

RYDER MAWBY
STAFF

America's Achilles' heel

This past week has been beyond stressful.

We're all tired. Tired of seeing partisan insults flying across every square inch of our screens on social media. Tired of having political propaganda shoved into our faces. Tired of watching helplessly as those around us go ballistic over the depressing theater of politics.

After the week we've had, it's a bit easier to conclude that one's vote does indeed matter in terms of influencing the outcome of an election. The election outcome in Georgia ultimately boiled down to a difference of a few thousand votes, for instance.

That being said, I still wholeheartedly disagree with the notion that voting is a *civic responsibility*.

Sure, participating in your electoral system is one way to make your voice heard. That is, given that your government engages in fair play. Your government must ensure that every single vote holds the same weight and that every citizen has access to voting in the first place.

This is where the issue of voting gets sticky — the system we have in the United States simply isn't fair.

Practically everyone outside of the status quo experiences some form of adversity at the hands of our electoral system. The New Jim Crow is the outrageous epitome of this.

While many of us celebrate the seemingly liberating win over President Donald Trump, countless Black Americans sit in our prisons for excessive drug charges that white Americans don't face [to the same extent](#). And you can't defeat systemic racism with a vote.

This is precisely why we cannot rely on voting alone to solve all of our problems.

Voting simply isn't resistance because it will accomplish nothing of merit by itself. It merely serves as a form of appeasement to hide the unruly facade of a broken democracy.

Technically, your vote does matter — but not to you as an individual. Rather, it matters to our politicians, our ruling class, so that they can stay in power. Why else would they feel the need to pander to your interests? The question we should be asking ourselves is: Why doesn't my vote hold as much weight as it's truly worth?

Politics are scary because they force us to digest the idea that maybe our voices are singular and alone we cannot achieve as much as our naive selves once [anticipated](#). Attempting to rationalize the harrowing spectacle of American politics will leave you with nothing but a headache and a trip to the medicine cabinet to grab a few Advil.

So, what can be done to solve this headache? I've always been sick of forcibly playing into this two-sided electoral puppetry crap, but man did this past Tuesday, in particular, make me want to bang my head against a wall and scream at the top of my lungs.

Two-party system [propaganda](#) is perpetually shoved down Americans' throats. Everything's Democrat this or Republican that. Most Americans don't even *think* about an alternative to the electoral system we have now, such as [ranked choice voting](#).

With ranked choice voting you could vote for, say, the Green Party, without feeling as though your heartfelt beliefs are being flushed down the drain. Additionally, third parties such as the Green Party or the Constitution Party would likely fare slightly better in elections, giving alternative interests a chance in the spotlight instead of the watered-down, centrist parties we have at the moment.

Under our current electoral system, you cannot expect a single vote to encompass all of your political views. When I look at election results, I don't see diversity in opinion: I see an aggregate of votes for one candidate with one specific set of views that directly contradicts the views of the other party. There is no gray area, no in between; these two choices cannot possibly represent the ideological beliefs of every American. If you want to resist the status quo and break apart from mainstream politics, you cannot rely on voting for a mainstream candidate to do so.

The American political compass is so skewed to the right that we tell ourselves Bernie Sanders is some "radical leftist," when by European political standards he would be considered [barely liberal](#). And on the other end of the American political compass we have what appears to be a fascist diaspora, but is simply the consequence of toxic patriotism and weak education.

I completely understand why people constantly sugarcoat our electoral system. There is something comforting about relying on voting to fix all of our problems and pretending a broken system is functional. But not everyone has the privilege of existing in this illusion. It's easy to ignore the large-scale problems others experience when you're living a white picket fence lifestyle.

Organize, join a local coalition or even take to Reddit to engage in political discourse (be warned, they're vicious there). Most importantly, get into the habit of constantly questioning the institutions we live under and envisioning an alternative.

This leaves us with one inevitable truth: America's Achilles' heel is its electoral system. This is a system in which the lesser of two evils is still evil and an electoral "minority" can become a "majority."

Every election cycle, the arrow inches closer and closer to America's heel — and once it hits there will be no America as we know it.

Ryder Mawby writes the Monday column on his transition from the East to West Coast. Contact him at opinion@dailycal.org. LAST UPDATED: November 8, 2020