

Dr. Michael N Compton Fall 2020 Public Affairs Essay Contest

By: Desiree Nixon

Contestant Name/Information:

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Biographical information: I am an only child that has nearly 35 cousins from Springfield, Missouri. In my free time I love to photograph and video weddings.

Essay theme addressed: In the myriad of voices one person can spark change to inspire tolerance and education.

Non-Profit Organization to donate funds: Arc of the Ozarks- an organization which gives voice to the voiceless everyday.

Word Count Total: 994 words

“Please, I can’t breathe. The knee on my neck. I can’t breathe officer. They’re going to kill me,” George Floyd said, on film with his last breaths, during an arrest in Minneapolis, MN on May 25, 2020. Those sentences, which spanned over the course of 8 minutes, sparked a revolt for months over police brutality. The power of one voice took over news stations for days amid a global pandemic. In a myriad of voices, one person can spark change to inspire tolerance and education. The effects of these voices can be cataclysmic or empowering. George Floyd, Greta Thunberg, and even President Donald Trump are examples of how the effects of a voice moves the masses.

Today, October 14, 2020, would have been George Floyd’s forty-seventh birthday. Although he is gone, his message is still inspiring change, and passion for Black Lives Matter. Not only that, but his loss is a “hot-button” issue in an already tense election year. Just as Jerrold Nadler, US Representative from New York, said, “Across the nation and around the world, the streets are lined with protesters demanding fundamental change in the culture of law enforcement and meaningful accountability for officers who commit misconduct.” The last few words Floyd said reignited a fight that has raged in the United States since its creation. In this reignition of Black Lives Matter, there is more of a policy demand which can lead to more change, all generated from that one voice.

Before COVID-19 took over the world, a sixteen-year-old Swedish girl took it by storm. Time Magazine’s 2019 Person of the Year, Greta Thunberg spoke her truth about climate change. According to the New York Times, it all started with her skipping school holding a sign which read “school strike for climate.” This eventually gathered national attention and gave her a platform to continue fighting for climate change awareness. In pre-COVID times, Thunberg

travelled around the world to speak about climate change. Her voice was so powerful it led to a global wide climate strike on September 20, 2019. “Because of her, hundreds of thousands of teenage “Greta’s,” from Lebanon to Liberia, have skipped school to lead their peers in climate strikes around the world,” said Charlotte Alter, Suyin Haynes and Justin Worland of the New York Times. Her voice was so powerful there were many who argued against its validity, including President Donald Trump who also in the myriad of voices empowers supporters.

Regardless of political views, people argue that President Donald Trump has a powerful voice. In essence, any president of a nation that prides itself of freedom of speech should have a powerfully voiced leader. However, Trump’s voice is undoubtedly different. When asked in the first presidential debate to condemn white supremacy, Trump took a different approach. “President Trump told the Proud Boys to “stand back and stand by” on Tuesday night when asked by moderator Chris Wallace to clearly condemn white supremacists,” said Jemima McEvoy of Forbes Magazine. The Proud Boys are a white supremacist group that helped to organize the “Unite the Right,” Charlottesville rally in 2017. McEvoy explains that after the debate Trump denied knowing what the Proud Boys were and said that they should stay away from the police. Regardless of if he knew or not, his voice empowered that group. Members of the Proud Boys quickly took to Twitter saying they are respecting the President’s wishes and standing by. The power of one person's voice can inspire those that support climate change, Black Lives Matter, or even white supremacy.

George Floyd, Greta Thunberg, and Donald Trump were born having no idea that one day what they said would spark change, revolt and even action. Nevertheless, it happened. Something as simple as ditching school for something you care about can evolve into moving the masses and changing political dialogue. When I was a child my mother told me to be honest, and

stand up for what I believe in. This has led many political debates on Facebook, but it has also led to some great conversations that have created change. For instance, in high school, when I took on some bullies for a freshman. Never stop. In comparing George Floyd, Greta Thunberg, and Donald Trump it seems hard to draw connections. But one thing is for certain, they never stopped fighting. When Floyd had a knee on his neck, he kept talking to literally try and save his life. Thunberg faced criticism from many people much older than her; and has Asperger's autism syndrome, which for an activist can cause some problems whenever you do not like crowds. However, she still fought what she believed in. President Trump is famous for going bankrupt many times. Yet, he still ended up as President of the United States, the leader of what is known as the free world. Even if you do not agree with the messages these people represent, they never stopped fighting and let their voice be heard in the myriad.

References

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