

INSIGHT



GUEST COLUMN | DAVID WENDELL

# Presidential combatants of 1800 can lead America by example

What an election! A wealthy egalitarian from the big city against a man of modest origin who overcame the throes of poverty to rise in ranks as a premier statesman.

One candidate seen as a warmonger who would serve as a dictator, the other as a champion of the less fortunate who knew struggle in their lives to rise and overcome it ... an ugly campaign with vicious, often unsubstantiated, claims, including rumors of illicit sexual affairs and accusations of money being given by foreign powers in exchange for political favors ... one candidate regularly making frequent appearances in an active campaign to engage his core supporters, while the other remained at home, preferring to conduct his appeal through the media.

It was a former vice president with extensive government experience versus an outsider having never held a constitutionally elected office despite a celebrity career. Theirs would be one of the most closely contested races in presidential history with results in question long after the election ... an unprecedented and defining moment in the annals of democracy.

This was the 1800 race for president between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. Adams, at 65, was the Har-

vard-educated elder statesman from a prestigious New England family of social standing and a leader of the Federalist Party, which believed in a strong central government.

Thomas Jefferson, 56, received a private education at his family's plantation in Virginia and expanded upon his family's holdings to become a prosperous businessman and advocate of those who felt left out of government. He would go on to lead the Democratic Republican Party of the newly established United States.

As prescribed by the Constitution, the office of president was not a position directly elected by the voters, but rather by delegates known as electors, selected from each state by their respective legislatures. The number of electors was set as being equal to the number of members of Congress from each state.

In 1800, it was the second presidential race for each candidate, both believing that their philosophy was best for the country and that if the other were elected, it would be the end of the democratic republic as they knew it.

With stakes so high, accusations ran rampant. Hints started to spread that Jefferson had an affair and conceived a child with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings (proved true by a DNA test in 1998). Adams was charged with agreeing to

accept money from the French government if he would pursue a war against England.

Jefferson traveled frequently to appeal to his agrarian base of supporters, not reached by newspapers of the day. Adams, following the example of George Washington, did not make as many appearances, preferring instead to rely on coverage of his campaign by the printed word.

Jefferson was greeted by his crowds as somewhat of a pop culture celebrity, having written the Declaration of Independence, whereas Adams was seen more as the old reliable statesman.

The contrasts in policy and personality couldn't be much different, and the populace was nearly equally divided.

As per the Constitution, in which both men had played a role in chartering, each state was allowed to set their own election date so long as it was before the first Wednesday of December. Because of the various dates, results were not usually known until all of the electors met in a joint session of the House of Representatives the first week of January.

As the electors gathered in Washington at the beginning of the new year in 1801, the roll call was a tie with the two top candidates each receiving 73 votes. Under the Constitution, the winning candidate then must be determined by

a majority vote in the House. The lower chamber, however, was just as divided as the populace, and was gridlocked after 35 calls of the roll.

Seeing the stalemate as a threat to the future of the nation, Alexander Hamilton, who was not an advocate of Jefferson nor the Democratic Republican Party, for the benefit of the country, lobbied on behalf of the author of the Declaration of Independence. And on Feb. 17, the House members from Maryland and Vermont abstained, which awarded the election to Jefferson.

It had taken three months. But the constitutional process had prevailed in the longest election in American history.

Adams, as the tallies became final, quickly issued executive orders (Congress was, at the time, majority Federalist) to nominate John Marshall as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and to expand the federal circuit court system so that he could name Federalist judges to the bench, preserving his political philosophy long into the future. He then gracefully conceded the election, establishing the precedent of a peaceful transition of power from one political party to another. Jefferson, in his inaugural speech, proclaimed to a people in dire need of healing, "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."

Jefferson went on autho-

rize the Louisiana Purchase, which more than doubled the nation in size, including land that became the state of Iowa.

Adams retired quietly to his estate in New England where he penned his memoir and spent time mentoring his son, John Quincy Adams, who, in 1824, was elected president.

In 1812, four years after he left office, Jefferson and Adams began exchanging letters between one another addressing the latest in political issues and even comparing notes on the best of farming methods. Hundreds of pages of correspondence cordially continued back and forth the rest of their lives.

They remained close friends until they drew their last breaths. Jefferson died at 83 at 12:50 p.m. July 4, 1826. At 6 p.m. that evening, at the age of 91, Adams closed his eyes for the final time, having uttered his last words, "Jefferson survives," having no way of knowing his former rival and newfound confidante, had died. It was the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Let us hope in this upcoming year of the 245th anniversary of the signing of our nation's founding document, the country can heal and come together, in the traditions of two of our most iconic leaders.

David V. Wendell is a Marion historian, author and special events coordinator specializing in American history.

GUEST COLUMN | NICK BERGUS



Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds speaks to the media during a COVID-19 news conference Nov. 12 at Iowa PBS in Johnston. (Kelsey Kremer/The Des Moines Register via Associated Press)

## Mandates matter, but the governor is undercutting her other tool: messaging

Facing rampant viral spread, 2,000 dead Iowans with more surely on the way and hospitals packed to capacity, Gov. Kim Reynolds issued — finally — a sort of statewide mask mandate. "If Iowans don't buy into this," she said, "we lose."

