

UIL READY WRITING
CONTEST TOPICS AND STATE ACADEMIC MEET 1ST PLACE ESSAYS
SPRING 2014

INVITATIONAL A

Topic I

“We live in an era with no historical precedents. History is no longer useful as a tool in helping us understand current changes.”

— Douglas Coupland, Canadian Author, b. 1961

Topic II

“Americans have always evinced some distrust of government, but the current situation has exacerbated this to a degree that may be unprecedented.”

— Eric Alterman, American Historian and Journalist, b. 1960

INVITATIONAL B

Topic I

“For all our current troubles, Americans are still the hardest working, most innovative people on the face of the earth. By trusting the American people, instead of government, we'll continue to surprise and inspire the world.”

— Rob Portman, American Author and Politician, b. 1955

Topic II

“Society honors its living conformists and its dead troublemakers.”

— Mignon McLaughlin, American Journalist, 1913-1983

DISTRICT 1

Topic I

“I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.”

— Albert Einstein (1879-1955), German-born Theoretical physicist

Topic II

“So when you spot violence, or bigotry, or intolerance or fear or just garden-variety misogyny, hatred or ignorance, just look it in the eye and think, ‘The good outnumber you, and we always will.’”

— Patton Oswalt (1969), Comedian, responding to the Boston Marathon Bombing, June 16, 2013

DISTRICT 2

Topic I

“When I disagree with a rational man, I let reality be our final arbiter; if I am right, he will learn; if I am wrong, I will; one of us will win, but both will profit.”

— Ayn Rand (1905-1982), American novelist / Philosopher

Topic II

“Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”

— Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), South African President / Anti-apartheid leader

REGIONAL**Topic I**

“There is a far cry between legal programs, legitimate spying, legitimate law enforcement—where it is targeted, it’s based on reasonable suspicion, individualized suspicion and warranted action—and the sort of dragnet mass surveillance that puts entire populations under a sort of an eye and sees everything, even when it is not needed. This is about a trend in the relationship between the governing and governed in America.”

— Edward Snowden, former Central Intelligence Agency Employee and National Security Contractor, *Time Magazine*, December 23, 2013

Topic II

“After writing all of this I realize that I am not leaving my profession, in truth, it has left me. It no longer exists. I feel as though I have played some game halfway through its fourth quarter, a timeout has been called, my teammates’ hands have all been tied, the goal posts moved, all previously scored points and honors expunged and all of the rules altered. For the last decade or so, I have had two signs hanging above the blackboard at the front of my classroom, they read, ‘Words Matter’ and ‘Ideas Matter’. While I still believe these simple statements to be true, I don’t feel that those currently driving public education have any inkling of what they mean.”

— Gerald Conti, former Teacher, *The Huffington Post*, April 9, 2013

STATE**Topic I**

In the United States, central urban neighborhoods — close to theaters, museums, restaurants, and downtown offices — are typically home to the poor, minorities, immigrants, and elderly. But demographic change has led to an increase in one- and two-person families, and this has made proximity to cultural and entertainment venues a desirable feature in real estate markets. Baby boomers – those born during the huge birth rate increase that accompanied the post-World War II economic expansion – traditionally have bid up the value of suburban housing in school districts with better academic reputations and paid more for open space and high levels of safety. Now that their children are grown and on their own, aging baby boomers (and their financially-independent childless children) seek the conveniences of urban centers.

The new arrivals often bring different expectations and resources, which change the dynamics of central urban neighborhoods. Because the more affluent newcomers are better educated and typically vote in higher percentages than poorer residents, they can influence municipal budgets. Mayors of very poor cities often must choose between spending on dog parks and bicycle lanes for new residents or affordable housing and job training for the old. This creates a new dilemma for mayors of many cities, and they have difficulty getting their arms around it. Mayors get elected to stimulate economic development, but gentrification may be an unwanted side effect of development that is beyond their control.

The conventional narrative of gentrification is that middle- and upper-classes, sensing bargains in real estate markets, buy properties in distressed neighborhoods, fix them up, drive up rents, and force poor, mostly minority, residents to find affordable housing elsewhere.

The total number of people displaced through gentrification is difficult to gauge. Moves are often made within the same neighborhood, but to properties in worse condition or to households of

families and friends. Most likely, the total number of neighborhood residents forced to relocate is small – around five per cent – and predominantly minority. However, gentrification affects many more people that can be captured with those numbers: long-time residents who are psychologically uneasy with neighborhood changes, clients and employees of businesses that close to make way for more expensive shops and services, and kinship and friendship networks which become strained as people move away. Moreover, rising overall property values may slowly displace more people over the long term than can now be accurately estimated. And minorities who relocate from gentrified urban neighborhoods to the inner-ring suburbs for cheaper housing may re-ignite a flight from inner to outer suburbs and exacerbate sprawl.

Should a local government seize a tired property from an irresponsible owner and sell it to someone who will convert it to a market-rate use? What level of policing is adequate to maintain public safety? These are difficult policy questions because every neighborhood is different and every application of policy is unique. Therefore, the line between fueling gentrification and ensuring economic inclusiveness can be quite fine.

The ultimate question is: Will urban neighborhoods be a temporary playground for the well-to-do who will inevitably abandon them as their lifestyles change, or can Americans use public policy to leverage market forces over the next couple of decades to rebuild urban America as a desirable home for everyone?

