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Untitled Essay

by

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I remember vividly that unbearably hot Summer day in August of 2017. My skin grazing the cold metal of the school bus as I huddled over my Iphone. The images burned into my memory. Angry, young white men, sandy hair in a side-parted fashion holding lit torches. The haunting chant emitting from their sour mouths: "Jews will not replace us". The following days of chaos and violence resulting in the death of an innocent woman. It was something my thirteen-year-old brain could not even fathom. Looking back, however, and remembering my own classmates excuse blatant gaslighting, bigotry disguised as "jokes", and false statements in the name of "good economic policies", it is hard not to see how this transpired.

Such false statements peaked with the recent election; the "Big Lie" as some call it. Such a lie resulted in something that one with an unfamiliar understanding of America would think impossible. Belligerent citizens, many of whom later revealed to be veterans, attempting to overturn the results of a fair election. Something that our nation was purportedly built on. Even as a new administration assures us citizens that we have returned to an Obama-era sense of normalcy, to act as if the past few years have not shed light on the false illusion of our country's supposedly indestructible democracy, is failing to see a grander picture with the state of America as a whole.

Currently, we are seeing a rise in oppressive voting laws that disproportionately affect working class and minority voters. A bill that works to expand voting access to such groups is being stalled in congress due to the filibuster.

The failure to protect voter accessibility highlights how the struggle to put an end to systemic inequality did not end in 1965. Nor the threat of extremism end on that

unbearably hot day in August 2017. Akin to how those who took part in Unite the Right Rally and those who perpetuated such rhetoric essentially escaped into the shadows, challenges to democracy itself come in many different forms. New slogans, new dogwistles. New "jokes", new policy.

In this day and age, it is pivotal that we as citizens and as a society remain conscious and literate to these recurring trends. That we acknowledge that America needs to keep true to its ideals and core concepts. White, cisgender, upper-middle class men do not rule this nation, the citizens do. As is clear with iconic, revolutionary figures such as Angela Davis, Maya Angelou, X Gonzalez, Marsha P. Johnson, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the United States is made of diverse people who come from a plethora of divergent backgrounds. America can only attest to its image of a "melting pot" when it allows for everyone's individual voices to be heard and to ensure that one's right to cast their vote in favor of a candidate of their choice will not be infringed upon.

When a "Big Lie" cannot result in more violence and oppression, is when America can preach about democracy.