

BYU POLITICAL REVIEW

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

This time of year tends to be an introspective one for me. The approaching holidays, the end of another semester, and the start of a new year all feel simultaneously too close and far away. I find myself feeling things a little too much now as well. I feel the weight of a year I just experienced with sorrow, nostalgia, relief, etc. as if I did not do the same mental dance last December.

This reminiscing often leads me to question what I really accomplished over the last twelve months—an assessment I can be pretty harsh about. Imposter syndrome and other feelings of inadequacy turn me toward marking the things I did not do. The things I thought I should have done, or maybe even the things I knew probably wouldn't happen (but will still justify bullying myself about). Rather than recognizing all of the obstacles I overcame, I am consumed by the ruts I found myself stuck in.

Although I'm inclined to give my year a failing grade for whatever disappointments I can fixate on, I am trying to become more understanding of myself. I try to remind myself of the small victories that can seem too insignificant to take stock of when reflecting on an entire year. The truth is those moments add up to much more than I tend to give them credit for. Take this publication for example. Each completed article is a victory for our writers; each round of edits is a relief for me; each image is a work of art created by our wonderful designer; each printed copy is a labor of love from our publisher. I might be tempted to think of how I only contributed to six of these Political Reviews in an entire year. But the truth is that these can't be measured simply by counting a magazine.

The same principle applies to each of our lives. The measurements we find to assess our life often lack proper comprehension of all the effort, love, and resilience enacted to carry us through an entire year. So, if you suffer from the same tendency I do and must think painstakingly through the last four seasons of you—be sure to do so with grace for yourself. Recognize the little wins, even if they feel insignificant on their own. They pile up faster than you expect.

Sincerely,
Haeley Christensen
Editor-in-Chief

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Before You Ask Santa for a New iPhone: Child Labor in the DRC

Elle Diether

I am ridiculously dependent on my iPhone. I panic every time I cannot find my phone and drop everything to find it. Despite my dependency, I know little about the production of smartphones., but one day I decided out of boredom to google it. The path I went on was both disturbing and enlightening, and I am going to take you on the same journey in a fraction of the time. Over half of the world's cobalt is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and 15% of its workforce are children [1]. Cobalt is a key component of rechargeable batteries which is a key part of smartphones¹. As technology continues to develop, the demand for cobalt will increase. Cobalt is projected to grow by 60% by 2025 [2]. Given cobalt's growing importance in the worldwide economy, it is crucial to understand where it comes from, and the key players involved. Child labor is commonplace in DRC's cobalt industry, causing the lives of thousands of children to have worldwide implications.

The DRC has a long history of exploitation, beginning with King Leopold of Belgium who colonized the DRC to extract valuable rubber resources [3]. In the 1920s Belgium companies monopolized the copper trade relying on either cheap or coerced labor to make large profits. Many cobalt companies operate similarly to these forbearers, especially in the exploitation of children. Labor is cheap with most workers making less than \$2 a day (children make around \$.50) [4] because the DRC is unstable due to two wars in the 1990s that killed millions, and in the Eastern Congo the war never stopped⁴. The most cobalt-rich areas are in the conflict-ridden Eastern Congo exacerbating conflict as rebel groups battle for cobalt profits. In this conflict over control of the cobalt supply, children suffer the most.

Mining is considered one of the worst forms of child labor due to its heightened risks [5]. For example, because of greater exposure to toxic substances, polluted water, and long hours, child laborers are sicker than their non-mining child counterparts⁵. Around 77% of child laborers have degraded health conditions [6]. Additionally, over half of child laborers have suffered physical abuse.

Female children in mining communities are much more likely to be victims of sexual violence. These circumstances are due to the nomadic nature of cobalt mining settlements, men can more easily get away with sexual violence because they are continually on the move. Children have little choice in whether or not they mine, some parents coerce their children to mine, but most children mine because it is the only way their family will be able to eat that day. Despite the horrors of cobalt mining child labor, little has been done to stop it.

It is illegal in the DRC for a person under the age of 18 to work in the mining sector [7], however, this law is seldom enforced. If the police ever threaten to enforce the law, they are simply bribed to look the other way, and if they do enforce it they punish the child, not the employer [8]. The DRC government simply does not have the capacity to regulate child labor, especially in the Eastern Congo which is plagued with violence [9]. Another important reason the DRC turns a blind eye to child labor in China.

Over 50% of global cobalt refining takes place in China, and over 60% of the DRC's cobalt is owned by China [10]. One of the largest cobalt

mining companies in the DRC is Congo Dongfeng Mining International which is 100% Chinese owned. Given China's own use of child labor, China cares little about using children to mine cobalt. Given China's lax safety standards child laborers are in grave danger of workplace injuries and death because they are given the most dangerous jobs. Despite the well-known fact that Chinese cobalt batteries are a result of child labor, American companies still buy billions of Chinese batteries, enriching the Chinese while most DRC child miners remain impoverished.

Big tech companies such as Apple and Tesla were sued by Amnesty International on behalf of child workers in the DRC. Little came from it. The empty company promises to do better as they continue to buy Chinese cobalt batteries [11]. However, it is not a solution to simply stop buying batteries from China. When companies start to hurt financially it is those at the bottom (child laborers) who are hurt the most. The few attempts by the west to reduce child labor have failed, for example, western governments [12] pressured the DRC to liberalize their cobalt industry by increasing the number of foreign-owned firms which pushed locals including children out of jobs, forcing them to turn to violence to survive [13].

I am not advocating you throw away your phone, that would not

solve anything. However, ignoring the fact that your phone is a product of child labor also is not the answer. It is the holiday season, and the best thing you can do to help child labor in DRC is to donate to an organization that helps solve the underlying issue that plague child labor. You may be thinking "I'm a poor college student I don't have any money to donate", however, a couple of dollars goes a long way in impoverished countries like the DRC. If you can't spend the money, email your senator—keep bothering them so that they care about the child labor in the DRC as much as you do. It doesn't have to be a massive gesture, small efforts are meaningful and important. Before you ask for the new iPhone from Santa, think about where it came from and what small things you can do to help alleviate the suffering of the thousands of children in the DRC.