Charles Dickens wrote about the “quiet poor”, those who live the best they can on modest incomes. Gentrification brings investment and resources to center cities, but often through the quiet expulsion of the quiet poor.

— City Mayors’ Special North America Correspondent, September 29, 2011

Topic II

Jefferson argues that the people cannot protect themselves from the evils of oppression – or of truly bad government that we see now – without the tools to do so. And the single most important tool is a public education, well-funded by the taxpayers in order to ensure the health of their own democracy. The problems we are facing with Congress and more generally in Washington are not simply a consequence of poor leadership, they are a product of years of underfunding of public education and a failure to value teachers – the most important guarantors of our democracy – so that everyone receives the quality of education necessary to select good leaders.

The problems we have been seeing in Congress for several years now are not simply a matter of political posturing and intransigence – that certainly is part of it, but the issue is considerably deeper. Our leaders in Congress are a product of an educational system that has for some time not done well in creating rational, critical thinkers who are open to understanding opposing viewpoints and listening. Furthermore, we have created a system that allows too much flexibility in the form of home schooling and other approaches that permit people to shield their children from an education that generates open-mindedness and an awareness of the basic tenets of rational thought.

In other words, we have elected what we have become, a society in which people increasingly rely on fixed beliefs to guide their decisions, rather than relying upon rationality and critical thinking skills to guide the process of analysis and decision-making. And this unfortunate cultural direction is a product of long-term devaluation of public education and of those who provide leadership in public education – the teachers who can guide children to become rational, intelligent and capable interpreters of their political and social surroundings. With those skills, and only with those skills, can the adults they become elect good leaders who make intelligent decisions that respect the interests and values of all of the people and who can work intelligently to protect the security of the nation.

Maintenance of a healthy democracy is to be found in citizens who can think deeply and rationally and, through that, determine whether the words and actions of their leaders make sense.

Fixed belief is not the basis of such a society, because if there is one constant about democracy, it is change. Democracies are constantly in a state of flux as new ideas are expressed and put into practice. Without the kinds of thinking skills needed to assess those ideas, the government – that is, the people – will not be able to make good decisions about those they elect to administer their wants and protect their interests. We see the consequence of this problem now with many leaders we have elected in recent years who display intransigence, irrationality, and ignorance, and an inability to communicate with the opposition because they lack strong thinking skills and they make decisions based upon fixed beliefs rather than rational analysis of their surroundings.

What Americans need to realize is that Jefferson was right. To put his words in a more contemporary way, a quality public education is a matter of national security. It is far more important than protection from terrorism or any other external threat, as real as those threats may be. The most serious threat to our society comes from within in the form of a citizenry that increasingly seems to lack the rational and critical thinking skills necessary to elect good leaders who will work intelligently on their behalf and cooperate to achieve a better future. The Congress is a reflection of the populace. If we don't like what we see, then we need to look in the mirror. What we will see is a society that has failed – both financially and in terms of valuing the importance of public education in maintaining a healthy democracy – to invest in quality public education at all levels, from elementary school through university.

— John W. Traphagan (1961) Professor, The Population Center, The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

1ST PLACE ESSAYS • ACADEMIC STATE MEET • SPRING 2014

**THE URBAN HIERARCHY OF NEEDS:
FACING THE FACTS OF URBAN CITIES**
Chelsea Boynton, Ira HS

**Conference 1A
1st Place**

Decisions, decisions, decisions. This is what an elected official must face when they are in office. Oftentimes, they are hard decisions, leaving people to suffer in the wake. This kind of decision is often the one made when deciding the future and growth of urban cities, resulting in many costly repercussions. The cost is not necessarily a monetary one, while it surely can be and often is a big note in the said repercussion, but it can also be along the lines of real estate, poor city services, gang violence, and potential in its' civilians.

Real estate or property values are a big topic in this day's economy. It's one of the biggest factors of a successful economy, and over the last few years, it was one of the biggest indicators of a failing economy. While this is more on a national level, the same can easily be applied to local, city levels. When people move to new areas, the cost of a home can mean just about anything. If it's a low cost, it usually points to the idea that the home is either in a bad neighborhood or has many problems in the home itself. The property value could also still be lessened by bartering depending on the upkeep of the land. It's a very simple equation that anyone can figure out; low value equals low quality. No matter what way this is approached, something is going to be costly, and while it would be ideal that someone would say no to a home like this, they often do not have a choice, either by being limited by their budget and/or the fact that they must stay in a certain area. This brings on the rise of population in the urban area and therefore the decision on the elected official of needing to appeal to those who are stuck in bad areas, or appeal to those who bring the city up on its' feet in the bigger, nicer areas.

City services in urban areas can range from poor to exquisite just by driving over a few blocks ranging from food services to public parks. Again, this brings on the idea of low value equaling low quality, but having very little choice in the matter. These smaller, lower value services are often kept up as best as one could, but due to the lack of space and/or finances to

properly keep up with cleaning costs, these services can be an eyesore, crowded, and even dangerous when it comes to public health and personal safety. As well as all of that, should the business be shut down, these buildings become vacant or even condemned, thus leaving the building to either rot or become someone else's problems. This choice of facing the cost of destroying the building or leaving it to wither away and become a health problem and a monetary problem lies on the mayors shoulders yet again. While the former is often the choice one would take as spending money in place of endangering public lives is the more efficient choice, there are many occasions where unused, deserted buildings still stand and become something of a public menace.

