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WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

In a country founded on human rights, there is a lot of argument over what those rights should be and are. The founders believed there were many, particularly the rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. To this, the forefathers added more specific amendments to these rights such as freedom of speech. This freedom allows civil discourse, a free press, and many other valuable things that make America what it is today. Not only do these rights allow Americans to speak their minds about things they believe in, it also allows them to comment on the people governing and if in the majority create change. Without the right to free speech, many great changes in our country would not have been made. Freedom of speech and civil discourse are important because they make America the best country in the world.

In the last 18 years of my life, I have been very thankful for the country I live in and the opportunities I have been gifted. Doing theater at a very young age I learned to be loud. Then as I got a little bit older, I realized that my loud voice could help me stand up for myself and others. My mom tells me I have always loved to argue, especially when I think something is unfair and these past few years, I have learned that those arguments

are a way to make change and air out our differences. When saying the word argument, I don’t mean what we see in the news media of today, I mean the art form of civil discourse where each party speaks in turn as well as listens to the opposition’s dialogue and reaches a mutual understanding or disagreement.

The reason civil discourse is so important is so that freedom of speech does not become what most political “debates” today have. Instead of the yelling and slander that is second nature in our modern world, there is understanding and respect even without consensus. Consensus is not the reason we debate, the reason for the debate is to air out our differences in a healthy manner and create understanding which sometimes achieves great things. Politicians are supposed to debate so we hear their beliefs and the strength of their rhetoric so we can make educated choices about those who govern us. Argument is an art form and tool when used civilly. Because of the right to freedom of speech in America, we are able to practice this art and use it as a tool. It is because of Freedom of Speech and Civil Discourse that America is a place so many people want to live.