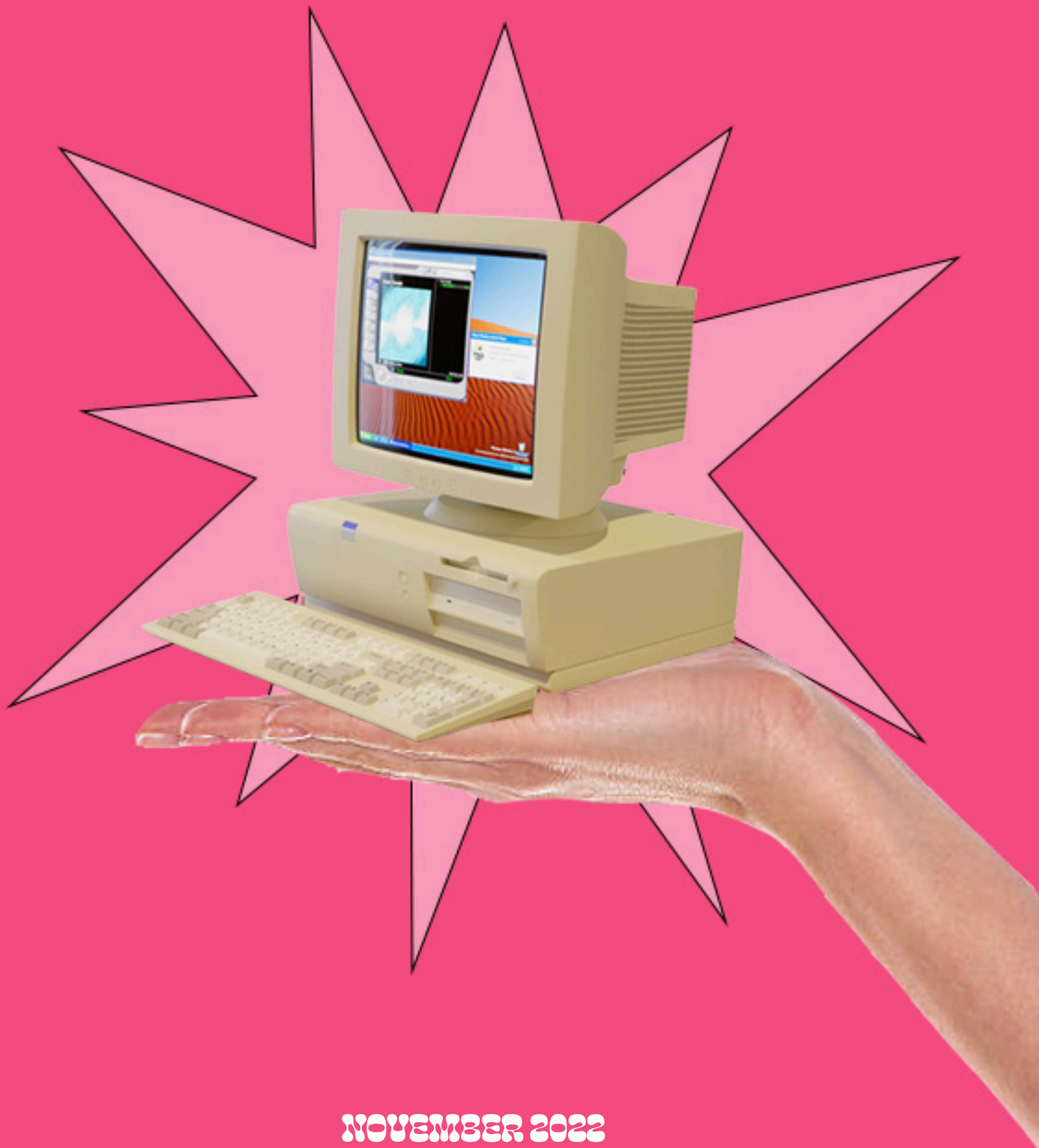


# BYU POLITICAL REVIEW



NOVEMBER 2022



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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The temptation of idleness is real. I have never considered myself an idle person, but as my senior year drags on and winter turns mornings darker and colder, the urge to stay in bed and do nothing frequently creeps in. This time of year just seems to have an effect on us as students and simply as human beings. And idleness, whether in the form of a warm blanket or an unfinished assignment, can feel irresistible.

Although I am always a proponent of proper self care, mental health days, etc. I also recognize that the much more vile properties of idleness are a poison to us as individuals and a society. Everything we have accomplished as human beings is thanks to people who shook off a tired mind and lazy days long enough to run experiments, build governments, create art.

If you're reading this, then I'm tempted to say you are already defying the odds of stagnation. Going out of your way to engage with political discourse (or even just listen to it). Hang on to those moments of curiosity and energy. They are what fuel greatness.

Even when I feel completely exhausted, the passion of our writers is invigorating. I can't say I always agree with their opinions—but I admire their dedication and the way they shake off the idleness that comes for each of us to write these articles, and be active students, and just to be active participants in the world around them.

I'll leave you with an excerpt from my favorite Tennyson poem (shoutout to Michael Lavers for making me memorize the entire thing a few semesters ago):

One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Alfred Tennyson  
Ulysses

I hope that no matter the obstacles that make us wish to just crumple and give up, we can move on with the temper of heroic hearts. Find the will that I have been amazed by time and time again. And strive on without yielding.

Sincerely,  
Haeley Christensen  
Editor-in-Chief

The BYU Political Review is a student publication of BYUPAS  
and the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies.



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# Why America Needs Humanities Majors

Zac Bright

I recently attended an interesting lecture at BYU. The speaker was David Elkington, an entrepreneur and businessman who went from investment banking, to starting a data company for sales representatives, to founding Silicon Slopes, to ensuring the establishment of thousands of more COVID testing sites, and currently has started a company that manufactures electric cars. In short, Mr. Elkington has made millions of dollars, if not billions, and presumably will continue to in the future. So, what degree did Mr. Elkington earn? He earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy. (And no graduate school by the way)

As a humanities major, this kind of story seems so bizarre. All of my academic life, humanities accomplished one of two things: (i) a good chance at law school or (ii) becoming a professor. Mr. Elkington not only believes that this view is not only false but a moral failing of academia. Humanities majors can and should do more to put their knowledge into practical application. This will lead to the overall betterment of society in innovation, connection, and living standards. Mr. Elkington's argument concentrated on the business world, and I believe the same applies to the political world. The political climate, not unlike our planet, is heating up. It is in desperate need of those who are critical thinkers, fast learners, great communicators, creative, and focused on what matters most: people. I am deeply entrenched in the humanities majors and minors. I am a philosophy major (catch me making billions in a couple of years I guess) and a French, logic, and ethics minor (not that impressive I promise). With that said, I will draw on my experience as a philosophy major to make a case and then provide some evidence in favor of humanities majors.

The critical thinking a humanities degree requires is rigorous, pedantic, exhausting, and thrilling. Philosophy presents arguments that we have to define, clarify, find examples, and see if there are any counter-examples or objections. This methodology of approaching people's claims permits the philosopher to evaluate the plausibility of their claim. For example, most people outside philosophy say, "There is no right or wrong. It's up to interpretation. And who are you to judge what is good or bad?" To be fair, there clearly are moral differences throughout cultures, subcultures, and even among individuals. But this claim when carefully analyzed has poor consequences. For example, Nazi fascism was bad. I feel quite comfortable arguing that their views and actions were wrong. This is all too quick but, hopefully, you have an inkling of what the process of critical thinking looks like.

