It’s not a stretch to call PHS a liberal school; talk of climate strikes or the Democratic candidates can often be heard in the halls. There’s nothing wrong with having strong political opinions and wanting to discuss them. However, it is important to remember that at the end of the day, they are just opinions. They may be (and hopefully are) based on fact, but they are still one person’s preferences in the current political climate. It is detrimental to one’s own party or side to assume that everyone has the same opinions, or that everyone should. There are many many examples throughout history of a time when political disagreements helped to steer the country in the right direction, such as the disagreements about the Articles of Confederation. This example seems obvious, but many can only view it using the lens of the past. They see modern politics as a series of black-and-white issues, with only one clear answer.

As a liberal who frequently agrees with the popular opinion at PHS, I don’t feel particularly politically ostracized, but I know many people who do. Some students are reluctant to share their opinions at school because they don’t want to be personally attacked. Some genuinely want to debate and learn from the other side, but are wary of our school’s political exclusivity. It can be hard to debate when the other side puts words in your mouth, or views all conservatives as Trump supporters. Many conservatives dislike Trump as much as liberals do, and are offended to be branded as fervent Trump supporters. Constantly yelling at conservatives can make them feel less confident in themselves, while also failing to make any progress.

PHS struggles to display apathy within the student body. Especially as teenagers who often feel self-conscious, it does us all a disservice to belittle fellow students’ political opinions. During debates, both in class and political clubs such as Junior State of America, I’ve watched people condemn their peers for not following the stereotypical liberal agenda. This is ridiculous and counter-intuitive. While one may disagree with others’ opinions, shouting will only serve to set a person further in their ways.

The polarization at PHS can be fueled by some teachers’ choices to teach both the past and present through a liberal lens. Students can feel alienated when their teachers consistently infrequently voice both sides of an issue. When teachers, who often serve as role models for students, plainly disregard an entire side of the political spectrum, students can turn to other sources for information or guidance that may be unreliable. It’s crucial that teachers remain impartial.

It’s important to remember that the path towards progress involves inclusion. For example, teachers could integrate respectful debates into their curriculum by relating modern issues to
those found in textbooks. Additionally, they could recommend organizations for students who want to become more involved politically, or websites that offer unbiased information. During homeroom, teachers could spend a few minutes informing students about the political platform of candidates, because it’s the job of PHS to educate its student body both politically and socially. Furthermore, PHS could become more politically inclusive if we remember that, while fact should not be turned into opinion, opinion should also not be turned into fact.