

Whose America? A Reflective Opinion

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The answer to “Whose America?” should be straightforward, yet I’m perplexed why such complexity is ingrained in a seemingly easy answer. We as a nation pretend not to know who America belongs to when, in actuality, we’re simply in denial that America belongs to the rich, white and privileged.

Acknowledging white privilege and dismantling the system is not “reverse racism,” but instead serves as the answer for creating a culture where the answer to “Whose America?” can include everyone. The inherent historic racist practices in the U.S. perpetuate a never-ending cycle in every field of human endeavors. As we continue to progress in fighting for a more equitable world, Black Americans don’t wish to be treated better than others; however, we want equal treatment. The respect of fundamental human rights should not be something any individual should have to fight for, primarily because of their skin color. Yet, unfortunately, that is the reality African Americans face. Black patriotism’s multifaceted nature constantly calls into question the viability of capitalism and other imperialistic structures ingrained in our institutions.

Furthermore, many Americans consider the insurrection of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th to be one of the “darkest days of American history” (Thompson, 2021). But for Black people and minorities, there’s a more in-depth perspective. I’ve read comments on social media that read, “It’s a horrible image for the United States,” and “Those incidents only happen to countries with failed democracies.” Many who say these comments have the privilege to make such ignorant statements and have no idea how insulting it is to minorities. To minorities, this is the America we have known all along. As I reflect on that day, knowing that former President, Donald Trump and many of his colleagues in Congress amplified lies to undermine our Republic’s Democracy, I thought, “This is America!” A country built by enslaved individuals to profit the most powerful rich white men and women. Elected officials encouraged and incited the attack on our nation’s capital to overturn the result of a free and fair election, which had the highest voter turnout from Black people and minorities to date (Parlapiano, 2020). This election also consisted of my home state, Georgia, voting blue; this hasn’t happened since 1992 when Bill Clinton won 43.47% of the votes (Stroh-page, 2020). The Republican leaders’ lust for power has allowed them to be complacent in carrying out their duties taken under oath. There should be no place for such leaders in Congress.

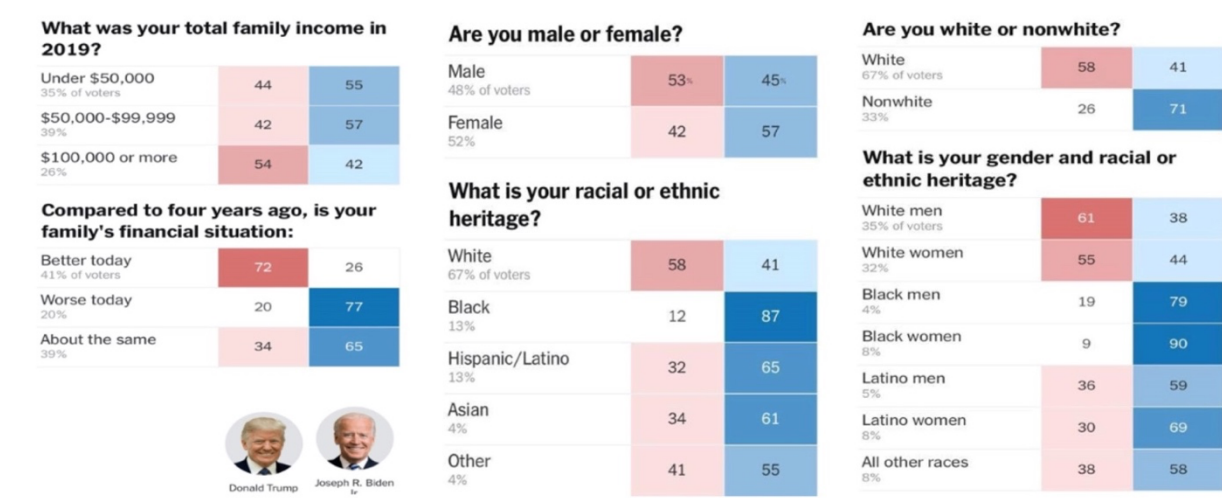


Figure 1: Source: Parlapiano, A. (2021, January 5).

WHOSE AMERICA?

This brings me back to the question of “Whose America?” Sit back and think about this. What occurred on January 6th happens often—and not only to a building. These types of terrible attacks frequently happen to individuals of marginalized groups. The events of January 6th were just one of many incidents that debunked American democracy. I have attempted to identify that day as the endangerment of an establishment, and I just can’t. This is the way the establishment was always designed to work.

You see, democracy in America only seems to work if you’re white and have the necessary access to power and money under this capitalistic system. Throughout history, democracy has always favored one group while minimizing the struggles of another. Today’s democracy favors rich and white people while those who are poor and colored are left with the crumbs of a society that does not deem them worthy of fundamental rights. “Democracy doesn’t work,” said the ancient philosopher, Plato (Forthomme, 2019). He often referred to it as a system full of incompetent and dishonest political leaders who exploit credulity and prejudices while thriving on emotion-driven discourse. No truer words could describe today’s system; what Plato referred to is still a common practice, unfortunately.

American writer, author, and political activist, Frederick Douglass declared, “Slavery is not abolished until the Black man has a ballot” (1865). Black men have been granted the right to vote for 151 years, while many Black women were not allowed the right to vote until 56 years ago under the 1965 Voting Rights Act (Pruitt, 2020). Malcolm X, another pillar of Black thought whose work and legacy I admire dearly, said our ballot is our “freedom.” Still, the bottom line is that elections don’t deliver the type of political leaders people need, and the right to vote has not delivered the freedom that Malcolm X surely had in mind. This is why this quote from author James Baldwin holds so much power: “To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.”

At this point, I would finally answer the question “Who does America belong to?” but I’m sure you already have the idea.

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