

Liberal Female College Student Voter Strategy

When asking Aidan Athanasio about her experiences and interest in politics, one would be very surprised to hear that she has always had a passion for it because she is a young female college student. Jillian Buckley and Sophie Lehman also had very similar reactions when asked about their political journey. Although they are one year younger than Athanasio, they both have found their voice in politics as young females in America.

Statistics challenge these beliefs by showing a new high in voter turnout among young adults which can be a deciding factor in the 2024 elections. There was a 12% increase in young voters from the 2016 to 2020 elections. Sources estimate that number will be even higher in the 2024 elections because of increased interest in politics among young voters. Regardless of this statistic, many people still currently believe that young adults are incapable of having a mature conversation around politics and simply are too young to understand or get involved. Athanasio and Buckley both recall a time when adults older than them told them not to discuss politics. This was simply because of their age and as a result of them being young females.

Once while working as a server at a restaurant, Buckley mentioned a time when she was discussing the Covid-19 vaccine with someone who believes that it leads to the spread of Covid. “When I tried to explain why the vaccine was effective he said that I did not understand [what I was talking about] because I was young and a girl, and girls are too emotional. After this he could not take anything that I said regarding politics seriously.” Buckley explains. According to research put out by the CDC, the Covid 19 vaccine has a success rate of around 90%. Even though Buckley was correct in her argument that the Covid-19 is a protector against the virus, her fellow coworker still saw her age and gender as a way to dismiss her thoughts.

Athanasio recalled a similar experience when her grandmother's friend was visiting and her husband would not acknowledge anything she was saying. "Her husband is a Trump supporter and would not acknowledge what I was saying because I am a female and young. My mom had to step in and tell him that I was right" Athanasio says.

Lehman and Buckley both attend Northeastern University in Boston, which is located in a state that is known to be very liberal. Athanasio attends Bard College in upstate New York, a liberal arts school that is filled with students that lean towards the left. According to research conducted by Stacker, Massachusetts has the most self-identified liberals in America. After asking all three about their political views they quickly announced that they are all left leaning. Both Athanasio and Buckley emphasize that going to school in liberal areas contributed to their political identity. "I go to a liberal arts college, so basically everyone on my campus is a left-leaning democrat," Athanasio explains. It truly is where you grow up and what kind of experiences that shape your views. Surrounding yourself with those who also have similar views can contribute to stronger views that align with one side. Lehman explains how growing up in a house that was left leaning helped form her views. "My parents and the kind of people that I grew up around helped shape my political views, I was almost always around people that were more left leaning" she states. Lehman also describes how she tends to spend time with those who share the same political views as her. Athanasio also shares this is common when it comes to who she surrounds herself with. She finds that people who share her views of the left are the most welcoming and open minded. Athanasio states that she does not think that Republicans are all terrible people. She further explains that " the [right] party is very misguided in this modern maga scene it is today. The blatant sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia seen in the republican party today is an embarrassment to this country and enough of a reason for

me not to fraternize with them.” The Washington Post put out an article discussing how 61% of Democrats labeled Republicans as racist, bigoted and sexist.

Even though Buckley and Athanasio both share similar political views and are both Democrats, they share opposing views when it comes to what problems they see in regards to where their party is headed. Buckley believes that every side has flaws as a result of it being a two party system. “I think the biggest issue is that a lot of the people on the left refuse to see the point of view of the people on the right because of past situations,” Buckley explains. When asked how she would change this, she mentions that having such a big divide is not going to get either side anywhere. “I just feel like people need to be more open to listening to all sides even if they don’t agree with the other side.” she emphasizes. In a rally back in 2017, past democratic Alabama senator, Doug Jones, commented on the fact that one of the biggest problems that the Democrats have is the perception that they do not listen. Lehman has a similar view but her approach when it comes to her experiences in her own life is a bit different. Her best friend is a Trump supporter and instead of discussing politics they just choose to stay away from the topic. “We just avoid politics at all cost because we know each other’s beliefs and we just do not want to put a strain on our friendship” she describes.

One of these beliefs that Lehman is referring to is the two party system in America. After asking for their opinions on the system, they immediately emphasize how they see many flaws with it. Athanasio comments on how she thinks the two party system has done a lot of damage to how our country functions. “Passing meaningful bipartisan legislation is practically impossible these days. It is very democratic versus republican and not about helping the population of the United States” she explains. “If there were more parties in the U.S political system, I do believe that more beneficial change would occur, but that’s a fantasy reality. The two party system,

however prone to political gridlock, is here to stay”. This is a common opinion that is shared by others among many Americans. In a poll put out by Gallup, 57% of Americans were said to believe that only having two parties is not enough.

Current statistics in the media since last year are showing a huge turnout for young adults. Buckley explains that young adults are tired of feeling like they are too young to make a change in the current world. “Young adults have found their voice when it comes to politics and issues in this world. We want to see change and we will make sure it happens” she stresses. Lehman portrayed nervousness when looking at politics in America as a whole. “Politics are just very stressful and they just are very bipartisan so no one feels like they are listening to each other” she explains. Similarly to Lehman, Athanasio shares a sense of anxiousness when it comes to current politics in America. “I feel nervous about politics in America today. Never as a country have we been so divided politically, especially with current issues.” Athansio highlights. This is a common feeling among citizens in America today discussed in a NY Times article written by Danielle Carr, that states how politics has a great effect on one’s mental health.

Some of the issues that are important to the three young women were: gun control, human rights, international issues and abortion. Among these issues, the one that got the most heat was the overturning of Roe v Wade, which has affected women across the nation. This issue has impacted many across the country and has brought out a new record of women voters. The NY Times released an article stating that after Roe v Wade was overturned, women surged in signing up to vote in some states. Kansas was among these states and showed a 70% increase in newly registered female voters. Buckley was among the demographic that felt the repercussions of Roe v Wade being overturned. She explained her struggles with having endometriosis, a disorder in which the inner lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus. “As a result of having

endometriosis, things like Roe v Wade that put laws on reproductive rights is scary to me because it is healthcare and I need things, like birth control to live” Buckley accentuates. Athanasio had a similar reaction when asked about the effects of the overturning. “Not only is abortion becoming outlawed but it is also becoming criminalized” Athanasio explains. “I can’t express how heartbreaking it is to see our country harbor ideas like that and put them into a legislation that would be someone in prison for getting an abortion. Outlawing abortion helps no one and harms all”. Athansio ended the interview with a quote from someone who inspires her, Ruth Bader Ginsburg- “I ask no favor for my sex. All I ask of our brethren is that they take off our necks” Similarly to Ginsburg- Buckley, Lehman and Athansio want their voices to be heard as liberal female college students and want changes to be made to help strengthen America.