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# The Last Word

By **Patrick Brady**, *Bank Street School for Children* – 2013, *Collegiate School* – 2017

It's September of 2008 and all one can hear throughout the hallways of Bank Street is conversation about the upcoming presidential election; even in the middle school classrooms it's active:

"He's definitely gonna win."

"Republicans are just Rednecks from the South."

"I can see Russia from my house."

"Who in their right mind would vote for McCain?"

Well, actually, me. If I had been eighteen years old, I would have voted for McCain. I remember when I shared this news with my classmates, it was met with lots of astonished stares and incredulous "What," and, "I can't believe you would do such a thing!" Soon, arguments exploded, all of us parroting the points our parents were making at home. We may have been only nine and ten years old, but our emotions were mirroring the polarization that was gripping the nation.



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Fast forward to September of this year. It's another Presidential election, but this time we're young teenagers, with our own opinions and beliefs, still arguing over the same things. Back and forth we go, in morning meetings, current events classes, lunchtime, and after school, debating proposed tax rates and military efforts overseas.

Our emotions boil over. Ali (13/14s humanities teacher) even threatens one day that she's going to start wearing a referee's uniform.

We are a class of nineteen and you would think with all our diverse backgrounds that we would reflect a range of political orientations. However, you would be mistaken. Of my eighteen classmates, I am the only one who identifies as Republican. Yes, there are issues that we all agree on, like gun control, abortion, and equal rights, but I am pretty much alone as a conservative. I favor the *Wall Street Journal* over the *New York Times*, I think Ronald Reagan was a great President, and I believe trickle down economics could work if given a chance.

Still, one against eighteen, the odds aren't great. Perhaps I just should have surrendered, stopped disagreeing, and sat quietly. It has certainly happened throughout history, people finding themselves alone and overmatched. Believe me, I understand why, in those circumstances, people have had the urge to give in. It's easier that way. But, just because something's easy doesn't mean it's right, and just because something's hard doesn't mean it's wrong. And isn't that the whole point of democracy—that it actually thrives on a plurality of perspectives, values, opinions, talents, interests, and passions?

In the last few years, I've really come to know myself and what I value. I understand the importance of standing up for what I believe in. I derive strength from standing firmly by my convictions, even if they aren't very popular with my classmates. Bank Street has taught me that: stay true to yourself. Not bad coming from a liberal institution.

Thank you to my family, especially my mom, dad, and my sister, Maggie. Thank you friends, and thank you teachers.