

The 2016 election was one of the most contentious and surprising in American History. News stations were saturated with polls and statistics. Social media became a battleground for national politics. Yet, in this cacophony of opinions, and so called “facts,” one voice and his message carried across the entire nation and seeped into the minds of the American people. “Make America Great Again” was his promise, and apparently America believed him. But I keep asking myself, was America ever really great? Our history is stained with injustice, slavery, and discrimination. However, from President Trump’s perspective, it was at one point, back in the 50s, a time of financial prosperity for the white majority and economic independence for America (Editors). The policies he has tried to implement, most notably his attempted ban on Muslim majority countries and the border wall he is working to build, reflect an age when the American public was xenophobic and paranoid (*History of U.S. Immigration Laws | Federation for American Immigration Reform*), when the socioeconomic inequality among the white was the lowest in recorded history (*60 Years of American Economic History, Told in 1 Graph - The Atlantic*), and when society was fractured by institutionalized segregation and discrimination and some of the most valuable members of this society were alienated for no other reason than the color of their skin (Editors). In this age, black men and women shouted in protest at the injustice that had seeped its way through each generation of Americans, and for the first time, this nation began to hear them.

Brown vs. the Board of Education and the Montgomery Bus Boycott were the first sprouts of seeds that had been planted centuries ago by our brothers and sisters who travelled across the ocean and foreign lands, who were beaten, enslaved, and dehumanized but chose not

to give up but rather to take root where they were planted. The Civil Rights movement stirred this nation to action. And since then our freedoms and liberties have blossomed, but the battle is not won. We are the legacy of those who have come before us, and the time has come for us to once again stand in the face of discrimination and say, “not today.” Because we have a president who does not value the beauty and history of our people or the breadth of diversity that is America. He does not know how to build a country for the people because he does not know its people. Our country is not a melting pot. It is a cultural mosaic of communities and our nation’s policies should be designed to embrace that. The two greatest opportunities for change and inclusion nationwide lie in the education of our people and the preservation of our health.

In 2017, the United States education system ranked 24th in the world for reading and science and a shocking 39th in the world for mathematics. Yet, we have one of the world’s strongest economies (“U.S. Academic Achievement Lags That of Many Other Countries”). The problem is that we are not taking the time to invest. There is a direct correlation between the amount of money spent on education and the quality of education received. Yet, the majority of funding for public institutions comes from local property taxes (*How Do School Funding Formulas Work?*). Less than 10% of all the money used in public education comes from the federal government (“Federal Education Funding”). Affluent neighborhoods pay more in taxes and as a result have schools of greater quality, while low-income regions, often dominated by minorities, are poorly funded and have lower quality education. To add to this deficit, high-performing schools receive more money from the government in the form of grants. The underfunded schools stay underfunded and the wealthy schools get wealthier. The government mandates that each child receives at least \$10,000 per year for education, but that number is too small (*How Do School Funding Formulas Work?*). We need to raise the bar and provide schools

in underprivileged communities with more governmental funding to ensure that the next generation has the education they need to make a difference in the world. Similarly, the American Healthcare system is a train wreck. It profits off the sick rather than the healthy because of its inefficiencies. Millions of people, especially the low-income minorities, have little to no access to medical care and are overwhelmed with medical debt from the few visits they do have (*Reducing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Access to Care*). I was born and raised in a small town in Kentucky right in the foot hills of the Appalachian Mountains. This region of the United States has some of the highest rates of lung cancer and diabetes in the entire nation, yet poverty and lack of physicians in the area keeps people from receiving treatment for years and sometimes decades (*Reducing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Access to Care*). I have seen people in my own community wither away day by day, week by week because our healthcare system had forgotten them. But, if we were to redesign the medical system to provide greater access and affordability, these problems would begin to dissolve. If telemedicine clinics became mainstream, accessibility may increase as the cost of healthcare goes down. And if all employers with over 50 employees were required to provide healthcare packages to their workers, nationwide coverage would increase (Shi and Singh). We would develop a more cost-effective system that better reflects the needs of American society.

Today. Today, we have been provided the greatest opportunity for change, because we can do something no other generation has had the ability to do. We can seize this day, January 19th, 2019, and fight to make a better tomorrow, not only for ourselves and our communities, but for all the generations to come.

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