Gang violence has been around since the early days of urban cities, earlier versions being portrayed by mafia gangs and cartels to today's street gangs, and it's likely it always will be around. Those who live in poorer neighborhoods often need help getting by, and while there are usually catches, dangers, and fine print involved, street gangs offer that help. They offer protection and places to stay, providing them to people who may not have that luxury, because they see each other as family. They share struggles, they share stories, and they share the same bad neighborhood. While it would never be ideal to join such groups, some people are born into it, a result of the past generations struggles, or people feel they are obligated to help their family or friends, thus inducting them by means that can result in death or further violence between rival gangs. The fact that there are gangs in a certain area or even people who may identify as a larger gang can and usually do result in aforementioned lower property values, meaning the sellers are willing to take whatever they can to be sure the house would sell, leaving some other person to be exposed to this violence and danger. As well as looking at the dangers that newer civilians may face, one must look at the fact that there are people in these gangs that struggle just as much as these new civilians who are forced to take up residency in these poor neighborhoods. These gang members pride themselves on their struggle. It's the whole base of the street gang life; those who struggle together, survive together. They face death every day of their lives. Many of them don't live past their mid-twenties, and many of them drop out of high school as soon as they are allowed or even attend school in the first place. Due to financial struggles, they feel they are forced to steal, sell illegal substances, fight, kill, and just about do anything they can for a few dollars for their family to eat that night. The mayor is forced to decide to help those in these poorer neighborhoods, the ones who have been struggling for generations upon generations, or sweeping them under the rug, letting them be, and trying to build on top of them and hope it trickles down into these areas and build a better base in these poor neighborhoods.

The idea of the struggle of a lifetime in these poorer neighborhoods brings on the next idea of potential in an urban area's civilians. When somebody grows up in this lifestyle, it's often the lifestyle they will take on for the rest of their life. Mistakes their parents made affect their children's lives and futures, coming up in the form of poor schoolwork, not working, not going to college, working several jobs at once, and staying in the same area that they were forced to grow up in. As they grow older, they don't have the funds to move, to travel, or to go to college, and so they feel all they can do is either work and barely get by or take the risk of going out in the world and bettering themselves. Though, one must step back and think; growing up in an area that could cost on their lives, would they logically risk everything they have for something they never had an actual shot at? Hardly. They don't know what to look forward to, and they don't know what they are capable of doing. All they know is how to survive and live in these poorer neighborhoods on some coupons and working two to three jobs at once. Humans are naturally afraid of the unknown, and while some would argue that humans would take risks when they can, they will only feel comfortable enough to do such things knowing that they have an actual chance in succeeding. This idea of success in oneself comes from belief in themselves and the success of people around them. Again, when growing up in this lifestyle where there is nothing but failure, they are going to believe that they are no better and will not succeed either. This results in failed potential. While college may not be for everyone, everyone has potential to chase the idea of college or even look for safer

communities and work their way up from the bottom and be better than the place they left. However, when the latter is not in full sight, no one will reach for the chance and grab something that may not even be there. They want to hold onto something that is tangible and real to them, thus staying in this bad neighborhood. The elected official of this area must face the decision of dealing with the wasted potential and clearing the fog of uncertainty and showing them that they do have a future in this world and it is not in this bad neighborhood as gang member or a poverty-ridden individual, or again, sweeping them under the rug, and giving the older, successful generations renovations and clear insights to their future and the future of the city's economy.

A recent example of this resides in Chicago a couple years ago. As the world Olympics and the decision of where it's to be held in 2016, controversy and uproar sounded in the streets and neighborhoods of the Chicagoland area. The mayor at the time and former Chicago resident Barack Obama thought it would be an amazing opportunity to have the Olympics held in Chicago as well as opening a few casinos to bring in money, allowing big business to grow and leading Chicago's economy. Lower class citizens were outraged. This is not what Chicago needed. They demanded and fought the choice, wanting things that would be the community as a whole, not give them fifteen minutes of fame and the possibility of even more violence than what the south side already provides. Officials were shocked. Never had the city responded so harshly to such actions as it was always seen as a city of growth and pride. However, the people didn't want tourists, they didn't want trouble. They wanted better roads, they wanted better public education, and still be considered a city of growth and pride, not for popularity, but for a better shot at a great future in the city they are so proud of in a state that's been struggling for decades. As the controversy settled, the officials turned down the choices of building giant casinos, and in 2016, the World Olympics are to be held in Rio de Janeiro. Should the choice have been opposite, quieting the members of the great city, results could have been disastrous, or they could have been great. However, it's no longer relevant. The lower class people spoke up about what they wanted, about what they needed, and it paid off greatly for them. The mayor made the decision to listen to the needs of his people, decide what he felt was best and even though the outcome was not what he expected, he knew what was right in the end, and Chicago has done nothing but improve since that day. It's a small step, yes, but even the longest of journeys begins with a single step, and the people of Chicago learned that lesson that day.

