ALLENTOWN
PENNSYLVANIA

Democracy in 2005

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The meaning of the term “democracy” has slightly changed since its conception. From its’ Greek origins, which in modern times most simply can be stated as the practice of rule by one man-one vote, to its’ present-day display of apathy and stagnancy, as well as social and political manipulation driven by personal agendas, democracy, as it was meant to be practiced, has eroded away beneath the surface of the wealthiest nation in the world, the United States. The effects of that erosion can be felt in every city worth the inspection, including Allentown, Pennsylvania. From its’ beginnings as a failed commercial center in the 1760’s, to its’ grandiose rise during the industrial revolution in the 1850’s, and now as it recovers from the decline of manufacturing and attempts to realign itself with the heartbeat of American hot spots, Allentown has proven to be an intriguing study into the practice of democracy in the year 2005.

“It is evident to all alike that a great democratic revolution is going on amongst us; but all do not look at it in the same light. To some it appears to be novel but accidental, and, as such, they hope it may still be checked; to others it seems irresistible, because it is the most uniform, the most ancient, and the most permanent tendency which is to be found in history.” (De Tocqueville 26)

The previous passage was written in the 1830’s following Alexis de Tocqueville’s investigation into the system of democracy then being settled into by the young United States. It would be interesting to hear his thoughts on the current status of democracy in this country. Democracy in America in the year 2005 has devolved into a status quo of, “what can you do for me?”, a direction de Tocqueville certainly would have considered nearly inevitable. Having stated the overarching theme behind the state of democracy, there remain specific categories of indicators of the health of a democracy. The indicators to be focused upon are state institutions, private enterprise, the middle class, education, freedom of information, and civil society and a democratic political culture.
The status of each of these indicators, when aimed at the health of a particular city, will not only indicate the positives and negatives within its’ democratic practices but will also ascertain the direction in which that democracy could be headed. However, considering the numerous theories on what indicates the health or pathology of a democracy, such as performance, protective and participatory democratic theories, subjectivity limits the extent to which those indicators will be construed as positive or negative. That subjectivity will be contrasted and compared to several of those theories throughout the study into democracy in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 2005.

While the indicators of the health of a democracy will later be thoroughly discussed individually, it is important that they are defined. The degree to which and context in which these indicators are to be interpreted will be included in the individual assessments. For the time being, however, only the indicators and the faculties within each applicable to democracy will be discussed.

State institutions are a principle of democracy which are nearly so central to its’ core that it is impossible for them to be out of tune with society’s greater good in and of themselves. The extension of these institutions, however, into the private lives of a government’s constituents can be both disruptive and in conflict with the interest of the people to protect themselves from government intrusion. These institutions, within the context of the city of Allentown, include, but are not limited to, the Mayor’s office, City Council, the County Executive and Commissioners (considering Allentown is the county seat), State Representatives, and the various departments, including the Department of Finance, the Department of Police, and the Department of Community and Economic Development.
The importance of private enterprise in the health of a democracy can be reduced to the hypothesis that economic freedom promotes political freedom. Those within a society, or in this case, a city, who own their own businesses or are employed by private companies will seek a voice in the governance of the local economy in order to ensure their property rights as well as to keep tabs on taxes and business regulations (Sodaro 220). Capitalism and democracy work hand in hand, and therefore the success of capitalism will positively correspond to the success of democracy.

The middle class has historically been linked with attitudes favorable to democracy. Aristotle wrote that “it will clearly be best to possess the gifts of fortune in moderation; for in that condition of life, men are most ready to follow rational principle (Terchek 60).” The middle class is largely comprised of those working in the private business sector, many of whom have an invested interest of the governments’ business regulations, as well as a large number of state employees, such as teachers and bureaucrats, who for obvious reasons have an invested interest themselves in government. The extent to which the middle class influences the health of a democracy can be indicated not only by their voter turnout numbers, but also by their prominence in much of America.

Education is arguably one of the most important indicators of the health of a democracy. Literacy levels and graduation rates are merely two of the more empirical indicators of education. The success of local school administrations is also significant. Democratic values, in their purest form, are typically only enhanced by formal education.

The freedom of information is imperative to the success of a democracy. An open media is necessary to inform the public of the current issues relevant to their lives within
a given society. The media is the common man’s current events encyclopedia, and that knowledge becomes essential when one is confronted with election campaigns that require a person to assist in the placement of a bureaucrat who will ultimately be deciding the fate of aspects of that society. Restrictions on the freedom of information and a biased media are only two of the many indications of pathology within a democracy.

