

“These Truths Are Self-Evident...”

Jaeho Lee

Findley Elementary School 4th grade

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Although these world-changing words were put forth into the universe by the fathers of our country 240 years ago, we have yet to achieve our forefathers’ goals. It is hypocritical that we still discriminate by economic state, gender, and race. We only hope that “...someone, somewhere will soon make a change...” (We are the World, a song by USA for Africa), and hopefully, we can progress to meet our original guidelines for the making of our country. What happened between now and then?

One example of how we failed to meet the expectations of our ancestors is the way we treat the homeless people in our communities. Why is it that some people sleep on soft beds while others use asphalt as their resting place? An estimated 100 million (or 1 out of 70) people are homeless worldwide and as many as 1 billion (or 1 out of 7) people lack adequate housing. Adequate housing must

meet the needs (e.g. air, water, food, and shelter) and the health requirements of the occupant. Safe housing protects family members from exposure to outside dangers, such as chemicals and allergens, and helps prevent injuries. The fact that 1 out of 7 people lack this necessity is atrocious. Those citizens in a state of destitution are looked down upon and completely stripped of not just their homes, but their dignity as well. Most people do not offer even a warm hand to the unfairly downtrodden citizens. The government must create an efficient system to address the serious issue of homelessness. For example, they could set aside a sum of money from the millions of dollars they spend in unnecessary military action to use in subsidizing jobs for the homeless. Through productive and well-paid work, these men and women can achieve their economic success independently. Although the leaders are already quite aware of the problems, they are not making an effective effort to fix the terrible predicament of homelessness.

Perhaps more wealthy people should be encouraged to donate to philanthropic efforts in order to help other people have a decent place to call their home, sweet home. Some wealthy have already given themselves and their money to charity, like Millard Fuller, who gave up his fortune and started Habitat for Humanity, an organization that houses people who live in poverty. Bill Gates, the creator of the software company Microsoft, donates more money than anyone in the world! However, there are many other millionaires and billionaires in the

world, and there are also many poor people that desperately crave and require assistance. Why is it that not everybody pitches in? People are taught to follow the Golden Rule (treat others the way one wants to be treated), but the “preachers” who spread the principles rarely help the poor. I would look towards others for help if I was in an impoverished situation. There are solutions. We could raise awareness, offer greater tax breaks for donating money, and get more famous people to use their power to persuade others to help. If we all try our best and work together, we can make the world a better place.

Racial discrimination has always been a nagging problem for humanity, and it will continue to be unless we address the issue head-on. Inequality is not an ideal upon which this country was built on. Racism was at one of its worst points as we know it during the first 70 years of the 20th century. However, some courageous and strong people stood up for themselves during this time. Some examples are Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and Jesse Jackson. One exceptional self-advocate was an African-American man named Martin Luther King Jr. He led a march on racial equality on August 28, 1963, commonly known as the “March on Washington.” At this March he articulated his vision for the near future which embraced righteous justice: *“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”* Dr. King hoped for equality on all degrees. His speech was a message

to the nation that the people of his race were treated unfairly, and he wanted to stop the injustice. His speech alludes to many of the ideals that our nation's forefathers founded our nation upon. Sadly, King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, at the age of 39. We must look towards people like Martin Luther King Jr. for a role model in fixing the unfair snubbing of equals because of their race.

Unfortunately, it is true that discrimination does not stop at race. Women have less authority than men. Although females have more rights than before, there are obvious unbalanced prejudices and discrepancies between genders even in the modern age. According to the Department of Labor, as of 2016, women earn only 78% of men's pay for the same job with equal qualifications. For every dollar a man earns, a woman earns seventy-eight cents. Sara Evans, author of Personal Politics, articulates the efforts of women in the 1960s to change the political structure as: "These women were convinced that, for real change to occur, a new civil rights group must be formed that could pressure the government to enact and enforce laws against [gender] discrimination." (Evans, 19) What the feminists of the 1960's and 1970's thought was so true; they are the role models of reform. Through education of our younger generation we can break down stereotypes and expand the role of women to be highly influential workers or even directors outside home. During World War II, women triumphantly entered the workforce and became known as "Rosie the Riveter". However, when the war ended, their

opportunities did as well. Many were forced into their previous role as homemakers, despite their terrific qualifications and economic need. More recently, though, as of 2016, Hillary Clinton, running for the presidency, is another of the examples of the women who hope to rise up from the “sticky floor” and break the “glass ceiling” of gender discrimination.

The people who signed the Declaration of Independence wanted us to afford everyone the same rights. But, Thomas Jefferson, who signed the declaration owned slaves. He also considered an African-American male only three-fifths of a white man and did not even include females in the Declaration of Independence. Believing “that all men are created equal” but not women or African-Americans is not what we would expect from a wise and educated man. So, think about it. Are we actually doing a better job making people accept others? With the inauguration of a female president looming on the horizon, we hopefully will be able to witness and help the old structures of racial, gender, and economic discrimination crumble down like the Berlin Wall.

Citations:

The Declaration of Independence (national document)

We are the World by USA for Africa (song)

I Have a Dream by Martin Luther King Jr. (speech)

Personal Politics by Sara Evans (book)