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Dear readers,

Each year as November arrives, I can't help but reflect on the year gone by. As the air grows crisp, I grow more and more introspective - do forgive me. While our pages are dedicated to dissecting the political landscape, I wish to stray for just a moment to express my gratitude.

I'm thankful for chilly weather, warm cups of tea, and cable-knit sweaters. I'm thankful for red and yellow leaves and snow-capped mountains. I'm thankful for lists, which I'm all too prone to make. I'm thankful for the humor and resilience provided by peers, mentors, parents, and friends - each day they teach me that life goes beyond the insular world of the 24-hour news.

I'm profoundly grateful for the talented writers and staff that keep the Political Review afloat. I couldn't do it without them. Our conversations and interactions teach me to think differently every day.

Finally, I'm thankful for you, reader, for your support and your curiosity. Your continued readership fuels our passion for politics, writing, and pop-culture references. Thank you for being part of our community.

Warm regards,

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“PUNK IS POLITICAL”

BY ABISH FATANI

Theoretical political ideologies have always had a place in the history of political development. When one looks back, it is easy to track these ideas and how they influenced our philosophers, founding fathers, civil rights leaders, teachers, and parents. John Locke, Plato, Aristotle, Fred Hampton, FDR, Napoleon, Che, and even Kurt Cobain each in their own right contributed to both the theoretical and applied political landscape. Punk is not only a genre of dress and tune but a political ideological movement. While punk today is associated with aesthetics of baggy clothes and loud music in the mainstream, in its foundation it is a political movement surrounding the leftist tenets of anti-establishment, anti-capitalism, feminism, and individual freedom.

The world first saw the debut of punks in the UK in the 1970s. Due to the unique aesthetic of punk, it has often been co-opted by people who do not align politically with the ideologies of the movement; those who use the movement purely to dress up and listen to edgy tunes. Unfortunately for those who want to erase politics from punk, “punk is all about and established in counter-culture. You stray from the norms, radicalize yourself, and fight for an end to working-class struggles and economic inequalities.” Punks didn’t start wearing tattered and patched pants because it looked “sick”, they did it because they were not able to afford new ones. When punks came along strikes were prominent as the cost of living was steeply increasing while pay did not. Economic downturn paired with civil unrest created a perfect storm for the counterculture, the anti-establishment, and anti-capitalist movement of punk to come to life. Written into early punk band’s mottos and mantras are ideas of standing up to the consuming greed of the rich, condemning scabs who cross picket lines and in turn withdraw support for fair wages, and freeing oneself from the idea that you must conform to be respected. The main ideas of anti-establishment, personal freedom, and anti-capitalism would carry on after the 70s.

During the 70s, punk would make its way across the pond where bands like the Ramones, Dead Kennedys, and Minor Threat would gain momentum in the music industry while a bustling American punk scene came to life. It was during Reagan’s presidency that the American punk scene was said to have its coming of age moment. When both the U.K. and the U.S. experienced a highly controversial leader paired with economic turmoil

is when the punk movement gained momentum. As humans do, when we are under duress we take note from those who have experienced similar circumstances to get through. The punk scene in the US would evolve similarly to the scene in the UK to encompass not only past tenets, but also to include the liberation of women.

Political movements grow and change as they get older. New ideas come to the forefront and new people have a say. The way the punk scene has been used as a vessel to advocate for more equal treatment of women is well documented. Riot grrrl is a genre of music, typically with an all female band or at least a female lead, that originated in Olympia, Washington in a meeting meant to address the rampant sexism in the punk scene. The name came from an idea to have a girl riot against a society that “offered no validation for women’s experiences.” More than just torn dresses and women screaming, riot grrrl was a “vital part of third-wave feminism.” The riot grrrl movement is arguably one of the most vital movements to stem from the punk movement. The “universal mission was to offer a sort of radical feminist camaraderie” amongst all women, but especially those on the outskirts of society who already found themselves vulnerable. Riot grrrl pushes the envelope for what is acceptable for women, it is not enough to just allow women the same rights, but let them defy societal expectations, women can be horse and ugly and loud and yet still deserving of basic human decency and respect.

Punk is often now seen as a mere genre of music and type of dress, but in reality it goes beyond that. It is a powerful and empowering counter culture that can be used to free oneself from unhealthy, unrealistic, and binding societal pressures and expectations. Punk is a political tool and ethos that many can gain inspiration from when addressing injustices on both a personal and systemic level. So be punk. Free yourself from the expectations that bind you from more personal growth and happiness, question authority, and never cross a picket line.

“A NEW(ER) GENERATION 6 OF LEADERS”

BY BRENDAN ARMSTRONG

Flashback to this time last year, BYU Political Review released its November 2022 issue. An intelligent and highly influential writer (it's me... I'm the writer) discussed age and how it impacted American politicians. Mitt Romney must've seen that article sometime between then and now, because on September 13th, he announced that he was not seeking reelection. [1] All jokes aside, I was completely blown away by Senator Romney's speech. Not because I'm a liberal and am anxious to see a conservative leave office, but rather because I thought he spoke so profoundly on age, leadership, and generational representation in politics. He spoke so maturely and was keenly aware of his role, at his age, in shaping American politics. This article examines various parts of his speech and provides additional commentary meant to further explore his statements.

1. “At the end of another term, I'd be in my mid-eighties.”

Senator Romney has been involved in public service for the last 25 years, beginning his service in his 50s. By seeking reelection in 2024, he would serve another 6 years, ending that term almost at the age of 83. The way he says this makes it seem very obvious that he is too old to be in politics - that being in your 80s means you should retire. I believe that most would be inclined to agree with this, and yet, that mindset doesn't seem to be reflected in the 118th Session of Congress. Following the death of Senator Feinstein, there are now 68 Senators over the age of 60, with 7 senators being part of the Silent Generation (people born from 1928-1945). [2] On top of that, there have been even more talks of fitness for office, term limits, and ageism, upon evaluating politicians like Senator Feinstein, Senator McConnell, and President Biden, making it clear that this is a very prevalent topic for many Americans today.