Unfortunately, she's spent the summer and fall helping Iowans buy into the importance of masks, distancing and avoiding gatherings at rallies such as the one she appeared at in a Des Moines with Donald Trump.

Mandates from the state certainly matter. Requiring masks at indoor public places will lead a segment of Iowans who weren't to finally wear masks.

But Reynolds has taken away, or at least severely undercut, her other, best tool: messaging.

That's critical to getting that buy-in because, as she admitted in her address undercutting her message, the state doesn't have the enforcement capabilities to police everywhere.

So, while there's a lot of photos of her out in her Iowa flag mask (modeling good behavior!), her other actions (modeling bad behavior!) and continued, vocal resistance to issuing a mask mandate coupled with weak statements about trusting Iowans to do the right thing, sent a different message: mask wearing was a choice like a scarf in winter not a requirement like a seat belt in a car.

Her own news releases were missed opportunities, always touting the contin-

uation of State Public Health Emergency Declaration and never highlighting the mitigation efforts they contained. In the age of social media, the headline matters most.

Her own department of public health, responsible for her ballyhooed awareness campaign for those segments of the population still are unaware we're in the midst of a raging, deadly pandemic, fumbled with an idiotic, now-deleted post.

In Reynolds' news conferences and other remarks, she always seemed to focus on the loopholes and exceptions to her mitigation efforts, instead of focusing on the requirements. I've spent the past eight months rewriting her news releases to emphasize the mitigation parts.

Even in her address, she made a point of acknowledging there wasn't a real way to enforce any of the mandates or measures.

And so, while Iowans brace (or don't) for a rapidly worsening state of the pandemic, instead of clear messages, we're left to wonder: do we have a mask mandate?

Some score cards say yes. Ultimately, I'm not sure how much it matters either way.

If Reynolds hadn't spent her time, effort and political attention undermining mitigation efforts by muddying her message and doing another, Iowans would be much more likely to "buy into this."

Nick Bergus lives in Iowa City. This column originally was published on bergus.org.



GUEST COLUMN | SIERRA CARTER

## Racial discrimination ages Black Americans faster: 25-year study of families

I'm part of a research team that has been following more than 800 Black American families for almost 25 years. We found that people who had reported experiencing high levels of racial discrimination when they were young teenagers had significantly higher levels of depression in their 20s than those who hadn't. This elevated depression, in turn, showed up in their blood samples, which revealed accelerated aging on a cellular level.

Our research is not the first to show Black Americans live sicker lives and die younger than other racial or ethnic groups. The experience of constant and accumulating stress because of racism throughout an individual's lifetime can wear and tear down the body — literally "getting under the skin" to affect health.

These findings highlight how stress from racism, particularly experienced early in life, can affect the mental and physical health disparities seen among Black Americans.

### WHY IT MATTERS

As news stories of Black American women, men and children being killed due to racial injustice persist, our research on the effects of racism continue to have significant implications.

COVID-19 has been labeled a "stress pandemic" for Black populations that are disproportionately affected because of factors such as poverty, unemployment and lack of access to health care.

In 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics identified racism as having a profound impact on the health of children, adolescents, emerging adults and their families. Our findings support this conclusion — and show the need for society to reflect on the lifelong impact racism can have on an American Black child's ability to prosper.

### HOW WE DO THE WORK

The Family and Community Health Study, established in 1996 at Iowa State University and the University of Georgia, is looking at how stress, neighborhood characteristics and other factors affect

Black American parents and their children over a lifetime. Participants were recruited from rural, suburban and metropolitan communities. Funded by the National Institutes of Health, this research is the largest study of African American families in the U.S., with 800 families participating.

Researchers collected data — including self-reported questionnaires on experiences of racial discrimination and depressive symptoms — every two to three years. In 2015, the team started taking blood samples, too, to assess participants' risks for heart disease and diabetes, as well as test for biomarkers that predict the early onset of these diseases.

We used a technique that examines how old a person is at a cellular level compared with their chronological age. We found that some young people were older at a cellular level than would have been expected based on their chronological age. Racial discrimination accounted for much of this variation, suggesting that such experiences were accelerating aging.

Our study shows how vital it is to think about how mental and physical health difficulties are interconnected.

### WHAT'S NEXT

Some of the next steps for our work include focusing more closely on the accelerated aging process. We also will look at resiliency and early life interventions that could possibly offset and prevent health decline among Black Americans.

Because of COVID-19, the next scheduled blood sample collection has been delayed until at least spring 2021. The original children from this study will be in their mid- to late 30s and might possibly be experiencing chronic illnesses at this age because, in part, of accelerated aging.

With continued research, my colleagues and I hope to identify ways to interrupt the harmful effects of racism so that Black lives matter and are able to thrive.

Sierra Carter is assistant professor of psychology at Georgia State University. She wrote this for theconversation.com