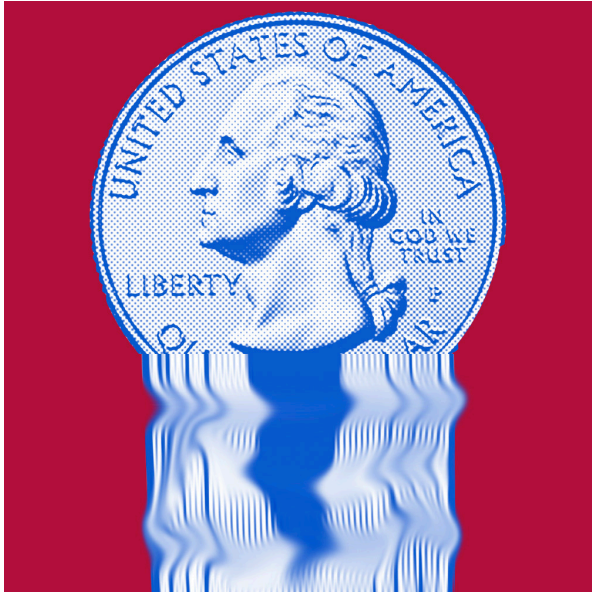


Some of my favorite aid organizations

- 1) Kiva <https://www.kiva.org/pgtmp/home>
- 2) Kenya Red Cross <https://www.redcross.or.ke/>
- 3) The Samburu Project <https://thesamburuproject.org/>
- 4) West Africa AIDS Foundation <https://waafweb.org/>

Minimum Wage: Not an Anti-Poverty Tool

Levi Hilton



In the November issue I wrote an argument against raising the minimum wage. It was based around the economic side effects that minimum wage causes. This includes higher prices, increases in unemployment, decreases in economic mobility, increases in high-school dropout rates, and other negative externalities. In this article, I will examine common misconceptions and false assumptions that many pro-minimum wage proponents misunderstand and rely upon.

Since the minimum wage was first introduced on a national scale in 1938, much has changed. \$0.25 was the first minimum wage and was part of President Roosevelt's New Deal. The purpose of the wage was not to fight poverty but to increase spending to help America get out of the Great Depression. In today's world, not only has the federal minimum wage increased to \$7.25, but the perceived reason for its existence has changed.

The political jungle in which we live is the home-front for moral warfare. Oftentimes, politicians across the ideological spectrum add moral weight to their policy preferences. This creates a milieu that paints policy challengers as immoral. Politicians regularly rely on unsound, and unexamined, assumptions to base their claims. They use these strategies in hopes to get their legislature codified.

This political strategy has been used over and over again in recent years to increase the federal minimum wage. Typically, proponents of increasing the federal minimum wage speak of the war on poverty, cost of living, having a 'living wage', and raising the standard of living. Suddenly, if you disagree with policies that increase the federal minimum wage you hate poor people. Or at least, you don't want to help them! This is not true.

Unfortunately, this rhetoric is built off of false assumptions concerning the employees who work minimum wage.

Many assume that minimum wage workers not only represent a large portion of Americans but that they represent Americans in poverty. Both of these assumptions are not accurate.

But don't take my word for it, let's examine them together!

First, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 1.5% of hourly-paid employees earn minimum wage. This fact not only undermines the assumption that increases in minimum wage would help much of America, but it highlights this important reality – we don't need a minimum wage! Without the federal law changing, the natural supply and demand of labor has shifted to an increase in labor prices. In almost all cases, employers don't base their wage on the federal minimum wage, but on the value that the employee brings in. In economics, this is referred to as "the invisible hand," which shows that markets respond to those involved and are not dependent on price control laws.

This is also why increases in the minimum wage are also highly correlated to increases in unemployment. A recent study by a professor at John Hopkins University found that countries with a minimum wage have almost double the employment of countries that do not have a minimum wage. If the government enacts a law that increases minimum wage, it doesn't magically increase the value that an employee brings to a company. If the value the employee brings is less than their cost of labor, then they will not have a job for long.

Another assumption that many politicians rely on is that minimum wage workers are in poverty. Once again, this isn't accurate. The National Bureau of Economics states that minimum wage employees have an average household income of \$75,203.78. Although the individuals who are employed earning minimum wage don't make much, they are usually a part of households that do. This is because a large majority of minimum wage employees are younger than 25, and looking to expand their job skills, preparing them for higher-paying employment.

Passing legislation that increases the federal minimum wage does not achieve the objective. It won't decrease poverty. It won't help millions of families access a 'living wage.' It does not increase the standard of living in America. It does not, and cannot, because of false presuppositions.

Let's seek to better understand the problems we seek to solve. Let's examine our assumptions against available facts and data. Let's reject the idea that minimum wage laws are the solution to American poverty. Instead, let's join in searching for real solutions, create helpful and viable legislation, and build a stronger America together.

Abortion in America: A Post-Roe Landscape

Amy Kurtzweil

It's often easy to remember where you were when something significant happened. I'm sure you can remember some, like where you were when a celebrity died or an election was called. For me, this is true about a few events, like the overturning of *Roe v Wade*. It was June 24th, and I was eating at a lovely pasta restaurant in Barcelona, Spain. It was a beautiful sunny day, and the pasta was fabulous. Not fabulous was opening my phone to see notifications stacking up one by one reporting the same headline: *Roe v Wade* had been overturned. I was shocked, mainly because based on my (limited) knowledge of Supreme Court precedents, I didn't think it was actually going to happen. More importantly, I was shocked because I was terrified of what this meant for women across America, including myself. *Roe v Wade* was not just about a woman's right to an abortion, but about our right to privacy and individual autonomy in healthcare. As 5 months have passed without *Roe*'s legal protection, America's healthcare landscape has changed drastically.

Roe v Wade was a landmark Supreme Court decision passed in 1973, which challenged a Texas law prohibiting all "but life-saving abortions" [1]. With a 7-2 majority in the Court, this decision notably was built upon the idea of a "fundamental right to privacy" [2] that was based on the 14th Amendment's Due Process clause. The Due Process Clause protects Americans' rights to privacy, specifically regarding how involved the state can be in matters of privacy [2]. Healthcare, including procedures like abortions, is protected by our right to privacy. While *Roe* didn't just legalize abortion across the board, it established a legal compromise between individuals and the state. *Roe* affirmed that the state has a legitimate interest in "the potentiality of human life" [2] meaning at a certain point when the pregnancy is viable, the state has the right to be involved in some way. *Roe* created a balance where states could choose how to balance the interest of the individual mother, as well as their own interests [2]. Without *Roe*, women no longer have federal protection of their interests. Without *Roe*, we've lost the precedent that created personal own zones of privacy and ensured that we could have individual autonomy over healthcare decisions. Without *Roe*, it's now up to each state to create a standard of abortion protection, without any regulation. The absence of *Roe* means that now states can completely ban abortion, as well as criminalize it [3]. Some states have already passed a standard of protection, meaning that abortion will never be truly banned within the state, but it can be restricted to a certain extent. Since *Roe* fell, abortion has been made illegal in 12 states [4], meaning abortion is prohibited entirely and even criminalized in those states. This means that in many states it is illegal or extremely hard to access regardless of whether it is a case of incest, rape, or threatening the mother's life [5]. Giving states the right to choose how or if they want to restrict abortion is theoretically a great idea, but giving states the right to completely ban abortion is dangerous. Banning the procedure entirely jeopardizes the lives of women who may have needed to get a life-saving abortion [Forbes]. Just after the Texas abortion ban [6] in 2021, a study conducted at the University of Colorado Boulder projected that a nationwide ban on abortion could increase pregnancy-related deaths by 21% [7]. We can already see this phenomenon in states where abortion is illegal, as women who seek medically necessary abortions due to pregnancy-related complications are now unable to receive these