2. “The next generation of leaders must take America to the next stage of global leadership.”

In order for America to continue distinguishing itself on a global scale, the government needs a new generation of leaders. We need more variety and more viewpoints from people who have lived very different lives from those who were born all the way back in the early- to mid-90s. After all, the oldest current U.S. senators were born in an age in which their adulthood was defined by post-WWII 1950s American exceptionalism. The youngest U.S.

senators are all children of the 1970s and 1980s and all entered the Senate after 9/11. [3] It's very apparent that there is a stark difference in the lives of these individuals and the perspectives they bring. I do believe that variety to be good, but I think in order for America to keep up on key global issues, it requires new perspectives from a much younger generation of leaders.

3. “Frankly, it's time for a new generation of leaders.”

I believe this to be the main point of Senator Romney's speech. He mentions earlier in his speech that America is facing many challenging issues, including, but not limited to, “mounting national debt, climate change, and the ambitious authoritarians of Russia and China.” And yet, he also states that, “political motivations too often impede the solutions that these challenges demand.” He recognizes that in the face of new challenges, there is a need for new political leaders who are ready and willing to contribute innovative solutions to address them. I don't mean this to sound like I don't think older generations of people can't solve these issues. I just believe that change is necessary and obtaining a variety of perspectives can lead to greater policy implementation. With a majority of U.S. politicians being older in age, we won't have that variety and we won't be able to address current pressing issues as effectively without diversified age representation.

I don't know quite exactly what the ramifications of Senator Romney's speech will be. I'm sure many will continue seeking reelection up into their later years due to varying political motivations that keep them from retiring. Nonetheless, I hope his speech can act as a “stepping block” that motivates other politicians to evaluate their positions in American government. Having a call coming from inside the house might be just what we need to start lowering the average politician age and encourage younger individuals to run for office.

“PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE” 7

BY CALEB JOHNSTON

When foreigners think of American society and politics, they most admire our technology, military, entertainment, and universities [1]. When thinking of American people, others might describe us as proud, independent, hard-working, and diverse. Americans, to my surprise, rank highly in one highly-desired trait: patience. In fact, ScienceFocus ranked us as the third most patient country in the world behind Sweden and the Netherlands. That ranking was based on our willingness to put off more consumerist desires [2]. Patience is a virtue, and it even seems to characterize our foreign policy from the past. We’ve been willing to engage in wars without immediate results based on core values such as freedom and democracy. Around 2015, President Obama embraced “strategic patience.” [9] As of late, we’ve strayed from such patience, wanting quicker results from our military investments abroad. Unfortunately, the past two administrations hastily ended engagements in the Middle East, hurting our country’s image and ushering in disorder. Against the backdrop of worse alternatives, the United States should choose to be patient with our involvement in foreign conflicts.

President Trump’s abandonment of the Kurds constitutes an example of both impatience and betrayal. The Kurds are 35 to 40 million stateless people that live in Northern Syria. They stand between four different countries: Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. They have supported American aims in the Middle East as early as 1971, when the United States armed them to fight against Saddam Hussein [10]. Starting in 2014, the United States supported the Kurds based on common ground in defeating ISIS [11]. In October 2019, President Donald Trump tweeted “The Endless Wars Must End,” claiming that his position on ending such wars contributed to his election. Just prior, President Trump had withdrawn support for the Kurds in Syria, supporting his decision by saying, “they didn’t help us in Normandy.” [7] While Trump’s statement may carry an ounce of truth, the history of US-Kurdish relations is a story of American abandonment over and over again. Even Republican politicians spoke out against the move, calling it a “betrayal” and its consequences “sickening and predictable” [8]. Trump then gave Turkish president Recep Erdogan the go-ahead to invade northern Syria. The Kurdish People were not asking for much; they wanted a US military presence to fend off a Turkish invasion [10]. Turkey did invade, and today, the US has reestablished support for the Kurds, raising the question of why we left in the first place [13].

Our country’s leaders aren’t the only ones showing impatience; the public’s commitment to long wars

seems to be low. When the US first invaded Afghanistan, the move was overwhelmingly popular, reaching 90% in the early days after 9/11 [3]. In 2021, 61% of Americans claimed the war wasn’t worth fighting [4]. Right before withdrawing from Afghanistan, 54% of Americans said the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was the right one [4]. Near the end of Trump’s administration, the US reduced the American troop presence down to 2,500 and committed the United States to withdraw all troops by May 2021 [5]. President Biden ultimately decided to withdraw, and the consequences were both predictable and disastrous. The Afghani president fled the country and the government quickly yielded to Taliban control. Afghani men embraced departing aircraft, fearing the consequences of Taliban rule [6]. The media were quick to blame President Biden, yet part of the blame lies with the American people. We’ve been calling for withdrawal from the Middle East for years, yet we act surprised when we see the calamity that ensues.

Some may argue that impatience is the best among limited options, especially when using American resources to bring about foreign motives. We had been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001, and in 2021, 69% of Americans believed we had failed in our intervention [12][4]. Understandably, it was difficult to see success with our efforts in Afghanistan, especially when we failed to build a successful government. But, against the backdrop of brutal Taliban rule, our presence in the Middle East looks like a success. With that alternative in mind, the US should be willing to engage in the Middle East, even if such a commitment seems endless.

