



## **Stealing America: Vote by Vote**

**The Eerie Silence that Surrounded the  
2004 Election**

**By Sasha Perl-Raver**

At the heart of our nation is our basic, constitutional right to vote. It is the core belief on which we founded this nation: that no one would suffer from the tyranny of a ruling class and every citizen would have a voice. People have fought, suffered and died for the ability to cast a ballot, which is why Dorothy Fadiman's new documentary, *Stealing America: Vote by Vote*, is so disturbing, moving and evocative.

Fadiman's film follows the events of the 2004 election, specifically in Ohio, where voting irregularity and suppression was rampant, and the media blatantly ignored the worsening of a trend we'd begun to see in 2000.

"We tried to get this story on in this country," says Fadiman, who directed and produced the documentary, noting that the BBC and other foreign news agencies were quick to report on the events. "No mainstream media in the USA handled the 2004 election and its spectrum of irregularities. There was so little coverage; it was shameful and shocking. For example, the votes switching: you were voting for Kerry and getting Bush on the screen, across the country, in 13 states. No mainstream media touched that."

Her documentary might be the first time people hear about things like the aforementioned vote switching, where a vote would be placed for Kerry and suddenly, mysteriously switch to Bush, 12-hour long waits to vote, over 300,000 Democratic voters being purged from the voter registry days before the election and numerous other atrocities that erode the fabric of our nation's most cherished ideal.

The film also shows the eerie silence surrounding these issues.

Ion Sancho, the man who was chosen to lead the hand count of ballots in Florida's 2000 presidential race, spoke up about vulnerabilities he saw in the electronic voting system and saw the media turn their back on him when he began receiving threats from White House Counsel, Harriet Miers' office.

"This was an eye-opening experience for me," he reveals, "because I've been involved in politics since the 1960's. I watched the Watergate situation in which *The Washington Post* and other major news media challenged the authority of the presidency."

Today, he believes corporate pandering has replaced the media's responsibility.

"My own experience in 2006 tells me that the American news media will not touch certain stories that they consider too hot to handle."

That is one of the reasons Fadiman's documentary is so profoundly important, although she believes there's been a shift since 2006.

"The U.S. media is definitely more curious and willing to address these issues than they were in '04," she says. "People have said, 'We do want to know more, we do want to understand.' As we approach November 2008, more and more people are saying, 'Let's find a way to tell this story so that people can begin to get a bigger picture and put it together.'"

Sancho believes Americans have taken the right to vote for granted, but he offers hope.

"There is no switch we could flip to solve the problem. This is a film about the problems of voting in America, it's about targeted voter suppression and there's no easy solution, but together we can take our country back. And that's the message of the film."

Fadiman agrees, "By 2008, [all the solutions] won't be in place, but that's the direction this train is going and this film brings in more people to get on the train."