The Republicans started as a party of liberation under Lincoln, but has morphed into a party of the privileged. The Democratic Party has become synonymous with handouts. Big change is coming. What form will it take?

ALTOONA, WI - There is never a shortage of grumbling when it comes to politics, but there's no denying that typical American discontent has turned into a level of ire rarely seen. Most people in this country currently think both major political parties suck, and not without good reason.

The Republican Party started as a party of liberation under Lincoln and was a party of opportunity that worked for a broad expansion of the middle class under Eisenhower. Even a corrupted soul like Nixon once proposed a guaranteed basic income for every American family. The GOP has since morphed into a party of **privilege**. Both its rhetoric and actions regularly show a devotion to hierarchy — rich over poor, man over woman, white over brown or black, old over young, straight over gay, management over labor.



The Democratic Party, on the other hand, has become synonymous with handouts. It is widely seen as the party of **entitlement**. This irks loyal Democratic partisans to no end, but the truth is the party's actions over the years have repeatedly reinforced this image.

Most Americans deeply value equality. Our nation was born out of rebellion against a king's power. The rejection of royalty is in our DNA, giving us a natural sense of fairness and distaste for privilege. Getting to start out at third base is repugnant to most Americans. But at the same time, there is a widespread belief that you should earn your keep. Taking without paying, getting without giving, rubs your average American the wrong way too.

All this leaves most people in this country at odds with what the two major parties presently stand for. In fairness, what the major parties have become is a reflection of two generations worth of emphasis on individual advancement and self fulfillment in American society. Both privilege and entitlement are products of me-focused politics. But conditions require — and predict — a politics that is more we-centered, and visible signs indicate movement in that direction. That leaves the parties in step with where we've been but out of step with where we're headed.

Entitlement needs to give way to a focus on service, to each other and to society as a whole. Privilege must be replaced by a commitment to equality and democracy. The longer the parties fail to change their ways and remake themselves, the more likely it becomes that a new major party will eventually emerge. Having so many voters looking at the parties and increasingly despising what they see is not a sustainable condition. It creates a vacuum, and nature hates vacuums.

Big change is coming. What form it will take and when it arrives is up to the parties . . . and the people.

— Mike McCabe

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