If our foreign policy is based on values, results will require patience. Recent mistakes should redirect us to a more measured, forbearing approach in world conflict. In particular, we face a continuing decision regarding our support for Ukraine in a surprisingly prolonged war. We could completely abandon Ukraine, simultaneously casting aside our principles as a country and letting an autocrat have his way. We could be more aggressive, taking a strong stand against Putin by expanding our military support for Ukraine. Such a move risks violent retaliation. Or, we could be patient, continuing to send aid. Situations change, and Putin’s administration has already proven to be vulnerable from within. Any sort of action is tempting given our dissatisfaction with the current situation, yet patience is the best choice among poor alternatives. Let us learn from past mistakes and refuse to exacerbate current problems—patience is still a virtue, even in foreign policy.

“FEMINISM VS. FEMININITY: THE BATTLE OF WOMANHOOD” 8

BY ISABELLA HALLOW

Embracing the spirit of the autumn season, I took to watching *Gilmore Girls* and recently finished the series that follows Rory's life from high school through college as she navigates her relationships with family, friends, lovers, and her own ambition. A pivotal moment comes in the final episode, where watchers find Rory rejecting a marriage proposal from her college boyfriend so she can pursue her own journalism career. Her place, she believed, was in the professional world—marriage and the traditional family life would prove to be a distraction and disadvantage. This decisive juncture in the show serves a compelling entry point for a broader discussion about the nuanced narratives surrounding women's roles and the feminist movement.

To truly understand the evolving landscape of womanhood, it is helpful to evaluate the evolution of the feminist movement. First wave feminism originally sprouted out of abolitionist movements and primarily advocated for civil rights and greater access to employment and education. [1] At this point in history, women could not own land, get a divorce, file for a lawsuit, or even make a decision for themselves.

The second wave of feminism came in the 1960-1970s, building upon the ideals of the first wave while incorporating more open views on sexuality and bringing to light both public and private injustices; issues like workplace harassment, rape, domestic violence and reproductive rights. [2] However, some critics viewed this sexual openness as a ploy to perpetuate a masculine-dominated society, thus hindering female empowerment. The gradual progression of social norms becoming more provocative is intriguing—an entire subject of study in itself.

The third wave of feminism brought a greater female presence in global politics and markets beginning in the 1980s. It too was an essential step. Nevertheless, it was during this period that the concept of gender as a social construct emerged, challenging the traditional definitions and roles of gender. In my view, this era acted as a catalyst, pushing feminism to extremes, to the point where recent iterations of feminism have raised questions about the very definition of womanhood.

In recent years, the total fertility rate in the United States plummeted from 2.12 in 2007 to a low of 1.65 in 2022, which is far below the replacement level of 2.1 needed for population stability. [3] While it is inevitable that there are multiple factors contributing to this large-scale decline in reproduction, I find it equally

unequivocal that society's narratives regarding women are having an effect. I believe that women belong wherever they want to be, and that they have the intellect, grit, and capabilities to accomplish incredible things and break glass ceilings. Simultaneously, I believe that the female sex has a unique purpose, granted solely to them. We are divinely designed—biologically and emotionally—to be mothers. As a female, of all the ambitions I have for my future, by far the greatest is being a wife and mother. The beautifully inherent purpose of women is to love and nurture the future, whether that be in their own homes with their own children, or in the lives of those around them. Femininity and nurturing qualities are gifts that should be celebrated and shared!

The feminist movement, originally rooted in the pursuit of equality of rights, has evolved to prioritize “equality of outcome”. In this quest, society has begun to impose the idea that women should bear no obligations that men do not share, even when such obligations arise from basic biological differences. While this narrative emerged in the name of feminism and equality, I feel it has taken on a twisted form. The world often degrades divine female abilities and places value solely on worldly metrics of success—primarily professional and financial. In the pursuit of true equality, women lose sight of the beauty of their uniqueness. Modern feminism deems men ripe with toxic masculinity, all the while attempting to diminish innate femininity, the nurturing qualities that set them apart from the male species. This paradoxical turn in the pro-woman agenda undermines the beauty and divinity that define womanhood.

Men and women are intended to be equals. While they should enjoy equal rights and opportunities, God did not intend for them to be the same. Rather than diminishing the essence of womanhood, we should celebrate it! Women have endured centuries of oppression, objectification, disrespect and abuse, and while the forms of mistreatment have changed, it seems to me blatant disempowerment to deny women the chance to embrace their femininity. We owe it to the women who have shaped our lives—our teachers, mentors, bosses, friends, aunts, grandmothers and mothers—to honor femininity and womanhood for what it is, and willingly embrace the divine roles that come with it.

“RESTRUCTURING THE GUN CONTROL CONVERSATION”

9

BY JANE DRINKWATER

In the US, the gun control conversation feels set in stone. We've fallen into a pattern: inevitably, a high-profile gun death leads to an outcry from the pro-gun-control crowd, to which anti-gun-control advocates respond with an amendment that's existed since 1791. Partisan gridlock and interest group funding has made it hard to pass national legislation on guns, but our conversations share part of the blame. For as long as I can remember, arguments regarding gun control have relied on the same statistics, laws, talking points, and stories. These stale discussions seem unable to make a dent in the American gun violence epidemic—so what should we be talking about? For more productive discussions (and hopefully, solutions) I propose we make the following three changes to our conversations about guns in America.

CHANGE 1: Talk about shooting rates, not gun-related death rates

The most common measure of harm done by guns is the number of gun deaths in a given year or area. This is the number most people are familiar with, the number that identifies cities or neighborhoods as most dangerous, and the number that tracks how gun violence changes over time.

Yet there is a glaring problem with measuring gun violence by fatalities: medical care influences which gunshot victims live or die. For example, while data on this subject is hard to find, one study found that only 1/3 of gunshot wounds were fatal [1]. This skews our perception of gun violence in several ways.

