

What is apathy



Apathy involves people either being content with their current status and the world around them, or being ignorant to those same surroundings. Apathetic citizens of any nation can cause the foundations of society to crumble because these people think everything is well on the surface, when in actuality, it is not. A society can go from having economic success one day, to being in a depression or even revolution as a result of apathy. The way to combat apathy in society is for the authorities to educate people on what their political system and its policies are.

If people knew more about their politicians and their specific policies, they would want to get involved in changing society in order to benefit themselves. They would realize that whoever is elected to office, whichever it might be, affects their lives both indirectly and directly. As a result of the entire population getting involved in the political system of his or her nation, society would be able to continually change so that it could maintain economic success, low unemployment rates, and equality.

Change is necessary for a society to stay healthy, and as Goldstone said in his essay *Revolution*, Social and political change is not a problem. Social change is an ongoing in most societies A society that is stagnant often suffers from a social order that is too stable. Without change, a change society cannot make progress or solve social problems such as poverty and extreme inequality (Primis 181). If society does remain stagnant, then economic success can lead to an apathetic population, and this can lead to repression, and eventually to revolution.

The best way to study and analyze the apathy in society is to look at the voting rates from year to year. By investigating voting, one can see through percentages and numbers precisely how involved people are in politics.

When the economy is doing well, as it is today in the United States, voting numbers usually decrease because people become apathetic, and they are less concerned about changes that might affect them. Due to the fact that some people are much better off financially than they ever have, they become less interested in politics and more interested in spending their well-earned money.

It is when people begin to suffer economically that they become more involved with politics because they feel that a change in the status quo is necessary for them to escape whatever economic recession they are in. Sometimes people get sick with all the lies and promises that come out of politician s mouths that they become apathetic towards voting. Rather than give one of these politicians who are only seen as the better of two evils a vote, they choose not to vote at all.

Their frustration with their choices results in them becoming apathetic and in his essay *Toward A Theory of Revolution*, Davies says that revolutions need both a period of rising expectations and a succeeding period in which there are frustrated qualities (Primis 205). Thus, a period of economic success, followed by the population being frustrated with its political figures, can ultimately lead to a collapse in society. This apathy then results in people becoming too content with their current status and they then ask fewer questions, and this can cause foundations to crumble.

The cycle then continues, with apathy leading to ignorance, and this can result in people blindly following the status quo, rather than examining the issues. Then, before these non-voting citizens know it, there will be revolutionary ideals floating about society. As long as the country continues to be economically successful, and the people view one candidate as too similar to the opposition, then people will continue to be apathetic because they feel the choices are not really choices at all.

Apathy not only results from contentment and frustration, but also from ignorance. Democracy is something everyone learns as early as kindergarten. When the teacher asks if it will be kickball or dodge ball at recess, the majority usually wins. It is an easy lesson for a 5-year-old to learn, as is raising your hand for what you want. However, one of the most simple and necessary elements of a democracy is the reliance on active participation in the government by a majority of the population. If the participants are not influenced to be active, the system fails.

By educating students and the public about the value of the system, the education system could help combat apathy. The tradition that college graduates are looked upon with more respect than the less educated has ended. How can the so-called higher educated members of society gain any respect when most graduates are unable or unwilling to participate in a ritual of our nation? The problem is that traditional education, that included more intensive study of government, has been replaced by a system that increasingly focuses on technology and skills training but may be failing in educating good citizens.

A higher education should be more than job preparation; it should be a continuing desire to improve and guarantee the quality of life for generations to come. With a lack of knowledge in politics and democracy comes the myth that one vote does not make a difference. Many young adults have no faith in the system, therefore they do not vote due to the feeling of disappointment that their vote does not matter. How often do you hear young adults say, “ I did not vote because I don’t feel as if my vote would count. ” Others are disenchanted with the political system because voting in the past never produced results.

However, young people today need to realize that one voice does make a difference. In addition, if more young adults took an interest, politicians would be forced to listen. For example, financial aid is one of many issues at hand in recent political campaigns. If politicians continue to cut student aid, some young people may not have a chance for a college education. Thus, young adults must have faith in the system and increase the number of young voters. Otherwise, politicians will continue to cater only to the needs of the older generation that is voting them into office.

The two largest voting publics in the United States are senior citizens and the college aged groups (Gherry 328). Ironically, it is the senior citizens who are the more politically informed, and who vote in the greatest numbers. These statistics support the contention that the youth of America are becoming less informed about the process and necessity of voting, and are also more apathetic about the true significance of voting. As Americans, we must do something about voter apathy because not only does voting allow

us to be active in the political process, it enables us to fulfill our civic duty and exert our political influence.

Contrary to public opinion, every vote makes a difference in this process and it may not seem like it, but if more people began to vote, they would definitely get noticed. Ironically, the last presidential election should have supported the idea of voter significance, yet served to create more apathy because of the post-election mess that occurred. Many people now feel the popular vote did not reign supreme, and that the voting system itself was shown to have more problems than was previously thought. To let our representatives know what we want, we must also exert our political influence by being politically active. How can we do this?

We can vote in state, local, and national elections, lobby to persuade our representatives to vote a certain way, and write letters to our representatives about policy issues. Of course, there are other ways of being politically active; to me, these are the most effective. One thing needs to take place, and that is educational awareness of the political system and its impact, pure and simple. A good way to start getting votes out would be to have the majority rules method of voting. If you could just see that your vote made a difference in the election of the president of your nation, it would make you want to vote again.

If the nation would listen to the educated people of the country instead of listening to the media, then the nation would be a whole lot better in terms of economics, welfare, war, and our society in general. In my opinion, we the people of this nation do not care about these campaigns that are putting the

other candidates down, we just want to hear the good things about what they can do to better our nation. There is not anything that Americans hate more than liars and back stabbers. By “ getting the vote out,” we voice our opinions on important issues.

By participating in the political process, we fulfill our civic duty. By exerting our political power, we shape our government policies. The best way to get involved in our political process is to vote, so people have to get out there, get registered, and go vote in the next election. Voter apathy has led to a dangerous situation in American politics. People have not listened to the issues and have therefore been left with candidates who seem to be all the same, only with different rhetoric and different levels of charisma.

Most people when questioned about their vote related that they were more against Gore and the Clinton administration than they were for Bush, and the reasons were more over moral behavior than policy making. The simple fact that during the past four years the country has experienced unprecedented economic growth, yet the incumbent administration was narrowly voted out, signals a public more concerned with the behavior of its leaders in the bedroom than their political policies.

Bush represents the status-quo as much as Gore does, and the recent election really only revealed a public split between two candidates whose only difference seemed to be that one was aligned with his predecessor who had fallen from public moral grace. In order to have more clear-cut choices in candidates and over issues, there must be a movement in the United States to bring political education back into the classroom. An uninformed,

politically uneducated public is a dangerous one because that public easily becomes apathetic.

Yet, it is the public that has allowed candidates steeped in rhetoric rather than issues to continue to hold office. This cycle is one that needs to be broken, and it is not going to be broken by those currently in office because they naturally want to keep the status quo going. It is the future voters, and voters from ages 18 to 30 who must start taking an active interest in our political system, become aware of the issues and the process, and care enough to see that voting intelligently can and will make a difference in our country's future.