

The Dignity Vote

There are times in our lives when there is only one option left: protest.
It's a matter of dignity.

Indeed authorities may impose their will regardless of our objection.
Indeed there may be little we can do to stop the assault.
But the message is not for naught.

In the sixties Civil Rights marchers bore the simple message: I Am a Man.
Together they stood up against guns and dogs and water cannons.

What we remember today is not disgrace,
but the integrity of men and women who dared to assert human dignity
in the face of insurmountable power and violence.

In 2011 auto workers at GM and Chrysler have been effectively disarmed.
They cannot legally strike.
If they choose to vote against the contract imposed by the corporations,
the dispute will be settled by an arbitrator
whose mandate is not equity, nor justice, nor fairness
in the struggle between Capital and Labor
but rather parity with *non* union auto makers.

In terms of power the workers' vote is mute.
In terms of dignity their vote means more than ever.

Their vote may assert: I am a human being not a cog in your machine.
Their vote may assert the fundamental value of what it means
to affirm one's dignity collectively, and to state unequivocally:
We reject intimidation, coercion, and extortion.
We reject contractual servitude imposed without the consent of the governed.
We demand equality and the right to strike.

The ratification or rejection of UAW contracts in 2011
may be the most important vote since 1937.
The issue isn't nickels and dimes.
In either era it was and is a matter of dignity.

Don't refuse to vote. Choosing silence is the ultimate indignity.