

In recent history our nation has been home to many scandalous activities. Whether it is Dan Rather's RatherGate, Governor Christie's BridgeGate, or even Tom Brady's DeflateGate the suffix of gate inspired by Nixon's Watergate has filled our media's news tickers. The tremendous story of a paranoid President and his staffers ultimate quest for power has certainly had its lasting effects on our nation. Effects more far reaching than the insertion of a suffix describing scandals both big and small. Due to the revelation of the Watergate Hotel break-in we were introduced to some of the first instances of modern investigative journalism, corruption in Washington, and Constitutional precedents that befuddled even the most knowledgeable of counselors. While each topic has its rightful place, the realization that the existence of corruption and a stark lack of integrity in the Oval Office has haunted our nation. This event has impacted voter turnout, and more importantly the American psyche, resulting in a permanent change in the peoples outlook on American politics. One man and his band of cronies left their stain on the American political system. The motives, justifications, and responses of these individuals are rather intriguing and not quite as simple as one might imagine, but, most important to understand are the far reaching effects the Nixon Administration had on our nations political landscape. When Benjamin Franklin left Independence Hall after the Second Drafting a woman on the street approached him and asked: Mr. Franklin, what manner of government have you bequeathed us? Franklin replied: A Republic madam. If you can keep it. Here is the story, not simply of the Watergate Scandal, but rather, an in-depth description of why Franklin was right and why an informed electorate is integral to our nation's political well being. The acts of the Nixon administration and the execution of the Watergate Scandal, including the cover-up plan and failed judicial proceedings, are the primary factor in the severe distrust in the American governmental system.

It's Sunday June 18th, 1972, and the Washington Post is about to welcome the American people to the mysterious 'back room' of the White House where deals are brokered, secrets are kept, and conspiracies are planned. "Five Held in Plot to Bug Democratic Offices" was the tagline that ran at the bottom of page one in the Washington Post. The story reported that a team of burglars were arrested inside the office of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate office complex in Washington. As two young, investigative journalists, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, were called to work on this developing story and they soon found themselves thrust into the big leagues. The next day "GOP Security Aide Among Those Arrested" topped the headlines and the Nixon administration was thrown into a frenzy. The story reported that James McCord, who was on Nixon's re-election committee payroll, was listed as one of the burglars in the break-in.ⁱ This story was no longer a mere headline. It was shaping up to be a national scandal immune to any modern day twenty-four hour news cycle. As the Federal Bureau of Investigation stepped into the ring it was certain that this incident would not be going away easily. Later, we would find out that that Nixon and his Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman privately discussed how to persuade the CIA to prompt the FBI to nix their investigation into the crime. Publicly, the White House's official response was that they would not comment on a "third-rate burglary."ⁱⁱ

Weeks later Woodward and Bernstein reported that a grand jury sought testimony from two men who had worked in the Nixon administration: E. Howard Hunt, a CIA officer, and FBI agent G. Gordon Liddy whom were now suspects in the pending case. Both of these men were later indicted for "guiding the burglars, via walkie talkies in the Watergate building."ⁱⁱⁱ With this revelation, the story was heating up, but the evidence linking Nixon to the burglary remained circumstantial until a ground breaking piece of information came to light. Bernstein had learned

that a check in the amount of 25,000 dollars from the funds of Nixon's re-election campaign was deposited into the bank account of Maurice Stans who served as Nixon's former Secretary of Commerce and more importantly was a current suspect in the case.^{iv} This was the first time that Woodward and Bernstein were able to report a definite link between Nixon and the burglary. The journalists continued to gather mass amounts of information through some investigation and a little help from the inside. Mark Felt, a high ranking official in the FBI, was being utilized as a confidential source. With access to all information of the ongoing investigation, Felt was able to confirm or deny the gathered information of the reporters along with hinting them towards various leads to pursue. What they were able to uncover through Felt's assistance played an integral role in bringing down the Nixon administration. While it would be easy to initially presume that Felt was merely carrying out his oath to defend the Constitution and uphold the law, the fact that these meetings were held in secret would suggest otherwise. Felt, a thirty-one year veteran of the FBI and WWII 'spymaster' knew exactly what he was doing. In the public, Felt was railing against the Washington Post's stories and the internal government leaks. "In a February memo released from the FBI, Felt denounced the Post stories as an amalgam of 'fiction and half truths' combined with some genuine information from 'sources either in the FBI or the Department of Justice.' To deflect attention from himself, he ordered an investigation into the latest leak. Expedite, he said."^v But the question becomes: why would Felt want the FBI to keep the investigation under wraps? It would later be revealed that Felt was considered by the Nixon administration as 'our boy' and one they could count on for discretion. According to the White House Counselor, John Dean, Felt had done the administration a major favor early in their presidency. Later released in a biography of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI had learned of a "ring of homosexualists at the