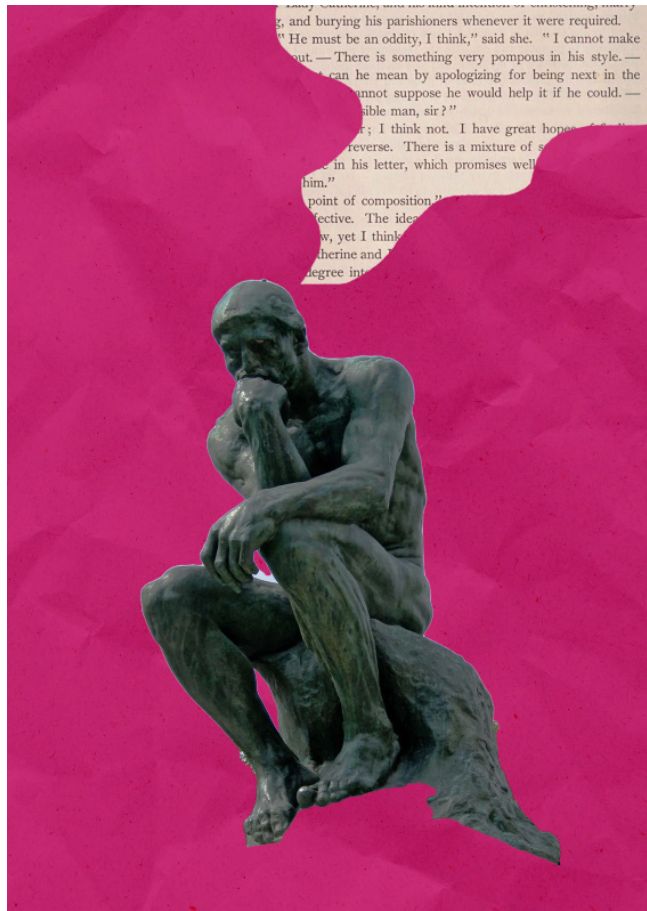
Now how can this skill help our politics? There seem to be at least two answers. First, at the citizen level, we will be able to engage in civil and productive discourse. When approaching or asserting arguments, we should exercise what we call in philosophy 'the principle of charity': see the other's argument in the strongest interpretation possible. This way there is a level of respect, but all the while allowing room for persuasion—a rare phenomenon in everyday political discourse. Second, when humanities majors become leaders in politics, the

same benefits apply but on a much larger scale. Frankly, the nuanced political discourse that would persuade and inspire Americans is dead. Let's look at a few arguments from our current and former presidents. President Trump tweeted, "Mexico will pay for the wall!" [1] Don't you see the excellent use of reasons? Isn't he thinking carefully? And then we have President Biden: "But we cannot let this – we've never allowed any crisis from a Civil War straight through to a pandemic in '17, all the way around, '16, we have never, never let our democracy take second fiddle, we can both have a democracy and elections and at the same time protect the public health," [2]. Doesn't President Biden just have a masterful way with words? Do you feel convinced? Clearly, both of these statements are not arguments. They are not persuasive, unimpressive, and kind of sad. Obviously, I was not charitable with which

quotes I chose, but I don't think anyone would be quick to defend the robust arguing skills of any of our political leaders. Just watch any government debate. It's a potluck of fallacies. But it doesn't have to be if humanities majors have confidence in their skills in the political world.

There is debate among political psychologists on whether an improvement in rhetoric would satisfy the incentives politicians face.[3] Similar to how the nice guys finish last, maybe the politicians with careful rhetoric finish last. There seems to be some truth to this idea. The presidential candidates who were the funniest were always voted for over those who actually had good ideas. So, maybe politicians should not seek to improve their rhetorical skills. I don't think so. For example, maybe politicians could master the charm of the non-rhetorics while utilizing the skills of the rhetorical master, and keep the rhetoric comprehensible. This is an option I love, but I think a better alternative would be for more people, especially students, to engage in humanities studies. In increasing the studies of humanities, I believe the incentive structure for politicians will change because those who study humanities will require more than ad hominem and empty humor.

Another skill in humanities that seems to be lacking in politics is the ability to understand humans. That is not to say humanities majors have all the answers to what humans are or what they need. We do, however, have a sharper understanding because we are forced to confront the good, bad, and ugly of humanity. Read any Russian literature (you really should) and you will know exactly what I am talking about. Policies today are constantly battling between the citizen's vote and what will gain the most profit. Perhaps not for everyone, but this does seem to be the motive behind the policies. As such, politics needs humanities majors. The focus has always been on the improvement and elevation of humans, no matter who they are. There are many different ways of going about to achieve the end of helping people, but the focus should always be on the people because there are lots of people in America who need help.<sup>6</sup>



# We Don't Talk Anymore

*Megan Baird*

**G**randma says she despises democrats, so my cousin doesn't talk to her anymore. My neighbor can't stand people who are pro-choice... her daughter will never trust her enough to tell her about her abortion. A friend puts up signs I disagree with, suggesting that people of the opposite party (me) are unintelligent and irresponsible. While these scenarios are not from my life, they are a reality for many. We can't talk politics, or anything somewhat related to politics.

How did politics become strong enough to destroy family ties? In 2016, 58% of Republicans saw the Democratic party in a "very unfavorable" light, a 37% increase in 1994. In the same year, 55% of Democrats saw the Republican party in a "very unfavorable" light, a 38% increase since 1994 [1]. We don't like each other and it shows - 27% of Americans hold unfavorable views of both political parties [2]. In 2020, 45% of Americans reportedly stopped talking to someone in their life about politics [3]. What's more, 58% of Americans who follow political news closely have stopped talking to someone about politics [2].

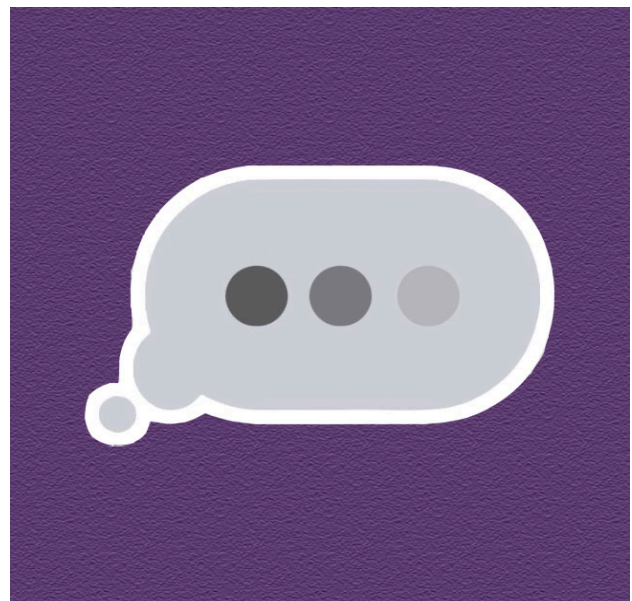
While tension drives democracy, hyperpartisanship destroys it. Interestingly, we disagree less often than you might suspect - our partisan polarization is much more emotional than it is ideological [4, 5]. 77% of Americans think we should fund research on renewable energy sources [6]. 85% of Americans support increasing opportunities for disadvantaged farmers and ranchers [7]. Most people favor increasing SNAP benefits [7]. 62% of US adults favor raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and even more support raising the minimum wage to \$9 an hour [8, 9]. The approaches might be different, but we're all working toward the same goals.

