

Electoral Fraud, Ethnic cleansing of Voter Rolls,

An Election Spoiled Rotten

By [Greg Palast](#)

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It's not even Election Day yet, and the Kerry-Edwards campaign is already down by almost a million votes. That's because, in important states like Ohio, Florida and New Mexico, voter names have been systematically removed from the rolls and absentee ballots have been overlooked—overwhelmingly in minority areas, like Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, where Hispanic voters have a 500 percent greater chance of their vote being “spoiled.” Investigative journalist Greg Palast reports on the trashing of the election.

Greg Palast, contributing editor to Harper's magazine, investigated the manipulation of the vote for BBC Television's Newsnight. The documentary, “Bush Family Fortunes,” based on his New York Times bestseller, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, [has been released this month on DVD](#).

John Kerry is down by several thousand votes in New Mexico, though not one ballot has yet been counted. He's also losing big time in Colorado and Ohio; and he's way down in Florida, though the votes won't be totaled until Tuesday night.

Through a combination of sophisticated vote rustling—ethnic cleansing of voter rolls, absentee ballots gone AWOL, machines that “spoil” votes—John Kerry begins with a nationwide deficit that could easily exceed one million votes.

The Urge To Purge

Colorado Secretary of State Donetta Davidson just weeks ago removed several thousand voters from the state's voter rolls. She tagged felons as barred from voting. What makes this particularly noteworthy is that, unlike like Florida and a handful of other Deep South states, Colorado does not bar ex-cons from voting. Only those actually serving their sentence lose their rights.

There's no known, verified case of a Colorado convict voting illegally from the big house. Because previous purges have wiped away the rights of innocents, federal law now bars purges within 90 days of a presidential election to allow a voter to challenge their loss of civil rights.

To exempt her action from the federal rule, Secretary Davidson declared an “emergency.” However, the only “emergency” in Colorado seems to be President Bush's running dead, even with John Kerry in the polls.

Why the sudden urge to purge? Davidson's chief of voting law enforcement is Drew Durham, who previously worked for the attorney general of Texas. This is what the former spokesman

for the Lone Star State's

attorney general says of Mr. Durham: He is "unfit for public office... a man with a history of racism and ideological zealotry." Sounds just right for a purge that affects, in the majority, non-white voters.

From my own and government investigations of such purge lists, it is unlikely that this one contains many, if any, illegal voters.

But it does contain Democrats. The Dems may not like to shout about this, but studies indicate that 90-some percent of people who have served time for felonies will, after prison, vote Democratic. One suspects Colorado's Republican secretary of state knows that.

Ethnic Cleansing Of The Voter Rolls

We can't leave the topic of ethnically cleansing the voter rolls without a stop in Ohio, where a Republican secretary of state appears to be running to replace Katherine Harris.

In Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), some citizens have been caught Registering While Black. A statistical analysis of would-be voters in Southern states by the watchdog group Democracy South indicates that black voters are three times as likely as white voters to have their registration requests "returned" (i.e., subject to rejection).

And to give a boost to this whitening of the voter rolls, for the first time since the days of Jim Crow, the Republicans are planning mass challenges of voters on Election Day. The GOP's announced plan to block 35,000 voters in Ohio ran up against the wrath of federal judges; so, in Florida, what appear to be similar plans had been kept under wraps until the discovery of documents called "caging" lists. The voters on the "caging" lists, disclosed last week by BBC Television London, are, almost exclusively, residents of African-American neighborhoods.

Such racial profiling as part of a plan to block voters is, under the Voting Rights Act, illegal. Nevertheless, neither the Act nor federal judges have persuaded the party of Lincoln to join the Democratic Party in pledging not to distribute blacklists to block voters on Tuesday.

Absentee Ballots Go AWOL

It's 10pm: Do you know where your absentee ballot is? Voters wary about computer balloting are going postal: in some states, mail-in ballot requests are up 500 percent. The probability that all those votes—up to 15 million—will be counted is zip.

Those who mail in ballots are very trusting souls. Here's how your trust is used. In the August 31 primaries in Florida, Palm Beach Elections Supervisor Theresa LePore (a.k.a. Madame Butterfly Ballot) counted 37,839 absentee votes. But days before, her office told me only 29,000 ballots had been received. When this loaves-and-fishes miracle was disclosed, she was forced to recount, cutting the tally to 31,138.

Had she worked it the other way, disappearing a few thousand votes instead of adding additional ones, there would be almost no way to figure out the fix (or was it a mistake?). Mail-in voter registration forms are protected by federal law. Local government must acknowledge receiving your registration and must let you know if there's a problem (say, with signature or address) that invalidates your registration. But your mail-in vote is an

unprotected crapshoot. How do you know if your ballot was received? Was it tossed behind a file cabinet—or tossed out because you did not include your middle initial? In many counties, you won't know.

And not every official is happy to have your vote. It is well-reported that Broward County, Fla., failed to send out nearly 60,000 absentee ballots. What has not been nationally reported is that Broward's elections supervisor is a Jeb Bush appointee who took the post only after the governor took the unprecedented step of removing the prior elected supervisor who happened to be a Democrat.

A Million Votes In The Electoral Trash Can

"If the vote is stolen here, it will be stolen in Rio Arriba County," a New Mexico politician told me. That's a reasoned surmise: in 2000, one in 10 votes simply weren't counted—chucked out, erased, discarded. In the voting biz, the technical term for these vanishing votes is "spoilage." Citizens cast ballots, but the machines don't notice. In one Rio Arriba precinct in the last go-round, not one single vote was cast for president—or, at least, none showed up on the machines.

Not everyone's vote spoils equally. Rio Arriba is 73 percent Hispanic. I asked nationally recognized vote statistician Dr. Philip Klinkner of Hamilton College to run a "regression" analysis of the Hispanic ballot spoilage in the Enchanted State. He calculated that a brown voter is 500 percent more likely to have their vote spoiled than a white voter. And it's worse for Native Americans. Vote spoilage is epidemic near Indian reservations.

Votes don't spoil because they're left out of the fridge. It comes down to the machines. Just as poor people get the crap schools and crap hospitals, they get the crap voting machines.

It's bad for Hispanics; but for African Americans, it's a ballot-box holocaust. An embarrassing little fact of American democracy is that, typically, two million votes are spoiled in national elections, registering no vote or invalidated. Based on studies by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and the Harvard Law School Civil Rights project, about 54 percent of those ballots are cast by African Americans. One million black votes vanished—phffft!

There's a lot of politicians in both parties that like it that way; suppression of the minority is the way they get elected. Whoever is to blame, on Tuesday, the Kerry-Edwards ticket will take the hit. In Rio Arriba, Democrats have an eight-to-one registration edge over Republicans. Among African American voters...well, you can do the arithmetic yourself.

The total number of votes siphoned out of America's voting booths is so large, you won't find the issue reported in our self-glorifying news media. The one million missing black, brown and red votes spoiled, plus the hundreds of thousands flushed from voter registries, is our nation's dark secret: an apartheid democracy in which wealthy white votes almost always count, but minorities are often purged or challenged or simply not recorded. In effect, Kerry is down by a million votes before one lever is pulled, card punched or touch-screen touched.

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