

2021 ESSAY TOPIC

Masonic lodges are places where people meet “on the level” regardless of political preference, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation.

Our country’s motto is e pluribus unum - out of many, one - and the familiar phrase “united we stand, divided we fall” dates back over 2,500 years.

For this essay, begin by finding someone who holds a different perspective than you on a divisive issue - social, religious, political - someone who fundamentally disagrees with a perspective you hold dear. For your issue, think locally, nationally, or even internationally. After taking the time to have a sincere, substantive conversation with the person you select about your chosen issue, explain what you learned from the dialogue. In 300-500 words, how did this civil discussion impact your perspective on the issue? On the person? How will this experience influence your future actions? How can you exhibit one or more of these traits in your school or community and how will this prepare you for your future?

WINNER LIST

First Place (\$4,000)

CLARE HAWKINS

Scott Community High School
Anthem Lodge No. 284

Honorable Mention (\$500)

JACENDA SCHNACKER

Jefferson West High School
Perry Lodge No. 415

Second Place (\$3,000)

ADDISON EMMOT

Beloit High School
Mount Vernon Lodge No. 145

Honorable Mention (\$500)

ANNAKA HAYNES

Doniphan West High School
Smithton Lodge No. 1

Third Place (\$2,000)

HELEN WINTERS

Bennington High School
Minneapolis Lodge No. 143

Honorable Mention (\$500)

MICKELLY SOYEZ

Marion High School
Advance Lodge No. 114

Fourth Place (\$1,000)

LIBERTY FRANKLIN

Garden Plain High School
Unity Lodge No. 273

Honorable Mention (\$500)

EMMA ATHERTON

Chanute High School
Cedar Lodge No. 103



CLARE HAWKINS from Scott Community High School, sponsoring Lodge Anthem Lodge No. 284.

Many topics, including feminism, are difficult to discuss because of opposing viewpoints, mainly due to differing political alignment. Although “about six-in-ten U.S. women today say “feminist” describes them,” many Americans debate that this term causes polarization (Barroso). My opinions on women’s equality and feminism have guided most of my political and personal views. I believe that women and men are fundamentally equal, which means that they should have equal economic, political, and social opportunities. In fact, “Feminism works towards equality, not female superiority,” (dosomething.org). Many years of identifying myself as a “feminist” and fiercely arguing my viewpoints as a woman have not warranted many conversations with those who oppose the feminist movement. Regarding the overall support of feminism in America, “45% say it is polarizing and 30% say it’s outdated,” (Barroso). I have been guilty of making the generalization that all who were opposed to the modern feminist movement “hated women.” This is simply untrue, as I have learned after my civil conversation with someone that is opposed to the modern feminist movement.

Although the conversation with someone of a different viewpoint did not change my current views about feminism and women’s rights, I glimpsed into the minds of the other side of the spectrum. The person that I discussed this issue with articulated his view in a unique way that I did not expect. He stated his religious convictions as being the reason for not

agreeing with the feminist movement. Specifically, he believes that the Bible tasks men with the responsibility of being the “head of the household.” This person did not hate women but viewed the roles and strengths of men and women as simply – different. For him, the feminist movement encroached on his religious beliefs. He did not think the feminist view of complete equality was correct, because men and women were destined for different purposes that were set out by a religious text. After having a thorough discussion with him, I did not agree with his viewpoint, but I understood why he disagreed with me.

This conversation made me realize that one can never make assumptions about people based on their views concerning “hot topics,” because these assumptions are often proven wrong after civil conversations. After talking with someone that disagreed with me, I began to see and understand his viewpoint better. I replaced the previously negative feelings about this person with understanding. Moving forward, I will make assumptions about people due to their disagreements with my stance. I will begin talking with others about their perspective before immediately arguing with them and fiercely defending my outlook. One can never know the reasons behind other’s opinions on political, social, and religious issues until they pursue civil discussions. In a culture saturated with disagreement and proving others wrong, I will seek to find common ground with others and understand the perspectives of others, rather than arguing my own point.

Works Cited

Barroso, Amanda. “61% of U.S. women say “feminist” describes them well; many see Feminism as empowering, polarizing.” *Pew Research Center*, 7 July 2020.

<https://pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/61-of-u-s-women-say-feminist-describes-them-well-many-see-feminism-as-empowering-polarizing/>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2021.

“11 Facts About Feminism.” *Do Something.org* <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-feminism>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2021.