highest levels of the White House.” Hoover sent over one of his ‘most discrete executives’ to investigate. “The alleged homosexualists included H. R. Haldeman and fellow White House aide John Erlichman. After interviewing the suspects, Felt found no evidence to support the allegations and recommended that the case be closed.”^{vi} So, he was a friend of Nixon’s. In the meantime, Felt had begun to talk off the record about the Watergate case to Woodward. Felt and Woodward also had a working relationship. “He [Felt] had first met Woodward, then a U.S. Navy courier, outside the White House Situation Room in 1970. After Woodward joined The Post in 1971, Felt became a valued source.”^{vii} The question of Felt’s double life still raises the question as to why he wanted to act as a double agent. The best answer, the conclusion the Nixon administration was able to reach upon their realization, was that Felt was after Hoover’s job of FBI Director. Though Felt’s actions were not in fact rooted in a deeper sense of patriotism, but rather existed as a personal power play, his role was integral in The Post being able to uncover the truths of the scandal. Through Felt, Woodward and Bernstein were able to share the most intimate details of the scandal with the American public.

In the next major break of information The Post was able to learn that Attorney General John Mitchell controlled a ‘secret fund’ that paid for a campaign to gather information on the Democrats. Following reports confirmed that there was a massive amount of ‘hush money’ flowing through the administration. President Nixon told his Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman that the Watergate Burglars “are going to need money.” The next day, burglar G. Gordon Liddy, told White House aides that he and his fellow burglars would need money for bail, legal expenses and family support. It was eventually revealed that E. Howard Hunt was at the center of this scheme to blackmail the White House for about one million dollars in order to remain silent. The White

House determined that it would be in their best interest to provide this 'hush money.' White House attorney John Dean met with Vernon Walters, the Deputy Director of the CIA to ask if the agency could provide 'financial assistance' to the Watergate burglars. The request was denied. Nixon and his re-election staff directed Maurice Stans, Nixon's chief fundraiser, to appropriate 75,000 dollars to the burglars.^{viii}

From the beginning, pieces of information brought forth describing the act itself undoubtedly left the American people with many questions. In regard to the hush money the question arises: Why did Hunt and Liddy request so much funds to keep quiet? Did they believe their tracks were covered? Why did they want to break away from their colleague and friend? While the exact answer to that question may never be quite clear there are logical inferences we can make. In an administration rocked with corruption carried out through scandal it is clear that Nixon and company were a group of individuals who were morally bankrupt and numb to the public's best interest. It would be logical to suggest that these individuals requesting so much money, money that was donated by Nixon supporters, was now for their own personal gain as they watched their careers in the public sector come to a crashing halt.

What is an even more striking question that we must ask is why did Nixon feel the need to deceive the American people to win his re-election campaign and why did his top aides go along with the plan? It is certainly no secret that the human specimen is one of greed. People seek power and when they rise to power they seek more. It is of a wide held opinion by many Americans that politicians are only concerned with remaining in office as long as possible. It has been said of federal elections that campaign tactics are no holds barred and the examples dating all the way back to 1835 Presidential election of Jackson vs Adams tell us that. But, why Nixon?

