Ben Berkowitz

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Professor Carr

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 United We Stand

 When Darwin established his theory of evolution, he was not just referring to humans evolving from monkeys. Change is a fundamental aspect in our everyday lives. In order to survive, we are continuously adapting to the situations we are a part of to establish greatness and success. Countless times throughout history we have seen how, if needed, the American people can and will alter our thought processes for the greater good of their country. An example of this would be slavery in the United States throughout the 18th and 19th century. For years and years people accepted the fact that certain people were born to be slaves, and this was their duty in this world. The white man believed he was superior and was more entitled to his rights and freedom solely determined by the color of his skin. After years of suppression and unjustified cruelty, the enslaved people decided to fight back. Throughout the 1800’s, there were various protests and uprisings intended to put a stop to slavery, which were led by men like Nat Turner, Samuel Sharpe, and many more (Andrews). People of higher power began to realize that change was essential to the continued success of America, and slavery needed to be eradicated. This change was brought about through the 13th amendment which declares that slavery shall not exist in the United States.

 One of the greatest issues which we are fighting for change for nowadays is gender equality. Womens rights have come quite a long way from where they were, including the ability to vote and drastic drops in the wage gap. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve equality. This drive and desire for change is what incited the Womens March of 2017. Following the inauguration of President Trump, many people were infuriated with his sexual slurs and did not deem him as an appropriate leader. Millions of people throughout the country flooded the streets in protest. These protests were against the president himself and against the overall privilege and power that men have over women. Many believe that this March served as a major catalyst toward equality in the future. The major changes that have happened over the last few years, including the general treatment of women throughout society and even the fact that more women are beginning to come forward and speak their thoughts, were achieved because of the Womens March. However, there are those that believe that the March did absolutely nothing for the cause and was a waste of time and effort. Some say that since no physical change was acquired, the March attributed to nothing. So, the question is, was the march successful in what it was intended to achieve, or was it a complete failure?

The women who took part in the March of 2017 were there with two main objectives in mind. Firstly, they were unified in their outrage and despair regarding the inauguration of Donald Trump. They were also challenging the cultural “normal” that allows men more power and privilege over women, emphasized immensely by the #MeToo movement (Chira). Many famous and exalted women joined together with the hundreds of thousands of others involved in the march. They were greatly disturbed that the man who was now running the country was a vulgar, desensitized man who, as Ashley Judd referenced in her speech by the march, believed he could use his celebrity status to force himself on women. “I am not as nasty as racism, fraud, conflict of interest, homophobia, sexual assault, transphobia, white supremacy, misogyny, ignorance, white privilege” (Judd). They were also furious about Trump’s getting rid of the Obama-era rule, which required companies with 100 or more workers to report detailed salary information to government bureaucrats by sex, race, job category, and other factors. The goal of the rule was to close the widely misinterpreted gender wage gap and empower workers to identify and sue their employers for alleged discrimination in pay and promotions (Boccia).

 However, these are all not true statements about Trump and his effect on the economy as pertains to gender. Under Trump’s leadership, women’s unemployment hit the lowest level since World War II. Of course, due to COVID-19 the unemployment rates have soared, but that has been for men just as much as women. In December of 2019, women's unemployment was at a staggering 3.2%(Duffin)!!! After gaining 4.3 million jobs since President Trump’s election, women now make up a majority of payroll employment. Last year, 71.2 percent of new jobs went to women, up from 45.7 percent over the expansion before President Trump took office (“As Job Creation Exceeds,”2020). Female small business ownership remains at an all-time high and 600,000 women have been lifted out of poverty since Trump took office.

