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Human Rights Essay Contest 2012

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The Success of Our Great Nation

"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man is threatened," was said by John F. Kennedy. Human Rights are extremely important, because when people know that their opinion is valued and counted, it drives them to be more successful. America is such a great nation because we were built upon values of everyone getting a say in what we will do. However, Human Rights are becoming a debated issue. Things such as the marriage and voter ID amendments have become front and center in Minnesota, and there are some that are beginning to stand against human rights. So many negative things could happen to our society if our traditional American values of human rights are forgotten, and wrong decisions are made. We have a responsibility to protect the Human Rights of others based on ethics and morality, and also to prevent negative effects on society. There are many ways that we can change our community to fulfill this responsibility, such as through our government, but also in our everyday actions that have the power to change the world.

We have a responsibility to protect the human rights of others based upon ethics and morality. Americans must remember the values that we were built upon, and that still drive us to success today. As stated by founding father Patrick Henry, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are things that everyone is entitled to. This is also said in Article three of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For example, the marriage amendment was a huge issue in this past election. The Marriage Amendment would prevent gay people from the pursuit of their happiness; therefore it was ethical that the majority of Minnesotans voted "no". Morality should call us to protect American values and dreams, to speak for those who may be unable to speak up for themselves. To accept our responsibility as people of our own government, we must make decisions based on the rights and needs of others. This uses our gift of freedom accordingly because as Americans, we recognize that everyone should have equal rights and an equal say.

Another recent example of the majority of Minnesotans supporting human rights was the striking down of the Voter ID amendment. Supporters of the amendment argue that we would be adding integrity to our voting system. Yet, our basic sense of morality and our values of integrity might I add, should remind us that it is completely wrong to prevent others from their basic human rights. In this case, it was the right to vote at stake. Although the ID's would be free, some people who tend to vote Democratic, such as more elderly people could not get them, in some cases. I absolutely commend Minnesota voters who voted "no", because they value protecting people's rights to vote instead of trying to weaken the Democratic vote. Ethics and morality drive people to protect the rights of others, preventing negative results in society.

We must ensure the rights of others in order to prevent negative effects on society. Taking human rights from others will ultimately affect us too. For example, picture a regular school classroom. Now imagine if we only allowed the kids who earned "A"s to speak, and everyone else was just required to listen. This type of a classroom setting would establish extreme jealousy, and would uproot the classroom community. The kids not allowed to speak would stop being friends with the kids that could, and might begin to bully them as well. The same could go the other way around. In the end, nobody wins and that society is ruined. I believe that this example can be applied concerning Human Rights. If we deny people their human rights, in the end it will always affect us as well. To make laws or to act in a way that takes away others human rights would create a rift in society. Jealousy, anger, and even violence would be the result. Just like the classroom, we would ruin our society by restricting some of their Human Rights. However, we can change that through the government.

As free people, we can change our community through our government. As proclaimed in Article One of the U.S. Bill of Rights, we are all entitled to freedoms of religion, speech, the press, or assembly. This means that we can express our beliefs without being punished. We can petition, rally, or simply tell others about what we believe. It is the beautiful example of American freedom, and why we are considered one of the world's greatest superpowers. Our society and our founding fathers realized that the only way people and a government could be successful is if everyone was allowed, without discrimination, to express their opinion about the beliefs and actions of society, such as laws made or elections held. Our society is upheld by this, and our constitution demands it. We are governed by these strong values of human rights, and I hope that it continues this way. As important as our government is, we can also change the community to ensure the rights of people in our everyday actions.

One way people might not realize that we can "Be the change that you want to see in the world", as said by Mahatma Gandhi, is through our everyday actions and decisions. In our words and our actions, we must remember that others depend on us sometimes and we have the responsibility to make a change when we see something wrong in our society. Going back to the example of the classroom, if even one kid had stood up to the teacher that stopped their peers from their rights as students, they would be recognized as a person who was not afraid to be a leader. Being a leader doesn't always mean that we get to lead from the front. Sometimes, like the student, leading unnoticeably in our actions can mean as much as any law. That classroom would go on to being a more positive community just like our society can, and does most of the time. Through other simple actions, even as simple as smiling at someone, we can make our community and ultimately the world a place of change for the better. Simple decisions can change the world as well. Almost every day, my Geography teacher tells us that "life is all about choices". What he intends for us to realize by this is that if we make choices that respect others and ourselves, we are making both our life and our community better. Human Rights are protected when people make the choice to do so. Therefore, our simple choices and actions can make a world of difference.

In conclusion, we have an enormous responsibility to protect human rights in our community, both through our government and our actions. Ethics and morality are major components of upholding human rights, and should help us make choices that benefit others. By protecting human rights, we can prevent negative effects such as jealousy that would cause a rift in society. If America wants to continue as one of the world's superpowers, we must always remember what built us as a nation. Human Rights drive us as people, and empower us to do great things.