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Untitled Essay by

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The role of a teacher is to be trained to share expert knowledge with their students and to serve as a role model for students to follow. Even so, an unprepared teacher can disseminate faulty information and fail to see the lessons that they still need to learn. This concept of an inexperienced, uninformed teacher can also be applied to whole nations, as William Greider recognizes when he asserts, "Americans cannot teach democracy to the world until they restore their own".

Since its founding, America has acted as a sort of bastion of democracy, assuming its role as a teacher of democratic principles. However, Americans cannot assume the role of teachers of democracy to the rest of the world if they cannot come to a clear understanding of how to preserve it.

Years of political polarization in the United States have led to extreme hyper-partisanship and a degradation of American democracy. There is a sort of tribal "us-versus-them" mentality within both sides, a mentality that can prove incredibly destructive. This mentality manifests itself most prevalently within the events after Trump's loss in the 2020 election. After his loss, Trump continually touted the existence of widespread voter fraud despite there being no valid evidence to sustain his claims. In response, many Republican states made an effort to combat this nonexistent issue.

The GOP-led effort to crack down on so-called voter fraud is a prime example of the decline of American democracy; particularly in Georgia's restrictive voting laws passed after Trump's defeat in the 2020 election. The new laws limit the use of drop boxes, require IDs, and restrict the timeframe for mail-in ballots, targeting methods that people of color are more likely to use to submit their ballots. These restrictive voting laws have not just been passed in Georgia, however—eighteen states have passed laws such as these

that make it more difficult for marginalized groups to vote. In what nation is this considered preserving the integrity of democracy?

America was founded on the very basis of the idea that the government can be "overthrown" through democratic elections if the people are not satisfied. Restricting peoples' ability to vote in these elections is inherently undemocratic and goes against the fundamentals of this country. Republican attempts to restrict Democratic voters not only reinforces political polarization, but actively contributes to the us-versus-them mentality that is already common in American society today. Much like an uninformed teacher, America acts as though it is a role model for democracy, a figure that the world can look up to, despite Americans being severely fragmented amongst themselves.

As much as we would like to believe that we have the ability to bestow our knowledge and experience as a democratic country upon the world, we must focus on mending our own democracy first. Although it may be difficult to accept, as Americans, we are all young students of democracy, and we must reflect on what it means to be a democratic nation.