PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

In 1776 John Adams wrote an influential pamphlet "Thoughts on Government":

"It should be in miniature, an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason, and act like them. That it may be the interest of this Assembly to do strict justice at all times, it should be an equal representation, or in other words equal interest among the people should have equal interest in it."

PR is widely used around the world,

BUT has extremely limited use in the U.S.

The National Municipal League, an urban reform proponent in the early 20th Century, included PR in its model city charter in 1914.

Ashtabula, OH was the first US city to adopt PR in 1915, followed by NYC in 1936. This sparked a boom; OH and Mass had great success. PR was adopted in about two dozen US cities including Boulder, CO from 1917 to 1947, but it worked too well.

NYC repealed PR in 1947 due to fear communists and minorities would get representation. Repeal followed elsewhere. Cincinnati, OH, repealed PR in 1957; Cambridge, MA still uses PR.

FINAL REPORT
of
Colorado's 2007 VOTER CHOICE TASK FORCE

- **Recommended Legislature establish a multi-step pilot project for implementation of Ranked Voting Methods.**

- **IRV for single-seat elections and PR for multi-seat elections.**

- **Project to begin in 2009 with 12 local governments for local elections.**

- **Legislature should require all voting equipment in state be able to conduct IRV and PR elections.**

Two additional statements appended:

- **The first emphasized the need for election integrity, public financing of campaigns, and PR.**

- **The second provided an example of use of PR in a unicameral CO Legislature of 100 seats.**

Best Democracy

Jesse Kumin

BFA, U. of Colorado/Boulder

Dr. Martin Luther King's proven method for overcoming 100 years of Jim Crow.

1) Observation

2) Understanding

3) Remedies

4) Attention

5) Action

Step 1: Observation

”If you don’t have a seat at the table, you’re probably on the menu.”

- Sen. Elizabeth Warren

Election Issues

Plurality Single Winner Districts

Designed to exclude people, not to include people.

- Leads to Gerrymandering.
- Leads to a restrictive two party systems, shutting out minority viewpoints.
- Discourages minority (race, ethnic, religion, party, social class) participation.
- Creates barriers to entry for candidates, limiting voter choice.
- Creates a “Spoiler Effect”.

Election Issues

Single Member Districts

- One individual supposedly represents all points of view in his/her district.
- Only two viewpoints allegedly represent everyone in the state.

Election Issues

Gerrymandering =

Safe Districts =

Unaccountable elected officials.

- **Over 87% of Congressional seats nationally are in "safe", predetermined districts.**
- **98% of incumbents running for reelection won.**

Election Issues

The Two Party System, primaries and caucuses

- Candidates in one party dominant districts are often elected through primaries with as little as 11% of the total eligible vote.
- Primaries favor extremists that appeal to the most motivated voters in a party's base. Primaries often defeat moderates who work with the opposition.
- Few incumbents are challenged or defeated in one party districts. When no challenger comes forth, no debate about the issues takes place.

Election Issues

The Electoral College

Violates the fundamental principles of majority rule and one person equaling one vote.

Over 700 proposed amendments have attempted to modify or abolish the Electoral College - more than any other subject of Constitutional reform.

Election Issues

Voter Suppression

Define the voter pool, how voters vote, and how votes are counted, and you can predetermine election outcomes.

The Founders started with 94% voter suppression.

Election Issues

At Large Winner Take All systems

At Large elections are designed to diminish or exclude minority representation, whatever that minority might be.

- **In 1989, a US District Court found this voting system illegal, that Chattanooga, Tennessee's use of At Large elections was in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in "Brown v. Board of Commissioners". Chattanooga was forced by a US District court to change electoral systems.**

- **The same was true in US v. Charleston County, 2004.**

- **As used today in Boulder, CO, 300 people (1/3rd of 1% of Boulder), "PLAN-Boulder County" have used At Large elections in combination with voter suppression, off year elections when fewer people vote, to control every city council since 1975, 42 years in a row.**

Election Issues

Corrupt influence of big money

- Buckley v. Valeo and Citizens United opened the floodgates of money used to purchase government offices by wealthy candidates and their backers.
- Dark Money, unidentified SuperPac funds.
- Money equals "free speech"?
- Creates an unlevel playing field for candidates.
- Intimidates candidates from entering electoral competition, because of their opponents “War Chest”.