Before exploring how our understanding is skewed, I must acknowledge that it is hard to draw reliable quantitative answers to these questions. This is part of the problem. Gun-related deaths are tracked, reported, and compiled into reports; it is much harder to find statistics on gun violence or medical care for victims. Shifting the conversation toward gun violence rather than gun deaths could lead to more data on the true degree of gun violence in America today.

That being said, based on other medical advancements, it's reasonable to assume that doctors' ability to treat gun wounds has improved in the last 50 years. Thus, changes in gun deaths over that time may not reflect any meaningful change in the amount or severity of gun violence; it may instead reflect more people recovering from what would have once been fatal.

Second, because the quality and accessibility of medical care varies dramatically by community [2], communities with similar amounts of gun violence may have different amounts of gun-related deaths. This may lead us to think gun violence is worse in one city/neighborhood/group than in another, simply because people who get shot in one community get to a top-tier hospital quickly, while people who get shot in the other community die on the commute or on the operating table.

Finally, because US hospitals have the experience and equipment to handle gunshot wounds, comparing our country's gun-related death rates to global death rates might not tell the full story. The US has more gun deaths per capita than other high-income countries [3], but there are several developing countries whose rates are even higher than ours. How might this statistic change if their medical care was as advanced as ours? How would our rates of gun-related crimes, injuries, or hospitalizations compare to those in developing countries?

Change 2: Broaden the focus beyond mass shootings

Mass shootings are terrible tragedies, and Americans are

getting far too used to hearing about them in the news. However, compared to other forms of gun violence, they are uncommon. Because of their brutality, mass shootings leave a disproportionate impact on the national consciousness, but their victims account for only a fraction of the gun violence in America. According to the Pew Research Center, 48,830 Americans were killed with guns in 2021. If a mass shooting event is defined as an incident where four or more people are shot, there were 61 in 2021 (the most ever recorded in one year), leading to 706 deaths. By comparison, there were 26,328 gun-related suicides and 20,958 gun-related murders [4].

America has to find a solution for the ballooning number of mass shootings, but we also need to find a solution for gun violence in general. Proposed solutions for mass shootings (such as limiting access to automatic or semi-automatic weapons or arming teachers in schools) will make no dent in the tens of thousands of lives taken by suicide, domestic violence, or gang violence. These shooters tend to use different weapons and have different motivations than the mass shooters we hear so much about, and our gun control policies need to account for them. Focusing our gun control conversation on the most prevalent types of violence is the first step to those improved policies.

Change 3: Examine the racial implications of gun laws

As this article makes clear, I believe gun violence is more widespread than our gun fatality numbers report and more commonplace than our focus on rare mass shootings leads us to believe. In general, I want solutions to this crisis and I am personally in support of more gun control. However, as we propose and debate gun control legislation, we often fail to consider how the laws will be implemented. In particular, we ignore the effects implementing gun laws may have on people of color.

In practice, a ban on possessing a certain type of weapon is a ban on having that weapon in your possession when you are searched by authorities. Yet, as is common knowledge that minorities—particularly Black and Hispanic men—are pulled over or investigated by authorities at much higher rates than other people. One study found that Black people were 95 percent more likely than white people to be stopped by police officers while driving and 115 percent more likely to be searched [5]. If laws are written and enforced incorrectly, the war on guns might end up having a similar effect as the “War on Drugs”, making illegal gun possession a party trick among rich white kids and a hefty prison sentence for young black men.

This effect is already observed with the gun laws in place today. The Harvard Law Review cites this sobering statistic: “seventy percent of all defendants convicted of federal firearms offenses were minorities” [6]. While the prevalence of gun violence among minority communities warrants discussion, it is beyond the scope of this article. This statistic certainly does not mean that seventy percent of all people violating gun control laws were minorities. Instead, it shows that law enforcement is already over-policing minority communities, and we have no reason to believe this practice would stop if we created harsher gun control measures.

Above all, the American gun violence epidemic cannot be left unchecked. Something has to break the stalemate that has permitted hundreds of thousands of people to die, and I hope that changes like these will pave the way, clarifying our understanding of the status quo so we can finally change it.

“DONALD TRUMP, TAYLOR SWIFT, AND CELEBRITY WORSHIP: ABANDONING INDIVIDUALISM IN FAVOR OF FANDOM”

10

BY KATELYN GALE

As a self-proclaimed die-hard David Tennant fan, I often think about the relationship between fans and celebrities. Have I watched many movies and TV shows that feature David Tennant? Of course. Do I religiously follow David Tennant's life, mirroring his political and social opinions? No. While these examples outline two vastly different levels of fandom—being a casual fan versus being a worshiper—the underlying principle of both is the amount of time devoted to listening to, watching, and identifying with celebrities. Celebrity worship, which I define as the extreme identification with and idolization of celebrities, negatively impacts individuals' self-identification and increases polarization within interpersonal communications.

Throughout US history, there have been numerous examples of such celebrity worship. Theodore Roosevelt popularized the 'bully pulpit,' the use and maximization of speaking platforms to advance public consciousness on particular topics, which consequently spread his fame and celebrity status within the United States [1][2]. FDR, in hosting and popularizing "Fireside Chats," radio addresses that he used to ease the public's concerns, instilled in Americans at the time a sense of familiarity, effectively establishing a parasocial relationship with them. JFK especially was seen as the epitome of white picket fence, aristocratic glamour and thus, coupled with his famously-rumored trysts, his celebrity status leading up to and within his time as president increased exponentially [3].