procedures, or at least have delayed access [5]. Banning abortion doesn't stop abortion – it just bans safe abortions [8] and potentially access to birth control. With 12 states making abortion entirely illegal, and 14 states enforcing new restrictions [4], women in America have readily turned to "at home" abortions, using Plan C pills and other remedies, many unsafe. By 2020, half of abortions were carried out in "self-managed" means, typically with pill usage [9]. These numbers are estimated to have increased since the overturning of *Roe*, which has left 14 states without abortion clinics, and 1/3 of women in places where abortion is either unavailable or restricted [9]. On top of this, *Roe*'s absence could have repercussions on access to birth control in America. Because *Roe* established a privacy precedent in healthcare, its absence has opened the doors to other potential restrictions on healthcare, particularly those involving women's reproductive rights [10]. With states now being able to define what constitutes an abortion, and when pregnancy or life begins, access to certain birth controls and family planning devices are up for debate. Certain birth controls or contraceptives such as Plan B or IUDs are often classified as "life-ending" and fall into some of the new state-to-state definitions of abortion because they disrupt the process of implantation [10].

Since the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, America's healthcare landscape has changed drastically. Both regarding the availability of abortions for those who need them, as well as regarding the potentiality of further restrictions over healthcare decisions such as birth control. The impacts of *Roe* being overturned extend not only to the rights of women in healthcare but to all of our rights to privacy and healthcare. This decision has made America an outlier among developed nations, as one of the few who deny access to abortion. Watching how America's social and political landscape changes as states continue to vote on and ratify local abortion laws will reveal much about the future of abortion access, and privacy rights in America.

How Ideology Reduces Humans to Objects

Jackson Berthold

A Russian soldier cowers in a crater somewhere in Ukraine, begging God for safety. He makes the sign of the cross with his hand as he prays. Who knows what he is thinking now? Does he think of his parents? Maybe he has a wife or even children? Whatever he was thinking, the drone footage could not reveal it. My heart beats like a drum in my chest as I watch the video, and I sense the man's pain and fear. Despite the massive distance and any cultural barriers between us, I sense his humanity and empathize with him. I close the video and move down to the comments. I find no such empathy among my American peers. They laugh at the poor man, cursing him as nothing more than a footsoldier of Russian imperialism. Another comment takes note that, contrary to the video's title, the man cowering in the crater is no Russian. He wears a Ukrainian uniform, and the particular sign of the cross he gestured was not Orthodox, but Catholic. Despite this, all I see is a continuous cacophony of laughter at the suffering "Russian" from hundreds of twitterites with Ukrainian flags in their usernames. I believe that video has since been deleted from Twitter, but my memory of it lingers on.

That experience highlighted one of the strange realities of human conflict, our proclivity to dissociate from our very humanity when invested or embroiled in conflict. The desire to ideologize conflict—painting it as black and white and the players as purely good and evil seems inevitable and incurs dire consequences. When we view other human beings as abstractions, as playing pieces in a wider conflict, we turn them into objects. Sometimes we even attack people that our ideology would otherwise incline us to protect when we become blinded by a label that someone else has applied to them.

The organization of the maddening crowd of humanity into ravenous tribal struggles on a national scale has inflicted untold suffering upon humanity. The war of the Vendée is one such example. The French revolution has its fair share of slaughter and injustice, but one campaign, where the French revolutionary government initiated a national conflict against its own citizenry in the name of social "progress" and "freedom", resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands [1]. The revolutionary government of France sought to impose its doctrine of social progress on the people, and in response to the public's widespread revolt, it initiated a campaign of violent suppression against unarmed civilians and combatants alike.

One quote from General Waterman, who led one of these "infernal columns" dedicated to the destruction of rural villages and the execution of "reactionaries", sums up the war in the Vendée quite well: "...there is no Vendée. It has perished, with its women and children, under our sword of freedom. Following your orders, I have crushed the children under our horses' hooves, and massacred the women - they will bear no more children for those brigands. I have not taken a single prisoner" [2]. They killed in the name of the revolution, in the name of equality, fraternity, and liberty. The revolutionaries' zealous quest for progress blinded them to the reality right in front of their faces. They committed genocide against the very people the revolution was advertised to liberate. Across the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, this dreadful

irony reappears all too frequently.

This kind of thought process wasn't relegated to distant bureaucrats or revolutionary footsoldiers drunk on ideology. Even popular writers and famous figures accepted and even endorsed the execution of innocents. In response to the slaughter of civilians, burning and looting of churches, and the ubiquitous and often violent seizure of personal property by fellow anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell remarked in his memoirs that "there was much in it that I did not understand, in some ways I did not even like it, but I recognized it immediately as a state of affairs worth fighting for" [3].

He did not resist or denounce the evils committed by his ideological comrades simply because they were fighting for progress. He, like so many of the period, was blinded by revolutionary fervor and ideological resentment. Orwell's doctrine of equality was shared by many of his communist and anarchist compatriots, who also harbored deep resentment of the clergy, viewing them as obstacles to equality and progress. Throughout the cataclysm of the Spanish civil war, the

revolutionaries' rabid anticlericalism led them to commit countless atrocities against priests, nuns, and Catholic religious sites, frequently exacting physical mutilation and sexual exploitation on their victims. The passion of their ideology stoked an inferno of hatred, with many thousands of broken bodies and destroyed communities lying in its wake [4]. These revolutionaries believed themselves on the right side of history, and because of that fact, their acts would be vindicated in time when their struggle created a final utopia bereft of human suffering or want. The ends justify the means, no?

The individual stories of the genocide in the Vendée and of the slaughter of priests and nuns across Spain are too graphic to detail here, but I urge those with strong constitutions to delve further into my sources to know the true horror inflicted by ideology upon innocent people. In these sources, you will bear witness to horrific acts of brutality egged on by rhetoric eerily similar to that which we see today on social media and across the American political arena. We Americans are not

immune to the ideology that has possessed so many others and should guard against it when possible.

If you are willing to dehumanize and support the suffering of normal people because you or a fellow ideologue have labeled them with a particular word, you might need to engage in introspection. When we reduce humans to mere labels, to mere ideological constructs within an abstract system of depersonalized actors, we turn them into something less than human. Consider what you think of so-called "anti-vaxxers", "racists", "fascists", "socialists" and "globalists". If you regularly think about the need to cull such people from society, or you feel pleasure in response to their pain, remember all the innocent and kind people who you or another might unjustly attack simply because a mere idea or incorrectly assigned label prompted you to.