Election Issues

Few Debates Impair our Decision Making

The Truth shall emerge from a free debate - John Stuart Mill

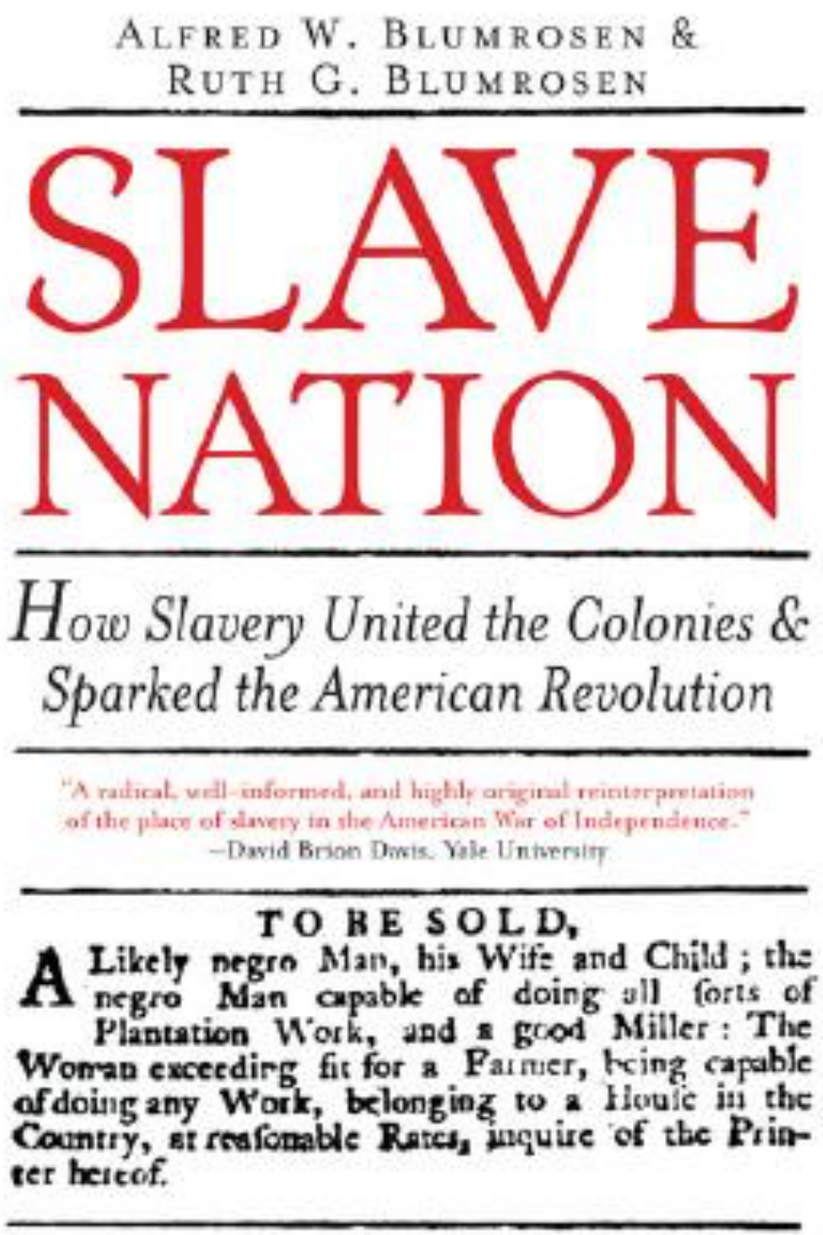
- In 2016, CO CD-1 Democratic incumbent Diane Degette refused to debate her opponent. In CO CD-4 Republican incumbent Ken Buck had 5 joint appearances with challenger Bob Seay, but none could be characterized as a debate.
- Democrats and Republicans frequently collude to exclude minor party competition at debates.
- Without debates, how do voters discern whose priorities we agree with most? Which candidate is the best qualified? Who has the best solutions?

