

An Open Letter to 18 or Older Political “Apathetics”

“It’s not a Partisan thing it’s a Participatory Thing”

Once our biological clock hits the much-anticipated stroke of legality: 18, a new tone of social responsibility rings loud and clear. Many young adults find it nearly physically painful to partake in normal chores and other such obnoxious obligations, but there is one chore that rises above the others: participating in our democracy. Although it essentially shouldn’t be placed on par with household chores, in many people’s, (particularly those of the younger generation,) minds it may even be below that level.

There are countless people I have talked with who say they simply “don’t care,” about the election, that their vote doesn’t matter, and/or that they don’t care enough about any of the candidates to bother pulling a lever this coming November.

Our generation, no matter which political color we bleed, need, now more than ever, to put the effort towards pulling that magic lever, and hopefully take some time to look over the issues and standpoints that lay just behind the polished soundbites and over-drawn scandals, before doing so. We need to vote because it will basically determine almost everything in our future lives. (Reread that line if you didn’t quite get the magnanimity of that statement.) You may not care about taxes and health care and even the environment at a young age, but someday, (hopefully) you will care. Peel yourself away from Facebook, and put a few minutes into learning about the candidates and the issues.

This election offers an unprecedented polarization of personal and political choices. In one corner we have Senator McCain of Arizona, who will turn 72 this August, a staunch supporter of the War in Iraq. In the opposite corner we have Senator

Obama from Illinois, a 47 year old African-American who opposes the war but supports universal health care. They have each had their mini-downfalls, (McCain with his lobbyist ties, and Obama with the Reverend Wright controversy,) but we as true democratic citizens need to step forth past the boundaries of smear campaigns and hearsay to make one of the most potentially meaningful choices in our lives.

With the country still at war after five years, a clear dependence on foreign oil with soaring gas prices, a recession or at the very least a harsh economic slowdown, a housing crisis, not even to mention the proposed policy changes to taxes and health care that could emerge out of this election: America needs one big political band-aid, real quick. There are issues and policies, (whether addressed by the new president or not) that will reverberate far into our lives and eventually into our children's lives.

Our generation has often been called selfish and I cannot help but agree. The decision we make this fall, whether to vote or not, and essentially which path we choose to guide the stars and stripes down, will effect us and essentially everyone in the global community for years to come.

Sean Combs threatened in the last election: Vote or die, and apparently too many of us are hypothetically dead. There's a reason the true definition of the word idiot is someone who does not vote. Plan on not complaining for the next four-to-eight years if you don't bother to apply for absentee ballots and/or make it to the voting booth come November. For the small amount of time it takes to learn the bare bones basics about the issues and to pull an educated rather than arbitrary lever, (or even worse yet: the one your parents are just because,) : it will be worth it.

The effects of this election won't be easily shaken off: there is no excuse for political apathy. We should care so much about politics that it hurts. I feel that we have too easily forgotten the sacrifices of yesteryear's revolutionary's that fought for women and African-Americans to get the vote. We forget that our nation was borne out of a revolutionary moment in history: if we had been this politically apathetic back then we'd all be drinking tea and not paying attention to Parliament. Perhaps as semi-privileged middle-American teenagers we have it too easy: perhaps, we need political action to happen right in front of our eyes to tear us away from the easy distractions of post-adolescence and the "good life."

Voting may always seem like a chore to some, but I plead for enlightenment from just some of my contemporaries. Being politically active as in being sexually active, (perhaps something more young adults can relate to) requires responsibility and many people my age turn away from responsibility like a vampire from the sun. However, this is one chore that really matters. It's as simple as that: vote, participate. Be an American that can know that they at least made an effort in affecting social change for many years to come. Remember: your vote doesn't matter if you don't cast it.