

"One person can
make a difference"



The Electability of Dennis Kucinich

By Bill Crosier, Houston Area Coordinator, Kucinich for President, December 8, 2003

About noon Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving, we received notice that Dennis Kucinich was coming to Houston the following Wednesday morning, to attend a conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. This news launched a whirlwind of activity for Kucinich volunteers throughout the Houston-Galveston area that would not cease until many of us fell asleep over our Thanksgiving dinners. Then the whirlwind picked up a few hours later, Thanksgiving evening, and continued all weekend and up until just before Dennis arrived. During this time, volunteers would assume various tasks: getting a suitable American-made car to pick up Dennis and member(s) of his staff traveling with him (Dennis only rides in American-made vehicles); drive him from place to place and first to a meeting with the editorial board of the Houston Chronicle. There was a luncheon to arrange and prepare (a vegan luncheon because Dennis is a vegan); a press conference to schedule; contacts with area newspapers, radio and TV stations to be made; the choice of dinner location to be made—large enough to hold the many Kucinich supporters and volunteers but not too far away—etc. We also worked in a quick stop at another restaurant across the street from the dinner, so he could speak briefly to a crowd of about 150 public radio supporters.

What we didn't know at the time was that the events we had scheduled for Dennis were still not enough for him. While Dennis was visiting with the National Black Caucus, he was invited to a reception that the local host committee was having for attendees of the conference, to be held in the ballroom of the recently refurbished Rice Hotel. So Dennis made plans to go there after the dinner, even though this would be during the only substantial break he would have that day—before going to Radio Station KPFT for the midnight show. He also gave several, short, unscheduled media interviews, after dinner, and after the midnight show.

Here's one of the most amazing things I saw during Dennis' visit, and it didn't even have anything to

do with Houston. In the car between the dinner and the Rice Hotel visit, he worked with staffers on arrangements for yet another event—to give a speech from his phone to a Peace Boat Tour crowd of about 600 peace activists who were gathered in San Francisco (with a phone at that end connected to the PA system). Following his visit to the reception at the Rice Hotel, he delivered that speech via cell phone, lasting about 20 minutes, from the foyer of the old hotel, with music blaring in the background from the reception on the floor above, with squeaky doors opening and closing constantly as people went in and out of the hotel right by where he was standing, and with noise from the traffic on the street just a few feet outside. We had the car brought over in front of the hotel, but he had already started the speech and it would have been even more disruptive to move through the street noise to the car to get a more peaceful and quiet place in the car. After speaking for about 20 minutes, when he heard the low battery indicator on his cell phone, he wrapped up his speech, and finished it exactly as the battery died. He delivered the entire speech extemporaneously, without any notes of any kind, in some of the most distracting conditions imaginable. I'm not exaggerating any of this. It was incredible to be there and to see it happen.

It was amazing to see Dennis Kucinich in action, myself, up close. I've never seen anyone like him. I cannot think of enough positive adjectives to describe Dennis, after seeing him in person and being with him all day long.

After the long day we had Wednesday, I don't know how he had the energy, and still maintained the concentration and clarity of thought that I saw, while remaining cool, understanding, imaginative, polite, and gracious. He had been up since before 5 am, and I was really worn out, but he just calmly kept going and going, while knowing exactly what to do and say for each event, staying articulate, clear, and focused about everything he said. This was even during and after the midnight KPFT show. Of course, everywhere he went, he also took time to shake peoples' hands, speak with

as many of them as possible, answer their questions, listen to their concerns, and give brief, unscheduled interviews.

Electable? There have been times when I have wondered, as you may have, whether Dennis could pick up enough votes in the next few months to change what we hear from the polls. I must confess that before this week, I had some doubts of my own (which I kept mostly to myself) concerning whether Dennis was really electable. The insights I got during the last week, though, have erased those doubts completely. After seeing what all of the Houston-Galveston area volunteers did in the last few days to make his visit here a success, after seeing all the time spent to help Dennis over the Thanksgiving weekend and the days following, after seeing the dedication, sacrifices, and enthusiasm from so many people who wanted to do anything they could to help, and after seeing Dennis in action close up, I don't have any doubts any more. The other candidates have NOTHING like this. The polls aren't set up to measure this. They don't show what grassroots organizing can do.

The mainstream media knows little or nothing about what is going on other than monetary contributions and public speeches (many of which they don't cover). They don't measure, much less report, the passion and the level of feelings that people have for Dennis. That is worth more than all the campaign contributions in the entire country. The other candidates and the media have so drained our country of hope and inspiration, and filled the population with fear, that many people are disgusted with the entire process. Many of them don't even want to vote, much less know who to vote for. Many have given up, and they just don't feel it's worth the trouble. Many of them just want to vote for "anyone but Bush," while others are afraid to vote for someone not willing to bomb the rest of the world into submission.

Over and over again while Dennis was here, I kept hearing people say, "Finally, we have someone we can vote FOR." It was terrific. And it's true.

I want to tell you a brief story that seems particularly relevant to what we are doing. Some of you know that I worked for a contractor at NASA's Johnson Space Center for quite a few years in their biomedical research laboratories. I still do work for them, along with other consulting. I wasn't there during the Apollo Program. However, I'll never forget something I heard about that era from an older employee who worked at NASA in the 1960's, after JFK issued his famous goal—"before this decade is

out, to put a man on the moon and return him safely to earth." Many people in this country thought that the goal was completely unrealistic and that it was not worth the trouble to try.

Many believed we would never get to the moon, or that even if we got someone there we wouldn't be able to bring him back alive. Some of the optimists felt it might be possible, but that it would still take 20-30 years to do it. Others were so afraid of the Soviet Union that they could think of little else.

The quote I vividly remember was what this old timer told me when I asked him how they were able to get to the moon. He said it was all summed up in a reply made by one of the NASA janitors when someone asked what he did for a living. The janitor said in a very matter of fact way, "I'm working to put a man on the moon."

The feeling of working together and doing whatever it took, knowing that if everyone did his or her part that they could do almost anything, and the dedication to a higher objective than few had ever dared to express, was what drove the people of NASA then and what enabled them to accomplish what many thought was impossible.

That is what we are doing. We're going to the moon, folks. You all have the talent, the enthusiasm, and the passion to do it. We are working towards a dream, a goal that skeptics think is impossible, but we're going to get there, just as the NASA janitor and his colleagues did. We can't do it individually, but we can do it as a team. Our goal is not just to win a primary, but to change the world, and Dennis is our space ship. He has shown us the dream and now we need to make it a reality. Daniel Patrick Welch said it well, that Dennis is the right person, at the right time. We just need to work together to achieve our dream.

So when Gary, or Anjellea, or Ray, or Bonnie, or I, or one of the others in our group call for help in the next few weeks for some project for Dennis, remember the janitor at NASA. Focus on the goal and the vision, not the seemingly insignificant task we're asking about at that moment. Your job is not to make phone calls, nor to pass out literature, nor to block-walk in your precinct, nor to talk to various groups about issues, nor to work on a fund-raiser.

Your job is to change the world.

Dennis IS the one. Dennis IS electable. Let's do it. Put on your seat belts. We're going to the moon!