Civil society refers to the population organized into associations independently of the state, while a democratic political culture is a more theoretical term referring to a pattern of widely shared attitudes and values supportive of democratic institutions and procedures. De Tocqueville wrote that “if men are to remain civilized or to become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them (Sodaro 222).”

Interest groups, trade unions, ethnic and religious organizations and single-issue organizations are all examples of what is meant when one refers to civil society. Each of these associations has a place in democracy that, when heard, whether its’ content is for the good or bad of society, expresses the alternative views necessary to fuel an intelligent democracy.

HISTORY OF ALLENTOWN

Origins. Chief Justice of Colonial Pennsylvania’s Supreme Court, William Allen, drew the plans for a rural village he would name Northamptonown in 1762. Allen gave the property to his son, James, in the early 1770’s, who then built Trout Hall, which can still be found in the heart of center city Allentown. Allentown remained a small village
of Pennsylvania Dutch farmers and tradesmen through the American Revolution before developing as a center of commerce for local farmers through to the 1920’s (allentownpa.org).

By the 1830’s, as the industrial revolution took off, Allentown had been opened up to the larger cities with the arrival of the railroad and the Lehigh Canal. A thriving iron industry, begun in the 1850’s and 60’s, supplied the nation’s railroad network and employed a large number of German and Irish workers. The Panic of 1873 marked the end of the iron industry in Allentown, and furnaces across the city began closing. By the 1900’s, Allentown had recovered from the economic disaster that was the iron industry and was facing another transition (allentownpa.org). The city itself acknowledges that center city Allentown has entered a decline, both economically and aesthetically, and a primary objective of its’ elected officials is to correct that problem. On its’ web site, allentownpa.org, the city writes:

“Faced with the decline of manufacturing and the rise of the service economy, the city is once again dealing with change. City officials are currently trying to attract business to the downtown district, primarily as a way to find new uses for existing structures.”

Much of the city government’s time and assets are currently being directed toward the redevelopment of Hamilton Boulevard, and also, as will be discussed later, to dealing with the ailing Allentown School District. The residents, especially those concentrated in center city Allentown, have become apathetic with regard to civic duty. The members of the city government, many of whom are self-interested, others simply burdensome, are ineffective with regard to promoting positive policies. Elections to those offices are won based on a combination of name recognition and party affiliation, leaving the issues and
experience at the door. Allentown has become a performance democracy, which is best described by Anthony Downs, who writes:

“Political parties in a democracy formulate policy strictly as a means of gaining votes. They do not seek to gain office in order to carry out certain preconceived policies or to serve any particular interest groups; rather they formulate policies and serve interest groups in order to gain office. Thus their social function—which is to formulate and carry out policies when in power as the government—is accomplished as a by-product of their private motive—which is to attain the income, power, and prestige of being in office (Tercheck 156).”

While a performance democracy is still a democracy, and is certainly capable of functioning and governing a society fairly, in the context of a local administrative authority, performance democracy falls short. Locally, more so than nationally, residents should maintain and display a certain amount of invested interest in government. Understanding, now, the city’s origins, one must further investigate the state of democracy in Allentown in 2005 by addressing the indicators previously introduced.

INDICATORS OF DEMOCRACY

State Institutions. The backbone of any democracy is the state institutions that determine and enforce policy and legislation. This diagram illustrates those institutions:
Elected officials include the Mayor, Roy C. Afflerbach, the City Controller, Frank J. Concannon, as well as City Council. Though only two of the council members are Republicans, while the others are Democrats, including the Mayor and City Controller, the Afflerbach Administration has been virtually motionless with regard to passing effective legislation. As recently as January 13, 2005 the Morning Call reported on a meeting held at the Scottish Rite Cathedral on Hamilton Boulevard, in which more than 300 residents turned out for what would be little more than a Mayor-bashing festival (Hundreds A4). While the structure of Allentown’s state institutions is suitable to a healthy democracy, it is the men and women who embody those institutions that are responsible for fueling progressive policies. Though those officials may not agree with one another on every issue, certainly they should be capable of finding a middle ground.

It should be noted that while the Mayor earns a salary of $61,493, City Council members make only $6,149 (Government Directory). This would indicate that the City Council members have full-time jobs, and sitting on the council is strictly a part-time affair. The Mayor on the other hand has only one job, and that is to effectively direct the betterment of the city and its’ residents. Perhaps the City Council members should be
advised that their responsibility is not to incite riots or inhibit legislation, but rather to aid the Mayor as he assesses and carries out policies that could potentially help the city.

