



# AUGUST NEWSLETTER

## **Learn More About:**

The Importance of Voting

The Current State of Back Lives Matter

US Foreign Policy

COVID-19 Relief Fund

Launching Unity For Womxn

Yoga and Meditation Sessions

# NEW LEADERSHIP



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# IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

Ian Connely

## WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

Why Vote? Does my vote count? If you're anything like me, you might find yourself asking similar questions when election season rolls around. The hopeful answer, the one that we might hear our parents or co-workers tell us is that the individual vote matters, your vote matters, and therefore, you should vote. After all, who doesn't want to have their voice represented in national decision making? For better or for worse, the election process is not this simple. Rather, it is a complicated and indirect process. Whether or not the individual vote matters has been an important topic in the larger discussion of US politics and the two-party system.

Before looking at different perspectives in our two-party system on the election process, it is important to first understand the relatively complicated process of how the US Presidential election works. The election of the President and the vice president is indirect. This means that when you vote, your vote does not apply directly to the candidate running for office. Instead, your vote applies to a member of the Electoral College. These electors are the ones who directly cast votes, known as electoral votes. The candidate that receives the majority of these electoral votes (270 out of 538) is then elected to office. Each state gets a certain number of electors roughly based on the state population (however each state gets 3 starting votes). All the electoral votes of a state go towards the candidate that won the majority of electoral votes for that state.

This might come as a shock, as it shatters the general idea that on voting day you are going to the booth to vote for a president. In reality, you are voting for an elector who will attend a collegiate meeting to then vote on who the president will be. Furthermore, these electors are not obligated to vote for the candidate that their supporters voted for (in some states they are held accountable by a fine). They are free to make their own decision.

If this seems like a confusing and outdated system to you, you're not alone. In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton won more votes than Donald Trump in the general election, however, due to the power of the Electoral College, Trump won the presidential election. This event, and many other presidential races in the past (Al Gore won the popular vote in 2000), has brought attention to the inequalities present in the electoral college.

Within this system, further complications arise. Firstly, US territories that have a population of over 4.4 million people do not receive any electoral college votes in the US election process. In the eyes of the US government, they are not entitled to having their voice heard on a national level. Furthermore, The districts that grant each electoral vote have a huge influence on who wins elections, and what bodies of people are represented. This creates powerful incentives to manipulate how districts are drawn across states in pursuit of not the general public, but a political agenda (this is a complicated process in itself that requires its article, however, its impact on elections is significant).

With all of this information, you might be thinking, if my vote is so insignificant, why vote at all? While your vote may not directly elect the president, if your vote joins enough others in your voting district, your vote undoubtedly matters when it comes to electoral results. With the "winner take all" electoral system, your vote is important in swaying the direction your state's electoral votes go, ultimately shaping the election. While the voting system is not perfect, your vote still does matter.

ABHEEK SINGH

# BLACK LIVES MATTER:

The Current State of the BLM Movement



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Black Lives Matter is an organized movement in the United States created in July of 2013. The movement has since stated many demands such as defunding the police, police-free schools, dropping charges against protestors, banning stop and frisk, and many more. The movement gained most of its recognition by the unfortunate death of George Floyd by a kneeling police officer. His words "I can't breathe" have become a worldwide slogan associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. While you may have thought that "I can't breathe" first came from George Floyd it, it did not. The first time someone said the phrase was in 2014 by Erik Garner who suffered a similar type of death to that of George Floyd. This shows the unjust treatments of colored people in the 21st century and how the black lives matter movement is trying to change this.

I  
CAN'T  
BREATHE

Over the past few weeks, we have seen many people hold peaceful protests and sometimes riots all throughout the world. It was the first movement that took place in all fifty states making it one of the most recognized movements in the world. In some instances, innocent business owners got their stores and buildings ruined due to unjust people who used these riots as an excuse for their

wrongdoing. The organization also raised a large sum of money from many donators who believe in the movement but there has been some recent controversy in where the money is going after they donate. Many people have asked for more transparency in their budgets. Many companies have also donated to the wrong black lives matter foundation with more than 4 million dollars raised by big-name companies such as Apple and Google making this mistake. Over the past few weeks, it has led to many cases of controversy for big-name companies. One recent incident is with Clair Janover who recently made a controversial statement expressing her disapproval of the opposing "All Lives Matter" statement. This statement ultimately made her lose her job at Deloitte. Denzel Skinner also lost her job at a Taco-Bell in Ohio for supposedly refusing to remove her black lives matter mask at her job.