As such, the celebrity status of political figures within US history is not a novel outlier of an event, but rather a long-established precedent. It is no surprise, then, that such celebrity status of political figures continues today. Yet, the effects of modern celebrity and political figure worship produce more extreme, negative consequences due to increasing political polarization and self-identification with political parties and political figures.

Most notably, Donald Trump's celebrity status has set a new precedent for celebrity worship, both within the Republican Party itself and amongst US citizens. Whereas the effects of the celebrity status and consequent worship of the aforementioned presidents cannot easily be measured, Donald Trump's celebrity status and the consequences of it are different, however, as the increased prevalence of social media and access to news reports comparative to the 20th century have become ubiquitous. Take the recent Republican presidential debates, for example, where much of the emphasis in the first debate was on Trump, specifically on if the candidates would pardon him if they were elected and if they generally support him [4]. For a Republican debate to be so focused on a former president who was not personally at the debate signals a degree of celebrity wor-

ship the Republican party has for Trump, which is corroborated by an April NBC News poll, which shows that 37% of Republicans currently identify more as Trump supporters than as Republican Party supporters [5].

This is concerning. Not because of the amount of Trump supporters or because of Donald Trump himself, but rather because the Republican party has undergone a fascinating shift away from party identification in favor of identification either with or against Trump. As individuals increasingly place their identities with a celebrity, they begin to lose their individuality and identity, instead almost gaining the identity of the celebrity himself. This is evidenced by the January 6th US Capitol riot, in which individuals, largely Trump supporters, mobilized in response to words Trump said regarding the 2020 election. I do not mention this to take a partisan stance, but rather to again give evidence to the negative effects of celebrity worship and the decrease in individualism. Additionally, there remains a negative connotation to the label "Trump supporter," which only reinforces the idea that overidentification with a celebrity harms not only the individual, but also interpersonal communication with others.

And this interpersonal communication with others extends beyond politics. Taylor Swift similarly has an immense scope of influence, with the Philadelphia Federal Reserve reporting in their June Beige Book, a qualitative summary of the changes in economic activity from the months prior, that hotel revenue in May soared due to the "influx of guests for the Taylor Swift concerts in the city" [8]. This influence, both economic and social, invariably leads to celebrity worship. Taylor Swift fans, known as Swifties, similarly have a reputation (pun intended) of fiercely defending and identifying with Taylor Swift. Most notably, in early 2021, Swifties defended Taylor Swift after she criticized a line from the Netflix show "Ginny & Georgia" that poked fun at her for having a lot of ex boyfriends. Following Taylor's criticism, her fans began to attack and harass the young black actress who said the line in the show, harassment that Taylor Swift did not address or discourage [6][7]. Thus, interpersonal communications become increasingly polarized when the individuals communicating overidentify with the celebrity or political figure they worship. As such, the most harmful part of celebrity worship that causes increased polarization within interpersonal communication is the override of individual identity in favor of the celebrity identity.

And so, will I continue to self-identify as a die-hard David Tennant fan? Yes, but with the careful understanding of the delineation between being a fan and being a celebrity worshiper. Having interests and favorite celebrities or political figures is not a bad thing by any means, but it is nevertheless prudent to stay away from extremes, in order to protect the rich individualism within our society.

“RENT CONTROL REALITY CHECK: 11 WHY RENT CONTROL IS NOT THE HERO?”

BY LEVI HILTON

Affordable housing, the Holy Grail of urban living, seems to be an elusive goal. It is a talking point for politicians across the ideological spectrum. In attempts to create affordable housing for low-income individuals and families, many states look to rent control as a vehicle to affordable housing. Many turn to rent control as the knight in shining armor, but I wish to remove the shiny armor and expose the chinks in these economic policies. There certainly are policies that state governments can enact that help provide affordable housing, but rent control isn't one of them. Government-imposed rent control is not the savior for low-income individuals and families.

Rent control can be a real market buzzkill. Imagine a party where the DJ can't crank up the music when the crowd wants to dance. That's rent control for the housing market. When dealing with a price ceiling, the economic equilibrium price rises, causing a shortage in supply. For the housing market, that means housing shortages. That's the kind of party everyone wants to leave early.

They say the devil's in the details, but with rent control, the devil might be in the bathroom tiles. When landlords can't make a decent profit, they may put off repairs and improvements, and many studies (specific studies referenced later on) confirm that rent control can indeed lead to a decline in housing quality. Some repairs when left undone lead to dangerous housing environments, and create a lower standard of living for people. We're not just talking about leaky faucets and peeling paint here, but fire hazards, shaky foundations, gas or chemical leaks, or worse.

Picture this: You have a lemonade stand, but the city says you can only sell lemonade at 25 cents a cup. It doesn't matter how good the lemonade is. It doesn't matter how much the customer is willing to pay. It doesn't matter how much the lemonade costs you to make. Are you motivated to keep your stand shiny and your lemons fresh? Probably not. That's how rent control can affect landlords.

Another economic disincentive that rent control inhibits is new real estate development projects. If rent control is set in a way that doesn't allow real estate investors to receive a healthy enough return, then they will look elsewhere for their investments to go, creating a shortage in housing. Housing shortages are dangerous because development projects take several months or years to complete. It is hard to play catch up.

Those who disagree with me may claim that rent

control policies are crucial for fostering affordable housing and preventing displacement. In a world with rapidly rising living costs, these measures help protect vulnerable populations, such as low-income families and seniors, from eviction due to unaffordable rent hikes. By stabilizing rental prices, rent control can create more stable and inclusive communities, encouraging economic diversity and preserving the social fabric of neighborhoods. It's a vital tool in the fight against housing inequality and ensures that everyone has a chance to access safe and stable housing.

While I think these intentions are sincere, I don't think that the policies in question truly have these effects. I think the evidence shows that.

How has this been seen in American cities? Let's look at New York City for starters.

