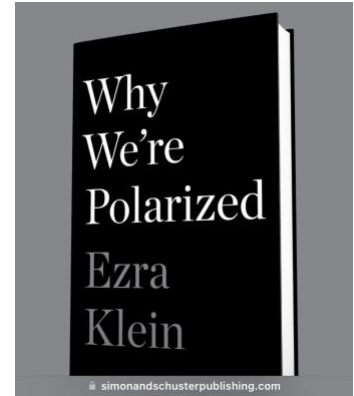


LWV Book Discussion

League of Women Voters Bremerton/Central Kitsap Unit
Tuesday, August 29, 2023, Noon - 3:00
Why We're Polarized, by Ezra Klein



Ezra Klein shows how and why American politics polarized around identity in the 20th century and what that polarization did to the way we see the world and one another. He traces the feedback loops between polarized political identities and polarized political institutions that are driving our system toward crisis.

Suggested Discussion Questions from the **Braver Angels Organization** <<https://braverangels.org>>:

1. Klein asserts that group identity has always been a feature of American politics but was less polarizing when one group (white, Christian, male) dominated political office and both major political parties. Over the last 50 years, demographic/cultural shifts have allowed people with diverse identities a greater voice in American politics. American's identities have become "sorted" so they align with our political affiliations, leading to dysfunctional hyper-polarization.

- What do you think of this argument?
- How do you think your group identities (religion, race, gender, culture, urban-rural) inform your political views and feelings toward others who don't share them?

2. Klein writes at length about media's role in the systemic problem of polarization...how it amplifies the loudest voices and reaps rewards for stoking outrage. He argues that media is responding to market demand, giving readers, listeners and viewers "what they want" versus "what they need."

- Do you think that's true?
- What can media consumers do to shift those dynamics and reduce polarization?

3. Klein offers some potential remedies such as eliminating the electoral college and expanding the number of Supreme Court justices.

- What do you think?
- How do they compare to his recommendations for changes in individual behavior, like greater mindfulness of how one's identities are activated and manipulated?

Other Resources:

- <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/tnyradiohour/segments/ezra-klein-why-were-polarized>
- <https://www.gatesnotes.com/Why-Were-Polarized>

Additional books:

- *Political Tribes* by Amy Chua
- *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* by Lilliana Mason
- *Bridge Builders: Bringing People Together in a Polarized Age* by Nathan Borney
- *Democracy and Truth: A Short History* by Sophia Rosenfeld
- *Sustaining Democracy: What We Owe the Other Side* by Robert Talisse