While many of the riots and protests have calmed down, there are still many more place. In Martinez, California over 1,000 people gathered for this protest on July 12th. The movement is not stopping anytime soon with new initiatives and ideas being released on the BLM website every day.

# US FOREIGN POLICY

NATHAN GODDERIS



Did you know the US and China are going into a Cold War? Or that Russia is already interfering with the 2020 election? As an American today, it's draining to hear that these statements are a reality, considering everything else we've recently had to deal with. While the pandemic has brought light to many of the US's domestic policy problems, like healthcare, law enforcement, and social welfare, and local events like protests and COVID deaths take our attention, the state of the US's current foreign affairs is an often overlooked, yet equally controversial issue.

Donald Trump has received a great deal of criticism regarding his response to the COVID pandemic; he took too long to recognize it, he didn't encourage social distancing, and now he's reopening schools while daily death tolls continue to rise. Yet, there may be an even bigger threat in his eyes: China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is a communist, and arguably one of China's most powerful leaders in their history. For most of this century, the US and China have worked together on economic, financial, and geopolitical issues, especially due to China's cheap manufacturing and the US's need for those resources. Over time, however, it became evident that the US was losing its economic prosperity and financial power, and President Trump responded with a series of actions in an attempt to impair China's advantages, which in turn also damaged the US's economic prosperity. Trump has accused China of committing unfair trade practices for years, while China believes the US is trying to stag-

nate their rapid economic growth. The tension between these two countries isn't only about economics, but political as well. With China being communist, and the US being democratic, the two countries have vastly contradicting governing values. This is where the current Hong Kong protests tie in. Hong Kong is under a "one country, two systems" principle, where foreign relations and military policy are under China's control, while all other domestic policy is largely influenced by established democratic values. The protests erupted due to efforts by the Chinese government to integrate Hong Kong into their communist system, with a lack of voting rights given to its citizens.

Hong Kong remaining independent is very important for the US's financial interests, as well as a preservation of democratic values, but Trump has held back from taking action due to fears it would disrupt his plans with the ongoing trade war between the US and China. Yet with the 2020 election coming up soon and Trump's approval ratings decreasing by the day, Joe Biden may be handed the presidential reins to handle these critical issues. If, however, countries like Russia and China don't interfere with the election to help Trump win.

China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia have all been accused of already attempting to meddle with the voting machines used in the election, as well as establishing fake social media accounts to sway voters with misinformation. US officials have accused these countries of meddling efforts similar to those of the 2016 election, while Trump claims the

election hacking issue is a rumor that Democrats started in an attempt to accuse him of more wrongdoing.

As with the rest of the world, the US's reputation has taken a bit of a plunge due to Trump's response to the COVID pandemic. Not only does the US suffer from the most cases and deaths per capita compared to any other global country, but Trump has deliberately abstained from following the standard procedures other countries have taken to deal with the virus.

On July 6, the president noticed a withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), a committee that helps nations cooperate on global health-related issues.

Trump's decision stemmed from the idea that "The world is now suffering as a result of the malfeasance of the Chinese government..." as he stated in a speech at the White House rose garden, citing that China held back from reporting the virus until late, and that the WHO was too slow in notifying other nations.

Joe Biden stated that he would make sure the US would rejoin the WHO on his first day in office.

Though it may seem like the state of the US's foreign policy is causing dramatic, lasting changes, one fact is certain: the 2020 election will have immense influence on the direction the US will take to address these foreign policy issues. If the protests and lockdowns aren't enough to motivate people to vote in the upcoming election, looking into the US's current foreign affairs may just increase the incentive.

# COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

## JARRET HOFFMAN

The coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) is a virus that affects the respiratory system that can be spread from person to person. COVID-19 has similar symptoms to the flu including a cough, fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty to breathe, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, or runny nose, nausea, and diarrhea. The coronavirus outbreak became so problematic that it was forced to be declared a pandemic thereby changing the daily lives of everyone around the world to protect people from a virus that has continually grown in cases and fatalities. These changes include businesses (not deemed essential services) being forced to lay off a plethora of people, strict regulations on the number of people that are allowed to be in a confined space at a time, regulations that require masks to be worn when out in public, and self-quarantining amongst people in households with multiple people as a precaution.