“The eighteenth-century philosophy of democracy may be couched in the following definition: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will.” (Terchek 143)

While one may not agree with the principles of many performance democracy theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter, who penned the above quote, he certainly makes a valid point. In a modern-day democracy, with the population growing exponentially, a republic disguising itself as a democracy is the only means of allowing every man a voice in governance. However, when those elected officials nearly always find themselves at a stalemate during policy discussion, unable to effectively institute legislation, such as in the case of Allentown’s city officials, democracy is failing. The institutions are not present for individual advancement, but for the “common good.” In the case of Allentown, as is likely the case in many other municipalities across the country, it is not the institutions that are falling short of the democratic ideal, but rather the self-interested politicians that embody those institutions.

*Private Enterprise.* It can be argued that private enterprise and capitalism are primary reasons democracy emerged. Those small business owners wanted a say in governance in order to ensure the state’s protection of their property rights (Sodaro 219). One drive down Hamilton Boulevard in Allentown illustrates the extent to which the city is filled with small and large businesses alike. It is accompanied, though, by a glimpse into Allentown’s past, through the dusty glass windows of abandoned shops and offices. Private enterprise is one arena in which the city government is not at fault. As Mayor
Roy C. Afflerbach stated in his State of the City Address, January 28, 2005, “a restructuring of our alphabet soup of development related programs into a more coordinated, modern and progressive Department of Community and Economic Development to revitalize our business districts” is one of the chief goals of his administration. At the heart of many city council meeting discussions is the redevelopment of Hamilton Boulevard and the downtown business district, as well as bringing a minor league baseball team and legalized slot machines to the city. City officials spend much of their time attempting to attract businesses to the downtown district, using the city’s infrastructure, which features state-of-the-art technology, including a fiber optic loop and uninterrupted electrical service, as a lure. The motivation is there, along with the space and infrastructure, the city simply needs the new businesses.

Assuming the principle that a capitalist system and democracy work best hand-in-hand, one cannot find fault in the city’s persistence with regard to development of the downtown business district; rather one should applaud the city for its’ efforts. While the Afflerbach Administration consists primarily of Democrats wielding their power like Republicans, even they must acknowledge the deterioration that has occurred in downtown Allentown and attempt to address it through economic legislation, whether it be tax cuts for potential businesses or a disciplined up-keep of the city’s streets, water and electrical infrastructure.

Middle Class. The middle class, it could be argued, are the largest determinant of whether a democracy will succeed or fail. Historically, it has been the middle class that
has brought about revolution and the birth of democracy, such as in Britain, France and the United States. As Aristotle wrote in *Politics*:

> “Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class, and that those states are likely to be well-administered, in which the middle class is large, and stronger if possible than both the other classes, or at any rate than either singly; for the addition of the middle class turns the scale, and prevents either of the extremes from being dominant.” (Terchek 60)

Allentown is distinct in that it is virtually part of a larger metropolitan area called the Lehigh Valley, which includes Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. In the center of each of those cities reside the poor, uneducated people. Surrounding that is a crust of middle class citizens, with the upper middle class residing in many of the suburbs that do not technically fall within the cities’ limits. This becomes important around election time because half of the population that is eligible to vote for Allentown’s elected officials, specifically those in the poorer parts of the city, is practically a non-factor at the polls. During the recent special election held in the 15th State Senatorial District that would determine the replacement for now-U.S. Representative Charlie Dent’s previous seat in the State Senate, polls opened at 8 a.m. in several townships in Lehigh, Northampton and Monroe Counties. While turnout was low in every voting district due to being the only office on the ballot, it was especially low in center city Allentown. At 5 p.m. the day of the election, the poll in District 1, located in the Lehigh Government Center at the corner of 7th Street and Hamilton Boulevard, only 70 voters had displayed their commitment to democracy. On the same day, in Lower Macungie, an area whose address is technically Allentown, featuring single-family, upper-middle class neighborhoods, another polling place had already reached 115 voters by 11 a.m. This illustrates the extent to which the
middle class is determining the policy of Allentown while being just a thin crust around the city’s outer edges.