New York City's rent control laws, although aimed at ensuring housing affordability, have experienced the negative impacts listed above. According to a study by the Furman Center, rent-regulated units experienced a 21% lower likelihood of building maintenance improvements compared to market-rate units, leading to subpar living conditions. Additionally, a report by the Citizens Budget Commission highlighted that these laws reduced rental property investment by 24%, hindering the growth of the city's housing supply. Consequently, New York's rental market has seen a widening gap between controlled and unregulated rents, exacerbating the affordability crisis. Reforms should be considered to address these issues effectively. The American Enterprise Institute conducted research using the NY census, and published the following findings:

“The Census report found that rent-regulated units have twice as many leaks, three times as many heating breakdowns, and three times as much mold. A third of them have “rodents” (almost twice the rate of unregulated apartments). Some 176,000 regulated units had three or more maintenance issues.”

Rent control might sound like the ultimate housing superhero, but beneath the cape, it has some dirty laundry. The negative effects of these policies are real and can be life changing. Instead of depending solely on rent control policies, governments should embrace a more diverse approach. Let's utilize economic incentives for developers, reasonable tenant protections, and well-targeted subsidies. After all, we all would like to see more affordable housing, we just need to get there the right way. Rent control laws are not the right way.

“ADIÓS TO MEXICAN MACHISMO”

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BY NATHAN CHASE

Sexism happens all over the world, but in Latin American countries, there has been a culture of “machismo” that has seriously hindered women in ways that differ from sexism in America and other countries. Machismo is the idea that men have overbearing control and dominance over their wives and children. His role as the head of the house demands that all in the family submit to his will, a behavior that unfortunately manifests often as domestic violence. Although there are admirable traits of machismo such as bravery and honor, it’s the aggressiveness, violence, and dominance that is harmful. This mindset has led to the abuse and death of women, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Mexico.

Over the years, all the domestic abuse has accumulated into a concept known as “femicide,” where homicide occurs solely because the victim is a woman. In the last few years, violence against women in Mexico has skyrocketed making it one of the most dangerous countries in the world for women. 70% of women in Mexico have experienced violence in their lifetime, and 40% say that that abuse came from their husbands. During the 2023 International Women’s Day March in Mexico City, tens of thousands of women protested that the government needed a change in policy and cultural awareness [1].

Men and boys in machismo culture are taught not to express their emotions or show vulnerability. These emotions boil over and lead to violence or mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. Men lack the mental health resources they need within machismo culture. As a result, men commit suicide in higher rates than women [2]. The culture of machismo must stop in Mexico for the good not just women, but men too.

However, there is hope of change happening in Mexico through its politics and government. Since the 2021 Mexican midterm elections, women make up about half of the total members of its lower house of Congress, and women have made historical gains within state governorships and legislatures [3].

In June 2024, Mexico is set to have a historic and consequential election that will put the country on a more progressive path for women. Similar to presidential elections in the United States, where the next president is either the Republican Party nominee or the Democratic Party nominee, Mexicans have chosen their two candidates who will represent their respective coalitions and face off to become the next president. Claudia Sheinbaum, former mayor of Mexico City and the progressive MORENA party’s candidate, will face off against Xóchitl Gálvez, a senator and representative of the more conservative PAN party [4]. Since the two candidates are women, Mexico

is almost guaranteed to elect its first female president in 2024. Given the country’s long history of machismo and violence against women, regardless of the winner, this election will be a turning point for women in the country.

In a country like Mexico, does voting a woman to power truly imply change? People should not vote primarily on the basis of their gender. The candidate’s policies and attitudes are far more important. This begs the question of whether elected women achieve gains only on the basis of how well they demographically represent women or on the basis of more substantive actions and policies. Evidence suggests that electing women in a country’s highest office does slightly change gender norms with an increased female representation in legislatures and other areas [5]. For example, in countries in Latin America where machismo has been a problem but a female president has been elected, such as Brazil and Argentina, girls have fared better in education, despite the gender gap in the job market remaining large [6]. Although it may take years to determine the consequences of the Mexican 2024 election on Machismo culture, change will occur if Mexico follows the lead of other Latino countries.

Once Claudia Sheinbaum or Xóchitl Gálvez is sworn in as president, their leadership can set a tone for Mexico. The future president can set an agenda that sets harsher legal punishment for those who cause violence against women and policies that provide resources for women [7]. The image and leadership of the next president can also culturally elevate women in Mexico. Seeing Sheinbaum or Gálvez interact with the President of the United States and other world leaders can break barriers by proving the machista ideology wrong, and young girls have someone they can look up to and know that they have no limit to what they can become.

Inaugurating the first female president will obviously not solve all the problems of Mexico’s machismo culture. However, it is a step in the right direction. For those who are part of the Latino community, many of us have seen machismo in our own families and communities. Standing up to machismo does not mean that men should not be able to express their masculinity. Men should double down on the positive aspects of machismo, such as courage and honor. Guys should keep pumping iron at the gym, posing with the cars, and hanging out with the boys. However, it is the responsibility of everyone to call out the negative behavior and strive for a future without violence where both men and women can live their lives safely and freely.

“PATRIOTISM IS PROGRESSIVE”

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BY CALEB RINGGER

I'll never forget an experience I had with a good friend of mine a few months ago. We were walking down the street when a huge RAM 3500 with two American flags propped up in the bed came barreling past us, blaring “God’s Country” by Blake Shelton. My friend looked at me, rolled his eyes, and said, “Geez, I wonder who he voted for in 2020.” The implication was obvious—he must have voted for Trump.