To get things done, we need to talk. Society is so divided it can't function - that's not how we progress, that's how we fall apart. We've got to talk politics, but how? When things are heavily emotionally charged, how can we find a middle ground? While much of our current political rancor can be (rightly) blamed on elites and social media, that's for another article. As citizens, we can lessen hyperpartisanship by figuring out where we agree. Find the middle ground, and expand from there. Second, we can be respectful especially when we disagree. Disrespect is the surest way to stagnate productive

conversation. We should strive to be well-informed and familiar with the ideas we are promoting and the opposing opinions on those ideas (not just to counteract them, but to understand them). Instead of listening to just one news source, we have to diversify where we get information from (and please: make sure your news source is not just Snapchat/Instagram/Facebook/Tiktok).

While we must treat each other with respect, we can also be cautious about whom we talk to—those who spout opinions on subjects they know little to nothing about hurt healthy civic discourse more than they help it. Despite this, we lead and learn by example. My interactions with people who provide thoughtful, well-researched opinions that are different than mine have opened my mind to new ways of thinking and helped me to moderate my political opinions. When we can't learn to talk, we all lose. Too much partisan fighting creates gridlock and hampers any hope of progress. This is how extreme candidates win and moderate candidates are sidelined.

Like a high-stakes sporting event, we've got people proudly wearing colors on both sides and booing the other team. This isn't BYU versus Utah, it's real life. We meet people we disagree with all the time. It's time we learn to love our neighbors and to disagree better.



# Minimum False

*Levi Hilton*

In a world that is full of prosperity, it is difficult to witness poverty and poor conditions it brings to people around the world. Good people everywhere seek to increase the standard of living for others.

One potential way that we could increase the standard of living is to increase the minimum wage. If the federal minimum wage increased from \$7.25 to \$15.00 then a lot of people would receive a raise... right? Wrong.

Although a higher minimum wage is a commonly thought solution to help those in need, it is not a viable solution. Increasing the minimum wage negatively impacts the very people policy makers seek to help. An increase in the minimum wage leads to fewer benefits, more taxes, higher unemployment, the elimination of economic mobility, increases in prices, spikes in high school dropout rates, and other unfavorable consequences.

Let's examine what might happen to a single mom who is paid the minimum wage.

At \$7.25 an hour she qualifies for medicare, subsidized housing, and government funded child-care. She suddenly gets a raise from \$7.25 to \$15.00. You may think she is better off financially, but even though she is making more

money, she actually loses financially. She has to pay more in taxes, and now she doesn't qualify for the same government benefits. The Heritage Foundation recently completed a study showing that a single mother like this would lose \$260 per month when receiving a standardized wage raise of 40%. In short – increasing minimum wage would not increase her standard of living.

Even worse, there is a chance she would lose her job! The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that if the minimum wage increased there would be 500,000 layoffs immediately. 40% of employers say they would be forced to lay off employees (CBO). According to Duke University, 70% of CFOs say they would look to outsource labor to foreign markets.

Unemployment rates increase. John Hopkins University recently published a study on the effects minimum wage has on unemployment. By studying various countries in the EU, they determined that the unemployment rate goes from ~7% in countries that don't have a minimum wage to ~12% in countries that do. The more money is required to hire employees the less motivated

businesses will be to hire. If an employee brings in \$5 of value per hour, a business won't pay \$15 per hour for their labor.

One reason that political figures push to raise the minimum wage is due to the assumption that people seek to make a living off of minimum wage jobs. This is an incorrect assumption. Only 2.6% of hourly paid employees earn minimum wage. Almost 70% of minimum wage workers are part-time workers. They are part of households with other sources of income. They are not working with an expectation to make a living. Most of them are working with an expectation to gain skills through training and job experience.

A majority of minimum wage workers are teenagers. Without the ability to enter the market at low-paying positions, how will today's teenagers gain the training and experience necessary to achieve higher paying employment? Even the New York Times concedes that a

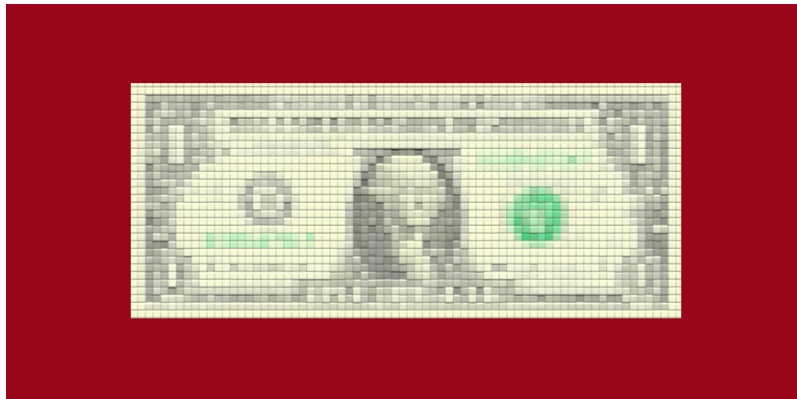
raise in the minimum wage would significantly hurt teenagers. This crushing blow to the economic mobility of today's youth could impact them and their families for decades.

Another significant negative externality that comes from raising the minimum wage is that prices go up. When businesses are forced to spend

more money on production, they need to increase prices. For example, after minimum wage increases in Oakland, prices on cheap labor products, such as coffee, increased by 30%. In Seattle, fast food prices went up by as high as 59%!

In a hypothetical fantasy, void of all of the problems that minimum wage brings, it still doesn't make sense to raise a minimum wage on the federal level. The cost of living changes drastically across the country. The cost of living in Los Angeles is different from the cost of living in Hickory, North Carolina. Attempting to set a minimum wage federally does not make sense if the cost of labor and the cost of living vary by location.

Ultimately, raising the minimum wage doesn't achieve the desired objective – to increase the standard of living. It negatively impacts both individuals and the community by increasing unemployment, increasing prices, decreasing economic mobility, and decreasing opportunities for American workers.



# Is Age Just But a Number ?

*Brendan Armstrong*

**A**s a young adult I often wonder, why aren't there many young politicians? Why was the latest Presidential election between a 77-year-old and a 74-year-old? Why is it that my generation seems to be competing with those who grew up in the Jim Crow era? There isn't necessarily a concrete answer—other than the fact that politicians aren't limited by old age. Rather, they are limited by a minimum age in running for office—25 being the minimum for a US Representative, 30 for a US Senator, and 35 for the US President or Vice President, with varying ages for state political officials.

Generally speaking, the median age of average citizens in the labor force is about 42 years old. [1] That makes sense given that most people enter the workforce when they're 18-25 years old and don't retire until they're about 64 for men and 62 for women. [2] Even more generally, the median age of individuals in the United States is 38.5 years old with 24.7% of the U.S. population being under the age of 20. [3] Now that we understand U.S. demographics a little bit better, this next part may literally make your jaw drop, as it did mine. As of the beginning of the 117th Congress, which started in 2021, the average age of Members of the House was 58.4 years, and 64.3 years for Members of the Senate. [4] Take a second to think about that. Those average ages are unbelievably higher than the average working force age and even higher than the U.S. median age! With age restrictions placed on politicians, this would by default make the average ages rise, but certainly not to this extent. Not to mention the fact that our current and last president both got elected to office in their 70s, an age where cognitive deterioration accelerates dramatically. [5]

So then why does this happen? What makes Americans so likely to vote for older candidates? Or are there even younger candidates to compete with?

