

One nation divisible under politics and parties for none

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the United States, it seems that everything has become political. Especially with the election of President Donald Trump, the battle between Republicans and Democrats is at an all-time high. From television advertisements to comedy sketches, Americans cannot escape the turmoil that exists between the two political parties. But, the divide between the two parties began long before now. In 1787, Alexander Hamilton, along with his supporters, created the first American political party, known as the Federalists (The Origins and Functions of Political Parties par. 5). These people were in support of a strong American central government.

The opposition or Anti-Federalists, led by Thomas Jefferson, who called themselves Democratic-Republicans, supported a limited central government. The parties were later changed to Democrats who supported President Andrew Jackson and Whigs who opposed Jackson. Slavery further divided the parties into multiple sub-parties dismantling the political system as a whole. Democrats who favored slavery became the vast majority, and the political divide held off again until the 1930s, at the time of the Great Depression. This began the United States current political parties.

According to the preamble of the Constitution, the purpose of the United States government is to “ establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare [of Americans], and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity” (U. S. Const., pmb.). The Constitution establishes a democracy governed by the people. However, quite possibly the most important part of the Constitution is the establishment of an indivisible nation of 50 states. The

creation of political parties created a way to divide the nation right down the middle.

The primary function of political parties is to elect an official whom you most agree with on issues of public policy. In theory, the two-party system, or bipartisanship, works in a way in which the two political parties work together through compromise. When participating in elections, voters are forced to register as either Democrat or Republican. Meaning constituents cannot cross party lines (i. e., a registered Democrat may not vote for a Republican senator, although they might agree with their policies) so voters must rely on their elected officials to reach this compromise once elected. Considering the purpose of campaigning is to become an elected official, the language used is critical. On the campaign trail, politicians use rhetoric that creates ways to further separate Americans by race, social class, and age. This creates further division between the two parties playing into an “ us vs. them” mentality.

Contradicting the very purpose of the political system, which is to make effective policies that serve the country as a whole. Based on a Pew Research study, 84% of Blacks affiliate with the Democratic Party, along with 68% of Hispanics and 65% of Asian Americans, while the majority of White Americans lean towards the Republican Party. The overwhelming amount of Blacks that vote for the Democratic Party could be attributed to the election of Barack Obama. But, Blacks still leaned heavily towards the Democratic Party to elect Hillary Clinton. So, it is also important to examine how the ideologies that are supported by Democratic nominees such as civil rights,

racial unity and equality appeal to the minority races versus how the rhetoric used by Republican politicians that seem to support the opposite appeal to everyone else.

Since the election of President Donald Trump, the tensions between Blacks and Whites continue to further increase. Unjust police brutalities against blacks are still happening; the Nazis and Klansmen are marching freely (and being called nice people), while Hispanic immigrants are being called, “ bad hombres, rapists, and thugs.” President Donald Trump promoted stop and frisks as a solution for illegal immigrants and rising crimes on the campaign trail. With his campaign slogan, “ Make America Great Again” (MAGA), Trump created a dystopian American society that needed to be mended and he was the only person that could fix this problem. On the other hand, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton played into the minority fear of being killed, deported or anything else that could happen under the leadership of Donald Trump.

Unlike her Democratic nominee predecessor, Clinton used fear as a form of rhetoric while Obama shied away from this using a message of hope; which is the opposite of the rhetoric used by Trump. Obama portrayed an America that was not that bad at all, with messages of hope and unity between the races. Considering the fact that the majority of white voters lean towards the Republican party fear-mongering seems to be an effective tool for the party; furthering the “ us vs. them” (whites vs. the minority) mentality. A similar Pew Research study showed another way Americans are divided. 54% of Americans with four-year college degrees leaned toward the Democratic

Party while 40% of voters with bachelor degrees were Republicans. Since education has always been affiliated with social class, the divide between the “haves and the have-nots” has been created.