In what is certainly a slightly comical scenario President Nixon was a well received Chief Executive. He carried an average approval rating of 49% among the American people. Going in to the election of 1972 Nixon's rating was just slightly fluctuated in the mid 50's. By today's standards, Nixon was the people's President. Even more striking were the results from the Nixon-McGovern race. Nixon defeated the South Dakota senator in a landslide victory carrying 47 states. He received 508 Electoral votes to McGovern's 172. Nixon was set to match or exceed FDR's record of winning all but two states in his 1936 election.^{ix} Certainly Nixon nor his advisors were able to shake their crystal ball to know with certainty the results of the election. But even so, would Nixon's team have not known through various polls that he was carrying all but three states? This landslide victory shapes the Watergate Scandal in an entirely new way. With such popularity Nixon was commanding the nation to follow his lead. The nation wanted Nixon. So, it begs the question: Why did he feel the need to cheat to secure a seemingly inevitable victory? Most historians describe Nixon as suffering from a deep sense of paranoia rooted in a fear of his enemies. David Greenberg, author of *Nixon's Shadow: The History Of An Image*, argued that before Nixon was President he was a Congressman, a Senator and the Vice President and as he climbed through these ranks he accumulated many enemies along the way. Of course it would be natural to make enemies in this profession. What is more indicative of Nixon's paranoia, Greenberg argues, is that Nixon always kept lists of his enemies, he knew who they were and he wasn't going to leave them alone. In rising to power so quickly, Nixon viewed his Presidency, in large part, as a personal vehicle to exact revenge on his enemies and provide rewards to his friends. What is even more astonishing than Nixon's obsession with his enemies is that he believed in all of his 'secret' actions and that he was above the law. Insert Nixon's infamous quote "I am not a

crook.” Nixon was convinced that he was fighting a larger moral battle against those who were out to ruin him.^x

What is even lesser known about Richard Nixon is that he was a man of a firm belief, convinced that three specific groups were out to ruin his career, and even worse were set against compromising the values of the nation.^{xi} The chief groups that were to blame in Nixon’s view, were those in the Ivy League, Semites, and Intellectuals. A dark sense of paranoia led Nixon to assert that folks classified in these groups were set against his political goals. So, to the original question: Why did Nixon conspire to break into the DNC headquarters? In short, he was on an ill-fated mission to win his re-election. He would stop at nothing to recapture the political domain he had over his enemies. In Nixon’s eyes he was on an exceptional mission founded in morality and could do no wrong. However, the next two years would not prove that idea false. The administration faced turmoil as previously mentioned but bad press, as Nixon would find out, was only the beginning.

For the second portion of this essay the indictment, impeachment, and resignation process will be discussed. On August 8th, 1974, Richard Millhouse Nixon serving as the 37th President of the United States offered his resignation to the American people. He immediately turned over the office to Vice-President Gerald R. Ford. After nearly two years of public debate, mounting pressure from the press, and consequently the American people, party leaders urged Nixon to step down. Speaking from the Oval Office, President Nixon stated that: “I must put the interests of the American people first” and he went on to admit that some of his judgements “were wrong.” Though he never took responsibility for the actions carried out by his administration nor

did he make any reference to the actions of the House Judiciary Committee he did remove himself from office. Prior to that fateful day, the U.S. Congress took action which certainly prompted Nixon's resignation. On July 27th, of 1974 the House Judiciary Committee voted overwhelmingly to pass the Three Articles of Impeachment. This was only the second time in American history that impeachment of a President was even considered. This move would have set up a Senate hearing leading to the actual removal of the President. Possibly seeing the inevitable end of these hearings leading to his firing Nixon decided to resign his office—before the rest of his dirty laundry was aired out.

Though Nixon left office and escaped further black marks in the Presidential history books, his darkest days were yet to come and his legacy was far from secure. The fact remained that a crime had been committed and higher legal action was still being sought. However, Nixon set many new precedents in his time in office and they exceeded the forging of U.S.-China relations. There was no protocol, no constitutional guideline in place for handling this sort of action; certainly not when taken by the President. The legal actions being considered were, in my opinion, far too lenient by the Office of the Special Prosecutor. The discussion that took place was whether or not Nixon could be indicted for Obstruction of Justice in covering up the scandal itself. In a memorandum sent to Leon Jaworski the Special Prosecutor assigned to this case it was determined that: "there is clear evidence that Richard M. Nixon participated in a conspiracy to obstruct justice by concealing the identity of those responsible for the Watergate break-in and other criminal offenses." It was determined that Nixon should be held to the same standard as any private citizen for breaking the law. But, the counter-argument weighed in that same memo-