My first hypothesis addresses voter turnout by age group. According to the U.S. Census, voter turnout in the 2020 Presidential election was highest among those ages 65-74 at 76% and lowest among those ages 18-24 at 51.4%. [6] I have found that voters usually prefer candidates that are closer to them in age. So, 65-74 year olds are going to vote for candidates who are also 65-74-years-old and they're most likely going to give that candidate a higher proportion of the vote, solidifying their victory. The only way to combat this is for younger generations to head to the polls. Without youth engagement, older groups will continue to have a disproportionate influence on voting and our elected candidates.

My second hypothesis is that the American electorate prefers candidates that have "more experience" or "know what they're talking about." Americans seem to follow the ideology that if someone is older, that automatically makes them wiser. I find that to be true in

some circumstances, but definitely not written law. Older people do have more experience and do contribute grand ideas to society, but that shouldn't dismiss younger individuals. I know plenty of young adults in their 20s who I would consider to be way more qualified than those we



currently have in office.

My third and last hypothesis is that older candidates simply have more money. They have more time to gather donors, establish relationships with important organizations, and/or risk self-funding their campaigns. An example of self-funding was former President Donald Trump who was able to afford a Presidential campaign with significant earnings from his past, working in the private sector. Another example is a 2022 candidate for the U.S. Senate, Mehmet Oz, who has spent over 21 million dollars of his own money on his senatorial campaign. [7] 25-year-olds don't have the money or donor networks to run for US Congress, but 62-year-olds just might.

I think it's important to note that I don't think ill of most older politicians. I find that they have done much good for this country through their experience, wisdom, and historical knowledge. However, I do think that things need to change. We need to put people into office that more closely resemble the average-aged American. We need people in their 20s and 30s. We need people who know what it's like to live as a young adult in today's American society and who can craft policies that benefit younger generations. Without them, our ideas will quickly be overshadowed. So, my fellow BYU students, please go out and vote. Utilize your voice and bring younger candidates to the table. Help younger generations bring the average age of American politicians to a more reasonable number.

# Democracy is not as Democratic as You Think it is

*Jackson Berthold*

**W**e in the West are proud of our commitment to equality. It's a basic principle of our political and domestic governance. One person; one vote, all men are created equal, et cetera. But the reality isn't quite so clear-cut. When it comes to Democracy, not everyone has an equal say, no matter how much we pride ourselves on our commitment to that idea. Most Americans have a paltry effect on American Democracy, while some institutions and individuals sway elections and the tide of history. This inequality is inevitable, but why?

First, we must understand the Pareto Principle.

You've likely never heard of this law, but it governs everything we do. Also known as the 80-20 rule, it essentially dictates that 80 percent of consequences derive from 20 percent of causes [1]. This principle initially sought to explain why the richest 20% owned 80% of the property, but its usefulness extends into the realm of public opinion as well. Whether it's productivity in the workplace, matches on dating apps, or influence over public opinion, the top 20% of people tend to produce nearly 80% of the results.

The Pareto principle is a statistical model that fits natural and social phenomena throughout history, and we can use it to explain why every society has rulers, elites, and aristocrats. The few tend to accumulate influence and power, no matter how egalitarian a society might seem. Even the Soviet Union had the Politburo. In a democracy, this inevitability is called the "iron law of oligarchy". This law, a consequence of the Pareto principle, was used by sociologist Robert Michels to describe how rule by an oligarchy was eventually guaranteed within any democratic organization. Michels described how a class of leadership gains control over organizations through the apathy of the average participant, whether in a company or a polity. Why is this the case? Those in power centralize power, expanding it implicitly. Since power gives you the ability to reward loyalty, influence information, and

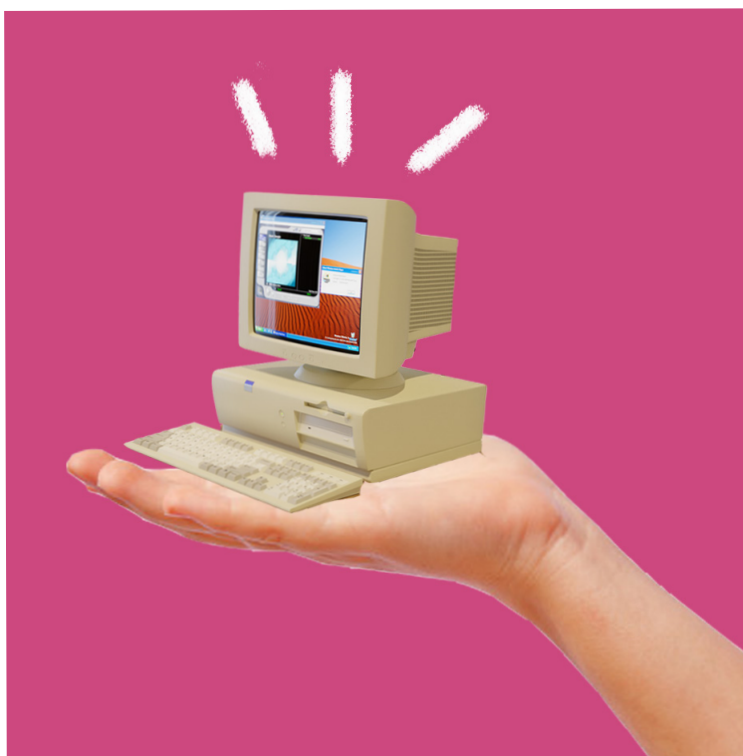
control procedures, those with control over a given system tend to gradually gain more influence in a circular feedback loop until we arrive at the ratio described in the Pareto principle [2]. While the powerful and well-connected undertake this process, the uninformed and uninterested, normal people, lose more of their hold and control over that system because they simply don't care enough to invest the effort or deal with the discomfort necessary to gain power.

But how do you centralize influence over the people's opinions, if that's where power in a democracy comes from? The answer: we live in an age of information, and those that

control information control public opinion. The structure and management of information networks, such as social media or entertainment media, have an opportunity to swing elections [3] and shift the tide of public countenance. The currency of democratic consensus is information, and those in charge of the news media, academic journals, and social networks have outsized influence over this information.

In such a system, the preferences of these few individuals will outweigh the preferences of the many, because their perspective, over time, becomes the pref-

erence of the many. On a practical level, the top 20% of influencers, as described in the Pareto distribution, gradually exercise more influence as they gather a following. The longer these media companies, academic journals, and other elite organizations operate, the more prestige and clout their perspective has. That's power. Before you know it, they're your favorite news channel, where you find all the right opinions about economics, culture, or politics. You can trust them because of their prestige, and keep coming back because they give you what you want. Why would I trust some rogue academic over a professional journal? An independent journalist over a network? The iron law of oligarchy always wins, and democracy loses its vitality to the few. To put it bluntly, the United States is an oligarchy, where economic and



of activism or populism can change that fact.

Noam Chomsky's Propaganda Model can help us explain why elites have so much sway over us. Mass media, such as news media or entertainment media, serve to communicate messages and symbols to the public. For the most part, they simply amuse and inform, but they also bestow the public with values, beliefs, and mores that help them integrate into the institutions around them [5]. These kinds of institutions are necessary to keep a modern society united, but because everyone can't take part in them, they're necessarily undemocratic. Because of this, mass media directly influences what we believe, value, and do without any direct input from the average person. Importantly, such institutions can't upend social and political consensus overnight, but those capable of organizing themselves in a tightly knit association are logically better at influencing others over long periods of time than the disorganized masses.

