Essay Prompt

Please identify three social, economic or community issues in today's society; analyze each issue and discuss how would like to resolve each one.

Essay Response

In our current year and month there are a plethora of problems facing this country. Of course, there is the global pandemic, but also unrest over the issue of racism and police brutality. And furthermore, there still looms strong tensions over any political topic, leading to much division in America. Now this is a blanket overview of the nation's most pressing concerns, and they all affect each community in different ways. In my own community, the pandemic has generated debate about mask wearing. Nationwide outrage about racism has exposed a lack of black history education in my school district. And political division has become more apparent than ever.

The pandemic has altered many aspects of our lives in my city, from how we shop to how we interact with others. How we deal with the coronavirus has become a hotbed issue up for debate. However, there is one issue in particular I have noticed much discussion and conflict about: When and where we should be wearing a mask. Debate about masks has increased recently due to the new mask mandate the Ohio governor Mike DeWine has issued. The mandate essentially states that masks must be worn in public, especially indoors, and there is a fine if people are not in accordance with this mandate. The mandate was targeted at seven counties, my own being among them. Among my peers, some have expressed they are completely fine with wearing a mask while others feel the policy is an intrusion on their personal freedom. No matter the view on how mandatory masks should be, most would agree it is not the most comfortable to wear for any extended period of time. Nevertheless, this debate spawns the view that wearing a mask should be a matter of principle, not something required. This leads to a number of people not following the mandate or becoming upset when businesses turn them away due to a lack of mask. If we are to solve this issue, we all need to generate discussion informing people how masks help stop the transmission of germs between people and slow the spread of COVID. Remind them that wearing a mask is a much better alternative than retreating back into a stricter lockdown. Help people to realize that the mask is not as much for their own protection, but for the protection of others (particularly vulnerable groups). I have found that the best way to combat ignorance is taking the time to inform and explain in a calm, understanding way. Yes, the government provides statistics on masks and informatic diagrams displaying their benefits, but there is a difference in how much people trust what they listen to when it comes from the government versus when they hear it from their own peers. In order to combat the pushback on wearing masks, as a community we must work to change minds and behaviors. There needs to be an increase in online forums where real community members discuss the merits of masks and more public sign displays of why we should have masks on. Wearing a mask should not be a concern of whether "this an intrusion of my rights" but of, "how can I better protect those in my community".

Nationwide, the spotlight has turned to how we should address police brutality and racism as a whole. In the year 2020 it seems as if racism should not even still be prevalent anymore, but yet it persists like a stubborn weed. I feel that part of the reason why racism still perpetuates our society is that we view movements like Black Lives Matter as simply a trend. Just a social media trend that will die out in a few months. Many people, myself included, are guilty of acting only when it is the prominent and popular thing to do. My peers tend to simply pass along posts on Instagram or Snapchat. Real change in our community cannot be achieved if we only discuss an issue for a few months. Many people are too uncomfortable to even begin really tackling racism. So, in order to work past the prejudices in our community long term, we need to start by educating the youth. Schools in the Berea City School District do not have mandatory black history classes, nor is the subject covered thoroughly in other history courses, such as U.S history. Even in World history, there is a much greater emphasis placed on European history than the rest of the world. Education is a necessary tool to fix the distorted view of history many of us hold. I think that our school district needs to adapt its curriculum to include a more detailed portrayal of black history. More content in history class curriculum about the civil rights movement and accomplishments made by black people throughout history is needed. This change in my school district curriculum would also make equal rights movements less of a trend and more of a long-term process of change.

The previous discussed issues are of great importance to my community and solving them is a difficult but necessary process. However, one of the main obstacles to solving any issue is political division. Bipartisan divide, as it is aptly named, is definitely within our current government and its effects are evident even within my city and social circle. It seems as if no matter what problem we face, it quickly becomes politicized to the point where solutions are seen as liberal or conservative, democratic, or republican. Particularly in my state and county, where there is no clear majority of political view. If we frame every solution or proposal within the scope of a political party, it prevents fruitful discussion from both sides. As a community we need to be more hesitant to judge those based on political beliefs so we can all work towards the common good. No one should hate someone on the basis that they support Trump or Biden. The existence of a virus should not depend on a political view. I propose that we stop putting so much emphasis on politics and more on implementing compromises to continue progress. When there are forums within the local government, there needs to be pointing out how the other side is wrong and more of finding common ground. Political divide will overwhelm our community and country if we are not careful.

All of the pressing concerns we face today in our respective communities can be dealt with if we decrease ignorance and increase cooperation among residents. No issue is too large or overwhelming to face if we pause to plan and work as a united whole, whether that be a pandemic or prejudice.