

3rd Place

7th – 8th Grade

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

An Ideal Future

Imagine a society where citizens are free of violence and have the power to participate in decision-making of the government. What values would be the most important factors in maintaining this functioning democratic society, and what would some of the benefits and challenges it brings be? According to the article “National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)” by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “In the United States, more than seven people per hour die a violent death. In 2019, more than 19,100 people were victims of homicide and over 47,500 people died by suicide.” Violence has been threatening our society ever since ancient times, causing the fall of empires and death of innocents. With a non-violent, democratic society, our people will be exposed to less suffering and severe violence, being able to grow and advance under the safe community surrounding them.

A few benefits of a democratic society would be respecting individual rights to make their own choices, tolerating different ideas, valuing all people, promoting freedom of speech, association, movement, and belief, and treating everyone fairly whether in society or in court. This allows the people to have freedom, justice, and equity, the three main components of which I think matters most in preserving a non-violent, democratic society. “The country where we live, the United States of America, has a democracy. This means there are processes in place that allow us to work through our differences by talking and voting. Together we can choose what we want our government to do. In America, there is no reason to use violence.” says David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City, 2022. By establishing democracy, we are respecting the will of the people and will be able to resolve conflicts peacefully, have an efficient government that is responsible towards citizens, and a safe and secure community.

Although there are many benefits from a non-violent democracy, challenges arise, too. One difficulty in maintaining a democratic society is immigration and sustaining a multiethnic democracy. “The politics of redistribution has also been notoriously complicated by ethnic diversity, but the growing ethnic diversity of both new and old democracies, driven in part by immigration, have generated different forms of right-wing populist backlash and has exacerbated political polarization.” Daniel Ziblatt, Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard University, declares. As an immigrant myself, I understand the views of the right-wing political party of holding traditional values and private ownership, however, there is no need to restrict ethnic minorities with an unequal representation when

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the society itself is non-violent. Even so, this issue still exists in our society today and is a problem we can help fix by peaceful negotiations through democracy.

Another challenge is the global economic powers that acts as a threat to the continuance of democracy. There are many indirect approaches in which an unequal economic democracy decreases the value of democracy through voting, institutional design, and even social media. In addition, most people are bribed or forced to vote for a certain candidate or party during an election. This leads to most elections being rigged and dishonest, tarnishing our noble democratic society and spreading false statements to the public. We can help by voting for whatever we think is best by pushing away negative influences that chips away at our morality. Furthermore, it's challenging to expand an already established democracy, since it involves applying the basic ideals of democracy through different religions, social groups, various institutions, and communities throughout the country. As Cyrus the Great left the regions he conquered in good economic order by leaving local rulers in place and allowing the local population to continue practicing their preferred religious traditions, a successful and non-violent democratic society similarly promotes the freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government. Through this comparison, we can see how our community can be improved to be as successful—if not more—than the ancient Persians, and learn from their mistakes to avoid the same fall that was brought on upon their government.

Overall, a non-violent democratic society has both benefits and challenges. A few benefits include the respect of individual rights, ideas, value, freedom, justice, and equity, while some challenges being, the ability to sustain a multiethnic democracy, dishonesty in voting, expansion, and global economic powers that pose a threat to the survival and growth of our democratic society. The least we can do to help with these difficulties is by keeping our communities safe and non-violent, promoting a multi-ethnic society and aiding one another when needed. By doing so, we can make sure the future of our society is secure and harmonious, paving out a path for generations to come.