Most of us believe there is an objective "marketplace of ideas" governing our political choices, but, in reality, people embrace political opinions that conform to narratives that their friends, family, and associates believe in, in addition to those that they acquire from trusted media sources. The narratives we share largely derive from "experts" or other elites, such as journalists, high-profile academics, and even entertainers. Other similar theories also exist, where, instead of popular narratives being shared by the public, elites prime "considerations" in the minds of the listeners, leading them to focus their attention on certain topics or ideas [6]. Walter Lippman's seminal thesis in "Public Opinion" best articulates this general idea. Because we cannot expect the average person to gain enough knowledge to sufficiently make choices about how to govern the nation, we force voters to use heuristics and trust "experts" to make decisions or lead them towards the right conclusions. We cannot expect the average person to understand the political and economic condition of the country, and the little they do understand is filtered through the information they receive from our elites [7].

This returns us to the Pareto principle and the iron law of oligarchy. Only a small elite are confident, connected, and capable enough to provide the necessary answers to compelling political and social questions. As a result, we trust those with knowledge because we are both too busy and too apathetic to discern the truth for ourselves.

You might fancy yourself an expert in political science, literature, or computer science, but who do you trust to give you the truth about virology or climate change? You certainly wouldn't trust your own opinion over the perspective of a credentialed scholar on the subject, whose views are presented by a major news network, would you? Unless of course, you were using that expert

to reinforce what you already believed, that is.

Lippman articulated his point more frankly here: "The world about which each man is supposed to have opinions has become so complicated as to defy his powers of understanding." We couldn't expect any single person to truly collect and correlate all the world's contents and truths, let alone the average man or woman. The opinions and perspectives of the average person are woefully uninformed, and the information they do have was derived from elites. Just as in Lippman's time, our experience throughout life is mediated by and interpreted through a pseudo-environment that media of any kind creates around us. Lippman was keenly aware of the vast disparities between ideas derived from individual perception and ideas grafted into our memory by the media, but most of us are scarcely even conscious of this disparity, and don't care enough to sort the two apart [8].

So, if we delegate most of the thinking to those with knowledge and power, how can we really practice democracy? What's the point of democracy if we surrender most decision making to the wealthy and influential anyway? Lippman argued to hand government control over to those with knowledge and expertise and simply get rid of the middleman, the average voter [9]. This proposal appalls most of us, but what else should we do in response to our realization that democracy is led by the few? Prescriptions for change would take a whole book to detail, but the reality of democracy leaves us with a call to action.

Democracy is a powerful idea. It gives us the illusion that we're in control, strengthening our faith in the idea that we decide our own fate and have a voice, which is necessary to maintain the current system. But in order to maintain this powerful idea, honesty is necessary. Lies provide an unstable foundation for any system, and the lie that the people are in charge must be excised from the doctrine of liberal democracy for us to truly comprehend the nature of our system. We are not a true democracy, and cannot ever fulfill our desire to be politically equal. We always have been and always will be ruled by the few.



# Unapologetically Pro-Life

Dalton Merrill



Not too long ago Instagram was flooded with infographics and opinions about the *Dobbs v Jackson* Supreme Court ruling that overturned the longstanding *Roe v Wade*. Before I go any further, I want to make clear that I will not be able to address every issue or argument surrounding abortion in this 800-word op-ed. I intend to explain why I agree with the ruling and why I am unapologetically pro-life. I hope this article will help those who disagree with me better understand the pro-life perspective. Additionally, I hope to encourage those of you who are already pro-life to become unapologetical in your pro-life views.

First, abortion is not a constitutional right. Although *Roe v Wade* was determined nearly 50 years ago, I believe it erroneously took power from the states by legalizing abortion nationwide. Abortion has never explicitly outlined in the Constitution or in any federal legislation enacted by Congress. In fact, it's quite contradictory to the 14th amendment's equal protection clause: "nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." [2]

Justice Alito said it best in the majority opinion of the *Dobbs v Jackson* case. "The Constitution does not prohibit the citizens of each State from regulating or prohibiting abortion. *Roe* and *Casey* arrogated that authority. We now overrule those decisions and return that authority to the people and their elected representatives." [3] Abortion is a states' rights issue. Overturning *Roe* was long overdue, speaking strictly from a legal perspective. No matter where you fall on this issue morally, I hope you can see that *Dobbs v Jackson* corrected a judicial error. Of course there is much legal complexity and nuisance to the decisions of both *Dobbs* and *Roe*, with very smart people on either side of the issue. However, after researching the topic, I'm firmly planted in the opinion that the Supreme Court justly returned abortion powers to the states.

From a moral perspective, I believe abortion is abhorrent. We frequently hear the phrase "my body, my choice" as a pro-abortion argument. I agree that we should have the freedom to choose what we do with our bodies. I understand that it's extremely upsetting to feel like the government is restricting your health choices. But I don't believe this perspective should apply to abortion.

Life begins at conception. When an egg is fertilized, a unique set of human DNA is created that can never again be replicated. This unique set of DNA is a human baby. A baby's body is not your body. We have plenty of laws that regulate what we can and cannot do to other people's bodies. It's no different with a preborn baby. Just as a parent can't assault a born child, they should not be allowed to terminate the life of their pre-born child.

Our actions have consequences. I often see people focus solely on the idea of agency when they advocate for legal protections for abortion. What they often omit is the necessary counterpart to agency: accountability. As justice cannot exist without mercy, agency cannot exist without accountability. The actions we take in this life matter. The things we do affect others. We cannot be willfully ignorant of the fact that pregnancy is a consequence of prior action.

I understand a large argument for the pro-abortion community is to use cases of rape and incest as a reason to justify all abortion. However, only 1% of abortions come from rape and 0.5% are due to incest. [4] Your opinion on such cases may vary from your opinion on cases of elective abortion. Notwithstanding, elective abortions are far too common (98.5% of all abortions!) and are often defended under the veil of legal abortions for cases of rape and incest. I know that many women seeking abortion are in difficult situations and take serious thought before ultimately choosing to terminate the life of their child. However, there is a big difference between elective abortion and cases of rape and incest, and sadly, I think the two become interchangeable in many pro-abortion arguments.

Lastly, I believe that every human life has value. Every human has a right to life. And I believe it is our moral obligation to protect that right. There are always going to be people who try to silence your voice. Whether it's "no uterus, no opinion" or "if you don't like abortion, don't get one," it will always appear easier to remain silent.

The irony is, the lives we are fighting to protect don't have their voices yet. I believe they deserve to one day have their voices heard. So if I need to speak up a little louder today, so that millions of people can speak up tomorrow, I will do so unapologetically.

*Note: for those looking for more ways to be involved in the pro-life movement, please consider joining the BYU Students for Life club here on campus.*



# The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict from a BYU Palestinian's Point of View

Gillian Marcucci

Recently, I have been very interested in the historical, longstanding conflict between Palestine and other Arab people/countries and Israel. This semester I have been enrolled in Dr. David Romney's POLI 474 Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict course. This course has been very educational for me and I highly recommend it to all. But rather than just the formal classroom education on the topic, I wanted to speak with someone more involved in the conflict. Fortunately, I have a friend at BYU from Palestine and she was so kind as to let me sit down with her and learn more about the conflict from her perspective.

