what Bush and Chaney have stood for. And I believe Obama "represents" anti war feminist progressives better than McCain.

Whether or not Obama will get the support he needs to change this nation, that is something else again. And in my mind, that is where we come in. We need to keep building social change movements to push for all the things in which we believe. But I believe Obama brings some calm to the table, some national security, and some sense of reason. And he is spending money training people to be organizers. Sure, that will help get him elected but it will be in place after the election. This is an amazing infusion of energy and training. That was a

smart move. Progressive people haven't worked together, gotten to know one another like this in a long time.

And on top of all that, I am very moved that after a history of extraordinary racism, which is not over yet, that someone other than a European American is running for president. I want to make room in my skepticism to celebrate and honor that. It is truly worthy of our attention. I thrill at the sight of Barak and Michelle in the White House and what that says to the world, what that says to women, and importantly what that says to the hate based thinkers that fill the ranks of the right. I will support it, celebrate it, and defend it.

#### 6. Don't they all tell you what you want to hear and then vanish?

They all tell us what they need to in order to get elected. Then after the election, it is back on us, the every day people. I know that seems like a drag, but the fact is, that is what it takes to get anything done. We have to organize. We always have.

There are all kinds of criticism to be put forth on the failure of this system, but this is not the right time to protest that system with a no vote. That is just plain suicidal. Choose the one you want to work with. Get him elected and then we can take the strength we have gathered in our communities and use that to push the president and the senate and the congress to behave appropriately.

Sure, they are going to dance around issues like taxes. You know what? I don't mind paying taxes if I know it goes to pay for services that improve my daily life. I don't have kids but I am ok about my tax money going to education. I think education makes it a better world. I don't go to art museums that much but I'm ok having my tax money go to pay for art. Art makes this a better world. I don't mind my taxes going to build bridges so I can cross the river. I like that we have public libraries. Taxes pay for that.

What I don't want is my taxes going to war contractors and bailouts of failing capitalist institutions and corporations. That is criminal. So one has to just ignore the tax cut rhetoric in campaign speeches. It is meaningless.

Once the election is over, we continue to shine light on the truth and say to whom ever is in office, "You cannot ask us for bailouts anymore. You cannot ask us to pay private contractors to kill Iraqi people. You can not keep building prisons and fill them up with poor people, people of color, many of whom have been falsely accused or are in jail for things white people just get fined for. If our tax money wasn't spent on war, prisons and bailouts do you realize how rich our nation would be?"

7. As a feminist, I was not thrilled with how he ran against Hillary. Why should I support him now?

This is politics. Hillary did not run against Obama so well either. And the press was having a hay day. It was disgusting. Sexism and racism and class, all played with as if no one ever dies from these conditions. I don't like how we elect the president. But at this stage of the game, it is as if there never was a primary. I think Hillary was courageous and profoundly clear on this at the convention. We have to look at Obama and McCain and their running mates and make a hugely important choice. Huge.

8. How important do you personally believe this election to be this year?

This is one of the most historic and important elections I have experienced in my lifetime. And the Republican Convention just upped the ante. How often do we get to do something as the citizens of the United States? I'm not a nationalist but I do live in a nation that is seen around the world as violent and insensitive and greedy and weak and self absorbed.

I want the world to see the other side of our nation, see us make a choice, even if it seems to some to be symbolic. Most people in the world don't know about the in fighting in the left or about gay marriage. All they know is that their lives and the very safety of the planet has been in grave danger for the last 8 years. I believe they are looking at us to see if we will stand with them to form the biggest circle of resistance the world has ever seen in opposition to Bush-Chaney policy. Regardless of what Obama can achieve or not achieve, I believe one of the strongest things we could do for national security is to show the world we have the courage throw out the Republican addenda and replace it with an offer friendship - to each other and to the world.