

It is easy to say that a vote is a dream. That a vote is a voice. It is easy to say that every citizen of the United States of America has a responsibility to the nation, to the greater good, to vote. It is easy to stand on our ledge of democracy and criticize other nations and their failure to meet our standards.

Because we're great. Because everyone dreams of being an American. Because we love our citizens and the interests of the many are always at the front of the minds of our nation's leaders.

It is easier still to say that our nation does not live up to these standards. That our facsimile of democracy is breaking down. It is easy to say that dreams of a better future are pointless.

Because dreams are only as real as you make them right? And not everyone shares the same dreams. Because each dream comes from a single voice.

But what is in a voice?

The United States has five territories with a combined population of about 3.6 million residents. Though these residents are U.S. Citizens, the territories have no electoral votes in the electoral college, they have non-voting representatives in the House of Representatives, and have no seats in the Senate. They have no voting power in Congress.

These are 3.6 million voices left unheard.

Within the United States, lawful permanent residents hold the same responsibilities and rights as most citizens. But they cannot vote in federal elections. According to the Migration Policy Institute, about 1 million green cards are granted annually.

These are millions of voices left unheard.

And you'll ask me: why do I care? What does it matter to me?

And truthfully all I can do is try to appeal to your humanity. And all I can remind you of is your privilege.

Because it is. A privilege.

It is a privilege to vote. It is a privilege to be apathetic towards the voting process. It is a privilege to know that your best interests will be at the forefront of the minds of the leaders of this nation regardless of whether or not you decide to submit a ballot.

Maybe you don't care. Maybe you'll never care. But I can ask you to understand that your vote is bigger than yourself. And that each and every vote affects millions of people: not just the citizens of this country.