Do They Know It's Christmas? The Infantilization of Aid in Africa

Megan Baird

In 1984, the world came together to help Ethiopia in the midst of a famine. Throwing together celebrities from Bono to Freddy Mercury, Live Aid was a massive fundraising concert that promised salvation to starving Ethiopians. It was Live Aid (or Band Aid) that produced the hit single from which this article takes its name. Live Aid created an instant cash flow of \$127 million for famine relief.

While the intentions of Live Aid were genuine, the effects were gauche. There are many elements of foreign aid we could address here. It is complex and requires much more attention than this piece can allow it. For this article, I can only address the cultural side of aid.

In popular media, we're exposed to two versions of Africa: Africa Suffering or Africa Rising. Either it's Africa plagued by ebola, corruption, and famine, or Africa making great strides toward democracy (Hooray! We're so proud of them!). Both approaches are inherently flawed and hearken back to colonial superiority. Either the West disengages from Africa (consider Rwanda), or they take credit for any positive advances, like a parent taking praise for how well they've raised their former colony - I mean, child.

Aid "sets itself up as the...know all and end all" [1]. Essentially, aid is a way for outsiders (colonizers) to tell people what to do and how to do it. While the money can be helpful, how can we balance the (potential) positive side effects with the negative cultural overtones?

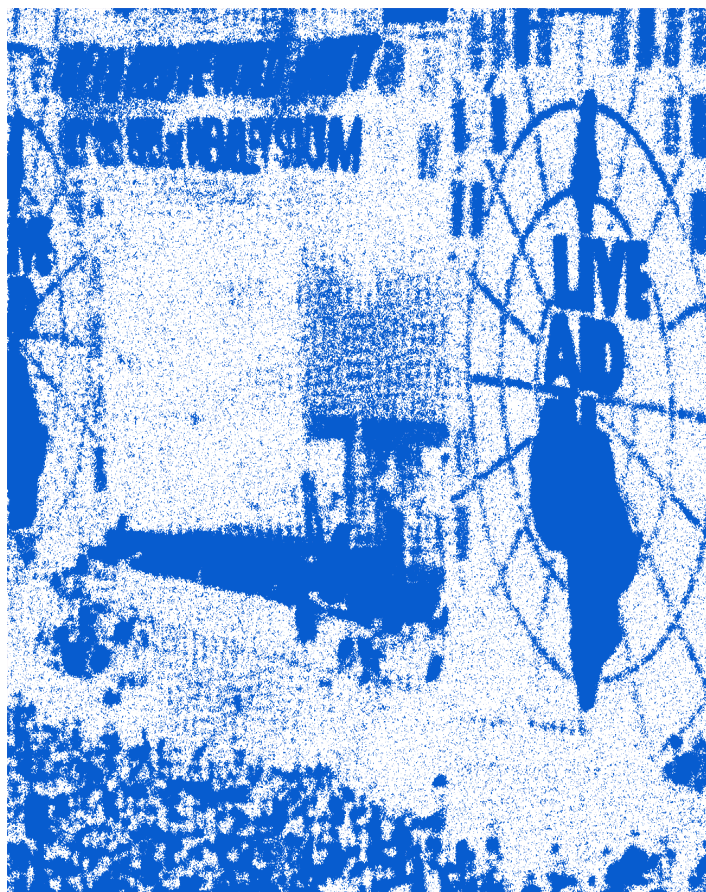
First, we have to address the efficacy of foreign aid. Does aid even work? Yes and no. Aid in the form of cash influxes (like Band Aid) often does help relieve the immediate symptoms of the issue. However, it has either no long term effect or negative long term effects. Think of it like DayQuil - it might lower your fever, but it doesn't take away the cold. While the money generated from the charity concert likely did save lives, it does not prevent future famine. It does not build institutional trust or work on alleviating general poverty - in fact, much of the current research suggests that there is a corollary effect between aid and increased levels of poverty. In 1990, 280 million Africans were living in extreme poverty. Currently, over 430 million Africans are in extreme poverty [2]. Worldwide, the number of people in poverty has decreased [2], yet Africa defies this trend [3]. Furthermore, we often use foreign aid to prop up governments that serve our own interests, even at the expense of the people under their rule (thinking of you, DRC). Perhaps aid-receiving countries are best served through grass-roots aid, instead of unconditional or conditional transfers to institutionally inefficient governments. Some suggest the best option is the creation of aid-funded universal basic income to get rid of inefficiencies and allow individuals to spend it how they choose [4]. Foreign aid has failed to deliver sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction [5]. We've got to stop, assess, and re-strategize in order to actually make a difference.

Does this mean we should avoid foreign aid altogether? No, it does not. Those who contributed to the colonization of Africa are responsible for many of the problems aid seeks to address. The pillaging of the people and the resources from the 1500s to the 1950s, as well as the history of oppressive, imposing regimes, has stalled the development of every country in Africa. We can blame "oppressive regimes," but we're the ones responsible for their existence. We can blame lack of institutional trust, but until the 1960s, the existing institutions

were ruled by a government thousands of miles away, often only there to drain resources. We can blame violence, but who originally stoked it? The ambiguous ethnic social divides reflect castes created by colonists.

There's a better way to do aid. Instead of singing about the helplessness of an entire continent, perhaps we should empower Africans to address issues and create change in their individual countries. Aid must be African-led, sustainable, and accountable [6]. We don't have to scrap it, we only need to re-think it. Let's enable African businesses and the economy to build their own infrastructure, instead of sending 15-year-old Americans to build a school and post about it on Instagram.

Live Aid was offensive and infantilizing—contributing



to a harmful "save helpless Africa" narrative that already predominates. Even worse, those who promote it have not educated themselves on the harmful impacts of their lyrics. The song has been reiterated four different times since, in hapless charity efforts. The lyrics may have slightly changed, but the accompanying attitude has not. political elites shape the views and preferences of the masses [4], and no amount of activism or populism can change that fact.

What SURVIVOR Has Taught Me About Allies

Dalton Merrill

Two of my crowning personality traits are being the world's biggest Survivor fan and being an outspoken conservative. And while, yes, this article is partly just another step in manifesting myself eventually getting cast in (and winning!) Survivor, I've actually learned a great deal about myself and the world around me through the lens of a seemingly inconsequential TV show.

For those who don't know, Survivor is one of the greatest social strategy games on earth. It's a reality TV show depicting 16-20 strangers who are left to fend for themselves in the wild. They compete in challenges to earn safety throughout the game because every week, someone gets voted off the island. A quintessential Survivor strategy is to make alliances with the other players so that you can all make it farther in the game and closer to the \$1 million prize. Good Survivor players find strong allies to not only protect them but also elevate their game and help them reach their full potential. In the end, it is impossible to win the game without allies.

