

County Chair Convention Address

Given by Mitzi VanSant, Executive Committee Chair, Democratic Bastrop County Convention, 3/29/08.

We would like to welcome you to the 2008 Bastrop County Democratic Convention. For some of you this may be one of the first one or two steps you've ever taken in Party politics. For some others, it represents a continuation of many years of activism in support of the Democratic Party.

This year has been a very special year in political history. More than ever before, large numbers of people have felt inspired and empowered by our Democratic Party Presidential candidates. That inspiration promises a welcome change from the 8 years of imperial rule we have endured with the Republican administration of George W. Bush. Some of you may have arrived thinking this gathering is simply about nominating a candidate for the Party ticket, through the election of delegates to the state convention. I would like to suggest that it is much more than that.

We come into Party politics in a variety of ways. Some feel moved by a person or candidate. For others it is a dedication to a cause, like peace, in my case. I would like to suggest that it is those causes or ideals we share that matter here today. Whether you are inspired to work for peace and social justice, increasing respect of our environment, the welfare and education of the young--and old--in our society, whatever the cause, remember it while we are deliberating today. What is really important in this convention is that we treat each other with respect, form personal relationships that bring us closer together, and that we come out of here this afternoon united as a Party.

One of my other favorite organizations, along with the Democratic Party, is the Public Broadcasting System. I give money to them, and time and money to the Democrats. Two nights ago, after an exhausting day preparing for this convention, I flopped down on the couch to relax and get sleepy. PBS was having a fund drive and the program running was about the folksinger and songwriter Pete Seeger. One of the many songs he has immortalized in his 60 years of activism is "We Shall Overcome", a song that I consider a hymn, more than folk song. In any case, one of the statements he made that caught my attention was this: "Participation, that's what is going to save the human race." I couldn't agree with him more.

I want to thank all the people who worked so hard to make this convention happen. Yesterday there were 8 or 9 people working in the two small offices, some over 12 hours at a stretch. There were many others working on committees over the last 3 and one half weeks. I know many of us already feel a bond forged in political activism.

For the rest of you, so new to this, I hope you find a beginning connection today, and that you will come back to work with us. There are many opportunities to serve, and in a variety of ways. Once we finish here today, we will begin planning our GET OUT THE VOTE effort over the summer and into fall. We will need money for yard signs, office supplies and

overhead, and other materials useful in the campaign. You'll find Sustaining Membership forms on your chairs, along with the Agenda. But more than money, we need your help to get our Democratic candidates, all together the local, state, and national elected this fall. Please remember the causes or ideals that inspire you, along with the candidates, and work for them through your efforts today.