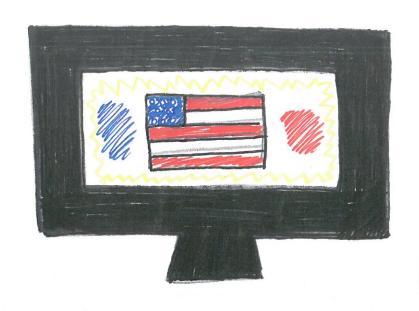


My earliest memory of democracy is the 2004 election. George W. Dush was running for re-election against John Kerry. I was starting out the first grade in an entirely new school district The yellow school bus that went from East Palo Alto to San Carlos transported the majority of students of Heather Elementary School and all of the San Carlos School District at that.





Despite the fact that I was in elementary school, Heather held a school-wide election to get kids opinion of who should win. The school wanted to empower children in the voting process. I vaguely remember the principal giving a speech about how kids are the future so their voices mattered in the voting process.

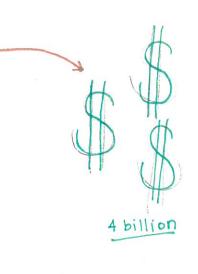


LISTEN TO

Around the same time, I remember sitting next to my mom on the couch as she watched coverage about the election on television. I asked her "Mom, which is better? Republican or Democrat?" without hesitation, and with eyes fixed on the screen, she responded, "Democrat. They care about our rights. They are the good seople Republicans are mostly rich white people who do not care as much. Except I remember that Ronald Reagan did something to help Salvadoran mmigrants so I guess he has been the least backepublican that the U.S. has had"

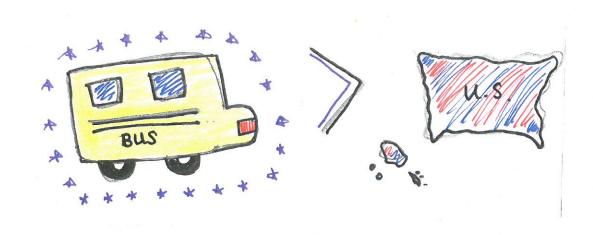
CORRUPTION MAKES THE







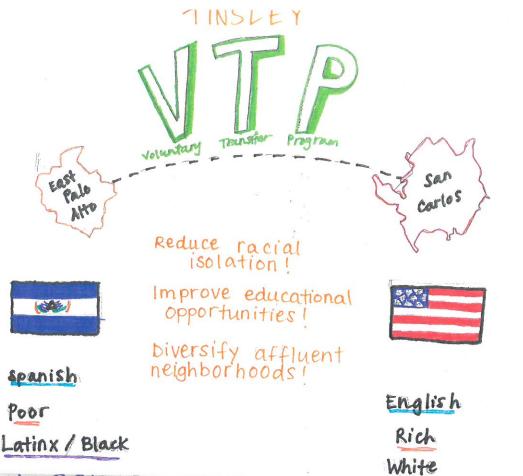
It was not until later in my life that I learned that Ronald Reagan helped fund the civil war in El Salvador. His funding played a role in facilitating the government military-ru genocide of many Salvadoran civilians. Understandably, however, my mother's primary concern with presidential candidates is their stance on immigration. Not that it mattered much anyway since non-u.s. citizens can't vote.



LARGE MAJORITY

When Heather Elementary Schools results got out, the kids had spoken: John Kerry was the choice presidential candidate. I few days later when the national results told us that George Bush actually won the election, I remember that our bus driver made an announcement to us on the trip back home. She pulled out the bus' speakerphone on the bus and asked us "who won the election?" Multiple quiet voices responded, "George Bush". She firmly responds with, "no. John Kerry won. I don't care what the election results say. On this bus, John Kerry won!" This was followed by a bus full of elementary and middle schoo students of color cheering, and beeling comforted. I didn't know why I felt better but I did, and I knew that this election would leave the first impression of politics, voting, and democracy in Smerica.





NATION

1EMOCRATIC senior year or learned why my commute to elementary school was an hour long. I was a part of my county's Tinsley Volunteer Transfer Program (VTP). VTP was established in order to increase academic opportunities for minority students by transporting them from their communities to more affluent, predominantly white schools with better resources. This was an effort to not only lessen the opportunity gap for students in my neighborhood, but also desegregate communities in my area. While the existence of this program infuriates me because it points to institutional barriers in our country, I can't deny the lasting impact in made on my educational journey.



WE ALL BELONG

Growing up, it knew only that democracy consisted of voting and giving people a voice. But I never saw this at 1 mome because my mome did not have the option to vote. If y mome would take me with her to immigration the sand protests. She acknowledged that governments and little to protect her and other immigrants. She has seen und in the u.s. Despite feeling, powerless and living in is here in the u.s. on a steady income. It is unlikely lives as an immigrant and we are in a gentrified and at williams without this country. However, that I would be excuse for the racism, discrimination, xenophobia, homophobia, continue to impact mine and my family's daily life. There is have a long journey and fight ahead of me.