Ultimately, this decision that lies on officials' shoulders of a city's needs boils down to the idea of building a better base, or building up a taller point on this urban hierarchy of needs. The decisions that this elected official must face day to day are heavy decisions that can change the entire future of a city whether it be becoming the next New York City or Chicago, or making it a much safer place for their residents to live. The decisions are often based upon personal beliefs and lifestyles, which brings a bigger gap between the struggle and the success as those who are elected come from families or generations that were successful themselves; however, that does not mean the correct choice will not be taken, seeing Chicago as one example. It takes decisions like the one Chicago's mayor had taken to build up a better urban area, it just takes empathy, sympathy, and an idea of what's right versus what's wrong to decide what's best. This is the decision they face every single day.

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A WORK IN PROGRESS
Emily Bohanon, City View HS

Conference 2A
1st Place

An artist gathers her tools into practiced hands, a smile curling her lips at the thought of continuing with her latest project, the biggest and most challenging she has ever tackled before. She runs her fingertips across the soft stone, searching for just the right spot in which to place her chisel and expose the sculpture that lies buried, waiting to be revealed by skillful and steady hands. Finally, she finds just the place and begins to chip away at the surrounding rock. Hours and hours she chips away at the rock, her mallet gently pounding against the chisel in her hand, breaking the material apart. This particular piece has been in the works for weeks, and the artist's stomach flutters with excitement. She can't wait to see it complete, and neither can the buyer, but this client is a rather difficult one to please. He is anxious to see his prize, but is impatient and has been unwilling to pay the amount she needs in order to complete the commission on time. As these thoughts flood her mind, calloused hands, normally sure and steady, begin to tremble, and her movements become sporadic and less controlled. It is with a quiet gasp that her anticipation and anxiety force the mallet to swing with too much force, and the artist's precious sculpture is ruined with a single sickening crack. The precious work of art will never surface from the unworked rock that encompasses it, just as the brilliant, rational minds and capable leaders of this country will never come to light because of the prodding and under-funding of an impatient and demanding force. Each part of this sculpture called for careful work and dedication by the hand of the artist, just as each student calls for the steady, guiding hand of an educator in order to blossom. Students will never come to think independently if they are treated as the same piece of the sculpture. As soon as our nation comes to realize that and come to treat students as those capable of creative, rational thought, and as soon as our nation begins to encourage these students to think independently, rather than underfunding school and forcing educators to work with cheap tools, we will be able to create the beautiful work of art that we all so desperately wish to see come to light.

It takes many different pieces to complete a sculpture, just as it takes many different people to form a democracy. From the first democracy established in the ancient city of Athens centuries ago, the idea of democracy was to limit the power of the individual and to distribute that power to the people. However, one cannot truly have a democracy when many of the people it supposedly represents are unable to vote or think rationally for themselves. Both Athenians and Americans from decades ago only allowed for white men with educational backgrounds (or those who owned land) to vote, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of this already problematic system of government. It took decades upon decades for our government to allow men of color to vote, and women have yet to practice that right for a full century. Furthermore, studies have shown that a vast majority of young adults, some only just reaching the cusp of adulthood, refuse to put into practice that very same constitutional right that African Americans, women and our troops have fought tooth and nail to obtain. The reason for this is not that these young adults do not appreciate the sacrifices made by those who came before them. It is that these young adults are ignorant as to how to think clearly and critically regarding what it is they truly want and that they are unable to fathom the idea that they are able to make an executive decision regarding their futures and the future of their country. How can adults possibly justify placing the burden of their nation's future on the shoulders of students who, not even a year before, were required to raise their hand in order to use the bathroom? Throughout many of these students' high school—and even their college—years, they were never taught how to determine what a strong leader is. Only a miniscule percentage were taught how to be a strong leader themselves. Even fewer had a strong leader or role model to look up to and use as an example. So how can a college student be expected to discern an intelligent, compassionate, and capable representative from the line-up of candidates when this particular multiple choice question was not discussed in the review?

President John F. Kennedy made the point that “a child miseducated is a child lost,” and it has been said by another that “our children are our future.” Both could not have been more spot on,

for it is our children that will inherit this country from the current generation, and the country's future will rest in their hands. However, if even one child is left miseducated or is left without the tools required in order to think deeply, rationally, and independently, then that child has been lost, and a small bit of hope for a promising future for this country has been chiseled away. It is the adults of today that are left holding the mallet.

It is our nation's responsibility to fund the institutions that will enable our students to receive the education they sorely need so that our nation runs the way it should. It is our nation's responsibility to value its educators and to treat them like the important artists they are, artists who craft and mold young, malleable minds into ones whom are capable of free-thought and ones whom are able to analyze situations and make rational decisions.

It is our nation's responsibility to fund the institutions that will enable our students to receive the education they sorely need so that our nation runs the way it should. It is our nation's responsibility to value its educators and to treat them like the important artists they are, artists who craft and mold young, malleable minds into ones whom are capable of free-thought and ones whom are able to analyze situations and make rational decisions. Unfortunately, the nation has failed to live up to its responsibilities, and has been failing since the time of Thomas Edison. He made the point, like Jefferson, that proper education is key to our nation's success, but that rather than giving students a means in which to use their natural skills and live up to their highest potential, schools are focusing more on molding minds into something able to efficiently regurgitate information. They are bypassing the sculpture of truly unique works of art for the sake of manufacturing a massive quantity of cheap, simple factory copies.

