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Crashing at the Intersection of Women's Rights and Voting Rights

Prologue 1: Enter Rigged Erections

The war on women and war on our ballots via hackable electronic voting machines are inextricably intertwined. These wars are being waged by the same oppressors: the 1% and their tentacles reaching into their flunkies and robots in the 99%. The 1% either own the corporations that own the electronic voting machines or own those people who own the corporations. But take heed, anyone could hack these machines. These oppressors want to control not only the entire country, but also, specifically and especially, women's bodies. They seek this control by restricting and outlawing our reproductive rights, including access to contraception. Not a peep about abolishing insurance coverage for Viagra and rigged erections.

Prologue 2: The Silencing of the Vaginas

The silencing in Michigan of Representative Lisa Brown for saying vagina—VAGINA VAGINA VAGINA—while the men in the room were trying to legislate our vaginas is a new low in the lengths the good old Republican boys will go to in their attempts to control us. As Brown said, “I am outraged that this legislative body not only wants to dictate what women do, but what we can say.” As reported recently by Cassie Murdoch on Jezebel.com, Michigan was in the midst of attempting to pass the most restrictive law in the country on abortion rights¹—so far. Eve Ensler performed *The Vagina Monologues*² with Representative Brown and other Michigan representatives in the Capitol building on Monday, June 18.

Prologue 3: Kissing Roe v. Wade Goodbye

The most important and longest lasting action against women by George W. Bush, our selected president, was his packing of the Supreme Court with Samuel Alito and John Roberts. There is the power and the will in

the Supreme Court now to overturn *Roe v. Wade* one step at a time. *Roe* is already being dismantled, one state at a time.

The Recent War on Women and Reproductive Rights

All these laws are being introduced by Republicans.

In April 2012 I spoke and e-mailed with Elizabeth Nash, the State Issues Manager of the Guttmacher Institute. I learned that the two states where the worst legislation against women has passed are Arizona (Governor Jan Brewer (R)) and Kansas (Governor Sam Brownback (R)). Arizona legislators passed six major restrictions: limiting how medication for abortion is provided, mandating an ultrasound before an abortion, prohibiting physician assistants and nurses from providing abortions, banning abortions for reasons of race and gender selection, prohibiting the use of public funds or tuition to be used to pay for abortion training at Arizona universities, and banning abortion at 18 weeks post fertilization. Kansas law bans abortion at 20 week post fertilization, has onerous and unnecessary abortion clinic regulations, limits how medication for abortion is provided, prohibits abortion coverage in health plans (except when necessary to save a woman's life), and requires abortion counseling. This counseling must include information that the abortion "will terminate the life of a whole, separate, unique and living human being."

The Guttmacher Institute has posted a state-by-state report of state legislation, enacted in 2012, regarding reproductive rights.³ Nash said that between 2000 and 2011, the number of states with less intrusive abortion-related policies dropped from 19 to 9, whereas the number of states with laws hostile to reproductive choice increased from 15 to 26. *Jezebel.com* recently published a terrific article by Erin Gloria Ryan on state by state anti-choice laws enacted in 2012.⁴

In 2010, ultra-right-wing Republican governors were elected in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Maine, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. In several of these states, these governors were not part of a long line of Republican governors. In fact, in some of these states, these governors interrupted a long line of Democratic governors.

Also in 2010, the Republican Party took control of a majority of the state legislative bodies. Nineteen of these state houses went from Democrat to Republican control.

Here in Massachusetts, Scott Brown (R) won Ted Kennedy's (D) seat, and with that vote we lost a supporter of reproductive rights. A Project Vote Smart review of Brown's record on abortion issues reveals⁵ that in 2011, NARAL rated him

45% and National Right to Life rated him 75%. In 2010, NARAL rated Brown 0% and in 2009-2010 National Right to Life rated him 100%. See *Vote Smart*⁶ to understand these evaluations.

Americans United for Life (AUL) is the organization that writes templates and boilerplate legislation against abortions and other reproductive rights. AUL specializes in the super-hatred of women and our bodies. Charmaine Yoest, the president and CEO of AUL who influenced the Komen Organization to defund Planned Parenthood, also testified against the appointment of Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court.

Reproductive rights, including contraception, are only part of the War on Women. There are other areas where this war is being fought: equal pay, jobs, domestic violence, and education. If we women don't own our own bodies, we have nothing. The recent laws restricting abortions will most heavily affect low-income women, young women, women of color and rural women. Rich women will always have access to abortions.

We have not heard the last of pre-natal personhood (North Carolina, Governor Bev Perdue (D); both legislative chambers Republican) and trans-vaginal ultra sounds (Virginia, Governor Bob McDonnell (R); both legislative chambers Republican). These misogynist crimes against women are two of the most barbarous tools in the war on women currently being perpetrated by the ultra-right wing. Since the Republicans vote in lock-step for these laws, I wonder if there are any who don't subscribe to the ultra-right wing of the Republican party.

Enter Rigged Elections—The War on our Ballots

I still believe that most people do not align with the ultra-right wing (the Tea baggers and the Wisconsin recall results notwithstanding). So how can we explain the shift in the vote to the right wing, represented by the Republican party? As someone who cares deeply about these issues and who has been following them since the 2000 Florida presidential election, I cannot help but conclude that Republicans are rigging elections by means of electronic voting machines. I also cannot help but ask why the Democrats are silent and, therefore, complicit.

Richard Charnin's "Wisconsin Recall: As usual, the Final Exit Poll was forced to match an unlikely recorded vote," provides ground-breaking and brilliant work in an account of what really happened in the totaling of votes in the Wisconsin recall of Governor Scott Walker (R).⁷ Charnin talks of "adjusted exit polls", meaning exit polls that the corporate media "adjust" to match the rigged outcome of the elections. Our elections are not owned by the people. Our elections are rigged by a privatized electronic

voting machine industry, a few corporations. The people who are behind these corporations promote their hatred of women and control of our bodies via rigged elections.

