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Electoral cannibalism

Every four years come November, the dreaded election morning twilight hits and the voters arise from their suburban graves to feast.

During the 2016 election, Blacksburg High School transformed into a zoo. Absolute hysterics were in play over the outcome of the election: some distraught, some oddly euphoric. Something took over every one of us that day, just as in [Alien](#). Personalities were revealed, friendships were destroyed and lives were ruined, or so it seemed to me.

Oh, you're a Trump supporter? We're not friends anymore. Simple as that.

I lived by this philosophy. Admittedly, I still *kinda* do, but it's more complex than the thoughtless instinct I followed in 2016.

What we at Blacksburg High School, and honestly the entire region, didn't understand was that every single one of us was within the same class kingdom. Sure, some were slightly better off, but we would all be branded as "Appalachians." Nevertheless, we turned against one another — all because of a man that never has and never will acknowledge our home's existence, our individual struggles and significance in the grand scheme of society.

Politics are naturally divisive. We separate from one another as if we're the positive and negative nodes of a magnet. We come from the same walks of life, patterns of breathing, but allow ourselves to tear one another apart in a [SeaWorld feeding frenzy](#) just because two rich people told us to do so.

We quite literally live in a postmodern, Black Mirror-like feudal society. Presidential candidates pander to our wants and needs, trying to tell us, “We’re not like the other old, white, male politicians!”

In actuality, President Donald Trump and Joe Biden will never live the same reality as the vast majority of Americans. Unless you were born into the American aristocracy, all you will ever be to Donald and Joe is an ordinary American. It’s time we face the inevitable truth: We’re sheep.

I try as much as possible to differentiate myself from this herd mentality, but even when I’m conscious of its draw I find it hard to resist. Human beings are herd animals. We rely on coordination for a sense of belonging. It’s instinctual to divide ourselves into factions whenever it’s convenient and blindly follow the flow of our groups, which is what happens every four years during election season.

Politicians know this and they take advantage of it. Ulterior motives drive Congress — wealth, power and other Mad Men-esque vices — all at the expense of the people. Elected representatives are *supposed* to represent those who elected them, but in the majority of instances all this position is to these representatives is a power trip. They exploit our depraved system for personal gain and then manipulate the American people into believing it’s a partisan issue — when in reality, it’s a deep institutional issue that will require grand willpower to overcome.

The frustration, the pure exasperation I felt in Blacksburg during the 2016 election wasn’t a reaction to how I felt about *what* people believed in per se, but rather *why* they believed in it. I held negative feelings toward my Trump-supporting peers simply because of the trendy, herd mentality many were quick to adopt, without realizing that this mentality is a direct result of political manipulation.

Walking through Sproul Plaza (pre-COVID-19), I was constantly met with a swarm of canvassing. Much of this work was done with good intentions and, in most instances, well-informed deliberation. But I still think about how politics have hijacked our ability to engage in genuine discourse without pseudo-education type biases. How much of this canvassing is done without thorough analyses of the political institutions we tread upon?

Until we begin to acknowledge this seemingly irresistible political temptation, we will continue to suffer from pointless feuds and interpersonal hatred. What human being wouldn't enjoy a ceasefire to the political bombshells exploding overhead? I just want to live in peace.

I've taken to Twitter to deliver the same sentiments detailed above, but the moment I hit "Tweet," a flood of angry conservatives threw their harsh rebuttals faster than you could imagine. I'd imagine the same would happen if I was to ever say anything questioning the shepherd's rhetoric at an in-person Trump rally.

Americans either act as if their entire lives revolve around politics or avoid politics to the point of ignorance. This gives Trump the populist power he has. [Hannibal Lecter](#) is no fictional character — he's the president of the United States. And I don't mean *just* Trump; I mean every single president. They've all participated in the electoral spectacle that has single-handedly destroyed millions of lives.

The frustrating part is that at the end of the day, our government is artificial. We give it its power in the same way we make gold valuable. Stripped of its shiny facade, there remains nothing but a feeble skeleton of broken law and repugnant history. Yet we allow this skeleton to turn man against man in a politically cannibalistic rage.

The only way we're going to achieve peace is with revolution. Americans have the collective ability to topple these centuries of oppression and inequality over right back onto the shepherds. We desperately need to strip our government of its facade and reveal its true motive to the American people.

The lambs will be silenced no longer.

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