This is the problem with our nation: it does not appreciate the unique, and it does not understand that it takes several parts to make a whole. Each piece requires special care, and each piece requires that time and effort be placed into it by someone willing to do the work. Our educators, our teachers, are willing to put in the hours, if only they are properly funded and given the tools that they need in order to bring the piece of art to life. Without those, our nation will never see the scores of independent, rational, yet creative minds that are required in order for it to succeed. We need leaders, and we need for the people of our nation to be able to discern who these great leaders are.

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EDUCATION: THE ENTIRETY OF SOCIETY
Hailey Langford, Gilmer HS

Conference 3A
1st Place

Fame fades unhurriedly into the distance of years passed. Physical beauty that once enthralled thousands of adoring fans diminishes into old age. Only a single quality of one's humanity remains resiliently, never wandering astray like the rest: an education. While all of one's most cherished possessions, even their loved ones, can be lost, an education is permanent, unable to be revoked. Stimulating intellect in each individual has a massive impact on the world as a whole, as does improper education in the form of indoctrination or brainwashing. An education encompasses many of humanity's greatest victories and stable entities, and the condition of the Modern Era has vehemently attests to its pivotal influence over governing bodies and the entirety of society.

The knowledge of society as a whole serves as a shield against disease, poverty, terrorism, and oppression. Innovation by brilliant, educated minds combat all of these disturbing entities with vigor. Many of history's greatest inventors, artists, and scientists boasted a proper education categorized by allowing the student to flourish in their own unique ideologies and establishing those ideas in a flexible, adaptable manner. In essence, having an education modifies the way one thinks, and many would argue this a positive result. Being familiarized with the archives of history, science, language, and mathematics early in life allows children to think critically, thus allowing

them to develop their own ideas as opposed to indoctrination by this digital age of advertising or their parents. Nations such as the Nordic states that have top-notch educational systems with emphasis on greatly-respected teachers and impeccable balance of subject matter tend to have higher gross domestic products, superb healthcare and scientific innovation, coupled with dwindling rates of poverty and war. Numbers do not lie, so it is evident almost without dispute that educated masses yield societal success.

An access to an education results in minds that function freely, critically, and creatively, the inverse holds true as well. Those who are not acquainted with a proper education in childhood are often condemned to a life of inadequacy and, in turn, misery. Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of lack of proper, unbiased education is that it bleeds into the democratic system. It is evident by the actions of modern America's congressional bodies that many people have devolved in a sense and begun to cling to their beliefs for dear life. This frequently stems from indoctrination in childhood, and the fixed beliefs of affected adults are not truly their own beliefs, but those of their parents and biased educators. The complexity of the issue lies in the antithesis of theory and practice; children are taught to always stand up for their beliefs no matter what, but their beliefs are sometimes the result of society's indoctrination, and they are not cognizant to the fact that new innovations or simply changing times may require one's beliefs to adapt. Just as the post-Galileo world had to accept that the earth is not the solar system's center contrary to deep-seated convictions, today's world must come to terms with modifications. Thus, Congress sits in a stalemate of world war proportions, unwilling to compromise on topics of economics, healthcare, and equal rights, and furious on the rare occurrence of compromise. This indecision took its toll on many Americans during the government shutdown of 2013 caused by an inability to compromise on healthcare reform. Many may argue that holding true to one's beliefs in such extreme manners is key to life, while others deem it a hindrance to progress.

Imagine fifth grader Jimmy returning home from school as he does each day. His mother provides her usual inquiry. "What did you learn today at school, Jimmy?" Jimmy excitedly replies, "Evolution!" As he begins gushing over the intriguing facts about "survival of the fittest" and humans' common ancient ancestry with other animals, his mother is absolutely horrified. Growing up in the 1960s and being raised to believe evolution was a sacrilegious myth, she cannot bear the thought of her child learning such blasphemy in school, a place she thought she could trust. She telephones the school furiously and, refusing to let Jimmy's science teacher defend himself, she declares that Jimmy will never return to school. Instead, she will home school him, and filter each morsel of education material before it reaches her son. All in all, Jimmy misses out on learning a topic quite interesting for many students, a balanced education, and also on the important experience of human interactions. His destiny stems from his mother's rejection of reason, and lack of desire to understand that such science is not all that radical. Jimmy is likely to develop beliefs congruent to his mother's, and the cycle of refusal to compromise in government goes on and on. Some would say Jimmy's mother's actions are perfectly justifiable and that parents have the right of total control over their children, but others would view this as a dangerous example of censorship. Society may begin to ponder, "Do parents have the right to object to history lessons because of the world's violent past? Should parents be allowed to have their child exempt from testing because they believe it is wrong?" The answers remain in ambiguity, and many worry this could be a "slippery slope."

Aside from the realities of history's successes, current government affairs, and even little Jimmy, the realm of literature also attests to the might of an education and the dangers of parental indoctrination. Harper Lee's beloved *To Kill a Mockingbird* presents a multitude of characters as foils to the Finch family. While the Cunninghams are poor and uneducated and the Ewells hold dearly to their racist convictions, Atticus Finch takes pride in the education of his children and the family's anti-discriminatory attitudes even in the face of the Great Depression. Atticus ensures that his young children, Scout and Jem, are not shielded from the racist, misogynic realities of life, but are instead allowed to view such things firsthand and develop their ideas independently. The

children are schooled to the best of their teachers' abilities, and the intellectual and creative stimulation of schooling allows their beliefs to be formulated, revealing that Scout and Jem do not conform to society's prejudices. They are open-minded, just as many of the fictional county's children would be if given the same raising as Atticus's children. The novel displays the correlation between receiving a good education and being able to develop ideas pertinent to the current times instead of outdated prejudices. After all, children are future voters, lawmakers, and government officials, so maintaining equilibrium between one's beliefs and the world surrounding them directly influences the future.