There is an enormous amount of evidence⁸ that electronic voting machines are vulnerable to errors, to hacking, and to fraud, and that such breaches of democratic process have repeatedly occurred. More evidence has been provided by Bob Fittrakis⁹ and Brad Friedman.¹⁰ I cannot think of any Democrat who has won an “upset” election since the 2000 presidential election. Can you? I can think of many Republicans who are in office from such “upset” victories. I cannot think of any state or legislative body where the Democrats are in control and where legislation against women gets introduced and passed. Can you?

Some say it can't happen here. But an honest look at U.S. history tells us we have never had democracy for the 99%. First, Europeans came and slaughtered the Native peoples; then, the oppressors enslaved people of African descent (60 million Africans shipped here like cargo from Africa); women did not vote until 1920, and we continue to fight wars all over the world.

Rigging elections is a hydra-headed monster. Voter ID and other means of suppressing the vote of elders, students, and African Americans occurs everywhere, and these measures are mostly, if not entirely, introduced by Republicans. Money and Citizens United also play their part. In Massachusetts in 2010, millions of dollars from out of state poured into Scott Brown's (R) coffers and in the Scott Walker (R) recall in Wisconsin in 2012 millions also poured in from out of state. Yet, even if all the suppression of the vote and the money were stopped immediately, election fraud will continue as long as the electronic voting machines are in use.

Rigging our elections via electronic voting machines allows the ultra-right wing to triumph in its hatred and fear of women and its ardent desire to control us, and few realize that this is going on. All the electronic voting machines are tallied in ways not visible to the human eye and recounts are difficult, if not impossible. How does this work? Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) and touchscreen electronic voting machines often do not have a paper trail at all, so elections cannot ever be recounted. Optical scan machines do have a paper trail, but obtaining a hand recount is expensive and riddled with regulations. Optical scan machines, as well as touchscreens, are susceptible to error, hacking and fraud. *Hand-marked, publicly observed secure hand-counted paper ballots (HCPB) elections are the only way to ensure that our elections are fair and that our precious votes are counted as cast.*

To the Occupy Movement

I know, I know—many people in the Occupy movement and elsewhere see no difference in either major party and say voting is irrelevant. For me, there is a difference even between -1 and 0. I want to know first that our votes are counted as cast, and next who really won the election. On the machines there is no way of knowing. Both DRE's/touchscreens and optical scan electronic voting machines have been hacked by computer scientists, without trace. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) [an independent agency of the US government, created by the Help America Vote Act—HAVA] put out a warning in December 2011 about ES&S DS200 IntElect optical scan electronic voting machines errors *during voting* [emphasis mine].¹¹ These machines were used in all or part of *Florida*, Illinois, Indiana, *Ohio*, New York, and *Wisconsin* [emphasis mine]. Read more details on the “Politics Extra” blog at cincinnati.com¹² and in *The Plain Dealer*.¹³ Read “*Chapter I: Hacking the Machines*,” about the most noted hacks of electronic voting machines by computer scientists..

Watch *Hacking Democracy*¹⁴ free on your own computer for one of the most famous hacks, done on the same machines on which Volusia County counted its vote in Florida in the 2000 presidential election. In this hack, Harri Hursti also demonstrated that he could go in and tamper with the program of the machine and leave no trace. Read “*Chapter IX: In Honor of the Anniversary of the Wisconsin Uprising, February 11, 2011—Wisconsin: The New Florida and Ohio?*” for a full description of what happened in Volusia.¹⁵

I love the Occupy movement and am part of Occupy Boston. We in the voting rights movement need you, the Occupy people: your honesty, courage, mic checks, steadfastness, analysis, reaching millions of people, street creds and non-violent civil disobedience. I implore all Occupy people to join us and help stop election fraud, the war on our ballots, and thus also the war on women.

See web site, Center for Hand-Counted Paper Ballots <<http://www.hand-countedpaperballots.org/>> and our Facebook page <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Center-For-Hand-Counted-Paper-Ballots/247752928605472>>.

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Thank you to all the sisters and brothers fighting both these wars every-

where, Elizabeth Nash, Jackie, Michelle Weiser, Mindy Fried, Nina Moliver, Stephen Caruso.

Bio: Parks, the Founder of the Center for Hand-Counted Paper Ballots and a long-time ardent feminist and internationalist, defended the abortion clinics with her body for a very long time. She does not want to go back to doing that and fervently hopes that those of you who have not had to do so, never have to.

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Endnotes

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⁵ "Senator Scott P. Brown's Special Interest Group Ratings," Project Vote Smart/Interest Group Ratings <<http://votesmart.org/candidate/evaluations/18919>>.

⁶ Project Vote Smart/Interest Group Ratings, scroll way down almost to the bottom of the page to this section "How to Interpret these Evaluations."

⁷ Richard Charnin, "Wisconsin Recall: As usual, the Final Exit Poll was forced to match an unlikely recorded vote," Richardcharnin.com, 06 June, 2012 <<http://richardcharnin.com/WisconsinRecallExitPoll.htm>>.

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¹⁵ Sheila Parks, "In Honor of the Anniversary of the Wisconsin Uprising, February 11, 2011—Wisconsin: The New Florida and Ohio?" (Second paragraph) OpEd-News, 20 February, 2012 <<http://www.opednews.com/articles/IN-HONOR-OF-THE-ANNIVERSAR-by-Sheila-Parks-120219-509.html>>.