Election Issues

Low voter turnout

- The American public is increasing disengaged.
- Only 54.5% of eligible voters voted in the 2016 Presidential election.
- About 35% of eligible voters vote in city of Boulder odd year City Council elections.

Another narrative of the American Revolution and U.S. Constitution



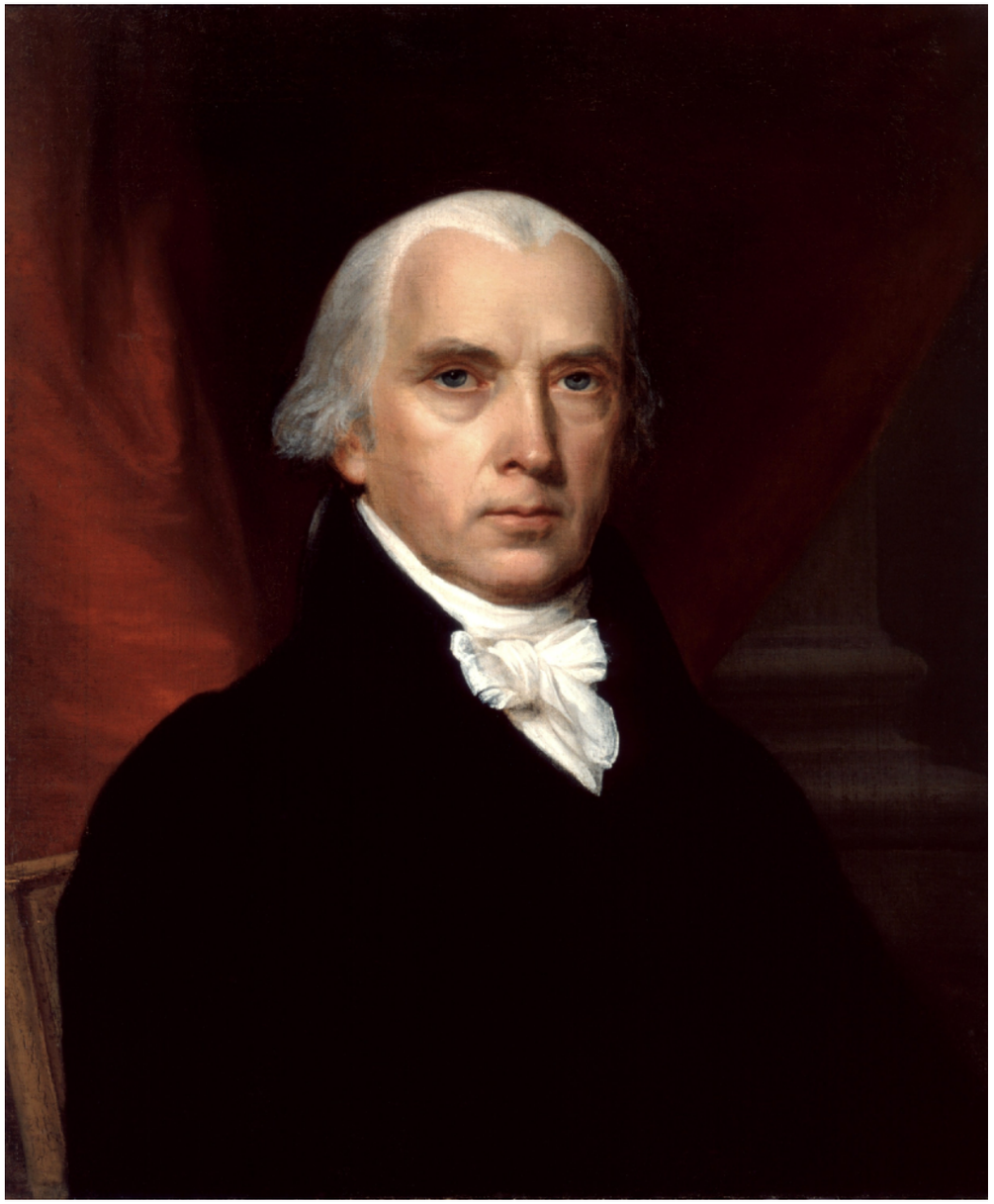
Slave Nation
by Alfred and Ruth Blumrosen

Why did we revolt from England?