The population inhabiting center city Allentown is the group that should be most concerned with the actions of the city government, yet they remain a political outsider. A quick look at the raw numbers will illustrate the disparity in wealth. In the 2000 U.S. Census, in zip code 18102, which is in the heart of Allentown, the per capita income was $12,940, and the median family income was $30,565. In zip code 18103, which is on the outer edge of city limits and includes the polling district mentioned earlier, the per capita income was $21,014 and the median family income was $46,808. Those figures indicate huge jumps in income for populations separated by no more than several miles living under the authority of the same municipal government.

Given some of the previous statements, it may be difficult to understand how, if the majority of the constituents in Allentown are Democrats but are far and wide outnumbered by Republicans at the polls, the city ended up with a Democratic Mayor and City Council. This can be explained by the fact that the previous Mayor, William Heydt, a Republican, left office on very bad terms with the citizens of Allentown. Current Mayor Afflerbach faced a weaker adversary in opponent Bob Lovett, and the Republican party had left a bad taste in the mouth of many of the city’s residents.

There is very much a middle class in Allentown, residing on the outskirts of the physical city. It is that population that essentially single-handedly determines who the elected officials will be. Those are also the people making up City Council and sitting in the Mayor’s office. It is, though, the people of center city Allentown who need the aid of
the city government the most to keep the streets clean and safe, yet they do not fulfill their end of the democratic bargain by showing up at the polls to vote.

*Education.* An educated population is best equipped to handle the responsibilities of living in a democracy, where an informed choice is typically the average man’s only tool to determine future policy. As De Tocqueville wrote, “The first duty which is at this time imposed on those who direct our affairs is to educate the democracy; to warm its faith, if that be possible; to purify its morals; to direct its energies (Tercheck 27).” This is a crucial statement considering the sad state of the Allentown public school district.

It was only on November 5, 2005 that Allentown School District was removed from the state’s 12 worst performing school districts list. While this was a momentous occasion for the district, it should also indicate to the objective observer that the district has much work left to accomplish. The Allentown School District’s web site indicates that only 36% of students are at a proficient level in mathematics, while in reading that number is up to 41%. This means that over half of the students are likely not proficient, or showing a mastery of what, in high school, amounts to basic skills.

Part of reason the Allentown School District may be unable to motivate and educate its’ students is the large number of underprivileged black and Hispanic students living in center city Allentown. It has already been established that this population is less likely to vote, indicating a lack of concern for public policies. This same lack of concern may transcend merely political interests, and filter into the classroom. Nearly 44% of the population of center city is Hispanic, an ethnicity also more likely to speak their native language at home. The language barrier, combined with the existing complacency
toward furthering their own self-appreciation, almost certainly plays a large role in the school districts inability to graduate students with adequate intellectual skills.

*Freedom of Information.* The necessity of an informed society runs parallel to the necessity for that society to be educated. Not only should a society have free access to information, various media outlets should present that information so that those in that society may obtain and assess differing perspectives on given events or issues. The importance of those media outlets is that they inform citizens of the continuing actions of the local, state and national governments, as well as of the elected and appointed officials holding offices in those governments. Aside from media outlets presenting the public with current news regarding the people and actions of the institutions of government, it also, to an extent, determines which side of the story the citizens will hear. This bias, however, is necessary only so far as that another media outlet presents an opposing view. Only in this condition is the public truly informed because it has heard the argument and the rebuttal. Another important aspect of the freedom of information is the access to elected officials and the municipal authority. Especially in a moderately sized city such as Allentown, it is important for the citizens to be able to approach and question the political leaders most directly influencing their everyday lives.

Allentown is home to several media outlets of different mediums. There are four local newspapers (including one printed in Spanish), seven radio stations based in and around the city, and four television stations whose primary local focus is Allentown and the Lehigh Valley. The most well-known of those outlets are The Allentown Morning Call newspaper, B104 and WAEB, both radio stations, and WFMZ, Channel 69. While B104 is primarily an unbiased, teenager-focused pop station, the other three are
recognized as the three principle news organizations in the Allentown area. The Morning Call and WFMZ Channel 69 are fairly capable of reporting the news in an unbiased manner; WAEB, however, which is the most widely heard AM news radio station in Allentown, is a conservative, right-wing station featuring national personalities such as Bobby Gunther Walsh, Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity. There is no local radio programming that offers a liberal argument to those conservative broadcasters. Such a thought is disheartening, considering the population disparity favors local Democrats.