random listed specific factors that would “mandate against indictment and prosecution.” Those factors included such things as: 1) His resignation being sufficient punishment. 2) Prosecution might further aggravate political divisions. 3) There would be considerable difficulty in achieving a fair trial because of the massive pre-trial publicity. But, there were also itemized factors that would mandate an indictment as well. Those included: 1) The principle of equal justice under the law. 2) The country will be further divided by Mr. Nixon unless there is final disposition of charges against him. 3) It cannot be sufficient retribution for criminal offenses merely to surrender the public office and trust which has been demonstrably abused.^{xii}

Mr. Jaworski faced a rather difficult decision with all factors considered. But, there was one remaining factor that sat above all the rest. Jaworski had a constitutional responsibility to take legal action. In Article I, Section 3, Clause 7 of the United States Constitution it states that: “a person removed from office by impeachment and conviction ‘shall nevertheless be liable to indictment, trial, judgement, and punishment according to the law.’” Now, throw another wrench into the works. Jaworski recognized that there were no guidelines on how to handle a President who had committed a crime and then resigned his office.^{xiii}

Ultimately, the case was going to be handled by the courts. In the case of the United States vs. Richard M. Nixon, Mr. Chief Justice Burger delivered the opinion of the court. On March 1, 1974, a grand jury of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia “returned an indictment charging seven individuals with various offenses, including conspiracy to defraud the United States and to obstruct justice.” Although Nixon was not designated as such in the indictment the grand jury named Nixon as an ‘unindicted co-conspirator.’ In this, by ruling of the District Court, a subpoena was handed down that: “required the production...of certain tapes,

memoranda, papers, transcripts, or other writings relating to certain precisely identified meetings between the President and others.”^{xiv} In a final attempt to remove himself from any level of guilt the President’s counsel filed a ‘special appearance’ and a ‘motion to quash the subpoena.’ This motion was a claim of Executive Privilege by the President. The District Court denied the motions presented. In short, the Special Prosecutor and the court had subpoenaed the tape recordings and further documents held by the Nixon administration that would have undoubtedly found each individual guilty of the crimes charged. Nixon and his counsel argued that the President held Executive Privilege and was not obligated to turn over the requested information. In a landmark 8-0 ruling “the court held that neither the doctrine of Separation of Powers, nor the generalized need for confidentiality of high-level communications, without more, can sustain an absolute, unqualified, Presidential privilege. The court granted that there was a limited executive privilege in areas of military and diplomatic affairs, but gave preference to ‘the fundamental demands of due process of the law in the fair administration of justice.’ Therefore, the president must obey the subpoena and produce the tapes and documents.”^{xv}

However, the President virtually walked free for his crimes committed. The Constitutional issue that prevented Nixon from being prosecuted under the full force of the law was Ford’s pardoning upon his oath of office. It was of now-President Ford’s opinion that the nation needed to unite and move past the Watergate Scandal. He declared that the ‘national tragedy was over’ and that we could now begin to heal. But, the issue wasn’t so simple for everyone and Ford’s pardoning of Nixon didn’t clear the crimes committed against the American people. In fact, this decision enraged many American’s as well as British television personality David Frost.

In the third section of this paper the period following the resignation will be discussed including the David Frost interview with Richard Nixon. Up to this point the nation had experienced a true roller coaster of emotions regarding the federal government. The country was involved in an extremely divisive conflict in Vietnam that led to protests on college campuses, the burning of draft cards, and deserters. The President of the United States had committed a high crime that he would not be tried for. There was a change in administrations and the Vice President turned President, whom was never even elected to office, immediately pardoned Nixon to prevent criminal charges. The American people were duped by a relatively well-respected politician and the principle of justice had been taken hostage. For most American's, Nixon was at fault and his favorability ratings dropped significantly. In May of 1973, the Watergate hearings, chaired by Senator Samuel Ervin, commanded a large audience. It was reported by a Gallup poll that nearly seventy-one percent of Americans watched the televised hearings. By August, Nixon's approval rating fell to thirty-one percent. While Nixon maintained that Watergate was primarily a political matter, at this time, fifty-three percent of American's determined that Watergate 'was a serious matter' and an overwhelming majority, seventy-one percent, had come to view Nixon as a culprit in the wrong-doing. Interestingly enough though, it wasn't until August of 1974 that the House Judiciary Committee ruled that Nixon be impeached and that the nation was finally able to reach a majority consensus, fifty-seven percent, believed that Nixon should be impeached or leave office.^{xvi}

