

Harriet Tubman and the Twenty Dollar Bill Debate

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Currency Redesign and the Proposal to Honour Harriet Tubman

The Department of Treasury in the United States in April 2016 made announcements on plans to adjust several amendments to the American currency. In their proposal, they constituted the most extensive revisions in nearly a century. Among the changes proposed in the \$ 20 bill, which has all along been bearing the portrait of Andrew Jackson on the front side, will now carry the picture of the former anti-slavery and abolitionist crusader, Harriet Tubman. Additionally, the Treasury has scheduled the bills for \$ 5 and \$10 for the redesign to bear the portraits of other women and leaders of civil rights groups. The department has also scheduled the official unveiling of new faced redesigns to be done in 2020 (Yglesias, 2016).

Jacob, the secretary of the Treasury, asserted that Tubman had been a role model to many for her brave leadership and her involvement in promoting democracy. The numerous comments and positive reactions from the children, who not only consider the icon historic but also a shining example of a leadership mentor, particularly touched the Treasury secretary. However, critics have met Treasury's decision with a lot of controversy, voicing their diverse views concerning the changes. The critics insist that the proposed changes will have many far-reaching negative impacts on the history of the United States (Speiser, 2015).

Political Objections to Changing the Twenty Dollar Bill

This paper presents an argument that intends to persuade a senator in the Senate against impending sweeping extended changes in the currency of the United States. It seeks to comprehensively outline the arguments that explain why the front side of the \$ 20 US currency, which currently bears the portrait of President Andrew Jackson, should not change to the picture of Harriet Tubman (Brown, 2017).

The main problem with the proposed changes in the US currency is the fact that the issue presents a symbolic question rather than a practical question in the controversial [American political](#) atmosphere. This is because the problem of [racism in the United States](#) is one of the controversial topics in politics. Some of the critics of the issue term the move as one that could potentially divide the country. This is

due to the long history of racism in American society between the Whites and the non-white communities who reside in the most powerful country (Pruitt, 2015). Harriet Tubman is a black American, while President Andrew Jackson is a pure white, which means that the proposed changes are apparently controversial. The changes, therefore, have the potential to polarize the political atmosphere of American politics with the possibility of intensifying racism in the society. This may negatively affect the peaceful coexistence among the White and non-white communities (Yglesias, 2016).

The inclusion of a woman figure on the front portrait of the \$ 20 bills is a sign of progress towards enhancing gender equality among the members of the society in the US. However, this indicates that the social [privilege of white](#) men is under threat yet again following the recently failed attempt to replace the current treasury secretary with a woman. It also shows that the demographic face of the culture in the US is changing in a way that is not acceptable (Speiser, 2015). The move by the Democratic Party to institute the change is evidence that the politics of the traditional conservative movement are greatly opposed by the Republicans.

Counterfeiting, Security, and the Practical Purpose of Redesign

It is important to note that the primary objective of the Treasury Department in its activities of redesigning the currency is to implement the necessary measures that are aimed at reducing the incidences of counterfeit notes in money transactions during daily economic activities. On the other hand, the issue of replacing the portrait with that of a woman is a mere aesthetic fix that is not in any way significant in preventing counterfeit incidences in the money. It is, therefore, unnecessary to replace portrait of President Jackson with that of a woman by the Treasury (Inskeep, 2015). The proposed changes are consequently uncalled for because they will only serve to create antagonism in American society, therefore overshadowing the primary objective.

Andrew Jackson is a former president of the United States who became the seventh commander-in-chief in 1829 and, therefore, is a symbolic figure in the history of the United States (Speiser, 2015). Andrew Jackson is heavily criticized for his cruelty against the slaves in his famous slave advertisement, Runaway (Brown, 2017). The potential replacement of his portrait, Harriet Tubman, was influential in aiding the slaves to escape forced labor while working as a union spy. The cruelty of Andrew Jackson cannot nullify the fact that he was indeed one of the founding fathers of the United States. His deeds were not acceptable in the postmodern era, but during those days, it was hard to consider them as infringing on the rights of the black people who were brought to the country as slaves (Yglesias, 2016).

Therefore, despite his cruel deeds, he has still been celebrated as an influential figure in shaping the destiny of the United States and, therefore, should continue to be recognized in American money as many other founding fathers. The argument put forward when identifying his portrait for replacement

was the fact he never advocated for the use of paper money. The claim does not hold any water, and thus, it is not a legitimate reason for his removal from the \$ 20 bill (Yglesias, 2016). The claim overlooks his overall importance to the country because his stand 3 was merely that which did not prevent the actual existence of paper money.