The violent conflict between Arabs and Palestinians vs. Israelis has been going on for decades. Simply put, it began when anti-semitism in Europe spread like wildfire after World War II in the 1940s and led to the displacement of many Jews. The United Nations adopted Resolution 181 in 1947, dividing the British Mandate of Palestine into two regions - one for the Arab people, now known as Palestine, and one for the Jews, known as Israel. This led to the first war between the two groups in 1948, known as the 1948 War, which ended on May 14th when Israel declared their independence as an official state. But the conflict did not end there. Some other significant events crucial to this conflict include the 1967 Six Days War, the 1973 War, the Palestinian intifada in 1987, the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, the second Palestinian intifada from 2000 - 2005, and many flare-ups of violence in recent years, such as the clash in Jerusalem at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in 2021 [1].

Noor grew up with her parents and three sisters in the Middle East in a region known as the West Bank. All of her grandparents lived in the once Palestinian area that is now part of the state of Israel. After the events of the 1948 war they moved to Jordan. They had their kids there and Noor's parents later met and married. About 25 years ago they moved to Daramola city in the West Bank and started their family. Though the area in which Noor's family lived was very safe, she still experienced some dangerous and shocking events throughout her life.

Noor was born at the Al Mous-taqbal hospital in Ramallah city during the second Palestinian intifada in 2001. Outside of the hospital, there were clashes occurring between Palestinian and Israeli tanks. Noor's mother was not entirely sure what was going on, but she kept hearing the sounds of bullets. Her husband was also not able to make it to the birth in time because he couldn't leave their home in Daramola due to the city's curfew. He was also frustrated because Noor's two other sisters were stuck at his uncle's house which was surrounded by soldiers.

Another time when Noor was just six years old, her family accidentally drove into an Israeli settlement, and the Israeli Defense Forces, (also known as the IDF, the Israeli military), held a gun to her three-year-old sister's head. Her family was very close to being killed. Noor considered their survival a miracle due to the similar experiences of others who weren't so lucky.

Noor attended a refugee school known as Daramola Basic Girls School for grades one through nine, after which she attended a public high school. A young girl at her school was traveling home when she had to cross a checkpoint. She was suspected to have a knife and the IDF shot and killed her. On a lighter note, later on in high school, Noor heard that the BYU Jerusalem Center was hosting an information session about applying to BYU in her city, so she attended and decided to apply. She was one of the two students from Palestine accepted to begin school at BYU on a full-ride scholarship in the

fall of 2019. She has become fluent in English and continues to attend BYU today as one of the few Muslims and students from the Middle East. She is such an amazing example to me of resilience and hard work.

Noor grew up not only learning about the conflict in school but being immersed in it. When I asked about her perspective, she said, "I know some people talk about a two-state solution. I don't think it's realistic at all because we've tried. We attempted to do that but it was not respected by both sides and there was a lot of pain, [for the Palestinians], to accept living [with Israelis who treat them so poorly]... so in my opinion, I think there's gonna be a solution of some kind...I just don't think it's going to be during my lifetime. Two states are not gonna work." She also believes that the conflict has become more of a political battle, rather than a religious one - which it used to be for some at one point in time.

As I have been learning about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I have tried to do so with a neutral stance. I entered POLI 474 with the attitude that I would learn about both sides of the conflict and then form my own opinion from there. Nonetheless, just with the information I've been

exposed to already, (outside of my relationship with Noor), I have been leaning towards supporting the Palestinian side for sure. After hearing about Noor's experience, I am becoming even more biased towards it. Though the Jewish migration to Palestine began with good intentions, the state of Israel has become expansionist and prideful in its amount of power. They abuse this power through various ways. For example, they have illegal settlements in Palestine and enforce thorough security checks at various locations along the border of Palestine and Israel. These time-consuming interruptions prevent Palestinians from wanting to leave or return to their country. Noor experiences this firsthand every time she flies home from Utah. Though some would say that Israel does its best to prevent unnecessary violence, it seems that they do more harm than good in regards to their relationship with Palestine. The IDF uses both dangerous and illegal weapons to commit mass murders against a people that basically has no way to de-

fend itself. Noor said, "People call it a conflict and they call it war but it's not. We don't have an army. Usually what reaches the U.S. news is when we hit, but usually what happens most of the time is they [the hits] do nothing. Nobody gets killed from those, but that is what is reported in US news first." This is because the U.S. is allies with Israel, and not only does the U.S. support Israel, but we do so to an extreme extent. Though in comparison to other parts of the world we give quite a bit of money to the Palestinian Authority, we give a significantly lower amount to them than we do to Israel. We give Israel 3 billion dollars in aid every single year, whereas in 2021, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken made the following statement: "As I announced yesterday, the United States is in the process of providing more than \$360 million in assistance to the Palestinian people."

When I asked Noor what the average BYU student could do to help, I couldn't agree with her response more. She said, "Be curious...because I know a lot of people grew up not knowing what's happening or being told that Israel is right. But I feel like in every situation in the world, you have to do your own research before coming up with an opinion, so just take the time to look things up, understand both perspectives from the people themselves, (not even the news), and see where that takes you" [2]



# The World Turned Upside Down: An Argument for Geographic Equality

Elle Diether

Germany appears in the middle of the map when it's in the most northern quarter of the earth." (Cartographer) "You're telling me Germany isn't where we think it is" (Josh Lyman) "Nothing is where you think it is" (Cartographer)

The above script [0] is the reaction of Josh and CJ, two fictional white house staffers in the tv show the West Wing, a show that follows the fictional lives of white house staffers. This conversation takes place during Big Block of Cheese day, when all of the staff meets with small unknown interest groups. One of these groups is cartographers for social equality who meet with a doubtful CJ the white house press secretary and Josh Lyman the Deputy Chief of Staff. However, both are quickly shocked to learn of the inaccuracies of the commonly used Mercator map, for example, that Europe appears larger than South America when Europe is in fact half the size of South America. Our entire worldview is shaped by maps, and it turns out not to be as accurate as we think. Due to the current Mercator map inaccuracies, there are social biases toward the southern hemisphere and developing nations. To combat these biases, the United States (and countries throughout the world) ought to replace the Mercator Map with the more accurate Peter's Projection and flip map so that the southern hemisphere is on the top and the northern hemisphere is on the bottom.

The current Mercator Map is the most commonly used map in the world [1] and was created over 500 years ago. It was designed to help explorers cross oceans causing the relative size of countries to get distorted. These distortions are not insignificant; for example, Greenland looks to be the same size as Africa when in reality Africa is 14 times larger than Greenland [2]. In the history of map making the Mercator map is the start of a shift in map making because it puts the northern hemisphere at the top and focuses on ocean travel. The earliest maps found in Ancient China and Ancient Egypt put the southern hemisphere on the top [3]. There is nothing that requires or is beneficial to putting the northern hemisphere on the top as opposed to the southern hemisphere. It is just what became popular in the modern era.

