

Open Letter to the Kids who didn't Vote: I Have a Million Questions, would You Mind Answering?

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Author Elie Wiesel said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference." Nothing rings more true to me at this moment in history.

Official numbers concerning the youth vote this past election have yet to be tallied. The unofficial numbers thus are ambiguous. According to a Harvard study and a Pew poll conducted prior to November 2nd, college-aged voter contemplation and intention were up from an average of 41% in 2000 to 57% in 2004.

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exuberance and vitality. This lack comes, he said, whenever we "drop the object." Dropping the object means that we do things but have forgotten the deeper, inner reason why we do them. Such "forgotten" actions then tend to lose their vitality, spirit, passion, and intensity for us, and THAT—the lack of vitality, spirit, passion, and intensity—is the mark of decadence.

Now if we look for decadence (properly understood) on campus, we will not find it at campus social events as much as in our grading system. This is because many of us have "dropped the object" of grades? Grades do not measure our performance in school as much as our performance in school is now measured by grades. These two are not the same. If they were, then getting a top grade while learning little or nothing would be considered a failure, not a success. Yet for a decadent student, getting a good grade

Over 20 million people between the ages of 18-29 voted in this election, up 4.6 million from 2000. Young Americans were patting themselves on the back for the effort.

However, when you look at the voter percentages compared with eligible voting population, the numbers aren't quite so impressive. Since 1972, the percentage of voters aged 18-24 dropped from 21% to 14%. The percentage of voters aged 18-29 dropped from 30% to 21%. The numbers are growing, but the voter rate is dropping. Why is this?

In the months preceding the election, I occasionally brought the subject of politics up to my 19-year-old sister, who is a

IS success. It is the entire meaning and substance of what it means to do well in class. The trouble, of course, is that if we place our emphasis on getting the grade rather than on developing our mind, we will lose the vitality and passion of what it is to develop the mind.

The results are disastrous. Decadent learners, trying to nourish themselves on the grade, tend no longer to get the real nourishment of learning. The soul of learning in them, hungering and thirsting for the "meal" of learning and not the "menu" of the grade, thereby becomes depressed, losing vitality and passion. At some point even their cramming begins to suffer.

Of course, one common response to the depression of learning is to become "driven" by goals. Unfortunately, this is not the answer because external goals cannot replace internal purposes. Indeed, a goal-driven existence is itself

college student. Not once did she betray the slightest interest. I thought she was a lost cause. Then, about a week before the election, she mentioned to me in an off-hand sort of way that she had registered to vote, but she still didn't know if she would actually vote, because she didn't know where her polling station was.

I called her on Election Day and caught her washing the car. She had found out where her polling station was, but she still didn't know if she was going to vote. I attempted one last time to explain how important it was to vote and how the outcome of this election could

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simply a decadent substitute for a genuinely purpose-driven life.

My advice is this: act immediately to save the soul of learning. Cram at the dinner table if you must, but never for a test. Instead, begin to cultivate a "true love" relationship with learning. Become a learning romantic, falling head over heels in love with learning. Do it every day. Oh sure, there will be some difficult times, but the joys and pleasures of true love will outshine the mere jewelry of grades every time. You will find yourself gasping in delight at a good point in class, moaning with satisfaction as you follow a deep and penetrating analysis, and shouting in joy when you reach a culminating "aha" insight. You might even want to get married, becoming a lifelong learner. Of course, the great irony of it all is you will not only fulfill your Being, but your grades will go up.

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on December 6 in what was a hard fought match-up between two talented teams. The gymnasium was packed with home team supporters as the energized Lions got off to a fast start, outscoring Messiah 14-2 early in the first half. The visiting Falcons were able to rally, going on a shooting spree that turned up twelve points to tie the game at fourteen.

Messiah took the lead late, taking advantage of key Lions' giveaways and outscoring them 37-31. Before the first half buzzer sounded, the home crowd suffered a scare when senior center Urick Lewis went down with an injury. Lewis hurt his knee when he came down on an awkward rebound. Lewis did not return for the second half.

It seemed as if Messiah would run away with the game in the second half, when Mont Alto quickly fell behind by ten points, their biggest deficit of the game. Behind senior guard Jacquet Scott, the Lions got back into it, scoring six points and pulled first to 47-51, then to 51-53, before finally taking the lead at 54-53. Messiah regained the lead with a late field goal, making the score 63-60. The Falcons made it a two possession game scoring an easy two from within the paint with only a minute to go. With no timeouts remaining, Mont Alto was forced to foul the Falcon players in order to stop the clock. Messiah was nearly flawless on their free throws, and closed out the game at 64-71. Scott led the Lions scoring with 13 points. Lewis, despite his injury, had six points in the first half. With their loss to Messiah, the Lions lose a step at 3 - 2 on the season.