Although the general consensus is that education establishes many opportunities in life for those who receive it, many disputes remain regarding ethical concerns. Since children are creatures with malleable minds, the utmost care has to be taken in early education. A parent's unwillingness to budge on determining precisely what their children are exposed to, or even a teacher proclaiming, "Always stand up for what you believe in," have insurmountable impacts on individual children, and thus on everyone. For many, the uncomfortable truth is that the world is ever-changing, with dozens of scientific breakthroughs occurring on a weekly basis. If people never changed with the times or with scientific advancements, detested systems like slavery, discrimination, and child labor would still run rampant in today's world. In order to succeed in a world that is subject to everlasting change, to solve new issues and elect the proper individuals to represent the public, we the human race must adapt from habitual behaviors and be willing to be flexible in our beliefs. Change can be frightening, but it has catalyzed national revolutions, the discovery of lifesaving vaccines, and interdependence in the global community. The world will always change, and we must not stand idly by and allow it to leave us behind.

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A SYSTEM OF INTERRELATED DEPENDENCY

Jackson Larimer, Lovejoy HS

Conference 4A

1st Place

The nature of society is one of interwoven complexities, such that academic pursuit has a tendency to directly influence patterns of democracy, based upon its focus and direction. The Enlightenment gave birth to revolutionary intellectuals such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, who seized the tendrils of republicanism that began to breach society in order to form a state founded upon principles of democracy. The tremendous responsibility of forming this new republic, the United States of America, fell to the hands of the educated as men such as James Madison eloquently set forth the principles the new nation would live by. But how was this magnificent event, this crowning achievement of democracy, made possible? Only by the hands of colonial predecessors who helped to educate the rising generations. Beginning with the Bible covenant and continuing with institutions such as Harvard and Yale, it was through the relentless pursuit of a greater level of education that a new form—a lasting form—of government was feasible. The traditions and precedents that began with the formation of a new state in the 18th Century remain equally applicable in the contemporary world; the success of democracy relies wholly upon the government's ability to adapt and respond to change. This adaptation comes by the exploration of intellectual and philosophical thought and the promotion of new ideas. A nation once free to exercise this gift of intellectualism in government is now being gripped by the suffocating presence of an inability to pursue higher academic ideals—a trend which is both predictable and degrading.

The population center is a sector of a modern collegiate institution that bemoans the current state of American legislature—But who is to believe their precepts? Those who recognize the legitimacy of an institution founded upon the cornerstone of sociology in order to investigate the current trends of both government and culture. This research center calls for a return to intellectualism which can be addressed as the most direct cause of government inaptitude, and their insight sparks a greater exploration into the nature of this complex issue.

Much as Jefferson initiated the “revolution of 1800”—the first time that presidential power was transferred to a new political party—a social revolution is needed today in order to correct the corrupt and convoluted practices of Congressional candidates. To reprimand and repress is to condone to the intents of those who seek to destroy democracy, for these attempts merely instigate greater contention and stalemated efforts. A more permanent solution is not to fix the men who have corrupted democracy through their incompetence, but to reform the system that has cultured such a nature of inaptitude.

External threats, rather than being viewed as a justifiable reason to limit democracy and open-mindedness on the basis of national security, should be seen as cries for greater intellectual pursuit. The logic behind this argument is that the flame of rebellion can only be quenched by the draught of knowledge that comes with an influx of intellectual thought. The promotion of knowledge in the public education system will lead to the promotion of wisdom (which can be defined as the proper application of knowledge) in government legislatures.

As an organic form of regulation, the American government has evolved, digressed, and subsequently reformed over the years; this meandering has created a history of policy that is not always in accordance with the pillars of democracy. The epitome of a time when our nation was led by people gripped with prejudice and preconceived notions rather than a streamlined democratic process is made evident by the Second Red Scare. The 1950's were a time when Communism was seen as an overshadowing, overpowering, and repulsive influence that could not be rejected through democratic means. Freedom of speech was greatly hindered by the House of Un-American Activities as Hollywood producers were arrested for their films that shed the USSR in a sympathetic light. Senator Joseph McCarthy declared that he had a list of 205 government officials that were involved with the Communist Party. A pandemic of fear and “witch-hunting” soon ensued. So great was the censorship of free speech that Arthur Miller was forced to write his views of McCarthyism under the mask of the Salem Witch Trials. His play represents a firsthand account of the magnitude of irrationality that encompassed American academia.

The Second Red Scare provides meaningful insight into the trend of contemporary society because it arose due to the educational background of those officials that were on the front lines of the anti-communist surge. Leaders such as McCarthy had witnessed in their youth the suppressive actions of the American foreign and domestic policy in the decades following the first world war. In this sense, their education was dominated by the tendencies of society. During the 1920's, several immigration acts severely limited the entrance of “aliens” into the American borders; these acts represented the regression of democracy because of their fear to permit intellectual freedom. Sacco and Vanzetti were brutally electrocuted because of their Eastern European origin and anarchist tendencies. During the Gilded Age, the Haymarket Square riot in which anarchists set off a pipe bomb had polluted the name of all Eastern European citizens. What emerged was a pattern of irrational fear that led to increased prejudice and a degradation of democratic precepts. This historical education, steeped in the fouling influence of fear and hate, culminated in the outbreak of the Second Red Scare.

