

In life, multiple events can shape your personality, thus it is hard to pinpoint an exact incident which has changed who you are. Since it's so challenging to find that one event, many people attribute mundane things like "turning sixteen," "getting a job," and "going into high school" as "life-changing" events, but I would argue those are experiences everyone encounter and don't really separate you from John or Jane Doe. However, in my life, one event shaped me into the person I am today: the 2000 presidential election between Al Gore and George W. Bush.

When I was seven years old I had a very basic understanding of politics; I knew there was an elected president, and vice president, that were in charge of running the United States. Since I was in second grade during the 2000 election, we only briefly talked about it. As an in-class assignment we drew the animal of the person we wanted to win, either an elephant or a donkey. Now, there's something you need to know; leading up to the assignment, vicious rumors had spread amongst the playground that Al Gore wanted to extend school days into the weekends. My friends and I would have none of it. Everyone in my class, bar one, drew an elephant on that day—a decision I still regret. On the night of the election, I decided to watch the news in order to find out whether or not I'd have to go to school on Saturday. I stayed up all night expecting an announcement, but it never came. Finally, after weeks of confusing deliberations, George W. Bush was declared the winner. This event profoundly changed who I would become a decade later.

While most kids at that age thought nothing of the entire election, I found it extremely intriguing. I knew *something* went wrong in the election that night and it

inspired me that America was able to move past such a dividing issue. This event, combined with the launch of the Iraq war, the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections, the inauguration of Barack Obama, and meeting Barack Obama, has stirred my interest in politics. Today, I enjoy reading about the current political issues like health care and immigration, and I follow every election closely. I feel it's important to know the current events in order to make informed decisions on pressing issues and I've come to realise that politics are an important part of our lives, affecting us everyday and everywhere. I don't believe that I would have the same interest in politics had I not stayed up that November evening in 2000. Moving forward, I plan on studying political science in college to better my understanding of the policy making used by Washington and other leaders around the world.

I often ask myself "what if?" What if I hadn't stayed up that night, what if I didn't follow the 2008 election, and what if I didn't go to Barack Obama's inauguration? Who would I be? What would I be writing about today? Asking these questions causes me to reflect on the person I've become and the experiences that shaped my life. Even though I will never fully understand the magnitude of these events, I am confident of one thing; had Al Gore enjoyed weekends as much as I do, my entire personality would have been completely altered.