Growing up in Utah, I haven't had many opportunities to interact with people from different walks of life. In contrast, Survivor puts together a group of people with extremely diverse backgrounds. In some ways, this makes it more difficult for the players to make allies, but the differences between the players have allowed me to see what it means to be a true ally both in the game and in life.

As a vocal conservative, people frequently make assumptions about me and my beliefs. I understand that wearing a MAGA hat has certain connotations, but I resent the sentiment that conservatives can't be good allies for marginalized groups.

I personally don't belong to any substantial minority groups myself. However, I've felt a huge shift in my self-confidence to speak up for minorities because of my experience in the Political Review. Last year, I was the only conservative author on our staff. I felt like I was representing an entire political ideology with every article I wrote. Although I forged genuine friendships with several authors in our class, I often had a hard time voicing my opinion in our weekly discussions because it felt like no one would agree with me. This year, we have a wider range of political opinions within our staff, and I've found myself speaking up more because I know there will be

at least one other person who agrees with me. Someone who understands where I'm coming from and can support me in my opinions.

As allies, we know that we will never truly understand what it means to be a minority because we haven't lived that life. We don't have that same first-hand experience, but we can support those who do. We can amplify voices courageous enough to speak up. We can speak up ourselves! We can notice prejudice or hurtful comments and stand up for those who might be too tired or too scared to say something themselves. We can make an effort to help others feel safe and welcome. We can protect members of marginalized communities.

In a bold act of love, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently demonstrated what it means to be an ally. In the wake of the Senate passing the

Respect for Marriage Act, the church released a statement for their support of the bill:

"The doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints related to marriage between a man and a woman is well known and will remain unchanged. We are grateful for the continuing efforts of those who work to ensure the Respect for Marriage Act includes appropriate religious freedom protections while respecting the law and preserving the rights of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters." The Church is unwavering in its commitment to the doctrine of eternal marriage between a man and woman while simul-

taneously supporting the legal protections for LGBTQ+ marriages.

Historically, allyship is associated with liberal social policies; however, today, allyship is not partisan. I fear that both Republicans and Democrats have made assumptions about allyship that not only harm minority groups but also create a barrier to entry for those who want to become allies but don't know how. In my opinion, the best allies are those who stand up for people on a personal level. I believe that proximity is the gateway to empathy. We are all children of loving Heavenly Parents. Our politics should never impede our ability to love our fellow brothers and sisters. And just because we may differ in the political policies we support, that does not mean that we are unable to be strong allies for those around us.



That's an Affirmative on Affirmative Action (Sort Of...)

Zac Bright

During high school, I observed two friends, Carson and Skye, who applied to the same university. Skye was accepted by the school; Carson was not. These things happen, but what made this particular case interesting was the number of relevant similarities between the applicants. They had the same GPA, ACT scores, went to the same school, both males, etc. Carson and Skye did have some differences, however. Carson played sports, was well supported by his community, has a strong and affluent family, etc. Also, Carson is white. Skye's father was in prison. His mom kicked him out of the house two weeks before Christmas, his senior year of high school, because he reminded her of his father. He had no car, little support, and lived a more impoverished lifestyle. Also, Skye is Black. Some would argue that the racial difference between these two applicants is what made Skye a more favorable applicant. There are possibly other reasons that made the university favor Skye over Carson, but for this article, let's just assume race is what made the difference. As such, this case is one example of the effects of affirmative action.

The Supreme Court has gotten busy this year (e.g. abortion, praying on fields, environmental issues, etc.). On Halloween, the Supreme Court argued about the constitutional validity of affirmative action. If affirmative action is deemed no longer constitutional, there will surely be a socio-political frenzy. But what is affirmative action? How is it being practiced? And what is the legal precedent for affirmative action? More importantly, what will happen if affirmative action is deemed unconstitutional? These questions will be explored.

"Affirmative action's definition has evolved over the years, so it would be wise to see what it means now to ground ourselves in the conversation[1]. According to the Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law, affirmative action

[1]s defined as a set of procedures designed to; eliminate unlawful discrimination among applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination in the future. Applicants may be seeking admission to an educational program or looking for professional employment [2].

This procedure considers past, present, and future racist

attitudes or policies concerning educational institutions and businesses. By considering race as an important factor for admission into a university, they hope to erase the effects of the past and avoid unknown racial biases they may have. In the late 90s, there was a question over the constitutional validity of such a practice. For if the university was looking at race, they were ignoring the qualifications of a certain candidate. Essentially there was worry that a Black person who performed poorly in high school would be privileged by a university over a white person with better qualifications.

In 2003, the Supreme Court held that universities could consider race for admitting applicants. This case, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, is commonly viewed as a landmark case in favor of affirmative action. Barbara Grutter, a white woman, applied to the University of Michigan

Law School and was denied. The Law School admitted that they consider race as a factor in admitting law school applicants. Grutter clearly took issue with this factor. The Supreme Court, however, concluded: "the Equal Protection Clause does not prohibit the Law School's narrowly tailored use of race in admissions decisions to further a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body"[1]. The

Court reasoned from prior precedent, race is a justified factor for university admissions when that contributes to a more diverse student body. Additionally, the Court felt that each university determines for itself whether diversity is a worthwhile objective for their institution. There are two other significant points brought up. First, the Court does clarify that if race is treated as a quota, affirmative action no longer qualifies as constitutional. Second, there was an expectation that 25 years from the decision, the use of racial preferences would no longer be considered [2].

Today many universities consider the race of applicants, i.e., they practice affirmative action[3]. But we are approaching the 25-year mark, and the Court is reconsidering the constitutional status of affirmative action. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has found that, in the last ten years, there has been a steady increase in diversity at universities. There are more Black, Hispanic, and Native American students in



universities than ever before [6]. Admittedly, the increase is not mind-boggling, and the percentage of diverse representation is nothing crazy either. But this increase may indicate a removal of affirmative action. Universities seem to be adequately erasing the effects of the past, and there the student body is more diverse. Job well done.

Or so it seems to the current Supreme Court. I think this is somewhat mistaken. Race should no longer be a consideration; socio-economic background should be the deciding factor between otherwise intellectually equal applicants. While this would redefine affirmative action as we know it today, the advantages would far outweigh any annoyances that come with a change in legal jargon. There are three reasons America should support socioeconomic affirmative action. First, those who would benefit from the race-focused affirmative action would still benefit from this adjusted form of affirmative action. There is a strong correlation between race and economic status, with the average Black family being much poorer than the average white family [7]. Socio-economic affirmative action would prefer the poorer applicant thereby ensuring more economic mobility for them in the future. As a result, marginalized groups would still benefit from this type of affirmative action.