I’m sure some of this assessment could have come from the lifted truck and the country music, but it was clear that part of it came from the strong displays of patriotism, especially the proud (or some might say obnoxious) waving of multiple American flags. In modern American culture, something about aggressive, explicit displays of patriotism is increasingly associated with conservatism and the Republican Party.

If anecdotes aren’t enough to convince you, consider a 2018 poll from FiveThirtyEight, which shows that while 72% of Republicans describe themselves as “very patriotic,” just 29% of Democrats do [1]. It seems like patriotism really is associated more with the political right. And Republicans love statistics like this, by this way—anything to get another excuse to say “Democrats hate America.” [2]

It kind of makes sense when you think about the basic underlying ideologies of the two parties. Conservatism, by definition, values tradition and established institutions, resisting calls for major social change. Progressivism, on the other hand, values social change, tries to reform existing institutions, and is much more willing to challenge authority. Naturally, progressives are more reluctant to celebrate a society that they might see as having serious problems that need to be addressed, while conservatives would be quicker to celebrate and aggressively protect the traditions they already value.

But just because it makes sense doesn’t mean it’s good. In fact, I think it’s one of the great tragedies of modern politics that so many people think you have to be conservative to be patriotic. Patriotism, in its most fundamental form, can be defined as “love for your country.” Consider that word, “love.” Most people, especially conservatives, would probably admit that loving someone does not mean giving unconditional support to everything they have ever done or ever will do regardless of context. It does not mean ignoring obvious past and present issues that could be addressed with a little effort. In fact,

it seems to me that a genuine desire to help that person become the best person they can be, especially when that is hard, is a much deeper expression of love. This kind of love requires honesty, even harsh honesty—pointing out areas for improvement, especially serious ones.

Similarly, in my view, true patriotism does not come from waving the flag off the back of your pickup, blowing up thousands of dollars in fireworks, or wearing a “1776” cap (not that any of that is inherently bad—I enjoy a classic Fourth of July barbecue as much as anyone). True patriotism means having the courage to identify serious problems in our country and striving to do everything we can to improve them, thus making our country the best it can be—dare I say “a more perfect Union.” This might mean studying history honestly so we can learn from the mistakes of our past—even those of our Founding Fathers, as wise as they were. It might mean participating in protests against unjust laws and systems. It almost certainly means electing leaders who respect American democracy and have never tried to overturn a legitimate election.

The term “un-American” is often thrown around as an insult against people who exhibit behavior that is perceived to go against the founding principles of our republic. People who criticize the United States, whether that’s for its history of racism, its imperialist foreign policy, or its shocking economic inequality, often get it the worst. But consider this—what is more “un-American?” Spirited debate and disagreement, or forced conformity? Which is more in line with the spirit of the Constitution—taking decisive action to fix a broken society, or clinging to tradition in the name of patriotism? When the Founding Fathers saw serious societal problems, how did they respond?

Modern-day progressives can win over many people who are turned off by the perceived anti-American sentiment on the left by openly displaying this deeper form of patriotism and re-framing the debate around social change. So if you’re a progressive, don’t let others convince you that you can’t be patriotic. In fact, I’d dare to say you’re more patriotic than you think.

“AN EDUCATIONAL MOUNT EVEREST: SOLVING THE FAILURE OF PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS”

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BY JACOB LEAVITT

In the New York Times article “The Failure of Progressive Movements,” Senior Writer David Leonhardt explains that some recent progressive movements—#MeToo, BLM, and Occupy Wall Street, specifically—have all fallen short of systemic change. Why? It’s easy to compare the hierarchical structure of the Civil Rights movement, dutifully commanded by MLK, to the anarchal BLM administration hodgepodge; the specific grievances of the Stonewall Riots to the imprecise, uncoordinated interests of Occupy Wall Street; or the coordination of Women’s Suffrage to the internal schisms [1] of the #MeToo movement that never really left the internet. These are all useful comparisons that contrast the flailing strategies of modern progressive movements to the efficacy of past movements. I believe there is one more critical comparison needed to highlight where contemporary progressivism fails: The American Revolution versus The French Revolution.

Cast your mind back to the British Parliament, 1790. The U.S. had recently ratified the U.S. Constitution, finally establishing the government that would survive time and tribulation. Meanwhile, a “wave of revolutionary hysteria” [2] was sweeping through France following the storming of Bastille. MP Edmund Burke wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France* correctly predicting that the French Revolution would fail where the American Revolution succeeded largely, he writes, due to French abandonment of institutions. As I use it, an institution is an established organization, entity, or custom that regulates a society formally or informally. Anarchy is the abandonment of institutions. During its revolutionary period, the U.S. upheld the rule of common law, practiced religion, honored education, and supported non-political social groups. France, however, saw law, religion, education, and non-political social groups as a symbol of aristocratic excess or a proletariat diversion and sought to dismantle and abandon them. France’s revolution, in the wake of the U.S.’s success, failed to improve the commoner’s life.

In a fit of historical *déjà vu*, contemporary progressive movements follow the same trend. Following the success of the 20th century’s progressive movements, the 21st century’s tend to fall short because of their mistrust in established institutions. In fact, the only consistent hallmark of these recent movements is their mistrust of institutions. In contrast, past progressive movements sought to franchise groups of people into established institutions by means of organized structure, specific interests, and united efforts. How crazy would it look if I went into the streets today and started digging holes and pulling up ethernet cables because I disliked an online post? This absurd, ineffective rage against the machine is akin to defunding police, “overthrowing capitalism”, and posting “kill all men” or “down with the patriarchy.” While there are many revolution-

aries in these movements making considerable change in their area of influence through institutions, each of these examples has a critical number of anarchal revolutionaries who damage the movement as a whole.

