Why I Became a Liberal and Why it Applies to You  
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*How I overcame my narrow-mindedness and formed my own beliefs.*

Let me start this off by asking you a question. What political party do you belong to? Now let me ask you a second question: What political party do your parents belong to? Odds are their political ideology matches yours. Of course, this isn't always the case, but studies show that you are very likely to vote for the same party that your parents do. This is especially true for democratic voters. If you think about it, it makes sense. Your parents raise you and teach you what's right from wrong. They teach you certain values and make you do certain things such as go to church. All of these factors weigh into how you think about the world. Of course it's not just your parents. Where you grow up, how much money your parents make, your education, and your lifestyle all play into how you vote. Though this can be good in some cases, often times we allow ourselves to form our beliefs based on other people and limited experiences.

Now anyone who knows me knows that I tend to lean towards the left. However I didn't always. For a long time I found myself identifying with the Republican Party far more often. I was raised in a two parent household. My dad is a firefighter and my mom is a doctor. Needless to say I never experienced an unstable household. I was raised catholic. I remember learning about how taxes work and where the money went to and feeling angry that money Americans were working for was being given to the poor as welfare. Why didn’t they just get a job? I didn’t want my paycheck to be smaller for their sake. I also had this view that America was the greatest country in the world. Sure we’d done bad things in the past but it didn’t matter. I was all for bombing countries we were at war with. The only way to be safe was to have a huge military that could win every war. Marriage was between a man and a woman. Taxes were too high. Welfare was due to laziness. Illegal immigrants needed to get out. All of these were ideas that I had. Or were they?

When I got to about my sophomore year of high school, things started to change. I started gaining actual interest in politics. I began to study it more closely. I started to realize that some of the systems we had in place were ridiculous. Some of my friends, mainly those that came from a "lower class", would tell me how their parents were trying hard to find a job but businesses simply weren’t hiring. When they did get hired the wages they’d earn were barely livable. They’d tell me how they’d go some days without eating anything except the lunch they received from the school and junk food. Their parents hadn’t attended college because it was too expensive so it wasn’t possible for them to get higher paying jobs and how they were going to have to start working right after high school to support their families. I think this was the first time I was truly exposed to people being in an unfortunate circumstance and being unable to get out of it because of how our country’s system was set up. Here I was, someone who never went a day without eating all he wanted, talking to people who didn’t know where their next meal was coming from.

After this I starting to stop listening to what other people were saying, and started doing my own research. I started reading about systematic racism and how it was still disadvantaging minorities in the country. I studied the income gap in the country and how it was growing every year. I started talking to different people who I never would have talked to before and realized that my view of the world was extremely limited. I have latino friends whose parents were here illegally because it was so hard to raise a family in their home country. Many had tried to get here legally but had to wait ridiculous times and pay ridiculous fees to get here. How can you pay fees when you have no money? That’s why they were coming here in the first place! The country that was founded completely by immigrants and built on the backs of African Americans were treating these groups like second class citizens. America was supposed to be fair to everyone. For the longest time I had been told it was. You grew up, went to school, went to college, got a good job and did well. That’s how it was supposed to work. America was supposed to be a role model for the rest of the world. I was told it was wrong to hurt innocent people. I was told that America fought wars for all the right reasons. Then I learned that we were in wars over oil that doesn’t belong to us. I learned that we were so concerned about losing trading markets that we assassinated leaders in other countries and put in people who would bend to our will. Even if the leaders we put into place turned out to be tyrants. I began to see that America was not fair for everyone. If you were a minority, gay, a woman, an immigrant, etc., then you were treated differently.

So I became a liberal. Because even though I’d been privileged throughout my whole life, I’d had nothing to do with it. I got lucky. I was born into a good family in a good neighborhood. I was born straight. I was born a male. I realized that the idea that hard work always leads to prosperity was completely false. Some people needed welfare so that they could feed their kids. I realized that the reason I went to a good school for free was because other people paid taxes and gave me that opportunity. I realized that people need help. I realized there is no difference between discrimination due to race and discrimination due to sexual orientation. Both were wrong. I realized that America isn’t a level playing field and that needs to change. I became a liberal because I genuinely believe that luck should not be the biggest determining factor in whether you succeed or fail in life. I believe that the government should help the citizens who need it.

Here’s what I want you all to take from this story: I had a very obstructed view of the world because I went through my life believing things based solely on my very limited perspective. It wasn’t until I exposed myself to other people who had come from different backgrounds and began to do my own personal research that my beliefs became my own. So do your research. Expose yourself. Move out of your comfort zone. Then you can make sure that your views are based on what you truly believe in, not what anyone else told you to believe in. I became a liberal. What will you become?