

Is there a credible progressive presidential candidate to oppose George Bush in the 2004 election? AWARE examines the positions of leading Democratic candidates on issues relevant to war and racism...

WAR IN IRAQ

Lieberman, Kucinich, Gephardt, and Kerry were all serving Congressional terms when the Bush administration proposed launching a war against Iraq. Of the three, **Kucinich** was the only one to vote 'No' in the Congressional resolution authorizing the commencement of hostilities.

In a recent interview, **Joseph Lieberman** stated: "I supported the war. I thought it was the right thing to do. I feel the world is safer...with Saddam Hussein gone" (Radio Free Europe 08/03). Lieberman has been one of Bush's staunchest Democratic supporters. In 1991, he was one of the cosponsors of the Congressional resolution leading to the first Gulf War.

In contrast, **Dennis Kucinich** stated in February as the hostilities were just commencing: "The facts are these, Iraq was not responsible for 9/11 or al Qaeda's role in 9/11 or the anthrax attacks on our country....This war is wrong." (Washington Post 2/03). He continues to remain critical of the United State's post-war occupation of Iraq, and he is a strong advocate for the rule of international law.

Howard Dean, the former Democratic governor of Vermont, also initially opposed the war: "I opposed President Bush's war in Iraq from the beginning. While Saddam Hussein's regime was clearly evil...it did not present an immediate threat to U.S. security that would justify going to war" (www.deanforamerica.com). However, once the war began, he admitted: "'It's hard to criticize the president when you've got troops in the field. We all have got to support the troops" (National Review 03/03).

The civil rights activist **Al Sharpton** has been an outspoken and consistent critic of Bush policies. "[I]mperialistic go-it-alone military-oriented

foreign policy is shortsighted, unworkable & will be too costly--in money, lives, good will, & sound international relations." (www.thestate.com 5/03). **Carol Moseley Braun** has been critical of the Bush administration's squandering of post-9-11 world-wide goodwill: "[W]e would do well to foster [international] cooperation to freeze the very ground in which extremism and terrorism festers....duct tape is no substitute for diplomacy and I believe the people can and must demand an end to the saber rattling that has made us hostages to fear" (www.selectsmart.com).

John Kerry voted 'Yes' on the Congressional resolution authorizing the Iraq war but, in the aftermath of the occupation, has become increasingly critical of the administration's militarism and shortsightedness. Like Kerry, **Gephardt** voted 'Yes' to war with Iraq and, also like Kerry, he has apparently changed courses since he announced his bid for the presidency; now he accuses Bush of "chest-beating unilateralism" and calls for renewed diplomacy and a greater role for the United Nations (www.gephardtgrassroots.com).

Wesley Clark is regarded by some as an 'anti-war' candidate. However, his remarks on this account have not been entirely consistent; at the start of the war, he stated: "[The] credibility of the United States is on the line, and Saddam Hussein has these weapons and so, you know, we're going to go ahead and do this and the rest of the world's got to get with us" (www.aaiusa.org). Furthermore, he has been accused by some of war crimes during his tenure as NATO commander during the Kosovo conflict (www.zpub.com).

PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

While occasionally styling himself as a peacemaker for the Middle East, **Lieberman** is in fact a strong supporter for most of the policies of the Israeli occupation. In January, Lieberman met with Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and reaffirmed his belief in Israel's right to 'self-defense' and conceded that, with respect to two years of violence and bloodshed, "the

blame goes on the [Palestinian] terrorists" (Palestine Chronicle 01/03). He was also a cosponsor of Senate Resolution 247, which expressed solidarity with Israel in its 'war on terrorism.'

John Kerry takes a similar position: "Israel is our ally, the only true democracy in a troubled region...America has always been committed to Israel's independence and survival we will never waiver" (www.johnkerry.com). **Gephardt** easily glosses over any moral culpability on the part of the Israeli occupying forces: "We must be steadfast in our support of Israel. There is no moral equivalence between suicide bombings and defending against them" (Associated Press 06/02). **Howard Dean** favors a 'two-state solution' and admits that one criterion for true peace will be the removal of Jewish settlements from Palestinian territory. However, although he routinely calls for the ending of Palestinian violence against Israel, he does not call for the ending of Israeli violence against Palestine. He has expressed unwavering support for Ariel Sharon, and feels that the United States should 'continue its historic special relationship with the state of Israel' (Palestine Chronicle 08/03).

Dennis Kucinich has been strongly critical of the United States' preferential treatment of Israel: "The same humanity that requires us to acknowledge with profound concerns the pain and suffering of the people of Israel requires a similar expression for the pain and suffering of the Palestinians...If we seek to require the Palestinians, who do not have their own state, to adhere to a higher standard of conduct, should we not also ask Israel, with over a half century experience with statehood, to adhere to the basic standard of conduct, including meeting the requirements of international law?" (www.kucinich.us).

During her career as senator, **Moseley Braun** consistently voted in favor of pro-Israel legislation. Furthermore, in 1998 she was one of 81 signatories on a letter to President Clinton which criticized the administration for considering putting public pressure on Israel and blamed the