

Honorable Mention

7th – 8th Grade

22nd Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

Democracy Amidst a Societal Shift

Before our country developed the democratic system we practice today, the people of the land were under the rule of monarchs. The people began to feel as if they had no power over many things happening in their lives. The monarchs had the last and final say as to how the society would function. As the people gained wisdom they were able to see what aspects of the government worked and what did not. Thus they came to form a nation built upon democracy in which the power was in the hands of the citizens, not the monarch.

The values that are most important to maintaining a functioning democratic society are honesty and integrity. When we as a society begin blurring the lines of right and wrong we begin decreasing the levels of honesty and integrity within ourselves and within our nation. When there is no honesty, there is no trust. Just as when there is no integrity, there is no faith. Both honesty and integrity are key components to ensuring the democratic system of government functions properly and as it was originally designed to operate.

Currently in the United States there are many major challenges facing our democratic government. We lack the aforementioned honesty and integrity from each other and from our leaders which has caused a sense of distrust and a lack of faith. Many feel the government is overstepping the line of power designated to it and feel that corruption in politics is the driving force behind many decisions made by our leaders. The faith and trust in the voting process itself has been weakened over the years as we struggle to find ways to ensure only those entitled to vote are allowed to do so using one voice, one vote. The reliability of what we are told by our media sources about our leaders, the state of our country, the events taking place in our country, and our relations with other nations is often questioned as many now feel they are being manipulated by news sources or only being told pieces of information. All of these factors, along with many others have led us to become a much divided nation. As Mayor Holt's quote says, "there are processes in place that allow us to work through our differences by talking and voting." Many are no longer utilizing the processes he mentions that are designed to promote a just and fair union. The processes help to ensure we each operate within certain guidelines to ensure the safety of our citizens and the protection of constitutional rights for each of us. We claim that we are striving to unite and ensure equality for all but from a student's perspective we are only drawing

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the lines between us and our neighbors deeper in the sand which makes having a successful, dependable democracy in America challenging.

My peers and I may face many challenges as we watch our country struggle to find balance within our democratic society. A society being reshaped by changes in the morals, perspectives, unity, pride, and reliability generations before us experienced in America. I can help contribute to keeping our democratic society a functional system by studying the history of the United States in an effort to learn from past mistakes and prevent those same mistakes from reoccurring. I can vote when I am of legal age and never turn my back on a neighbor in need. I can take a stand in the proper way for what is true and right. As a Christian, I will pray that God guides those in elected positions to make the best choices for us as a country and that we as brothers and sisters in this country join together again seeing each other as equal human beings. As Lal Bahadur Shastri said, "Our country has often stood like a solid rock in the face of common danger, and there is a deep underlying unity which runs like a golden thread through all our seeming diversity." For our country to continue to be like a rock and have a functional democratic society we must restore our unity.