Consequently, what is to be learned from the actions of the past? In order for democracy to thrive, a proper and unbiased education system must be rigorously promoted. As our nation moves forward, it must draw upon the experiences of the past to project a brighter future of intellectual expression. Those circumstances which allowed for the growth of democracy and education must be ardently seized upon, and the trend must continue. Only then will a practice of higher education and awareness proliferate. Despite the drawbacks of the Second Red Scare, the United States governmental system was able to salvage the American culture of education and free intellectual thought. As the Cold War continued, the American focus underwent a beneficial shift from condemning Communists (or rather, perceived Communists) to bolstering American education in mathematics and science in order to guarantee a more refined defense system. The National Security Defense Initiative was a government policy that provided extensive funding in the math and science subjects of public education, which encouraged intellectualism by providing students

with greater opportunities to pursue careers as engineers. This, in turn, protected the ideals of democracy as new weapons technologies were developed to secure American borders. When the external threat of warfare was diverted, the nation underwent a transformation as democracy was free to loosen its tongue and circulate throughout the American populace. In addition to this result, the economy grew and the wealth of the nation increased as educated individuals pursued academic occupations such as entrepreneurship.

In order to understand the full ramifications of the influence of education on democracy, the current practices of government must be thoroughly analyzed for both integrity and effectiveness. In the past 20 years, how has legislature reflected intellectual awareness and sought to ensure democratic practices in the future? The facts provide a rather bleak reality of the direction our nation is headed. Allow me to explain the underlying framework of legislative decision in order to more fully discuss the motivations for current actions.

The judicial branch of the American government is capable of interpreting the constitutionality of actions under the ruling in the John Marshall court case *Marbury V. Madison*. This means that the judicial branch provides the boundaries for which the legislative branch may exercise their authority. Therefore, a protection of democracy must begin with the judicial branch and continue through the extension of policy written by the legislative branch. In a revolutionary court case determining the limits of freedom of speech in the 1930's, the judicial branch determined that freedom of speech was to be maintained IF and only if it does not represent a "clear and present danger, such as shouting fire in a crowded theatre." But what is to be defined as a "clear and present danger" in a society now marked by such diversity of thought? The freedom of speech has a legitimate hold on the development of education, as a pattern of freedom of expression must be established to promote intellectual practices in institutions. In society today, there are several explicit examples in which the government has overstepped its bounds in interpreting the manifestation of a "clear and present danger."

The documentary film "Shouting Fire—Issues from the edge of Free Speech" examines a situation in which the intellectualism of the academic field was compromised by government legislature. Chase Taylor, high school student, was thoroughly ruffled when his school endorsed a "day of silence" for the promotion of gay rights. Should not the school, as a public domain, allow for the expression of both sides of the issue? In response to this day of silence—in which students wore pins to show gay pride—Chase decided to decorate his own apparel in response. He believed this open difference of opinion would allow others to see that he did not support gay rights—a perfect example of intellectualism put into practice. On his t-shirt he wrote a message that said "homosexuality is a sin to God" and a scripture reference. His school promptly demanded that he remove the message. He declined, stating that it was his right to express his opinion, just as many students publicly advocated their support for homosexuality. The case went to court, and here is where the corruptibility of democracy is made evident. The initial reaction to Chase's message could be attributed to the prejudice of a single school's administration. However, the courts showed their own prejudice when they ruled the case irrelevant, because Chase had graduated. This means that the school has the freedom to continue the practice of the suppression of free speech.

Chase's message clearly did not form a "clear and present danger." Yet the judicial branch refused to uphold and support the principles of democracy within the public education system. This incongruous practice in regards to democracy has managed to infiltrate higher levels of society as well, which is now defining holistic American governmental action.

Viet D. Dinh is an American senator and primary writer of the PATRIOT Act. This legislature dictates that the federal government can regulate phone conversations and internet searches across the nation in an attempt to root out terrorism. While public safety is a clear priority, the Patriot Act inspires fear in American citizens and justifies censorship of the people. Such censorship is an attempt by the federal government to limit intellectual expression, which directly compromises the education system by enacting a pre-established bias. The Patriot Act has encouraged colleges such as Harvard University to propose the establishment of a speech code.

How can Congressional procedure, which is inherently marked by intellectual debate, represent all facets of public opinion when Congress will soon be filled by members who have been taught to follow a particular advocacy? Such a flaw will greatly hinder democratic progress if it is not soon corrected.

Under careful analysis of past events and their natural consequences, the future of democracy can be predicted by situations such as collegiate speech codes, the Patriot Act and the suppression of Chase Taylor's message. Just as immigration acts and electrocution of anarchists encourages a desensitization in regards to the fragile nature of democracy that led to the Second Red Scare, contemporary culture will determine the limits of freedom of expression in the near future. It is the responsibility of the public education system to raise leaders who have been exposed to multiple opinions in order to secure a future government that will reflect the needs of the people. The integrated sectors of government, such as foreign policy, legislative practice, and overall integrity, will in turn reap the benefits of a benevolent democratic form that has been re-established through the diligence of the education system. This intellectual equilibrium is not only right and proper; it is necessary for the growth of a nation that has been committed to educational and democratic ideals since long before 1776.

