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The United States of Disappointment: A Voters' Guide By Larry Matthews BC Guest Commentator

Here we are in the middle of yet another "election of our lifetime," facing the choice of Tweedle Dee or Tweedle Dum. Or, as one Russian (Russian!) commentator put it, "Dumb and Dumber."

It's not that these guys, you-know-who and the other fellow, aren't smart. They are smart enough to be in the nation's political finals. But does it matter? Does it matter which one wins? Will our lives be any different, one way or the other? It's a tough call.

Judging by the debates, probably not, given that neither man addressed issues that will improve the lives of the Americans, whose household income has fallen by eight per cent since 2000, according to economists who track such things. Eight per cent is significant. It means our standard of living has fallen. As a nation, we are worse off than we were the day Bill Clinton left office.

The big thinkers tell us there are many reasons. One, of course, is "globalization," the catch-all excuse for why there are so many poor people in America today. Americans are competing for jobs with young people in India or China who are willing to work long hours for pennies. That's their story and they are sticking with it.

Another is the Romneysque opinion that half of Americans are lazy bums who won't take responsibility for themselves.

Still another theory is that we have slipped into a period of electing bums to high office and these bums don't have what it takes to do the right thing. Let's go with that one.

We'll begin with President Obama, generally praised as one of our smartest Presidents, a guy finely attuned to the nuances of issues great and small. Maybe that's his problem. He not only sees two sides to every issue, he sees hundreds of sides. He comes across as smart but weak. He meets the other side at the fifty yard line. They refuse to move from their one. He says, "okay." It's no wonder he spends his evenings holed up with Michelle and the girls.

Then there's Romney, a guy who could go through a series of debates with his various selves, arguing for and against everything he's ever stood for. Pro choice. Pro life. Universal health care. No, not that.

Isn't it odd that the word "poor" never comes up in a reasoned way that offers some hope. There is lots of talk about middle class families, but in a general way that floats into irrelevance. Let's face it. Neither of these men has a clue about how to improve the lives of the people whose votes they are courting. They are levitating in a space created by focus groups and professional campaigners.

So what are the stakes? At the top, in truth, not very much.

The biggest risk in electing Romney is not his policies. The biggest risk is the Supreme Court. Estimates range from three to five the number of Justices who will be retiring or otherwise leaving the court in the next four years. Unlike the elected politicians, the Justices actually have an impact on our lives.

Conservatives have long targeted abortion rights, voting rights, marriage equality, affirmative action, and many other hard-won rights, offering various racist and/or bigoted reasons. Make no mistake about it, the forces of the old white America are standing by, ready to reclaim what they feel is theirs. They don't need millions of votes across the fifty states to do it. They only need five votes on the Supreme Court.

So, even if you're feeling disgust with your choices at the top of the ticket, there is a reason to vote. Even if you've written off Obama as another political hack, there is a reason to vote. Even if you believe that, in the end, it doesn't matter, there is a reason to vote.

You're vote today could protect your children's basic civil rights tomorrow.

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator, Larry Matthews, is a veteran broadcast journalist. He is the recipient of The George Foster Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcast for his reporting on Vietnam veterans. He is also the recipient of a Columbia/DuPont Citation, Society of Professional Journalists, Associated Press, and other awards for investigative reporting. He is the author of [five books](#) including *I Used To Be In Radio: a Memoir*. Click [here](#) to reach Mr. Matthews.



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