

Elections, Movie Stars, and We the People

By Phyllis Chesler

I really no longer believe that my forte is to jump on the latest bit of news and opine upon it, first out of the gate. I am more interested in what is timeless than in that which is merely timely, momentary, and is soon gone and forgotten.

However, the NYC mayoral debate got me thinking—here's what else is wrong with how we elect candidates.



In our time, celebrities with absolutely no expert knowledge and very limited educations feel free to weigh in on the topics of the day. We believe them because they are our gods and goddesses—and perhaps because many of them have played the part of candidates, presidents, kings, queens, princesses, etc.

Therefore, we also view and rate real political candidates in terms of their looks—can they pass for actors, are they beautiful or handsome, do they speak as well as movie stars, are they tall, trim, glamorous, or charming? Whether they're experienced in politics, command a working knowledge of how government works—well, that's less important than how they look or speak. Even if they're making it all up as they go, or lying outright doesn't matter. How would most of us know anyway?

It is said that people get the government they deserve, but I don't think that's true. Most of us don't even vote. Too many of us do not have educated opinions; we follow the herd or vote along tribal lines, rarely for the good of all. Some of us are one-issue voters—we do not care about the twenty to thirty to fifty other key issues.

No candidate has ever really impressed me. I make the best of always bad choices. And, when it was safe to do so, I have famously voted for Winston Churchill and for Susan B. Anthony—and once for Elizabeth Cady Stanton. I've been royally castigated, threatened, warned by my former people, super "woke" feminists, when they feared or believed I'd voted for the Wrong One. I have some unbelievable stories along these lines.

I am no longer enamored of voting. It takes time away from my work. I actually have to leave my desk, stand in line, deal with often confusing instructions. But I am voting in this upcoming election for mayor. Leaving aside Mamdani's utter lack of experience, his Jew hatred and pro-Hamas/Islamist views (although I cannot do that), my loyalty is to the quality-of-life issues in my once fair city.

The NYC trains do not always work. They are, increasingly, always late. Either a rail has broken or a fire has broken out; sometimes violence has stopped all forward underground motion. Too many streets remain unpaved. Driving on one is like being on the sea during a bit of a storm. Scaffolding obscures everything. Violent looting is rampant. Violent, crazed, and homeless people attack others on the streets and on the subway. And no, Mamdani's idea of sending mental health workers, but not police, on emergency calls is dangerous (for all involved) and very stupid.

Mamdani talks about sending only social workers—what world does he live in? Does he not understand that so many domestic violence calls indeed do become very violent and that only

police can safely deal with it—but not even police can always safely disarm a violent man who intends to kill his wife, his children, the police officer, and then himself.

What imagined soft talking does Mamdani think will work with raging rageaholics? This city does not have anywhere near enough expert staff to deal with paranoid schizophrenics, nor is there good enough medication either. There are not enough beds, not enough hospitals. Talking therapy may work for garden-variety “neurotics,” and perhaps also for clinically depressed, anxious, or suicidal sufferers who still need medication in addition.

Medication is expensive. Where does Mamdani think this money is coming from? How will he raise it if he chases large corporations out of town? How much more is he willing to tax the middle class—until he forces them to leave as well?

Houston—or oh, my five boroughs—we have a huge and terrible problem.

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