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URBAN CENTERS: THE BEATING HEARTS OF AMERICA
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Conference 5A
1st Place

The great cities of America—New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles—were all born from the partnership between the wealthy benefactors and proprietors of America and the millions of foreign immigrants that came to the shores of this country to seek prosperity and life. It was on the backs of these immigrants to build these cities from the ground up, but also develop the lifeblood, the culture, the rhythms and moods of these urban cities, changing them into places of growth and revolution. The impact of central urban neighborhoods has been felt tremendously throughout America's history, from the Industrial Revolution to the Beat Generation, and although the beautification of these cities is an admirable task, the overwhelming problem of gentrification is furthering the divide between the rich and the poor.

The early American immigrants in the late 1800s quite literally built America from the ground up. This large labor pool was centralized in rapidly growing urban cities, providing a seemingly endless workforce to hammer nails on the railroads twisting through the Great Plains, operate the machinery in massive factories lining city rivers with smokestacks, and assemble Ford cars in Detroit with breakneck speeds. The Industrial Revolution in America was prompted by the funds of a few wealthy men but was fueled by the urban centers and their millions of hardworking, tireless, working class individuals who developed an entire way of life based on industry. It is true that America has veered off from manufacturing and industrial work since the boom of the Roaring Twenties and the World Wars, but labor is cyclical and one day in the fast approaching future America perhaps will return to industrial work. One has to look ahead, for spaceships might have to be created in mass for a development of America's progress in the exploration of the "final frontier", or even supplies for a total war may have to be developed en masse in the event of a world disaster, and the urbanites in highly centralized cities will be the ones supplying the work force, not the highly educated American residing in the distant suburbs.

Urban centers have always been one source for cultural revolutions based on the truth that they are mostly made up of minorities, immigrants, and the poor. Starting in the early 1900s in New York City, the Harlem Renaissance defined nearly a generation through the jazz, poetry and new types of social identities that originated from the movement. Not only did the cultural change rock the way young people in America became entertained, it also helped revolutionize the way the

country viewed African Americans and propelled their social place in the U. S. The heavily urbanized area of Harlem, New York was not filled with wealthy whites, but working-class and artistically driven African Americans who as a community developed their own identity that perhaps could not have taken place if the rich industrialists of the 1900s mingled side by side. The Beat Generation of the 1940s, influenced by Allen Ginsberg and the rest of the “New Vision” poets, arised from the minority laden South-side, Manhattan where it wasn’t entirely socially acceptable for well-off and sensible individuals to live. It was this melting-pot of youth that were disillusioned by the war and looking for something new and free from the tradional that the Beat literary revolution was born. Through the rejection of the social norms of America developed by wealthy whites, they affected a whole nation with literature and artistic endeavors never seen before their time, influenced by the jazz bars in minority boroughs and the upheavel of traditionalism in the ghettos of New York. Momentous, revolutionary creative movements such as the Harlam Renaissance and the Beat Generation could have only come out of inner cities, where the artistic, open-minded, nonconforists flock together to create communities that spark ideas that change nations. The dismantling of these societies through gentrification would wreak havoc not only on the urban centers of America but the cultural lifeblood that keeps the nation alive.

The idea of beautifying the urban inner-cities across the country is an admirable task but the importation of the wealthy, classically-educated upper class will not achieve a successful cohesion of the urban poor and the suburban-bred wealthy. One only has to look towards Europe as an example. In Paris, the very wealthy few live near world-class museums and public parks in beautiful penthouses alongside tree-lined avenues while most of the poor, pushed out of Paris by the surging price of living due to the arrival of the upper-class, are forced to live on governmental housing blocks on the outskirts of the city. There are some ghettos in blocks that the police cannot enter for fear of being killed by the extremely poor and neglected citizens that the government has pushed out of the way to make room for the few rich that has viewed living in a city to be trendy for the time being. The overarching problem is not the gentrification of urban areas, but the dramatically uneven distribution of wealth in America that is forcing tens of thousands from their homes. It is not just that one group of citizens must force out another simply to be near the theatres, the art houses, the libraries, and the parks when it was that one group who left the cities for the suburbs to escape the poor and the immigrants. The “Gospel of Wealth” by James Carnegie of U. S. Steel at the turn of the century preached that it was the wealthy’s duty to give back to the poor, to build universities, libraries, and museums, to further the country through charity and good will. The government should spend money and effort on creating public places and beautifying the urban areas with poorer residents and let the rich create and maintain their part of the city through the private sector with their own funding, as to allow the immigrants, the poor, and the foundations of this country to have the right to live wherever they please.

America was built on the revolutionary power and ideas born from the urban inner cities untouched by the hands of the wealthy few. The lack of traditionalism found in the immigrants and the poor has sparked essential movements through art history and it is through these social changes that America continues to evolve and grow as a country. The delicate balance of the rich and the poor will be dismantled completely by the upheaval of inner-city residents who cannot afford to exist in cities becoming gentrified by those with money and power that ultimately disrupt the urban dynamic whether their intentions are for good or for bad. Urban centers and the citizens who live within them are the beating hearts of America, the sources of cultural revolution and social change, and we must protect them from the ruin that will occur if the gentrification of these cities continues to destroy the lives of so many.