Second, socio-economic affirmative action would theoretically establish support from both political ideologies. Liberals tend to focus more on social issues and care deeply about racial diversity. How this is achieved has already been discussed, but to repeat, there is a strong correlation between race and economic status that would be lovely to eradicate. On the other hand, conservatives love rags-to-riches stories and bettering the economy for the whole of America. Socio-economic affirmative action would improve economic mobility for any American that wants to go to the Ivy Leagues to become a significant contributor to the economy. So, as luck would have it, socio-economic affirmative action can appease both ideologies. Whether from an economic or social standpoint, both sides benefit.

To further this point, let's look at a university that currently practices a race-focused affirmative action: Harvard. Harvard explicitly endorses a race-focused affirmative action, saying that diversity enriches education as a whole [8]. Furthermore, Harvard's class has become increasingly more diverse. White students now make up for less than half the total student body, which is a wonderful achievement. However, most Harvard students come from wealthy families. According to a recent report, "The median family income of a student from Harvard is \$168,800, and 67% come from the top 20 percent. About 1.8% of students at Harvard came from a poor family." [9] But don't worry, the poor kids who go to Harvard to become rich. But the glaring problem is that only 1.8% of students come from poor families! When I

consider the economic and social goals of a university, not admitting poor students seems to be problematic. If universities would redefine affirmative action to have a socio-economic concentration, then this problem would be solved.

There are, however, two problems with socio-economic affirmative action worth mentioning. The first is that the Court is not looking to redefine affirmative action. The Court is deciding whether a race-focused affirmative action is constitutional. In a perfect world, I would have the Court look at the economic background of applicants, say no to race-focused affirmative action, but encourage the constitutionally sanctioned practice of socio-economic affirmative action. Sadly, this surely will not be the case. Arguably, however, since there is strong correlation between economic and racial status, I would hope they maintain the constitutionality of affirmative action as it stands.

The second problem is if socio-economic affirmative action was established, how would the poor kids afford these Ivy League schools? This article will not be the article that explores this question in-depth, but it is a question in need of answers.

Returning to my friends, I know that by admitting Skye — an economically destitute and Black individual — that university gave him the tools necessary to confront life's challenges and escape his own struggles at the time. Additionally, Skye brought a diverse background where he could share his unique life experience, and what he has learned, with others. Carson still succeeded without attending that university. That is not to say Carson did not deserve to attend that university, nor does he not have experiences worth sharing. But honestly, Carson had the means to overcome rejection from a university, while Skye did not.

I'm not sure what the Supreme Court will conclude about affirmative action. But affirmative action, properly understood and practiced, does not seem to be unconstitutional. Socio-economic status matters and it is not something a university should pretend to be blind about. In fact, they should embrace socio-economic status (or maybe just race) as a consideration. As such, the Supreme Court should let the universities implement their own policies while preventing constitutionally approved quotas, and universities should broaden their vision to include economic background. This is no easy feat in the legal world. So good luck to the Supreme Court.

If You Read One Book This Year, Let It Be This One

Ethan Gillett

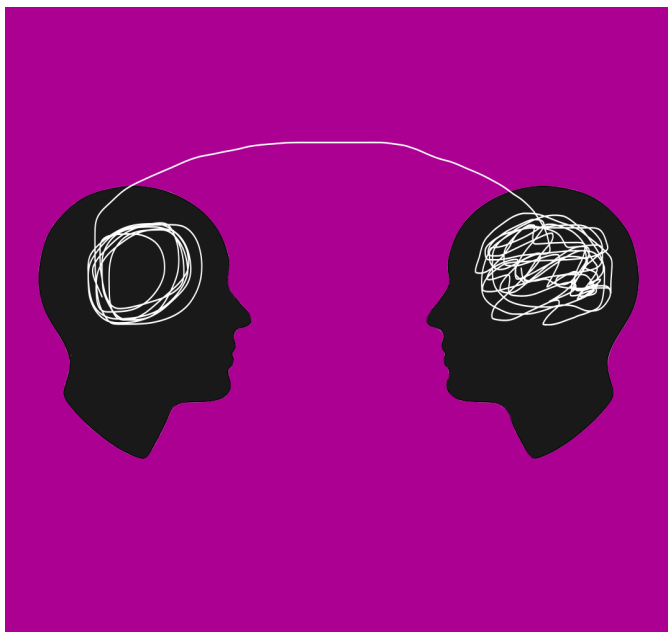
Have you ever heard statements such as, “I simply worked harder than most”, “competition will solve economic inequality”, and “we are uniquely placed to help those less fortunate”? These statements all reflect Darwinist age thinking. Social Darwinism is the belief that certain people or actors become more powerful in society because they are innately better than others. Motivated by the quote “survival of the fittest”, Darwinists favor hard work, comparative advantage, and competition as methods to succeed in life. They might ask, “shouldn’t we be given an advantage over others if we have shown that we are more efficient, harder workers, more honest, etc?” Applications of this question are found in economics, political science, and even certain religious circles. Many in these fields search for a social application of the natural selection process. An application that has long been misunderstood.

In her book *Social Empathy: The Art of Understanding Others*, Elizabeth Seagal seeks to establish a connection between the “survival of the fittest” argument with humans’ unique ability to empathize with one another. She writes, “to balance our social instincts, which can include competition, with our need to be connected to others, we human beings set up rules and codes that help us survive.”[1] These rules appear as criminal or tort law and commandments that attempt to rectify or soothe the perceived injustices. These injustices often turn into highly politicized debates on immigration law or religion that, if not settled, could result in a court case. They can also be less politically motivated such as not being invited to a friend’s birthday party or going on a date where the other person is constantly checking their crypto. Seagal’s argument continues to explain these laws and codes exist due to a misinterpretation of Darwin. She provides this quote from Darwin: The social instincts—the prime principle of man’s moral constitution—with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, ‘As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise’; and this lies at the foundation of morality.[2]

Seagal argues that it is the “prime principle of man’s moral constitution” or ability to empathize, in combination with competition, that allows us to succeed. It is our innate desire to “do unto others as ye would like to have done unto you” that must work in tandem with the competitive nature

of man. Sound familiar? It should; considering the fact that “putting off the natural man” is a very common principle taught in the church. Even BYU’s motto “Enter to learn, go forth to serve” calls upon our ability to empathize and serve with our fellow man.

Have we lost sight of this marriage between competition and cooperation? Do we focus too much on competition, searching to get ahead, that we lose sight of the other half of the equation? Many policy experts believe we have and have identified specific mechanisms in society that could reassemble the long-forgotten marriage. In their book *House of Debt*, economists Amir Sufi and Atif Mian argue that debt markets should be fashioned around equity sharing instead of traditional lending; resulting in less severe recessions and greater equality. In a world where competition still exists in the market and cooperation exists between the banks and homeowners, everyone shares in both the risk and the reward.