In the aforementioned contentions it was concluded that Nixon was in fact not impeached nor tried for his crimes following President Ford's blanket pardon. So, three years after Nixon submitted his resignation, the people's court took session with British television personality

David Frost presiding. In a lengthy multiple part interview Frost walked Nixon step by step through the events that had unraveled during the Watergate Scandal and the judicial proceedings that had followed. While Frost was dawning no real legal power and could hand down no official punishment he sought something much more meaningful for our American democracy. He sought, for the people, an admission of guilt and an apology from Richard Nixon. I would argue that the people learned more about Richard Nixon the man and the scandal itself during this interview than we had previously ever known.

One major point that stood at the forefront was the contention that Nixon should have been charged with obstruction of justice for his covering up of the scandal and the individuals who carried it out. When Frost brought up this point it became clear that cracking Nixon would be no simple task. On the point of the cover-up, referring to the hush money, Nixon responded: "If a cover up is for the purpose of covering up a criminal activity then it is illegal. If, however, a cover up, as you [Frost] have called it, is for a motive that is not criminal, that is something else. My motive was not criminal." During the interview, in large part, Nixon maintained that the people must not weigh his actual actions in specific, but rather the motive behind the actions. Thus, arguing that he never had any ill or corrupt intent in his handling of the situation. In fact, Nixon believed that he was serving in the best interest of the nation and that the things he did in office, particularly during the Watergate Scandal, was a means to an end to accomplish his agenda. Later on in the interview with Frost, the question was posed to Nixon: "Would you say that there are certain situations...where the President can decide that it's in the best interest of the nation, and do something illegal." Nixon, with agitation, answered: "Well, when the President does it, that means it is not illegal." With this answer it is abundantly clear that Nixon had convinced himself

that he was not violating the law. Nixon maintained: "I did not commit the crime of obstruction of justice because I did not have the motive required for the commission of that crime...I did not commit an impeachable offense. You're wanting me to say that I took part in an illegal cover up. No!" Towards the end of the interview Frost began to ask the questions straight forward. He demanded his thesis be meant and that Nixon accept responsibility for his actions. Frost asked Nixon if he would be willing to say more about the scandal. Nixon asked, "What would you like me to say?" Frost replied: "I think there are three things that I would like to hear you say, that the American people would like yo hear you say. One, that more than mistakes were made, there was wrong doing. Two, that I [Nixon] did abuse the power I had as President and three, I put the American people through two years of needless agony and I apologize for that." Through a lengthy answer Nixon covered a lot of points. Before getting to the portion of the answer that Frost was looking for Nixon looked to defend himself one last time. Referring to the period between April 30th and August 9th, the day he resigned, Nixon said: "From that period I did some things that were good for this country...I was concerned about the China Initiative...and the Vietnam fragile peace agreement." Finally, Nixon opened his heart to the nation and offered some sort of an apology. He referred to his final cabinet meeting he had the evening before he offered his resignation. Speaking to his key supporters, cabinet members, and advisors he said: "I am sorry. I just hope I haven't let you down."

Nixon reflected that when he uttered those words he knew that he had in fact let them down. He continued: "I let down my friends, I let down the country, I let down our system of government and the dreams of all those young people who oughta get into government but will think its all corrupt and the rest. Most of all, I let down an opportunity that I would have had for

two and half years to proceed on great projects and programs for building a lasting peace.” In the final moment of the interview: Nixon finished by saying: “I made so many bad judgements, mistakes of the heart rather than the head. But, let me say, a man in that top job has gotta have heart but his head must always rule his heart.”^{xvii} In a pure and genuine moment from the former leader of our nation, the country was finally able to receive some sort of closure. Through most of the segment Nixon was rather guarded in what he was willing to reveal. It was clear that he was looking to carefully craft his answers almost as if he needed to separate the truth, from the false reality he had created in his mind. It is often said that you can learn a lot from a man by his demeanor. The way that Nixon carried himself through this interview lead me to believe that he was certainly at fault for the Watergate Scandal. Though we may never know with absolute certainty who is exactly to blame what we do know is that Watergate effected our nation in a manner that is unmatched by any other scandal.