Somerset v. Stewart

In 1772, the "Somerset v. Stewart" King's Bench decision peacefully abolished slavery in England and Wales, 4 years before the US Declaration of Independence.

The Founders were morally compromised



James Madison, “Father” of the US Constitution, owned 120 slaves. Madison meant the Constitution to:

"protect the minority of the opulent against the majority."

Constitutional Convention Results?

- Voter Suppression: 94% of the population was disenfranchised.
- The “3/5ths Compromise”, gave slavers control of the Electoral College, all three branches of Government, future legislation, the Presidency and the Supreme Court.
- 10 of the first 12 Presidents were slavers.
- The United States endured slavery for 93 years after it was abolished in England in 1772.
- Jim Crow: institutionalized discrimination against African Americans, persisted for 100 years after slavery was finally abolished in 1865.

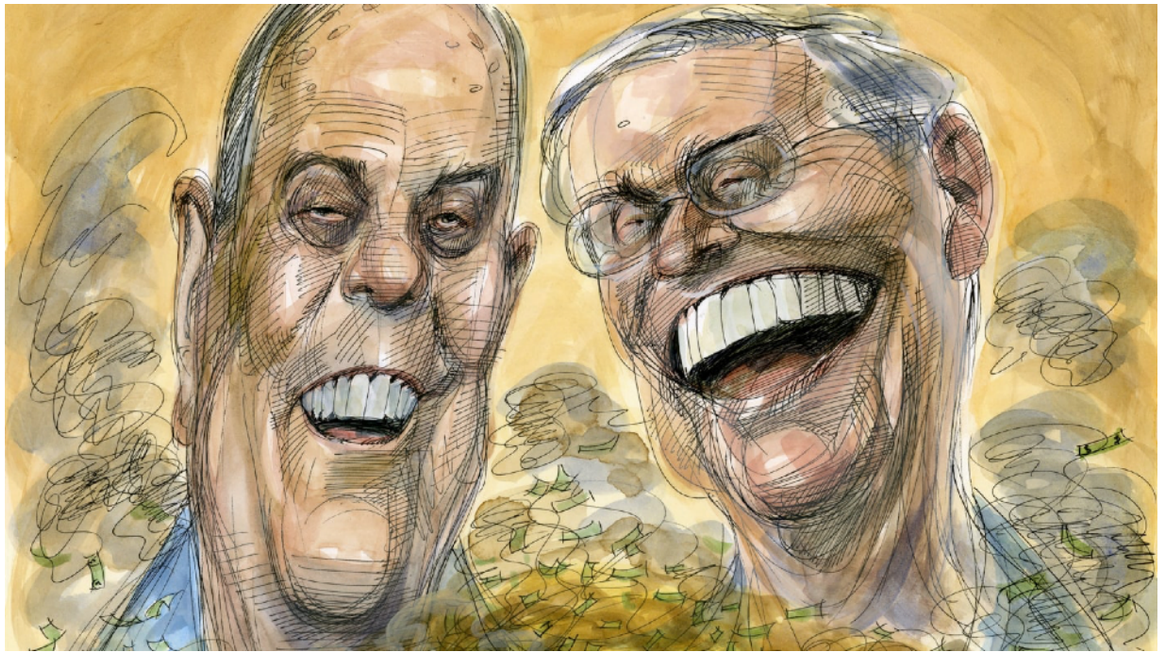
Why do election issues persist?

Article V purposefully made change difficult, designed to give slave states veto power over abolition.

Continuity of Elite Dominance Since Inception

John Jay, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, second Governor of New York, owned 8 slaves.

"The people who own the country ought to govern it."