What about in our classes? Is competing for those few A’s really that necessary? What if classes had group elements incorporated into the curriculum? Where, instead of being curved on the success or failure of a few, everyone benefited from ensuring the success of their fellow students. I had a professor say once that there were two ways to cheat in his class. The first was to take credit for someone else’s work and the other was to know how to help someone struggling and do nothing about it. Knowing that helping your fellow classmates succeed will also increase your chances of getting an A

sounds like a pretty decent incentive to me.

In the end, social empathy is about caring for the group. It involves asking the question, “How will my actions affect other people?” before we act. Whether we are on dates or asking for help on a homework assignment, our actions and inactions have the ability to change people and their lives. If you don’t know where to start, then read Elizabeth Seagal’s book. Don’t have the time? Make a list of your five most important relationships and then think about something you can do for each of those people. Then do those things. You might be as surprised as I was to discover how much those five things will change your attitudes towards everyone else.

A Case for a General Education

Caleb Johnston

Nothing I am learning will help me in the future.” Once upon a time, I was that student, repeating that refrain over and over again. I saw my studies in history, math, English, and all general subjects as a near-pointless step in the process that would get me to college. As if I would have the ability, I contemplated reforming education by making it more practical, vocational, and useful. I wanted to be educated and trained to work, to see a specific career application.

Then college came, and I had hope. Now there was freedom—I could choose what I wanted to do and pursue it wholeheartedly. Well, I decided to study economics, and I was living the great paradox that most economics students do. We understand the importance of specialization in an economy, yet by virtue of studying economics, we fail to put it into practice. Though I wasn’t where I wanted to be, I could stomach my indecision, because I felt that I was in a normal stage of discovery.

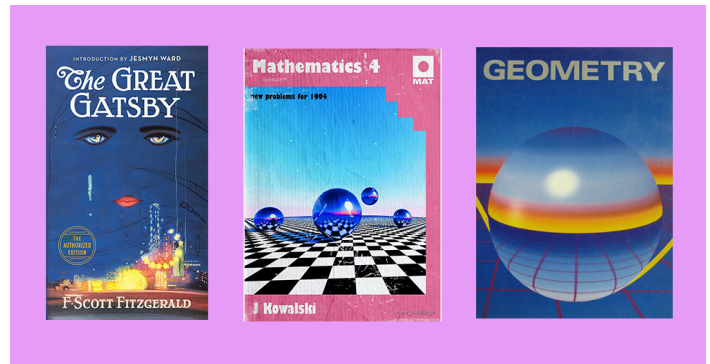
The unknown was stressful yet tantalizing. With a boyish curiosity and a desire to learn, I felt optimistic about several career options. I considered the foreign service, CIA, supply chain management, and more; the options seemed promising. Mentally, I was misguided by the thought that I would figure it out. I hoped for a revelatory moment, a feeling of divine clarity. The reality is, most of us don’t ever figure it out that early on. Among 25–33-year-olds, 75% say they have experienced a quarter-life crisis. The average age for such a crisis is 27. In that same age group, 36% have entirely changed their careers, and only 28% know what their dream job is [1]. Recently, I had an excellent conversation with a man who was a chemical engineer for years. Now, as he pushes into his 60s, he has found his passion as a farmer. Would it really take me that long to figure it out?

While the aimless among us are compelled to experiment, a general education is beneficial even to those who have more career direction. Even if you have a well-defined career path that aligns with your purpose, you will still have to learn on the job. Liz Wiseman, a researcher and author on leadership, said “Based on the rate at which knowledge is increasing and the rate at which knowledge is decaying, I calculated that about 15 percent of what we know today is likely to be relevant in five years.” [2]

She is right; there will always be idiosyncrasies with a new job or company, and the nature of the job will just change with time. But what about Malcolm Gladwell’s 10,000-hour rule? Don’t I need to start practicing to really excel? Still not knowing what to do, I listened to a BYU forum that completely changed my perspective. David Epstein, author of *Range*, spoke on how generalists succeed in the long-term. He claimed that we often hear about the exceptions, the Tiger Woods and Mark Zuckerbergs of the world. Yet they truly are exceptions, and generalists tend to excel in more complex fields [3]. The overspecialized mind may struggle to integrate information and approach problems from multiple angles.

Epstein is not alone in his argument about generalists. Sydney Hook, an American philosopher, argued, “broadened vocational preparation is not only of use to the future worker himself; its benefit to society is apparent to anyone who has ever been forced to deal with the mechanized mind of a bureaucrat.” [4] Even Adam Smith, the original evangelist for specialization, warned, “The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become.” [5]

I imagine none of us want to become that kind of stupid,



in which we repeat the same operation and refuse to be innovative. I certainly do not, and that has helped me to swallow my career indecision. But now, in my fourth year of college, I have reached the peak of my quarter-life crisis. I am about to graduate, and my career path is as ill-defined as it's ever been. For the fourth time in my college years, I am considering a new career path, and it is severely misaligned with my undergraduate major. With this recent reorientation, do I wish I would have studied something other than economics? Do I regret pursuing government work, then dabbling in supply chain and management consulting? Do I fault BYU for pushing me into GE classes on philosophy, writing, science, and music? Absolutely not—I am grateful.

Forgive me for being philosophical, but I have learned that education is for life, not just a career outcome. Yes, my general education has framed my mind in a way that will lead to better career outcomes, but I do not want a career to be the sole focus of my life. Think about the potential life applications of your education.

I hope to be a stellar father. With what I am learning in sports psychology, I wish I could go back and restructure the way I practiced. Now, not only will I try to live my athletic dreams through my children, I can help them train to reach their own dreams. Maybe even that class on nutrition will come in handy as a father. As an economics nerd, I may teach my children about making decisions based on marginal costs and benefits. I hope to serve in The Church of Jesus Christ and in the community. I'm sure what I've learned in religion classes will be helpful, and maybe my moderate knowledge of government will be a resource.

Learning is fun; it keeps us on the edge of our seats. If we track into a path that is too specialized, we may deprive ourselves of that thrill. Elder Holland, in pushing for a general, higher education, said, “The ennobling climb toward an Everest allows us—indeed requires us—to take the high ground, gives us a place to view the broader, more liberating, more eternal ‘general’ education, if you will, that is so fundamental to the growth of the human mind and development of the human soul.” [4] A general education provides great value to a career; it distinguishes one as being able to lead, create, and integrate different ideas. Not having our sights set on a dream job is frustrating, yet the lack of focus engages us in the invigorating process of a general education. No matter our progress along our career paths, we should appreciate general education as an eternally refining experience. So, next time you are obliged to learn something outside of your track, do not hesitate to dive in, and you may start enjoying the thrill.