In the final section of this essay the effects of the Watergate Scandal on the American public and political system will be analyzed. The Watergate Scandal brought with it plummeting support for the Nixon Administration. As time went on and more information was revealed to the public the tide began rapidly changing. For example, in June of 1974 only 49 percent of Americans said Watergate was a ‘very serious matter’ as it revealed corruption in the White House. But, by August of that year, nearly 65 percent gave that same response. Comparatively, in May of 1974 only 48 percent of American’s felt that Nixon’s actions were serious enough to warrant him being removed from office. By August, that number had improved to 57 percent. All in all, by

the time that Nixon had left office he only had a 24 percent approval rating. In most polls, he ranks at the bottom in comparison to other President's.^{xviii}

Soon after Nixon's resignation, The Roper Organization was out in the field attempting to quantify the emotions of the nation and determine a clear path forward. In their quest they determined that twenty-seven percent of Americans believed the week of Nixon's resignation 'was one of the darkest in the nation's history.' But, conversely, forty-six, percent said that it felt like the rebirth of the nation.^{xix} So, the question became clear: what is next for the United States? Between Watergate and the Vietnam Conflict sucking confidence out of our government system it seemed that the nation was at a plateau. We could either go up or down but there was no in between. Karlyn Bowman writing in Forbes Magazine, has remarked that the country was able to recover from this political catastrophe on three separate occasions. She says: "...in 1984 when American's were feeling very good about their country (a political ad for Reagan's election declared that it's morning again in America), at the end of the Clinton presidency when the economy was roust, and immediately after 9/11." It is clear that the American public was, and is, a resilient force with faith in their democratic system," (but not always so much in their leaders).^{xx}

Initially, it was of my opinion that Watergate and the failing of our beloved government system was the reason that the public has experienced what we should call 'democratic depression' or a lack of faith in their political system. However, immediately following these attacks on our government by the evil forces of corrupt politicians the American people responded the only way they could. They went to the polls and took charge. Predicting a severe decline in election participation in the following elections there was actually a steady rate present, if not an increase. In the 1976 election featuring Jimmy Carter and Vice President Gerald Ford, nearly fifty-five

percent of the voting population turned out to vote. Though it was down two percent from 1974 there remained a steady percentage. In 1980, the number only wavered by point four percent. From that point on the amount of folks showing up to the polls in general elections continued to climb reaching its peak of nearly 62 percent in the 2008 election featuring then-Senator Barack Obama versus Senator John McCain.^{xxi}

But what is the true reason for this American perseverance? The sentiment of distrust that many American's still carry today in regard to the federal government was generated because of Watergate. According to Julian Zelizer, a professor of History and Public Affairs at Princeton University argues that the actual effects of Watergate are much more deeply rooted in our nation. He notes that: "each revelation (in the Watergate Scandal) gave voters another reason not to trust their elected officials and to believe the worst arguments that people made about government. American's could never look at government the same way again." This distrust is certainly present in the politics of today as well. Zelizer argues that it has caused many problems in the legislation of policy and for the functioning of our two party system.^{xxii} For instance, for the Democrats who tout the benefits of a more centralized government national distrust leads them to fight an uphill battle. There are certainly modern examples of where we can find this to be true. In President Obama's first term he signed into law the Affordable Care Act which progressives argued is a building block towards socialized healthcare. Any piece of the agenda that allows the government to grow is met with severe scrutiny from the public brought about by fear-mongers and it should be recognized that it is because of the corrupt acts of Washington politicians like Nixon.

