

Why the Argument Against Nader's 2000 Candidacy Isn't an Argument Against Sanders's 2016 Candidacy

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On May 23rd, [Amanda Marcotte, at Salon](#), argued against Bernie Sanders's Presidential candidacy as if it were comparable to Ralph Nader's candidacy in 2000, and she cited an article from me as having presented the key historical record and basis for that opinion she was putting forth; but the historical analogy of Nader's candidacy doesn't really apply in the case of Sanders's candidacy in 2016, and understanding why it doesn't apply is important for any progressive who is considering whether Sanders should be viewed as possibly being today's Ralph Nader — the "spoiler" for the Democratic Party.

Marcotte said, linking to my article titled "Ralph Nader Was Indispensable To The Republican Party" (which headline was *true* as I there documented in detail), that Nader's having received under 3% of the vote that year "was enough to [tip a close election towards George W. Bush](#) [this was her link to my article], but it's also so paltry that it debunks the claim that the people would back a lefty alternative to the main parties if only The Man would let them have a chance."

But actually, Bernie Sanders is *no Ralph Nader* whatsoever.



Unlike Nader, Sanders has been running a campaign designed for the specific purpose of winning the U.S. Presidency, not for the purpose (as I documented in that article) to take enough Electoral College votes away from the Democratic Party's nominee (Al Gore) so as to throw the election to the Republican one (George W. Bush), which as I also showed there,

Nader succeeded at doing by drawing off enough otherwise-Gore voters to him so as to hand all of the Electoral College votes of two states, New Hampshire and Florida, to Bush instead of Gore, in an election so close that if *either one* of those two states had instead been won by Gore, then there wouldn't even have *been* any Supreme Court *Bush v. Gore* case, because even if Bush were to have been declared the winner of Florida (because of the 97,488 Nader votes there), Gore would still have won New Hampshire's 4 Electoral College votes (if Nader *hadn't* been in the race) and thus would have won the White House, [by the EC margin of 270 votes to 267 votes](#). (Gore won the national popular vote by [543,895](#) of the counted votes; although he clearly won the most votes, he lost the 'election', and Nader's participation did that to him in the Electoral College.) I proved there that in 2000 "Ralph Nader Was Indispensable To The Republican Party" because without Nader's participation in the contest, Gore would surely have become the U.S. President (because won both NH and FL), and I also documented there that Nader was assisted by Republican Party mega-donors for that specific purpose, and that he focused his campaign in its closing days especially on toss-up states in order precisely to achieve his goal of drawing off enough liberals in enough toss-up states so as to make Bush President. Nader wasn't campaigning anywhere in order to win for his own Presidential bid *even a single state's* Electoral College votes, nor did he win any; he was instead running a campaign designed specifically to make Bush President, by blocking Gore from winning the Presidency. In that sense, Nader was utterly deceiving his voters; he was taking advantage of their naïveté, and there's no other well-informed and honest way to characterize what he was doing.

But there are also many other reasons why the 2000 election is fundamentally different from the 2016 one, and here they are:

Although every intelligent person recognized by the time of Election Day in 2000 that Nader wasn't going to win even a single state, much less the Presidency, and no poll showed him to be preferred for the Presidency by more voters than any of the other candidates (including Bush and Gore) were preferred, [the polls that have been taken thus far in the 2016 Presidential campaign do consistently show Sanders to be preferred not only over Clinton but over Trump](#). Naïve persons can cite against this the fact that in Democratic Party primaries and caucuses, more votes have been cast for Clinton than for Sanders, but those are only voters in Democratic Party primaries and caucuses, not at all representative of the entire U.S. electorate, no more so than Donald Trump's similar achievement on the Republican side reflects the entire electorate. (And, to see the very *latest* chartings of these head-to-head poll-results click [here](#) and [here](#).)

Furthermore, unlike Nader, who had no record in public office, Sanders's career in elected political positions is far lengthier than Hillary Clinton's is ([even just his service in Congress is](#)), and the only major Presidential candidate this time around who has no political record — a record of statements on a few issues, but no record of actual *actions in public office* — is Trump. Trump, unlike Nader, has been serious about winning the Presidency, and so he contested for the nomination of one of the two Parties, the Republican Party. Furthermore, Trump possesses the wealth and the contacts and the personal attributes that appeal strongly to a large enough section of the electorate for him to be a major contender, but Nader never did, not any of that. If one might reasonably allege Trump to be also a showman and (like Nader was) a deceiver, then certainly his deception of his supporters in 2016 is far less than was Nader's deception of his supporters in 2000 ([a deception that placed Bush into the White House](#) — something that very few of Nader's voters were

wanting).