Unfortunately, the new 21st century brand of cynical education doubles down on this failure. Cynical education seeks first and foremost to tear down institutions in defense of virtues it can’t define and principles whose origins it refuses to acknowledge [3]. Recent progressive movements aren’t working and education is escalating the problem. What can we do? BYU President C. Shane Reese said in his inaugural address that BYU can be the solution by making “strategic investments in areas where we have natural strengths as a Church and as a university, furthering recent efforts regarding the family, religion’s role in human flourishing and constitutional government.” Education’s principal object should be to develop individuals who are capable of and seek to bolster and refine institutions such as the family, humanitarian organizations, industry, and government rather than to disregard them or worse, to tear them down. When this happens, education and the rising generation become forces of institutional revolution rather than anarchal revolution, their espoused progressive movements enrich society, and life becomes better for more people. Imagine if researchers spent as much time writing about how men and women can better work together as they do writing about how the genders collide. Imagine if professors taught about effectively creating an interest group or humanitarian society the same way they teach about racism. Imagine the fire of education inspiring in pupils hope, generosity, forgiveness, and cooperation instead of anger. Supporting institutions is hard because such support typically comes at the expense of instant gratification in favor of a joyful promised future.

In the absence of forces that bring people together, people grow apart. This social entropy is the root of the loneliness epidemic crippling the developed world. On every level, anarchy and individualism fails. Without marriage, our deepest bonds devolve into incidental sexual encounters. Without community groups, churches, youth organizations, and local service societies, families become islands and neighbors become strangers. In the absence of international institutions, countries become isolationist—capable only of war. Individualism does not work. Cynicism is not enlightened. Instant gratification is not joy. We are not defined by our labels or by our strengths but by our membership within society, capacity to form moving relationships, and potential to grow. In a lonely and dreary world that recognizes only meaning from the self i.e. *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) let us proudly declare *e pluribus unum* (of many, one)—that we have meaning because we work together.

“ON EDUCATION” 15

BY ZACHARY BRIGHT

Christopher Nolan is one of the greatest movie directors of all time. Although it has garnered mixed reactions, I love Nolan’s movie *Tenet*. I’ll admit, *Tenet* challenges everyone’s cognitive ability via visual chaos. But, let me hop onto my crumbling soapbox for a quick defense of this chaotic Christopher Nolan film. *Tenet* explores the implications of humanity’s obsession with overpowering nature. Overpowering nature tends to improve our own well-being, but occasionally this is not the case (think atomic bomb). Paradoxically, those who are in a position to produce something that will overpower nature and are aware of the potentially negative consequences will move forward with creating that product

This observation about humanity’s desire to overpower nature is not new. While Plato had some things to say about this, Nietzsche also wrote, “...everything that occurs in the organic world consists of overpowering, dominating...” [1]. I wouldn’t say that everything consists of overpowering, but I will concede humans have this tendency—for better or for worse. Some areas where overpowering nature has been positive includes indoor plumbing, air conditioning, water filtration systems, supermarkets, etc. Other areas are more questionable: weapons, social media, email, gasoline cars, etc. Recent developments in artificial intelligence have caused me to reflect on the automated processes that make information distribution and processes more efficient than humans, and how that impacts us mere mortals with regards to education.

As of 2009, a study showed that almost half of all students in all universities in the United States receive an “A” [2]. The conclusion of this study is that grades have been inflated. In other words, the A standard now was a B or C standard 20-30 years ago. The worry about this trend is that the bar of what is intellectually demanded of students has decreased. The study, however, neglects to determine whether the increase in “A” students is due to increasing intelligence or a lower standard for everyone, but other studies show that the latter is true. In addition to recent declines in vocabulary competence in the United States and Europe [3], a recent 2023 study found a reverse Flynn effect. The Flynn effect suggests that every generation’s level of intelligence, on average, will increase. Flynn showed it has been the case, so he postulated it will continue to be the case. But for the first time, the average intelligence of Americans and Europeans is declining [4]. They offer four possible explanations: (1) we

have hit the intelligence ceiling and humanity as a whole cannot get any smarter, (2) grading standards have laxed, so adolescents aren’t being intellectually challenged, (3) media has intellectually injured our brains, or (4) technology has started to do the work our brains should do.

I should note, they measure intelligence by IQ levels and other factors. These measurements may be problematic, but it’s some measurement, and something has gone wrong. One of my favorite quotes from President Dallin Oaks, a Latter-day Saint leader, says “We have thousands of times more available information than Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln. Yet which of us would think ourselves a thousand times more educated or more serviceable to our fellowmen than they?” [5]. That being said, I’m not sure what to do with the first explanation, but the other three seem highly plausible. My proposal for remedying this intellectual crisis is (1) be strong and abandon AI in the classroom, (2) read and contemplate good books, and (3) talk to living, breathing human beings.

First, we should have the strength to shun AI from our educational journey. AI can do many wonderful things, but it should not act as a crutch to our intellectual development. In a class recently, I watched a student type into ChatGPT “Rebuttals to Hume’s argument against miracles” because a teacher asked for counterarguments to Hume. This student then raised their hand, and said “I think...”. But alas, they did not really think. Second, we should read and contemplate intellectually demanding books. Whizzing through *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is nice, but does not demand much intellectually. There are so many excellent books that require us to stop and think for hours. These kinds of books are not books we just want to finish; we want to understand these books. Lastly, we need to talk to human beings. I think we learn so much through face-to-face interactions and dialogue. Oftentimes, we learn more effectively from and with each other.

We have created technology that overpowers a limit in our nature, but I’m afraid we may lose something valuable if we embrace this technology with nonchalance. The educational experience is not about getting a good grade, getting a job, or finding a sweetheart (though these all can be part of the experience). In the words of my dear friend Kaity M., “Your job is to learn. That’s it, and it’s lovely.”



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