The biggest piece of the puzzle that we have yet to solve is the thesis of this paper. Is Nixon's Watergate to blame for the downfall of our American political system? Certainly, since the dawn of our nation we have existed as primarily a two party state divided by the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. These parties have operated out of the exigencies of their time. Whether it was the fear that a strong federal government would return us to rule by the crown or the fact that the lack of a strong central government would fail to put down another Whiskey Rebellion the contention has existed long before Nixon. And of course corruption was not created in the 1970's by Nixon's re-election committee. So, naturally we would be left to analyze the sentiment the American people had towards the ideas of the federal government. In 1958, the National Election Project, a special research project created by the Pew Research Center, sought out to identify how American's felt about their government and if they could trust them to do the right thing. In December of 1958, in the first poll conducted, seventy-three percent of Americans responded that they trusted their government. That number remained, in large part, at a high level. However, in December of 1974, the same question was posed and only thirty-six percent of Americans were able to give the same response. Just three months later that number dropped by three percent, the trust of the people continued to dwindle. By October of 1980 it had hit a record low of twenty-five percent. With minor fluctuations in percentage through the next thirty years, we find ourselves in July of 2014 where the number of American's who can trust their government sits at a historic low of just fourteen percent.^{xxiii} In short, the proof is in the pudding, as they say. Prior to 1974 when Nixon resigned office the trust of the federal government soared high. Prior to that date, the number continued to dip finally landing in the low teens. Corruption at the highest level, consistent lying, and a cover-up scheme by a man so respected ended as more than

simply a dark day in American politics. The Watergate Scandal took a permanent toll on the psyche of the American voter that has forever left a mark on the idea that government can be an effective institution of, by, and for the people.

When Thomas Jefferson left Independence Hall after the Second Drafting he was approached by a woman on the street. When she approached him she asked: "Mr. Jefferson, what form of government have you bequeathed us?" He replied: "A Republic madam. If you can keep it." Political commentary is certainly not difficult to find and there will never be a shortage of pundits and talking heads. Our political machine will continue to be filled with cynics and those who wish only to complain. But, where the United States falls short time and time again is in the those willing enough to dream up solutions and those courageous enough to suggest them. Does that mean then that Nixon's corruption was the fault of an uninformed electorate or a populace unwilling to be vigilant? No, that is certainly not the case. But, the thesis of this paper must focus on the outcome of Nixon's scandal that ravaged our democratic environment. People lost faith and trust in their government's ability to lead and to lead morally. While it was agreed that this was not the first instance of corruption in politics it was the first time the entire nation was able to view it on live television. Since Woodward and Bernstein broke the story of the break-in in their Washington Post article the nation began to drastically change its course. The question is, where exactly did we end up? In an attempt to tie together all loose ends let us shortly review everything that was covered. First, the story of the Watergate Scandal broke and the Nixon administration simply shrugged it off as a 'third rate burglary.' Woodward and Bernstein utilized an inside source at the FBI, Mark Felt, to continue finding leads. Ultimately, enough information was revealed about the incident that spawned an indictment proceeding and impeachment hear-

ings. To avoid any real legal trouble Nixon resigned office and escaped any chance of prosecution. Perhaps the most upsetting fact in this case lies in that previous sentence. Nixon avoided legal repercussions and that was made possible by Gerald Ford's first official act as President when he pre-pardoned Nixon. The lingering effects of the Watergate Scandal don't seem to be the major story as those are merely consequential of Nixon's presidency. Plus, we can't treat the public as anything more than the victim in this situation.

The most important facet of historical research is not simply understanding the story that you have found. But rather, it is knowing exactly what to do with that information. As this essay comes to a close the question that must be posed and answered is this: How does the United States prevent another Watergate Scandal? Of course you can't necessarily offer a screening for Presidential candidates to assess their mental health nor can you put them through some sort of litmus test to separate the fact from the fancy. However, as an electorate and as a populace you can demand that justice be done. The reason that the United States suffered from Nixon's Watergate was not purely the fact that it happened. If you refer back to the statistics you will notice that a majority of American's believed that there was wrongdoing by the Whitehouse and Nixon was to blame. Yet, it was the burglars who were indicted and it was his aides who first resigned while Nixon walked away free. The only way the United States can prevent another Watergate is to ensure that we honor the sacred principle of Equality Before The Law.

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