Why change something that has been around for five hundred years? Simply put it is because these images lie to us about our world, and current satellite technology allows for maps with pinpoint accuracy [4]. Most people in the world have distorted views of the world because of the Mercator Map. However, these inaccuracies can be fixed while still having the

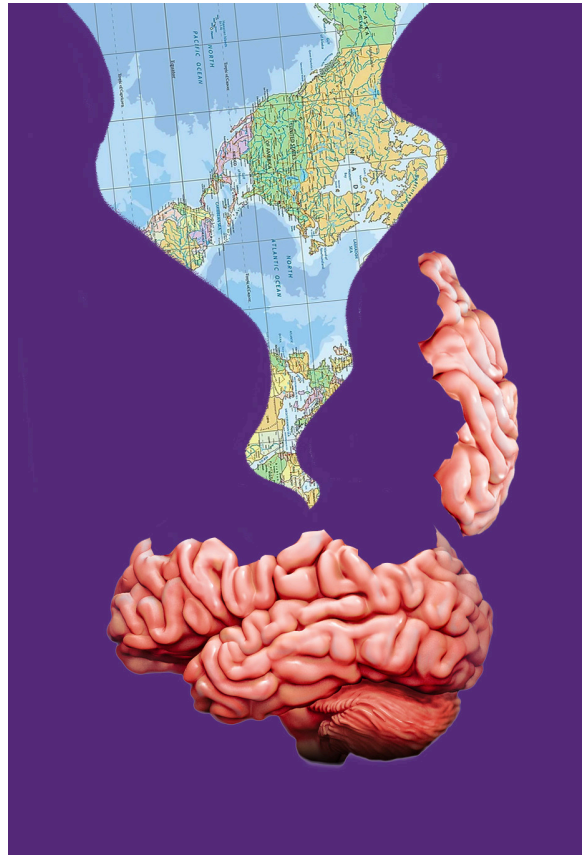
northern hemisphere on the top, so why do I want to flip the map? To fight against prejudice. Several studies have found that people associate things that are higher or up as better than things that are lower or below. In two different studies participants were shown a map of a hypothetical city and asked where they would like to live [3]. People were significantly more likely to choose an area in the north of the city. Another group of participants were asked to guess where fictitious people of different social statuses would live, they plotted the richest people in the north and poorest in the south[5]. Another study from the University of California Santa Barbara showed that most US children believe the United States is the biggest country in the world [6]. Unconscious biases lead those in the Northern

Hemisphere to see those in the Southern Hemisphere as inferior and less important. Given that most nations in the Southern Hemisphere are developing this reinforces the old colonial narratives of superiority [6]. These biases could be significantly combated by putting the southern hemisphere on the top of the map.

There are costs to switching to a new map, taxpayers would bear the costs to replace the thousands of Mercator maps currently in the US public school education. Some may argue that people will resist these changes and will not be willing to relearn a new map. However, this would not be the first time countries bore the costs to change to a new, more efficient system. Many European countries switched to the more accurate metric system in the 1970s, which was a far more costly endeavor since it involved completely changing measurements used throughout society (businesses, schools, roads, etc). Switching to the metric system was a long ar-

duous process but now most countries in the world operate off the metric system. Given the greater complexity of switching to metric systems, changing out world maps would be a much easier endeavor—especially in the digital world.

There is a lot of inequality in the world. It's overwhelming and it often seems hopeless. There seems to be no simple solution to stopping inequality. However, in the case of geographic inequality, there is a simple solution that has large potential. While it does require significant initial costs, when else has there been such a simple opportunity to combat inequality? As the ones who drew the last map, it is our duty as westerners to combat the inequality that we created and flip the map.



# From A Conversation With My Grandma

*Ethan Gillett*

If you haven't read Garrett Hardin's *The Tragedy of the Commons* then it is time for a refresher. Published when my mom was in diapers (1968), it laid the foundation for further expansions of economic, population, and governance theory. Focusing on population growth, Hardin starts his essay with this claim, "Ruin is the destination towards which all men run, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons." Hardin believed the Earth was a classic tale of finite resources being destroyed by its exponentially multiplying inhabitants (us), and that in order to protect these 'commons' protective legislation needed to expand and population needed to be controlled. While he was mostly wrong about over-population Hardin left us with a model to which we could apply different "common" problems. One such 'common' is passive investment.

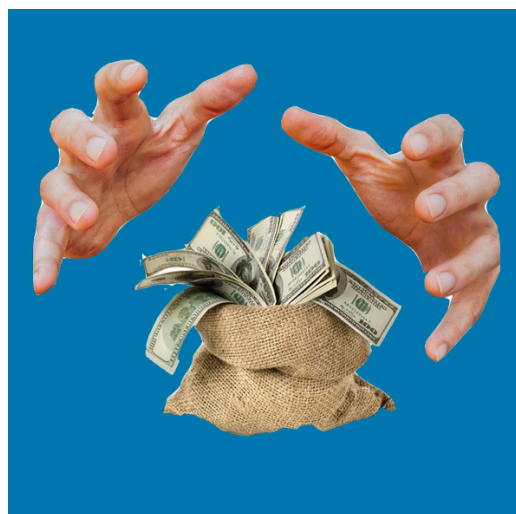
I'm assuming that most of us grew up being told to invest in the stock market from a young age so that when we retire we would have a hearty nest egg with which we could happily visit our grandchildren. My grandma calls this her "American Dream" and if you are anything like her, you invest in a low-cost mutual fund or index tracker through your IRA or 401(k). These passive investment vehicles are designed to limit your input on investment decisions, and instead subject you to the ebbs and flows of the financial markets. If markets continue to go up, and you hold on for long enough, then you can assume to have a 'safe' retirement. The unfortunate reality is that for many of us young people, passive investment has led to one of the largest counterfeit inflations of security prices in history.

The increase in passive investment has led to a new tragedy in the commons. The democratization of financial markets through the internet has allowed millions to supposedly guarantee income and a retirement by investing in large and secure publicly-traded companies. Billions of dollars have flowed into these companies from individuals envious to take for themselves the rewards of risk, often pushing their stock price over their intrinsic values. This self-reinforcing phenomenon only works as prices continue to go up and as we enter a new recession we will see a rapid devaluation of these companies that trade beyond their true value. The 'tragedy' comes when we realize that passive investment has its upper bound of success. Once we are through this recession and billions have been wiped out of IRA and 401(k) accounts, we will realize that our laws have become outdated to control the financial industry and limit the amount of 'effective' capital in public markets.

I'm not saying that passive investing is a bad idea. What I am saying is that our financial system has allowed the inflation of prices beyond their value due to the misallocation of invested capital. What can we do about

it? The simple response (and ones that Republicans and Libertarians hate) is regulation. The United States is an excellent regulator of markets, in fact probably the most excellent. We regulate oil, tobacco, and alcohol all for the purpose of decreasing the negative effects on our society. While these have been largely successful I have doubts that regulating the financial markets would be efficacious politically or economically.

Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom would agree. She writes in her piece *The Struggle to Govern the Commons* that "Humans devise ways of evading governance rules. Thus successful commons governance requires that rules evolve." This simple fact is that financial regulation, particularly in the Fintech and Private Equity industries has hardly changed in the last 20 years. We are stuck solving today's externality problems with old policy methods. Dr. Ostrom argues that any institutional arrangements used for the purpose of decreasing the tragedy of the commons need to be "complex, redundant, and nested in many layers."



This likely means that it must be a balance of private and public efforts. The private solution lies heavily in the hands of money managers; it is them who should be more actively choosing wise assets that are trading in line with their intrinsic value and future cash flows. Publicly, the government needs to regulate private equity and fintech by allowing more investors into this space. They can do this by closing decades old tax loopholes that have only benefitted 'accredited investors' or by even expanding the definition of an accredited investor to give more people the opportunity for these types of investments.

Whatever your opinion is on investment strategy, it is clear that financial policy needs to be updated to allow all to participate in private investments. Access to the public markets is not enough. So this voting season make sure you vote for those representatives who fight to



# Too Many Cooks in the Kitchen

*Caleb Johnston*

After a reluctant chat with David Wallace, Michael Scott announced to the office: “We have decided to promote Jim to the position of co-manager.” Stanley and Phyllis expressed confusion; Dwight had an explosion of anger. In private, Oscar sarcastically asserted, “It doesn’t take a genius to know that any organization thrives when it has two leaders...Where would Catholicism be without the popes?”

