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Dear Citizen: Notes from a Presidential Candidate

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Dear Citizen,

Today I am announcing my candidacy for the office of President of the United States of America.

I've actually been on the campaign trail since last April when I made my first public announcement in New York City and since then in a variety of places including Chicago, New Hampshire, Vermont, Colorado, New Mexico and New Jersey.

The initial impulse to run for office was spurred on by George Bush's speech at a college graduation in Ann Arbor, Michigan last Spring. He stated that "the politically correct" are the greatest threat to freedom of speech in America today. By that he means members of ACT-UP, victims of bias crimes: women, homosexuals, ethnic and racial minorities. He would like them to shut up. As President he functions as a grand employer who has a complaint box. Each of us may get our two cents in. Once. After that we're on our own because there is no special treatment for the vast majority of Americans today. There is very special treatment for white upper middle class heterosexual men and their spouses and children, there is such treatment for fundamentalist Christians and fetuses.

George Bush does not write his own speeches. The statements he made in Ann Arbor flowed from the pen of a new speech writer, an alumni of the left-baiting Washington Times. The New York Times which covered the Ann Arbor event suggested that this was the beginning of the '92 campaign trail, for which freedom of speech would be a big issue. I thought if he's starting now, I will too.

I am a 41-year old American, a female, a lesbian, from a working class background, a poet, performer and writer making my living pretty exclusively from those activities. I am a taxpayer. I've lived the majority of my adult life under the poverty level, without health care.
I have never made over $20,000 a year nor have I ever lived in a household where our combined incomes approached that amount. More Americans, far more Americans are like me than George Bush. Why is he ruling this country and our lives?

My campaign is about freedom of speech. Mine and yours. I am not a professional politician, not a CEO or a lawyer. I write all my own speeches. I believe in total disclosure. What you see is what you get. I’m turning all my upcoming art events, readings and performances until election day into political events. I regard my campaign as a gesture of activism. An opportunity for me to vote. I will be a write-in candidate in as many states as I can file my papers in by next fall.

Admittedly, it’s pretty melancholy. I used to write off of the highs and lows of drugs and alcohol. Now I rely on the magic of everything else, often the highs and lows of my hormones. I go pretty low. I’ve had suicidal feelings for years. Usually (or recently) I got out of them by means of some project, or a show. My candidacy is also that kind of gesture, a desperate one, the only gesture possible in a desperate life. And ours is a desperate time. Don’t you imagine the President of the United States sometimes must have to get desperate? Wouldn’t it be great if clutching Barbara at some moments in the world’s news the top couple uttered: we’re scared? When following the Thomas proceedings wouldn’t you have loved it if George Bush said, “I’m not sure, I’m in doubt.”? What scares me in American politics, in public life, in “leadership” as it is presented to us is that one face, grim and determined, it never changes. Men and women like that in all walks of life scare me. I think of Hitler in Triumph of the Will. He stood on a car in a motorcade in Nuremberg, passing through arches, light & shadow, yet he prevailed - that figure of a beneficient man, blessing the cheering throngs. Anyone who holds his cards that close to his chest is bound to wreak havoc. I offer you a moody campaign.

Sincerely,

Eileen Myles

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Dear Citizen:

The following is the text of a speech I gave at a benefit for Planned Parenthood held at PS 122 on December 14th.

I’m an advocate of all kinds of birth control, especially lesbian sex the catholic church should give us an award its so natural its so rhythmic and I’m also pro-birth.

I don’t understand a culture that runs to anyone who’s had a near death experience - what did you see, but when a woman’s had a baby she’ll probably lose her job. I want to be in a culture that honors her. She should get a promotion. She’s had a brush with life. She has wisdom, real wisdom. She’s seen something and needs a reward. A place of honor. I don’t believe in the forces that call themselves pro life because they’re not interested in making a new place for that woman who’s made a choice to have a child. They call it duty, like going to war, an obscene way of talking about a miracle. Usually a woman who’s had a baby loses meaning, the baby gains meaning. The baby is the future, the woman is the past. What is a man, a man in power? A former baby. What is a fetus? A future man. That’s what they think. Nobody’s arguing about future little women inside of women. In New York State there are stickers inside bars saying WARNING THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IS DANGEROUS TO FETUSES. They mean fetuses
inside women. Little men. That's what they mean. But here's what I know. I read it in the paper. Domestic violence is the leading cause of birth defects, more than all other medical causes combined according to a March of Dimes study. To make this statement utterly clear - it means that pregnant women who are beaten up by their domestic partners. And these beatings cause birth defects. A further study tells us that less than one percent of these women are beaten up by other women, ie friends or lovers. As I write this I have just been told by my super that there is a guy out in the back. On the firescape. So what we're talking about is pregnant women being beaten up at home by their husbands and boyfriends. Most battering occurs when the batterer is drunk. Maybe at the bottom of beer glasses and beer cans we should print the message: Now go home and beat your pregnant wife. I am counting on the naturally contrary hostile disposition of the alcoholic who hates to be told what to do. One day a year more women are battered than any other day. That day is Super Sunday. We can only surmise that more fetal damage occurs on that day than any other day of the year. If the religious right cared about human life wouldn't it crack down on Super Sunday? When a woman is battered we say, our culture says why didn't she leave. No one says why did he do it. Studies of female development say the only records that give us any insight into female decision making processes are the interviews that take place in abortion clinics. To have an abortion, or to give birth this is the only recorded example of decision-making in a woman's life. To become a lesbian, there's no records of that. Homosexuality was not included in the US Census. Why didn't she leave. A culture that removes a woman's right to choose then asks why she couldn't move to save herself is evil. A culture that discounts the bruises on a rape victim's body, that ignores the testimony of a hospital emergency ward: she was raped. This is not my culture. My name is Eileen Myles, I am a write-in candidate for President of the United States. My campaign is basically about representation. I am a female, queer and make far under 100,000 a year. If you are like me or identify with people like me I would like to be your representative. You may write my name in on your ballot next fall. George Bush when asked about his wife Barbara's golf game said, she stinks. Mario Cuomo refuses to pardon Jean Harris. There's plenty more. When I tell people my campaign is about representation, they say that's not enough, what do you stand for?

Sincerely,
Eileen Myles