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## WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

Maya Angelou once said that “words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.” I have always valued the power of the spoken word. As Americans, we were given freedom of speech, not just to speak our minds, but to speak out against the travesties and injustices that many of us are facing. Our voices are powerful instruments which we can use to shape the world around us.

Participating in civil discourse is not just about trying to prove your own point, it is also about discovering multiple viewpoints. Listening to what others have to say allows us to explore every side of an issue so that more informed decisions can be made by all parties involved. By practicing respect, courtesy, and active listening, we as a community can better understand the perspectives of one another and form solutions that benefit everyone involved.

Virtually every freedom that we enjoy as Americans is the result of brave and passionate individuals who stood up for what they believed in. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the people who challenged the system and worked

towards creating meaningful change. Whether through giving speeches, writing books, or participating in debates, these pioneers showed us that we can make a difference in the world with our words.

I want to be able to follow in their footsteps someday. I have dedicated my life to becoming a civil rights attorney so I can use my voice to help others. One day I even hope to run for public office so that I can work towards creating legislative change. Like Maya Angelou, I also believe that utilizing one’s voice holds a deeper meaning than just writing our thoughts on paper. I want to learn how to make my voice more powerful so that I can help as many people as possible. I think that participating in the Regent’s Cup is a great way to achieve that. Through this competition, I hope to gain the confidence and skillset required to someday make an impact on the world.