Alexander Hamilton, Harriet Tubman, and Competing Claims to Representation

The Department of Treasury initially intended to replace the face of a \$10 bill that bore the picture of Alexander Hamilton to feature a woman due to the longstanding requests from the activists. However, the victim turned out to be former president Andrew Jackson because supporters of the founder of the banking and monetary system in the US protested against that change. According to his fans, Hamilton is more connected to the currency compared to other public figures in the country and, therefore, should remain put (Speiser, 2015). The selection of Jackson is an unfair decision given his immense contribution to the history of the United States, and hence, regardless of his perceived cruelty towards the slaves, cannot be rendered insignificant to the nation.

Andrew Jackson has great historical significance in the United States due to his immense contribution to the Army of the Americas, where he led the forces to significant victories in some battles throughout his career. During the Age of Jackson, the influential leader contributed to greater democracy in the country, most notably among the ordinary people. It was during his tenure as an American President that the country experienced the most significant political movements before the start of slavery around the 1850s. In 1801, when he was the commander of the American forces, he led the army to a crucial victory against the invading British forces (Inskeep, 2015). He famously won the Battle of the New Orleans against the British troops, where he ruthlessly defeated the British troops, leaving them with over 2000 casualties against America's 71. He later served as the US president for eight years, from 1829 to 1837.

His achievements greatly contributed to the nature of modern-day politics because he founded the modern-day Democratic Party after the split of the Democratic-Republican Party and later contested using the party for the presidency in 1828. He is the First President elected through the Democratic Party in the United States (Berman, 2015). The Democratic Party is the oldest party that still exists in modern-day politics all over the world and is one of the two [political parties in the United States](#).

Andrew Jackson and the Democratic Legacy of Popular Politics

Andrew Jackson's primary objective in leading a political movement was to promote greater democracy for the sake of the ordinary people, commonly known as Jackson democracy. He devolved

the political power from the already politically established elites to the ordinary voters. He promoted democracy through all ranks of politics in the American nation, which remained a dominant issue before the start of slavery in the 1850s. Jacksonian democracy played a crucial role in growing the American democracy, which later motivated various events and political movements in later years (Inskeep, 2015).

The Jacksonian democracy enabled all white males to exercise their right to vote in an electoral process by initiating the change of state laws that only allowed male voters who possessed property to vote. Through Jacksonian democracy, the majority of states adopted universal male suffrage by the 1850s, which subsequently led to the abandonment of the provisions that eligible voters must own property and the mandatory payment of taxes. These efforts by Andrew Jackson were of supreme importance in facilitating better representation of the less privileged citizens in the United States (Anirudh, 2016).

During his tenure as president, he intensified trading activities between the United States and other European countries by signing treaties and opening up the borders for more trade with Asian and South American countries. During his presidency, Jackson led to around a 70 % increase in exports and a remarkable 250 % increase in imports into the country. Jackson was also instrumental in the fight against corruption, where he undertook some measures to deal with corrupt elements inherited from previous regimes. He facilitated resignations from the office of the corrupt officers, including his postmaster general, who was found engaging in fraudulent activities (Brown, 2017). He played a critical role in the growth of science in the United States, specifically in the field of oceanography, when he authorized scientific expeditions in 1836, which were implemented later on by his successor, Martin Van Buren.

Partisanship, Historical Memory, and the Politics of American Currency

The proposition by the leadership of the Democratic Party under President Obama to remove former President Andrew Jackson is questionable. The criterion used only proves that the decision was purely a political one. The series of changes that have taken place over the years that the Democratic Party has been around in American Politics can explain the clamor for the replacement of Jackson's face with the \$ 20 currency.

During the mid-20th century, the inclusion of Northern African Americans into the Democratic Party led to the incorporation of their interests into the party. The African Americans were for their civil rights supported by the progressive movements and the liberal ideologues. Their inclusion meant that the Democratic Party became a new multi-racial coalition that led to a historiographical revolution in the history of the United States. This has subsequently led to a significant shift from the old norms under which Andrew Jackson and [Thomas Jefferson](#) founded the Democratic Party (Speiser, 2015). Many progressives now in the party are, therefore, supportive of replacing the champion of democracy in

the United States with the portrait of a black woman on the \$20 bill.

In conclusion, the proposed replacement of Andrew Jackson from the face of the \$20 bill with the face of Harriet Tubman should be allowed to happen. This is because it will deny future generations to honor one of the most prominent founding fathers of the United States, who played a critical role in the growth of democracy in the country. Although Harriet Tubman also deserves equal recognition and equal measures, it should not be at the expense of compromising the efforts of Andrew Jackson, who, in many ways, created the modern world.

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