

Helene Sharer-Meneley Delta County Democratic Scholarship Essay

A purple thumb is democracy. A purple thumb is what Iraqi women show with pride after they vote. They have waited decades to vote, yet the majority of Americans don't exercise their privilege to vote in most elections. In fact, "Voter participation has been consistently dropping since 1960 (The American Presidency Project). The ramification of this lack of participation is that fewer people, those from the party fringes, and likely, most passionate about controversial issues, are electing our leaders. When the majority of citizens do not vote, the outcome is not representative of the majority, and this leads to further alienation from the democratic process.

People tend to not vote because they feel like their vote won't make a difference, however, they do not know how detrimental their decision can be. Polarized members of both parties are voting and their opinions are being heard, while the middle ground is heavily underrepresented. Consequently, this underrepresentation leads to Americans with a wide variety of unmet needs. People wonder why their elected representatives are not responding to their problems but rarely connect this to the importance of voting. Instead, it seems that citizens latch on to the latest theory posited on their phone.

It's not the lack of information that keeps my generation from voting but instead, a firehose of biased, untrustworthy information from media and social media. This problem also has a negative impact on those who do vote; the issue is not that they are uninformed, but that are misinformed. How can people accurately sort information when it is showered on an hourly basis and where the most outrageous or controversial story garners the most followers? Will this type of misinformation contribute to United State's trend away from voting in elections? Let's hope we continue to value democracy in this country just as the women in Iraq do?