Along with the efficiency of media outlets to thoroughly present topics and events of concern to their subscribers, the availability of locally elected officials is also a determinant of the health of the freedom of information indicator. In this respect, Allentown, though this was a limited study, certainly falls short. Three of Allentown’s political leaders who had been requested for interviews either never returned the calls, or were simply unable to find time. Mayor Roy C. Afflerbach and County Executive Jane Ervin were completely unable to be reached, while Director of Economic and Community Development Ed Pawlowski was unable to find available time for an interview. County Executive Jane Ervin was, though, able to be tracked down at several functions regarding State Rep. Pat Browne’s campaign, but was typically unable to find time to speak with anyone not related to the local Republican party or the media.

In a separate account of local elected officials being unavailable to the public, there was a press conference held on March 23, 2005 in which State Rep. Pat Browne was providing a rebuttal to opponent Jennifer Mann’s charge that he was unable to serve more efficiently as a State Senator than she, due to two prior drunken driving convictions. Following Pat’s statements, those in attendance were asked if they had any questions.
Two reporters, one from the Morning Call, the other from WFMZ, each asked Pat several questions, taking about five minutes. Following their questions, an older gentleman posed a question about Pat’s stance on a bill that is approaching vote in the State Senate. Not even having finished asking his question, the man was interrupted by Pat’s Campaign Manager, Shawn Millan, and told that his question would have to wait until after the press conference. When it ended several minutes later, Representative Browne turned his back on the man and proceeded to shake hands and photographs with the more well-known, respected local party leaders.

While those four local officials may have a very demanding schedule due to the size of the city and the extent of their bureaucratic involvement, certainly a few words with a constituent can never hurt. Communication is the only medium man has with which to engage one another in productive debate, yet when elected officials can no longer discuss relevant topics with the common man and feel they only need to do so through the use of news and media outlets, a divide develops. One could begin to think that maybe elected officials no longer feel obligated to represent the common man, but rather have directed that obligation toward ensuring the media presents them in a flattering light. Simply stated, holding office is no longer about courting the constituents, it has become courting the media.

*Civil Society and a Democratic Political Culture.* For each of the previous indicators to succeed, the presence of a civil society and a democratic political culture is essential. In order to manage the administrative duties of the state institutions, there must be citizens willing to serve the better interests of that society. In order to maintain private enterprise and support the educational system in a society, there must be citizens desiring
to further themselves and the future of their children. Along with those people, a civil society can be measured by the number of associations and organizations, whose focus is on promoting the interests of their members, and the number of citizens affiliated with those organizations. The democratic political culture is evident in terms of voter turnout, which was discussed earlier, along with more intangible characteristics such as support for democratic processes and locally elected officials.

Allentown has an endless supply of associations and organizations that are active in the community. From charity-focused groups, such as Rotary International and Kiwanis Club, to professional organizations, such as the Lehigh Valley Builders Association and LeadNet, to politically oriented groups like Citizens for Pat Browne and Young Republicans, Allentown has no shortage of groups with which nearly anyone may be affiliated. However, once again, many of the members of these groups are successful, middle class, white citizens. They are the same citizens who decide the city’s political leaders and become the city’s political leaders. The city’s underprivileged center city residents, for the most part, refrain from joining those groups and organizations, so are certainly not reaping any of their benefits.

There was one recent event that indicates a glimmer of hope for Allentown’s inner city residents overcoming their apathy toward an active civil society and a democratic political culture. On the same night of the election featuring State Representatives Pat Browne and Jennifer Mann vying for a seat in the State Senate, at 5 p.m. while at the polling place in the Lehigh County Government Center at the corner of 7th Street and Hamilton Boulevard, one could find, surrounding the statue located at the center of the intersection, about five to fifteen young, African-American girls wearing
Jennifer Mann T-shirts and waving Jennifer Mann banners. While this is a sign that, despite the low voter turnout by the residents of center city Allentown, there still exists, at least in a limited form, support for democratic processes, the reality is that until that group shows up at the polls on election day, there is no reason for the city’s elected officials to support legislation aimed at aiding that group.

It is apparent from a review of the specific indicators of the health of a democracy that Allentown is a diverse city, in which the municipal government is forced to reconcile the benefits of being a larger city containing practically limitless resources (including proximity to Philadelphia and New York City, many small and large businesses, many citizens committed to fostering democratic ideals) and the shortcomings associated with an overwhelmingly lower class population that refuses to participate in the advancement of democratic ideals. The balancing act required of Allentown’s municipal government is one of its’ major hindrances, along with conducting that governance when the majority of the elected officials are such simply for their own betterment, especially the prestige associated with holding office and the connections that elected office can bring with regard to an official’s outside, entrepreneurial interests. Acknowledgement of those previously listed circumstances that may be, due to the passage of time and the actions of the city’s historical leaders as well as its residents, forever engrained in the spirit of democracy in Allentown, Pennsylvania, is essential when discussing democracy as it stands in that city in the year 2005.

