



In today's politically polarized America, it seems impossible to bridge the chasm between red and blue. This alarming phenomenon has divided communities, created social media chaos and made even family gatherings uncomfortable.

How did we get here, and what can be done to knit Americans of all political persuasions back together?

You can find out by attending this forum.

Speakers will include experts on political polarization:

- Professor James L. Taylor (University of San Francisco) and
- Dr. Jean Lin (CSU East Bay);

and also include representatives from Better Angels, a nonpartisan group that strives to bring red and blue Americans together.

The forum is free and open to the public.

Event flyer, speaker biographies and Pew research attached.

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# “Partisan divides over political values widen”

Pew Research Center

October 5, 2017

The divisions between Republicans and Democrats on fundamental political values – on government, race, immigration, national security, environmental protection and other areas – reached [record levels](#) during Barack Obama’s presidency. In Donald Trump’s first year as president, these gaps have grown even larger. And **the magnitude of these differences dwarfs other divisions in society, along such lines as gender, race and ethnicity, religious observance or education.**

A new study by Pew Research Center, based on surveys of more than 5,000 adults in the summer of 2017, finds widening differences between Republicans and Democrats on a range of measures the Center has been asking about since 1994, as well as those with more recent trends. But in recent years, the gaps on several sets of political values in particular – including measures of attitudes about the social safety net, race and immigration – have increased dramatically.

**Government aid to needy.** Over the past six years, the share of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents saying the government should do more to help the needy, even if it means going deeper into debt, **has risen 17 percentage points (from 54% to 71%)**, while the views of Republicans and Republican leaners have barely changed (25% then, 24% today). However, Republicans’ opinions on this issue had shifted substantially between 2007 and 2011, with the share favoring more aid to the needy **falling 20 points (from 45% to 25%)**.

**Racial discrimination.** In recent years, Democrats’ views on racial discrimination also have changed, driving an overall shift in public opinion. Currently, 41% of Americans say racial discrimination is the main reason many blacks cannot get ahead – the largest share expressing this view in surveys dating back 23 years. Still, somewhat more Americans (49%) say blacks who cannot get ahead are mostly responsible for their own condition. When the racial discrimination question was first asked in 1994, the partisan difference was 13 points. By 2009, it was only somewhat larger (19 points). But today, the gap in opinions between Republicans and Democrats about racial discrimination and black advancement **has increased to 50 points.**

**Immigration.** Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65%) say immigrants strengthen the country “because of their hard work and talents.” Just 26% say immigrants are a burden “because they take our jobs, housing and health care.” Views of immigrants, though little changed from a year ago, are more positive than at any point in the past two decades. As with views of racial discrimination, there has been a major shift in Democrats’ opinions about immigrants. The share of Democrats who say immigrants strengthen the country has **increased from 32% in 1994 to 84%** today. By contrast, Republicans are divided in attitudes about immigrants: **42%** say they strengthen the country, while **44%** view them as a burden. In 1994, **30%** of Republicans said immigrants strengthened the country, while **64%** said they were a burden.

**“Peace through strength.”** About six in ten Americans (61%) say good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace, while 30% say peace is ensured by military strength. Opinions in both parties have changed since the 1990s; Democrats increasingly say peace is ensured by good diplomacy, while Republicans say it is military strength that ensures peace. Today, **83% of Democrats and Democratic leaners see good diplomacy as the way to ensure peace, compared with just 33% of Republicans and Republican leaners.**”

[For the full report see <http://www.people-press.org/2017/10/05/1-partisan-divides-over-political-values-widen/>]



## Bridging the Partisan Divide

Phoenix Alameda, January 24, 2019



### James Lance Taylor, Professor University of San Francisco

Professor Taylor is from Glen Cove, Long Island. He received his MA and PhD from the University of Southern California and has served as Chair of USF's Department of Politics and President of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. His teaching and research interests are in religion and politics in the United States, race and ethnic politics, African American political history, social movements, political ideology, law and public policy, Black political leadership, and the U.S. Presidency. Professor Taylor is the author of

*Black Nationalism in the United States: From Malcolm X to Barack Obama*, among other books, as well as numerous articles on Black politics and social movements. As a political commentator he appears regularly on San Francisco news TV with KRON 4, FOX KTVU local, ABC 7, and on NPR/KQED.



### Jean Lin, Assistant Professor Department of Sociology & Social Services California State University East Bay

Dr. Lin has an MA in International Relations and a PhD in Sociology, both from the University of Chicago. She was also a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society at Stanford University. Her research and teaching interests encompass political sociology, social movements, community organization, and civic participation. She has published on topics

related to environmental protests, labor movements and leadership, and international non-governmental organizations. Her current book project looks at civic participation and collective action around environmental threats in Beijing.

### Leslie Lopato and Steve Taddei Better Angels San Francisco Alliance

Better Angels is a volunteer-led national movement with members in all 50 states. Its mission is to unite red and blue Americans in a working alliance to build new ways to talk to one another, participate in public life, and influence the direction of our nation. Better Angels' rapidly expanding programs have put trained moderators, organizers, liberal and conservative participants, and student debates in hundreds of communities. Better Angels is developing a model of constructive cross-partisan engagement that challenges the political world to move toward depolarization. For more information, you can visit Better Angels' website at <https://www.better-angels.org/>.