

# Shun others over politics?

Our serious differences are not reason enough to end personal relationships



I joined Newsday's editorial board during the 2010 election cycle, and what strikes me most in recalling that time was the sense that the nation was as divided as it could get.

Oh, 2010 United States, your little dinner table disagreements seem so precious now. It's like looking back at the bedtime tantrums of a toddler who, eight years later, burns down the house in a fit of rage.

The debate over the Affordable Care Act was spirited in 2010. But by the time we got to Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, with white nationalists marching and Heather Heyer killed after one allegedly ran her down and President Donald Trump's "very fine people on both sides" remark, things got really hot.

If 2010 was the season when our broad political discontent with each other began to boil over, it was also the time when we began to discuss in earnest whether such disagreements were reason enough to separate ourselves from the people whose lips and keyboards we

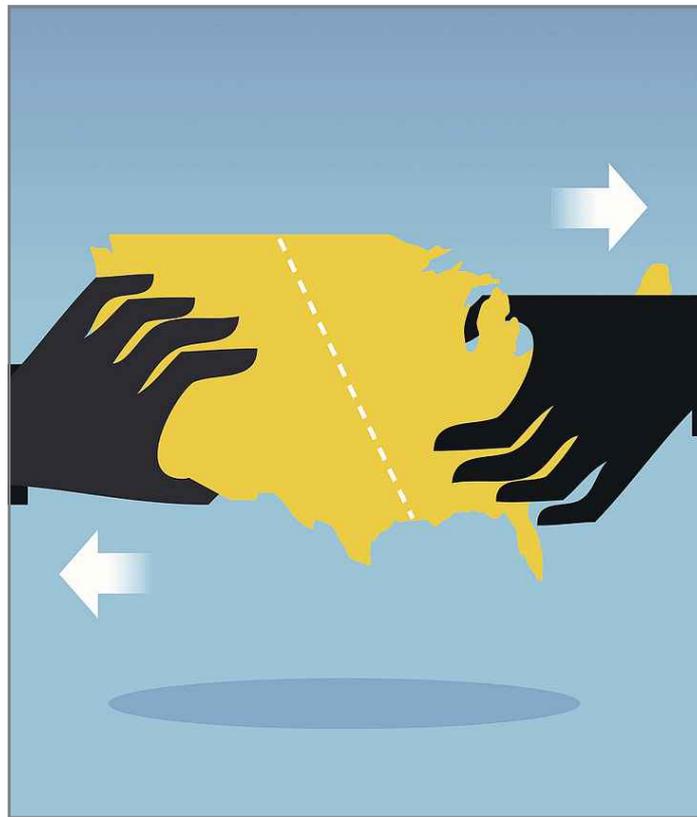
wanted to pour glue on.

Liberals were tired of being forced to listen to Uncle Roy's rants that Barack Obama was a Kenyan-born Muslim hellbent on taking their guns, money and freedom. Conservatives were sick of hearing Aunt Diane tell them they held their religious convictions and devotion to individual liberties, limited government, the Second Amendment and the rights of the unborn out of small-minded ignorance, not thoughtful deliberation.

Separate Thanksgivings, anyone? Mostly not. Mostly we argued that these disagreements shouldn't tear apart families and friendships. We've tried to love each other, and to stay away from the triggering topics. Discussions about the weather, football and that special something in Aunt Sally's potato salad hit all-time highs.

And now we have Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and an argument about truth and youth and assault and privilege and treatment of women that's fueling its own overdue inferno.

Many people who've counted on and loved each other their entire lives are furious with each other over Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford, the woman



who says he sexually assaulted her 36 years ago. They're engaging and raging over what sexual assault is and how much it matters, about what justifies crippling a career and whether society's default setting should be that accusers are believed.

And so we are again debating

whether to stay close to those with whom we so vehemently disagree. Aren't these issues important enough to decide whom to see and speak to, whom to love and support? What better reason to shut somebody out than politics, which is really philosophy,

which is really morality, which is really what life is all about?

Anyone who supports (or opposes) abortion is no friend of mine, right? Anyone who can't see Kavanaugh (or Ford) is lying needs to see his or her way out of my life!

That feels right. It's not. Because we are in this together, and there is no getting out of it. With our families, we share bonds of love and sacrifice and history that provide the core meaning in our lives. We chose our friends and grew close to them because we saw value in them, in their conduct and outlook. That value was real.

Sexual assault of women is both far too common and far too often overlooked, and men who behave properly almost never need fear false accusations. But there are people who've helped me raise my daughter, who've loved and supported my wife and me for decades, who I've seen perform extraordinary acts of kindness, who see society's response to sexual assault differently. And war, and criminal justice, and rape. Just as my lefty loved ones disagree with me about property rights, the Second Amendment and free speech.

Even so, we will be in this together. And it will get better.

Lane Filler is a member of Newsday's editorial board.

## NY voters deserve better from state



Voting booths during New York's Sept. 13 primary elections.

BY BETSY GOTBAUM

Some New Yorkers know that Oct. 12 is the deadline to register to vote in November's elections. But what most people probably don't realize is that it is also the deadline to change your party registration if you want to vote in a party primary next year.

If that sounds absurd, it is. For all its progressive values, New York State has some of the most backward voting laws in the nation. That must change.

Every single other state in the country provides a deadline to switch party registration that is significantly closer to primary elections.

New York falls short in other areas when it comes to enabling civic engagement. For instance:

- New York is the only state that has separate primary elections for federal, state and local offices. This confuses voters, and it is also a colossal waste of taxpayer money.

- Thirty-seven states have some form of early voting, which allows working people, parents, seniors and students to vote at a time that is convenient for them.

- Twelve states and the District of Columbia have automatic voter registration, increasing the reliability and security of voter rolls.

- Thirteen states and the Dis-

trict of Columbia allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister, increasing the likelihood of participation among young adults.

Despite repeated demands by the public, the New York State Legislature hasn't adopted any of these reforms, which have boosted voter participation in other states.

If you look at the 2016 presidential election, states that actively encourage voter participation — including Minnesota, Maine and New Hampshire — had turnout rates of nearly 70 percent. States, including New York, that make it more complicated to vote, had turnout rates below 50 percent.

Our elected officials like to tout New York as a progressive

leader, without taking the steps to make it a reality. When the State Legislature convenes next year, it must implement voting law reforms that will protect and expand the freedom to vote here in New York.

In the meantime, if you are not registered to vote, visit the state Board of Elections website today for guidance at [www.elections.ny.gov/voting/register.html](http://www.elections.ny.gov/voting/register.html), or call the board at 800-FOR-VOTE.



Betsy Gotbaum is the executive director of Citizens Union, a nonprofit good-government group.