

Student

views

HOW DEBATE HAS SHAPED MY LIFE

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I never really cared about politics, government, and current social issues until I became involved in debate on the Decatur High Forensic Team. Ever since that fateful day at the end of my freshman year, when I submitted an application and had a conference with the coach, my life has changed dramatically, and for the better. The principal event I was trying out for was Lincoln Life Lincoln-Douglas Debate, a type of debate that involves conflicts set in idealistic conditions, causing a more reasoned and value oriented debate. Since then, I have branched out into Extemporaneous Speaking and Congress and have won awards in these events. The most profound effect my new found intellectual interest in debating would have would be on the political, social, and idealistic aspects of my life.

Before I began to debate, I never really cared about major social issues such as welfare reform, abortion, and other similar controversial issues. I had always stood neutral on them and had never really commented on them. After approximately 100 rounds debating various social issues on both sides, though, I have developed a very strong personal ideology upon which I stand. Each topic we have debated had to be debated from both sides of the resolution, a very tough thing to do if you stand strongly on one side of an issue. The development of my ideology gave me a desire to learn about current events and what happens in the world. It also spurred my interest

in politics. Politics never really thrilled me nor did it ever catch my attention until I became involved with debate. Only while I was involved with debate did I realize the immense decision the leaders of this country have to make. Realizing how crucial these decisions are to the country, I finally decided whom to support. Debate helped me make that decision and also helped shape my political ideology.

My social life in high school started sluggishly. I had joined only a few clubs during my freshman year and played little part within them. I did not realize how much of an impact I could have on my school and community until I joined forensics. Along with discussing debate, our team also discussed problems within school and society and possible solutions. I had never really known about the problems of our school until I heard them from our senior members of the team. It made me realize how many problems we had within our own school. The constant intellectual debate on how simple some of the problems were to solve made me finally decide to try to make a difference. I joined many clubs relating to my beliefs and ran for student council to try to help solve some of the problems. Debate also has expunged the shyness that I had when I entered high school. With an interest such as debate, one has no choice but to voice one's stance on an issue or else lose the debate. Being forced to speak has helped me ward off my shyness and helped me to become a more social person. Debate has

helped me to be able to communicate ideas to other people clearly, effectively, and without fear of the repercussions. The inability to do these things contributed to my shyness, and debate helped me to learn how to be able to develop these skills in order to help remove my shyness.

Within debate, a lot of reading is done of philosophers who deal with the logic and reasoning of various topics. The selections I read in order to help me also have altered my perception of the nature of ideals. It makes me want to ask why are things done and what are the justifications behind the actions. For example, I never really knew what justification the government had in governing until I read *Two Treatises on Government* by John Locke. It made me realize that the government sometimes did not have any justification in its actions. Thus, thanks to debate, I rethought why actions are done and under what justifications.

Debate has played a very influential role within my life. It has constantly challenged my views, tested my limits, and pushed me harder than any other activity I have ever taken. It has also stretched my horizons and taught me lessons I could never learn in classroom. It has perhaps played the greatest role of any of my intellectual interests throughout my high school career and has shaped much of my life.

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