The first known case of COVID-19 was reported in November 2019 when a 55-year-old contracted the virus in the Hubei province of China. The first reported case outside of China was reported to have been in Thailand on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. That same month, the first COVID case in the United States was reported when a patient in the state of Washington returned from a trip to Wuhan, China at a time when there was a reported outbreak of pneumonia during his trip and experienced symptoms upon his return.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there is a total of 3,236,130 total cases of COVID-19 in the United States and a total of 134,572 deaths as a result of the virus as of July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. There are 10 states with over 100,000 total cases and four states with over 200,000 cases with California leading the US in cases with 312,344 total cases.

Of the 10 states with over 100,000 COVID-19 cases, four states are confirmed to have over 100,000 cases with New York City leading all states with 216,199 confirmed cases. Florida has the second-most total cases with 250,984 which is significant for being the state that is hosting the restart of the NBA season from Orlando. According to the World Health Organization, there has been a total of 12,552,765 COVID-19 cases with 230,370 new cases and 561,617 deaths with 5,285 as reported on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The good news is many people who have contracted the coronavirus have recovered with over a million people in the United States eventually recovering and seven million people worldwide.

To prevent contraction of the coronavirus or to help in recovery, people need to keep up with their hygiene, eat healthy, stay hydrated as well as respect the regulations mandated by the CDC. This includes washing hands for 20 seconds multiple times a day, covering the mouth when coughing with the crevice of the elbow, staying home when necessary especially when sick, and keeping a safe distance from surrounding individuals. Unfortunately, most states have a vast homeless and elderly community that is unable to respect the boundaries of the COVID-19 regulations making them susceptible to the virus.

To combat this, Unity for Equality has set up the COVID-19 Relief Fund in order to protect those who are more vulnerable to infection. If anyone wants to contribute to the relief fund, we are accepting the following donations: tissues, hand sanitizer, thermometers, disinfecting wipes, cough drops, Tylenol, canned food, water bottles, and gloves among others. , the funds from our merchandise sales will go towards care packages for the homeless and elderly that include groceries and meals. Follow the link below to find more information on how you can contribute to the COVID-19 Relief Fund.

[Link to Donate](#)

# LAUNCHING UNITY FOR WOMXN

Rachel Billings

With the launch of Unity For Equality's Unity 2030 plan comes the addition of the Unity For Womxn branch to the organization. Unity For Womxn, headed by myself, will strive to expand Unity For Equality's mission with a specified focus on promoting the rights of femme-identifying individuals, especially those in impoverished communities, and celebrating the attributes that femmes bring to our society.

While 2030 is a long way away, Unity For Womxn is not hesitating to begin its work. In what way, you may ask? By launching Unity For Equality's first-ever Femme Forum!

The Femme Forum is a friendly poetry competition where any femme-identifying individual can submit a work of poetry to the Forum for a small entry fee of \$5. The poems will be displayed for the public to enjoy and, if the viewers feel so inclined, to vote for their favorite poem. Whichever poem receives the most votes after a three-week-long period will be this year's winner! The prizes will include having their poem displayed in Unity For Equality's next newsletter and the opportunity to choose any organization that supports femme-identifying individuals. Unity For Womxn will then donate the entry fee sum total to the winner's organization of choice.

Poetry is a fantastic way for womxn to reflect on their experiences and share their stories in a very raw, emotional, but also empowering, way. It allows individuals to become vulnerable and explore parts of themselves that they might otherwise not engage with. Especially during the quarantine and with the recent current events circling the news, dipping into that side of ourselves is extremely important to release our inner tensions and acknowledge our fears.

My hope is that this Femme Forum will not only launch Unity For Womxn, but it will also allow femme-identifying individuals from all walks of life to connect with one another through words, since we can't see one another in person. If all goes well, the Femme Forum can continue to recognize femme poets all the way into 2030 and beyond.

If you are as excited and eager to participate in the Femme Forum as I am, please keep your peepers peeled on our social media pages listed within this newsletter!



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## **MEDITATION**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY & SATURDAYS**  
**6PM-6:30PM**



## **YOGA**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY & SATURDAYS**  
**11am-12pm**

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN EITHER PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT US USING THE CONTACT INFORMATION WITHIN THIS NEWSLETTER

# New Merch!

Check out the new merch we just dropped!



## CLOTHING

B  
A  
G



M  
A  
S  
K  
S

Every purchase goes towards efforts to address the challenges we face today, from climate change to extreme inequality. When you purchase Unity For Equality's merch, you will turn your action into a real, lasting impact.

If you want to help, check out our merch website at:  
<https://unity-for-equality-incorporated.square.site/>

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