Victor Juhasz illustration

Charles and David Koch

David Rockefeller

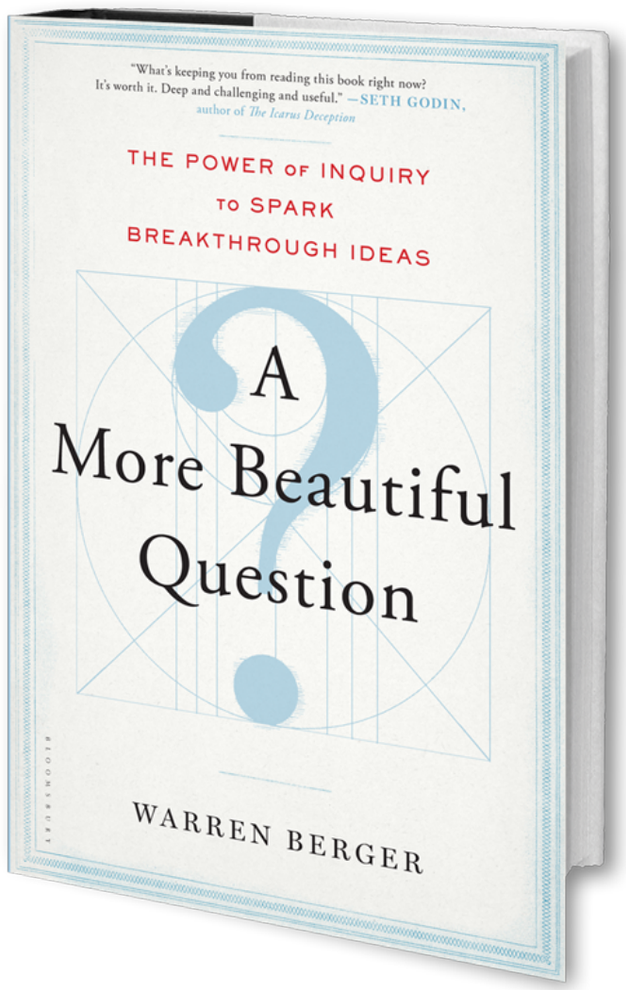
What are the results of the Slavers' Model?

Concentration of wealth in a small minority of hands.

"We used to own our slaves, now we just rent them"

- Florida Farmer, "Harvest of Shame", 1960 CBS television documentary by Edward R. Murrow

Step 3: Remedies: Reframe the Question.



A More Beautiful Question

An ambitious, actionable question can serve as a catalyst for change.

Step 3: Remedies: Reframe the Question.

”What election system results in the most equitable representation of the electorate and greatest level of accountability?”

Step 3: Goals & Remedies

What is Best Democracy ?

Everyone gets a seat at the table.
Everyone's interests are represented.

Step 3: Remedies

What better models exist?

How do they work?

Why adopt them?

Choices

Two clunky old phones that don’t have today’s features?

Or, unlimited sizes, vendors, colors, price points, with up to date functionality?

Mixed Member Districts (MMD)
Proportional Representation with a Party List

Used by 5 of the top 5 democracies in the world as defined by the "Democracy Index":

Norway

Iceland

Sweden

New Zealand

Denmark

Inclusive, not exclusive.

Remedies: Multi Member Districts

MMD solves two major issues, gerrymandering and meeting the "Inclusiveness v. Exclusiveness" test.

- **PR systems represent nearly everyone.**
- **Fine Grain Multi Member districts are impervious to gerrymandering.**

Iceland's MMD System is inclusive, Boulder County's electoral system is exclusive.

	Boulder County	Iceland
Population	322,226	334,139
Legislative Body	County Commissioners	Alþingi
Districts	3	7
Members per District	1	9
Elected Representatives	**3**	**63**
Electoral System	First Past the Post	Proportional Representation
Parties Represented	**1**	**7**

Colorado's electoral system is exclusive, Denmark's MMD System is inclusive.

	Colorado	Denmark
Population	5,540,545	5,748,769
Legislative Body	House & Senate	Folketing
Districts	35 House & 65 Sen.	12
Members per District	1	13 average from districts
At Large	0	40
Elected Representatives	100	179
Electoral System	First Past the Post	Proportional Representation
Parties Represented	2	9

Remedy: Design a Colorado electoral system to meet today's needs.

- Government officials should more accurately reflect the people they're representing.
- Fine Grain Proportional Representation impervious to gerrymandering.
- Move from concentrated power to dispersed.
- Make government accountable.
- Make Colorado one of the top 5 democracies in the world.