And the final key reason why Sanders is no Nader is that the United States government and political system have changed in fundamental ways since 2000, such that this country is far more like the America of 1860 which saw the end of the Whig Party and its replacement by the new upstart Republican Party, than it's like the pre-2000 USA, which was a country where the level of public trust of governmental institutions, and trust of both Parties and of the press, was [enormously higher than it is today](#). The American public is far more willing today to consider an anti-Establishment candidate than they were in 2000.

During just the past few years, these changes have been of such historical magnitude that I no longer agree any longer with the statement I made at the end of my article about Nader:

The only way forward for progressives is [inside the Democratic Party, fighting relentlessly to take it over as completely as possible](#), so that it represents the progressive vision, and all conservatives will thus be represented by the Republican Party. That's democracy, and then our elections can have clear and honest battle-lines. Only then will the aristocracy encounter a formidable public, and be forced to back down so that we won't continue to be financing (through our taxes) their investment-losses, and consuming their polluted air and toxic products.

Today's Democratic Party is instead sufficiently attractive to Republicans so that [the Republican Party's mega-donors are donating heavily now to Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign](#). The chief matters in which the Democratic Party has become, for any progressives who still remain in it, only a fool's political haven, are:

It, like the Republican Party, is intensely supportive of what Mitt Romney infamously said in his 2012 contest against Obama, asserting about ["Russia, this is, without question, our number one geopolitical foe."](#) And, despite Obama's having for political reasons condemned that Romney-statement, Obama himself believed it to be true and [promptly began acting upon it once he had won a second term and was therefore freed from needing any longer to pretend that he didn't actually feel that way](#). Consequently, the [urgent danger now of a nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia](#) is currently even more important to reverse than is the danger of runaway global warming — which Obama [likewise promotes even while saying pretty words against it](#). And even if Obama gets only just one of his three mega-'trade' deals passed, the recent Paris agreement to limit global warming [could effectively be dead](#) as a consequence of that.

These are issues that progressives say they care a lot about; but, if they do *actually* care, they won't vote for either Clinton or Trump (maybe Trump, *certainly* not Clinton). This time around, both political parties are so bottom-line similar on the issues that count the most, so that no political Party that stands a chance of winning the White House, neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party, is really on the good side of either [climate change](#), or geostrategic issues ([war-and-peace](#)), or winning back America's democracy ([which has been only for show since at least 1980](#)). And the lone current candidate who is good on these issues and who also has the name-recognition and the existing political following who stands any chance of winning the White House — *perhaps not* a Democrat — is [Bernie Sanders](#). If he will need to run a write-in candidacy in order to be able to salvage this nation and this planet, then at least there will be a *chance* that the future *won't* be vastly worse than the present, and he therefore ought to do it. And, in any case: he's no Ralph Nader, and the

differences between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are far less important than the differences between Al Gore and George W. Bush were in 2000 (and [Gore was passionately opposed to invading Iraq](#), and that invasion would not have happened under a President Gore).

Nader was indispensable to Bush's becoming President, and that was a terrible thing. But, even if a write-in candidacy for Sanders might end up causing Trump to beat Clinton this November, even that wouldn't be as bad as would be Clinton's beating Trump, because Clinton has a real record in public office and it's [horrific](#), whereas Trump has no public-office record at all, and no intelligent person will trust the mere statements and promises of either liar — [only the record](#) speaks to an intelligent voter, this time around.

Having no record in public office is far better than having [Clinton's record in public office](#).

And so, those are the main reasons why anything that Bernie Sanders can do to continue on in his fight for the White House will be praised and supported by intelligent progressives — not condemned by any of them on the basis of whether he's a 'Democrat'. A 'Democrat' such as Hillary Clinton is an [embarrassment](#) to the Democratic Party. Regardless of whether or not Sanders is a 'Democrat', his record and not only his words prove that he carries on in the great tradition of the Democratic Party, the tradition of FDR, which Hillary's husband Bill did so much to end by deregulating Wall Street and by ending [AFDC](#) to poor children.

To put it simple: Sanders is the anti-fascist candidate. Whether he contests for the White House as a Democrat or on his own, all intelligent progressives will support him in the effort. He has created a movement, and it's far bigger than just some portion (the *non*-Hillary part) of today's Democratic Party. It's all of what remains of FDR's Democratic Party, and much of that is no longer even included within today's Democratic Party. And it could win the White House, even if Sanders ends up running against both the Republican and the 'Democratic' Parties to do it. Unlike Nader, he wouldn't be running against the 'Democratic' nominee; he'd be running, in any case (and, *unlike* Nader) honestly, to *win*.

America has changed a lot since 2000.

Investigative historian Eric Zuesse is the author, most recently, of [They're Not Even Close: The Democratic vs. Republican Economic Records, 1910-2010](#), and of [CHRIST'S VENTRILOQUISTS: The Event that Created Christianity](#).

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