While campaigning, President Trump used rhetoric that appealed to Americans without college degrees, with the promise of better jobs for industrial workers. But interestingly enough, Trump promised tax cuts for the rich and cutting out programs that would help lower-income Americans, meaning the majority of his supporters would not benefit from his presidency. According to an article on the economist. com, wealthy Democrats support higher taxes; they are more likely to favor higher taxes on wealthy households than are poorer Democrats. Republicans, meanwhile, are not much in favor of increased spending on Medicare and Social Security, though many of them are likely to need it.

In 2017, only 35% of Republicans said they were in support of increased spending on Medicare, compared to 61% of Democrats; there was a similar difference in opinion overspending on for Social Security (Why People Vote Against their Economic Interests, par. 2). Democrats, who are known as being the party for the people favor Social Security, Welfare, Medicaid, and Planned Parenthood programs that provide help to lower-income Americans, who otherwise could not afford necessities such as healthcare and food. So the question remains, “why do lower-class Americans vote against their own interests?” This could be attributed to the fact that Americans believe that politicians actually make little to no difference in the economic outcomes of

the country, so when voting they prioritize civil and social issues over economic issues.

In contrast, upper-class voters that affiliate with the Republican Party vote for their best economic interests, with the fear of notwithstanding their social class, even if that means sacrificing their moral beliefs. While campaigning Trump promised voters that he will repeal and replace the Affordable Health Care Act or Obamacare, a promise that could leave 77% of Americans without healthcare. Even though Trump did not fulfill his promise, that rhetoric secured the vote of those lower-class Americans.

Lastly, there is a generational divide between the political parties. According to the Pew Research Center, the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are completely divided with 48% affiliating with the Democratic Party and 46% Republican. Generation X (1965-1980) is more right-leaning while the Silent Generation (1928-1945) is the only group that is completely left leaning. The youngest voters, millennials (born 1981-1996) although are more likely to identify as Independents, are more right-leaning, as well as Generation X (1965-1980), but it is important to note that, as millennials age their support of the Democratic party is decreasing, but only amongst white males (Maniam and Smith, " A wider partisan and ideological gap between younger, older generations").

During the 2016 primary elections, many millennials backed Senator Bernie Sanders, who previously identified as an independent before the election. The young generation cares more about climate change and social issues that are backed by the Democratic Party but are more interested in

Republicans economic ideas. Summarily, while campaigning, politicians must persuade their potential voters that they are a part of a larger group (Republican Party or Democratic Party) by appealing to people's need to belong. The language is exclusive to one side or the other and essentially no common ground is met.

However, the party that seems to get lost in the shuffle is the Independent party, who could potentially diminish the "us vs. them" mentality and create a more inclusive, productive American political system. It remains unclear on what the two parties agree and disagree on. Until there are clear party guidelines no progress will be made among lawmakers and the bickering between parties will continue. However, American history has shown a shift and emergence of political parties, maintaining the "us vs. them" mentality. But as millennial voters, who are the largest generation since the baby boomers, become more politically involved, the Independent party will emerge, changing the countries current two-party system; meaning there could be real compromise met amongst politicians and lawmakers in the future.

Works Cited:

1. 1. Baltzell, George W. "Constitution of the United States - We the People." Constitution for the United States - We the People, constitutionus.com/. C. K. "Why People Vote against Their Economic Interests." The Economist, The Economist Newspaper, 5 June 2018, www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2018/06/05/why-people-vote-against-their-economic-interests.

2. 2. Flanders, Stephen. “ The Origins and Functions of Political Parties | Scholastic.” Scholastic. com, 25 July 2007, [www. scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/origins-and-functions-political-parties/](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/origins-and-functions-political-parties/).
3. 3. Jones, Bradley. “ 1. Trends in Party Affiliation among Demographic Groups | Pew Research Center.” Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 18 Sept. 2018, [www. people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/](http://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/).
4. 4. Smith, Samantha, and Shiva Maniam. “ Younger, Older Generations Divided in Partisanship and Ideology.” Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, 20 Mar. 2017, [www. pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/20/a-wider-partisan-and-ideological-gap-between-younger-older-generations/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/20/a-wider-partisan-and-ideological-gap-between-younger-older-generations/).