Best Democracy

Proposed Colorado Plan

	Colorado	Denmark
Population	5,540,545	5,748,769
Legislative Body	Unicameral House	Folketing
Districts	21	12
Members per District	11	13 average from districts
At Large	64	40
Elected Representatives	295	179
Parties Represented	6+	9

Goal

Increase Voter Participation

- In countries with Proportional Representation, multiple parties offer voters lots of choice. Norway has 8 parties and a 78% voter turnout. The US has 2 major parties with a 54.5% voter turnout.
- Universal registration, make voting an opt-out policy.
- Remove all barriers to voting: physical, time constraints, handicap access, language.

Remedies: Why adopt Proportional Representation?

"...the right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all."

- Gary Swing

- Improved ballot access for candidates.
- More voter choice.
- Fairest system of representation: 39% of the vote = 39% of the seats.
- Includes nearly everyone at the table.
- Facilitates government based on coalitions and cooperation.
- Eliminate gerrymandering and safe districts.
- Eliminate obstructions to change.
- Introduce accountability to our elected officials.
- Increase voter participation by representing all voter blocks.

Best Democracy

Best Democracy was started in Colorado with two people in Sept./2015. As of April/2017 we have 265 FB members from 15 states, Washington D.C., Canada, England and Norway.

- **Join Best Democracy on Facebook.**
- **Show this presentation to other groups.**
- **Contact your elected representatives. Ask them what they're doing to make elections more fair, politicians more accountable. Ask them if they know about Proportional Representation.**
- **Contact jesse@bestdemocracy.org, volunteer to work on charter campaigns, the web site and to organize events.**

Proportional Representation Importance

Vision: voters form voluntary constituencies Not just by geography, in districts

US hasn't upgraded its democracy since Alpha version from 1700's

Except for successful local movements 100 years ago (National Municipal League)

Beaten back by politcal operatives, McCarthy era

For councils and boards and legislatures, both at-large elections and ward systems distort representation

Fair redistricting initiatives on the way in Colorado, but inherently limited

PR is Easy to Achieve

Demonstrated all around the world Any PR system is a major improvement

Mixed Member PR with leveling seats, ala Germany STV: Single Transferrable Vote (Boulder 1917-1947) STAR (Single Transferable Assigned Representative) (Jameson Quinn at Harvard)

Mix and match options for:

Ballots Districts Lists Tallying

Ballot options

STAR ballots:

Like current ballots, but allow nonlocal write-ins

MMP: 1 district vote for candidate, 1 national vote for part

STV: Rank each candidate in multi-member district

Districting options

PR does not need multiple-winner districts! Just use existing districts with STAR voting

Somewhat bigger districts with MMP system for overall proportionality

For council one big district, but with PR. People will vote geographically if they want

Lists: predeclarations and delegation

STAR: Candidates each publish their list Party lists, adjusted by tally results

Tally method - lots of good options

STAR: Single Transferrable Vote (state-wide)

Councils: Proportional Approval Voting, Reweighted Range Voting

STAR voting

Every party assigns a representative to every district

Nearly everyone is represented by someone they supported

What if it works too well: lots of parties? Many options Require minimum percentage

Status, Momentum

10 State legislatures have multi-member districts Potomac Compact proposal: Maryland and Virginia

Real interest in Oregon on redistricting panel Study alternatives

But nearly any PR system is better than current system Avoid perfectionism

Attention: Colorado Target Audience

- Unaffiliated voters (36% of Coloradans).
- Disenchanted Republicans.
- Disenchanted Democrats.
- Minor party members: Libertarians, Greens.
- Think Globally, Act Locally. Start in Colorado. Spread knowledge of PR and this great remedy for Electoral Dysfunction to other states, just like decriminalization of marijuana.

Step 5: Action, Achieving Social Change

Proportional Representation and Range Voting are great remedies. How do we realize them into working electoral systems?

- Management by Objective; step by step.
- Marketing 101: cutting edge and early adopters first.
- Local governments, then states.
- Create YouTube videos.
- Ask your local city council to create a “Good Governance” Board to examine election reforms and political accountability.
- Identify the low hanging fruit. Which local governments need change most?
- Write Charter Amendment templates. Clear legal tests.
- Introduce change incrementally by conducting winning campaigns, 50% +1, in the low hanging fruit local governments, giving voters tangible PR examples to examine.