ANALYSIS

Allentown, Pennsylvania, is an intriguing study into the democratic practices of a typical, growing, moderately sized city in the United States. It is intriguing because the
direction of the city is very much indefinite; it is intriguing because Allentown seems destined to be the one of the first large cities swallowed hole by the expanding metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and New York. It is intriguing because, depending on with whom one is speaking or what one is reading, democracy as it is practiced in Allentown is either a stable model, or it is allowing for the further decay of the greatest ideal in political history.

“In a democracy, the government always acts so as to maximize the number of votes it will receive. In effect, it is an entrepreneur selling policies for votes instead of products for money…” (Terchek 156)

Should one consider this statement, written by Anthony Downs, an acceptable explanation as to how democracy should function, Allentown is a blue-ribbon municipality. Control of the governing apparatus is handed peacefully from one administration to another, as voted on by the residents of the city, and the institutions in place are stable, with their activities dictated by a fairly lengthy Home Rule Charter. While legislation is difficult to pass through with approval from both the Mayor and City Council, if one subscribes to the principles of a performance democracy, fast and efficient legislation is not incredibly necessary. The lower-class man is certainly not involved with the decision-making efforts of the local government, as a performance democracy theorist would specify. It is clear, by the educational achievements of the local school district and the income levels of those living in center city Allentown, that the lower-class man has no place in politics. He simply wants to live his life as he wishes and allow others to decide whether his property taxes raise or dip several tenths of a percentage point from year to year. The media is performing its’ function by keeping those who care informed of the issues and the stakes in election campaigns, and ample
access to numerous media outlets prevents local news from being completely biased. It is certainly conceivable that a democracy can survive while its’ citizens continue to become more and more alienated from the officials they have elected into office. It is only a matter of time, however, before that citizenry grows weary of the men and women dictating public policy, and through speech or action questions the rulers as to why they have not been invited to the party.

“It is true that all valuable as well as new ideas begin with minorities, perhaps a minority of one. The important consideration is that opportunity be given that idea to spread and to become the possession of the multitude.” (Terchek 169)

Written by participatory democracy theorist John Dewey, this statement shines hope on the under-privileged, the uneducated and the financially dependent. In Allentown, the under-privileged, the uneducated and the financially dependent are essentially self-prohibited from developing the ideas that can change a generation. Quite possibly it begins with the school district, which is seemingly unable to effectively educate its’ students. Quite possibly, the schools in Allentown are unable to educate their students because the parents of those students are not home to force their children to attend to their academics. Almost certainly those parents are not home because they are working second- and third-shift in order to feed their children and begin bridging the gap in income between themselves and Allentown’s wealthier residents. This is almost certainly because Allentown’s wealthier residents privately own and operate many of the businesses in which the lower-class citizens work. And quite possibly, because Allentown’s wealthier residents are the owners and operators of the city’s private enterprises, they feel the need to vote for its’ elected officials while the lower-class constituents are simply happy to have gotten through another day.
A democracy is only as good as those who participate in it. Exclusionary devices, whether they are intentional or inadvertent, could well be considered the Achilles’ Heal of a democracy. Those devices are currently at work in Allentown, Pennsylvania. There is no more important a task granted to those controlling a government than to educate and include its’ citizens. Based on that premise alone, considering the state of Allentown School District, democracy is failing the city. The number of age-eligible voters from center city that do not vote on elections days is disturbing. Allentown’s local news is divided into two colors: black (people, as well as Hispanics) when reporting on violence in the city, and white (people) when reporting on city officials. It is difficult to imagine democracy being successful in an area with so much disparity.

Allentown today is a model city in which to raise a family (if living in the right school district), work (assuming one owns their own business, or is a lawyer or doctor), and play (provided one stays away from the more violent neighborhoods in center city). The democratic ideal may be fading slightly from that which Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau had in mind, but such is the case all over the United States, correct? After a brief study into democracy in Allentown in the year 2005, it is obvious now that, even though good people no longer want the job of running the cities and states, someone still has to show up and sit in the office.
WORKS CITED