Abolish the Confederate Flag

Brendan Armstrong

American historical symbolism has long been a subject of debate. What can a symbol mean and what kind of messages can it portray? While those topics are often discussed today, the debate over a very particular American piece of history intensified on June 17, 2015, when a 21-year-old white man shot and killed nine African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina in hopes of igniting a race war in the United States. Investigators later found blatant racist remarks posted online on his behalf with pictures of him holding the Confederate flag [1].

In Provo, you might not come across the Confederate flag very often. The most common version of the flag that you'd see is the Battle Flag of the Confederacy which consists of two blue lines containing thirteen stars (representing the thirteen states that supported the Confederacy) spread diagonally across a red background. However, the flag is still found across America—specifically in southern states. The first edition of the Confederate flag originated in March of 1861, at the onset

of the American Civil War [2]. The flag was raised at the Capital of the Confederate States in Montgomery, Alabama. At the time, the flag represented the various states that had succeeded from the Union and their efforts to preserve the practice of slavery and states' rights. After the Civil War came to an end in 1865, the flag endured as a piece of history.

In fact, it wasn't really until 1950 that the flag was regularly seen again when white Americans and southern state governments used it to protest the Civil Rights Movement. In 1961 for example, Gov. George Wallace flew the Confederate flag in Birmingham, Alabama, in defiance of President Kennedy's movements to promote integration of black and white Americans [3]. It was weaponized, a symbol of hatred and alienation, and used to prevent black Americans from obtaining the same rights as white Americans.

The flag continues to be flown today, particularly by neo-Nazis and far-right extremists who are seeking to intimidate black Americans. People may claim that it is an attempt to preserve history and recognize southern heritage but, at the time of its creation, it represented slavery and racial hierarchy. There is no reason to promote those ideals. As was stated by State Senator Paul Thurmond in reference to the 2015 debate of the flag, "It is time to acknowledge our past, atone for our sins, and work towards a better future. That future must be built on symbols of peace, love, and unity. That future cannot be built on symbols of war, hate, and divisiveness" [4].

The question then remains: if we abolish the flag, are we ridding ourselves of American history? My answer is no. White southerners say they use

the flag as a symbol of their Southern heritage but, for many African Americans, that flag is a symbol of oppression, horror, and malice. Remembering that flag is forcing African Americans to endure the lasting effects of a period defined by oppression and racism [5]. Getting rid of that symbol isn't forget-

ting our history. It is moving on from a time that was defined by horrific racial norms and fostering an American system dedicated to unity and growth.

Today, there is no excuse for flying the flag, given that its use represents white supremacy, racial bigotry, and belligerent attacks on the well-being of black Americans across the country. Just as the man who murdered the nine African Americans in South Carolina sought to instill a racial hierarchy, the Confederate flag should be done away with to extinguish the promotion of those ideals. When people fly the Confederate flag, they know what type of message they are spreading. It isn't one of peace, historical remembrance, or unity. Rather, it is a message to Americans everywhere that they are promoting racist ideals and are attempting to use a symbol of hatred to pervert America's future.



How Do Other Countries' Elections Differ From That of the United States?

Gillian Marcucci



In light of the recent Midterm elections, I thought it would be fun to talk about how other countries' elections work in comparison to the U.S. In the U.S., we elect the president through the Electoral College. Each state in the U.S. is assigned the same amount of electors as they have members of Congress. There are 538 electors total, including the three of Washington D.C. Besides Nebraska and Maine, (who choose their electors "using a proportional system"), [1] after all the votes in a state are tallied, "the winner gets all the electoral votes for that state" [1]. Then the candidate who receives the vote of more than half of the U.S. electors is elected president.

In the United States, citizens are not required to vote, but they can register to vote after they turn 18 years old if they so choose. There are 229 countries and territories within the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, and 122 of them have "some form of compulsory voter registration" [2]. Some areas, (such as the Netherlands, Hungary, Chile, Israel, and Argentina), require residents to register to vote once they are qualified, whereas other places, (such as the UK, Tonga, and New Zealand), automatically register their residents. In some places where voting is not compulsory, residents cannot vote without first registering to vote, but in other places, (such as Mongolia and India), residents are not required to register before voting [1].

Just like in the U.S., a majority of the other countries and territories in the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network vote through paper ballots. Out of the 227 countries and territories for which the network has data, 209 of them have their residents cast their votes through paper ballots. Israel and Mali are examples of a few countries in which voters can choose a ballot for their preferred political party [1].

After the CoronaVirus Pandemic panned out, many countries altered their voting policies and procedures to increase voter turnout. For example, both New Zealand and South Korea extended their periods for early voting in their

2020 elections. New Zealand saw a 37.2% increase in early voting since their previous election in 2017 and South Korea saw a 14.5% increase in early voting compared to their Parliamentary election prior to 2016. In Myanmar, "voters who were unable to return to their place of residency because of restrictions could vote at temporary locations before election day" [3].

Among all of the countries that held elections in 2020, eight of them allowed for postal voting. Compared to its presidential election in 2016, the U.S. saw a 24% increase in postal voting in 2020. In 2020 the four countries of Croatia, Poland, Switzerland, and Belize allowed their residents to vote by proxy, meaning "a voter authorizes another person to cast their vote for them" [3]. In Croatia, only voters who were infected with Covid-19 and got permission from the court were allowed to vote by proxy.

Twenty-one countries also allowed residents to vote through mobile ballot boxes due to the pandemic. In Montenegro, for example, mobile ballot box teams visited voters sick with Covid-19 who had requested assistance. They would give them a ballot to vote and collect it when they were done casting their vote. Both the voters and teams were under strict health protocols, (such as social distancing and the wearing of masks), for this process to be done safely.

The voter turnout rate in the United States has significantly increased in recent years. Of the voting-age population, 62.8% of people voted in the 2020 presidential election as compared to 47.5% in the 2018 midterm elections. Among other factors, this could be due to the "bitter campaign between Joe Biden and Donald Trump and facilitated by pandemic-related changes to state election rules" [4]. In the recent midterm elections, almost 30% of young adults between 18 and 29 years old voted, "marking the second-highest youth turnout in three decades" [4]. But despite this happy increase in voter turnout, the U.S. still lags behind other countries. In comparison to the other 38 member countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and 12 other selected countries, according to Pew Research Center, the U.S. ranks number 20 out of the 50 in voter turnout among the voting-age population, with Uruguay, Turkey, Peru, Indonesia, Argentina and Sweden in the lead.

Fortunately, many countries have great election systems in place that allow their residents to vote, and one positive result from the Covid-19 pandemic. It caused governments to alter their voting laws to make voting easier for different residents, leading to an increase in voter turnout for many countries. The U.S. has also seen a recent spike in voter turnout. But we still need to do better! Encourage others around you to vote, no matter their age, occupation, or disabilities. There are many systems in place in the U.S. to allow and help anyone eligible and willing to vote to get to the polls, (even if that poll is a ballot box).

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