Joking aside, our country has one leader and two major political parties. Today, 48% of Americans under the age of 40 want more parties to choose from [1]. The desire for multiple parties may be a result of complex views on policy areas or dissatisfaction with our current parties. Sadly, it may also be due to increasing political division. While we may be frustrated with the bickering from both sides, this division should drive us to a simpler system. The conversation is not about having one or two leaders, but Oscar’s principle still holds; having more involved parties complicates leadership.

Currently, our elections for Congress function in a way that encourages a two-party system. In general elections, candidates have to receive more votes than any other candidate in one single ballot. Only two states, Georgia and Louisiana, require a runoff in the general election without a clear majority [2]. Duverger’s Law claims that “the simple majority, single ballot system favours the two-party system.” [3] If we really want to escape from a two-party system, we would need to overhaul the way we run elections. One alternative is majority voting, which requires that a candidate win more than 50% of the vote to win an election. In such a system, a runoff election may be required [4]. Another option is proportional representation, a system in which voters select parties rather than candidates. Parties get allocated a certain number of seats in the legislature according to election results [5]. Different parties may have to form coalitions in order to establish a majority and the ability to govern.

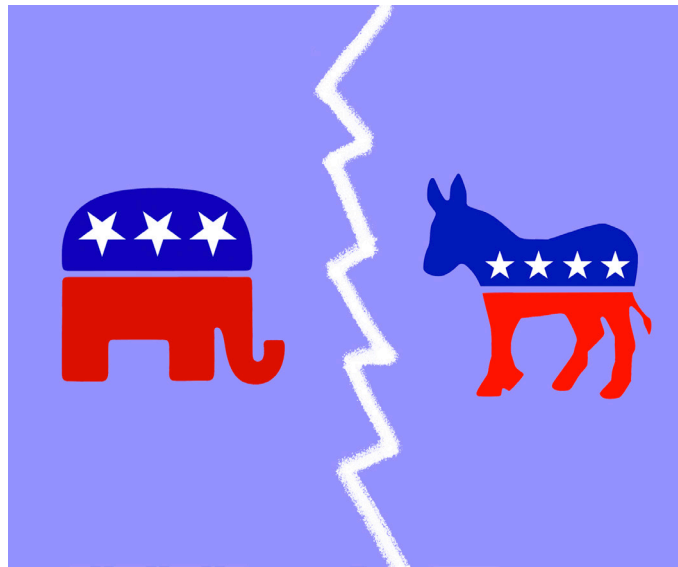
In recent years, there has been a palpable divergence to both political extremes. We may believe that a multi-party system would alleviate such tension, but this system could push us to further extremism. In our current system, the two major parties must moderate their

policy views to court more centrist voters. If the party is not somewhat moderated, it cannot expect to beat the other major party in a general election. A proportional representation system would allow for extremist groups to gain representation without appealing to the centrist voter. If our goal is unity, we should stick with a system that incentivizes moderation [6].

Not only would a multi-party system require an undesirable change in our election system, but it would also force us to maintain more information on the various political parties. Our country prides itself on democracy. The result is more decisions to make on our ballot—people vote on positions from the county treasurer to the president. In a large nation with many decisions to make, we should push for simplicity.

Some may argue that a multi-party system

would be a more accurate representation of our country, or that a coalition government would bring us further toward the center. But the accurate representation may not actually come to fruition, especially because the formation of coalitions may misrepresent what the public desires. Our current system lets the people have a major voice in which party governs. The formation of a coalition government separates that decision from the people and gives it to party leaders. A



simple system keeps the people involved in the process.

After a period of co-management, leadership at the office realized that the system was not working. Jim wanted to make pros and cons lists for all big decisions, while Michael wanted to operate off a business feel. Jim transitioned back to being a salesman at Dunder Mifflin, and Michael led the office as manager. Government is a mass effort at collective action. Luckily, we do not struggle with the two-leader problem, but the principle still holds; collective action problems become more difficult with more involved parties. We live in a massive country with enormous influence and diverse interests. The resolution to our increasing political division will not come from more parties, it will come as we are willing to reach across the aisle in our two-party system.

# American Politics in a Godless World

*Amy Kurtzweil*

Whether you're Saint Augustine, Maimonides, or John Locke, religion has always played a fundamental role in how we understand government and our role within it. Our attachment to religion and its corresponding roles and obligations are present even in our increasingly polarized political climate—wrought with religious debates surrounding issues such as abortion or climate change. Despite the intrinsic prominence of religion in American culture, the U.S. is entering a new era, more steadily relying on the power of numbers and logic rather than the powers of the divine. In 1998, only 8% of Americans identified as having no religion, while nearly one-third of Americans today now claim this status [1, 2]. Even more staggeringly, 20 years ago, 70% of Americans identified as being members of some kind of church – today that number has decreased by over 20%, with only 47% of Americans identifying with church membership [1]. As the presence of religion in American society dwindles, this brings to question what morals and ideologies will influence the next generation of American politics, and what the future of American politics may look like.

Although most Americans feel strongly about the separation between church and state [3], religion (or lack thereof) often informs important moral ideologies which frequently influence stances on political issues. Based on current trends, Pew Research estimates that by 2070 those identifying as religiously unaffiliated will approach or exceed the American Christian population (while other religions remain the minority) [2]. Assuming this prediction is correct, as the proportion of religiously unaffiliated people grows in America, religious influence on political issues and politics, in general, is likely to decrease with it. This brings to question what the next generation of American politics and ethics will be based on in the absence of religion.

While Christianity is expected to level out with unaffiliated religion, it's reasonable to assume that the political climate will become further polarized in a power struggle between the faithful and faithless. In an article by The Atlantic, author Shadi Hamid explores the idea of new non-religious belief systems. Hamid speculates that with an absence of religious faith will come a religious fervor surrounding political beliefs. He speculates that

these new personal-political creeds will fill the ideological void left behind by religion [4]. Thus, some speculate that political dogma may become the new religion of many Americans. As such, with the impact of religion on political beliefs on the downturn for many Americans, politics may soon be comprised of debates of religious vs secular ideology.

As politics seemingly becomes tied closer and closer to personal identity and ideology, this projected political-religious divide may only increase polarization among the parties. According to a study conducted at Brown University, polarization in the U.S. is increasing faster than in other democracies. The study noted that “since the 1970s, major political parties have become increasingly aligned with certain ideologies, races, and religious identities.” [5] With party politics becoming increasingly identity-based, American politics may

eventually turn into a game of “party sorting” [5], with each side of the aisle having less and less in common. The growing divide between those with religion and those without is making politics more personal—leaving less room for common ground and grey areas between the parties.

As religion in America decreases, and political polarization continually increases, the future of American politics seems

more contentious and divisive than ever before. With political ideology becoming progressively more personal on either side (religious or not), it's important for Americans to remember that politics isn't a game of us vs them, but rather a team effort to make our country into something we can be proud of. While these projections on religious faith are subject to change, these current trends are important in understanding what drives Americans, and what the driving force has the potential to be. Religion in politics (or lack thereof) will likely play a pivotal role in the increasing polarization between parties within the next generation, and understanding how ideology is used as a motivating force will be crucial to understanding what party identity means in the future. Whether it's our motivation behind our political ideology, or it's our politics themselves, the game of politics has always been a religious one.



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