 Regarding the wage gap, there is more than what is just seen on the surface. When simply comparing men to woman overall, it is true that woman made $0.81 for every $1.00 men were paid in 2020. This is called the uncontrolled pay gap group, which measures the median salary for all men and women regardless of job type, seniority, years of experience etc. Upon looking at the controlled group, which measures males and females with the same jobs and qualifications, the pay gap was cut to $0.98 for every dollar a man makes. There are many different aspects that may well explain the 19% increase in pay men have over women. According to a Department of Labor study, differences in education, experience, choice of industry and occupation, career interruptions, and hours worked explain all but 5 cents of the so-called wage gap (Boccia). The last five percent missing may very well come from flexible work schedules which they adjust based on family life. One example is that while 42% of mothers with some work experience reported in 2013 that they had reduced their work hours in order to care for a child or other family member at some point in their career, only 28% of fathers said the same (Parker). This does not prove that there is no wage gap based on sexism, but it demonstrates the progress that has been made and that negative effect Trump has had may be smaller than the world has come to believe.

 Regarding the march’s second purpose, to challenge the unrightful privilege of men, there are those that belief there has not been change, or at least no significant change, worthy of admiring. According to a 2017 report published in the *Economist*, about half of all employed women in the United States will face sexual harassment in the workplace (“Women in the Workplace”, 2020). In 2017 alone,135,755 rapes were reported in America (Desantis). It seems from this that not much had change since the march. However, a survey was given in both 2016 and 2018 to women regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. In 2016, 25% of women reported being sexually coerced, and in 2018 that number had declined to 16%. Unwanted sexual attention declined from 66% of women to 25%. An increase in self-esteem and a decrease in self-doubt was noted as well in compared to two years prior (Johnson). As much as the assault numbers are still bad beyond belief, women are beginning to stand up for themselves and express themselves confidently. The knowledge that thousands of others are sharing their stories as well gives women a sense of community and the speak out as well.

 The road to equality appears to be never-ending. The fight for women's rights has been an ongoing dilemma for centuries. Although there is so much more left to accomplish, we must realize how far the American women has come. From gaining the ability to vote to women climbing the ladders of social and political power, the change is quite astonishing. A major factor in this change in the past few years is greatly due to the Women’s March of 2017. The march has encouraged women of every race and color, no matter what their background is, to stand united in defiance of the inequality bestowed upon them. Women have become more open to expressing their opinions and the struggles they have heard as they now know that their voices will be heard by the masses. As Martin Luther King Jr. Famously quoted, "Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in”.

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**Reflection Paper:**

The argumentative essay we have been told to write has been undergone for quite some time. Beginning roughly two months ago, we were told to choose an event of protest that occurred over the past one hundred and twenty years. We were then told to do some extensive research on the topic chosen and write an expository essay, which is an essay that only displays pure facts with no opinions or bias. Thinking of the various available protests to write about, it was quite tough for me to choose just one. I narrowed my choice down by contemplating the main areas of inequality that are still around today. This left me with the choice of writing on racial profiling and black rights or the fight for women's equality. With my choices narrowed down to just two, I went with the one that I believed would be written about less by my peers (that didn’t exactly seem to happen 😊). After much thought, I chose to write about the Women’s March of 2017. This came from the fact that it is a protest that only happened three years ago and I would be able to associate myself with the times of the world that I had lived in as well. It was also far enough in the past that there was quite an extensive amount of time to be able to see what change had occurred. After finishing our expository essay, we were then required to write this essay, the argumentative essay, in which we bring claims and counterclaims to our argument while unbiasedly taking a side in the argument. I started writing my essay by thinking of a proper argument. Originally, I was thinking of an argument largely pertaining to abortion and the workplace. After speaking it over with my teacher, we established that writing on abortion were extremely overdone and the extensive workplace writings were just downright boring. I needed something that would hook my readers to the page and keep them interested throughout the entire essay. It took some time, but after a lot of research, I realized that, unbeknownst to many, there were many people who believed that the March had not brought about any change. This led to my argument, whether the March actually succeeded in what it set out to accomplish or not?

 The genre of my writing is an argumentative essay, as it is a writing which includes an argument based off of my expository essay. The argumentative essay carries a lot of power as it is showing your readers that you are not just pushing away the counterclaim. You are acknowledging the other sides opinions and explaining why you believe that your side is better represented. This genre of writing allows me to show that I understand that not everyone believes that the Women’s March led to more positive world for women, and prove in the best way I can how I believe it has. The purpose behind this essay is to establish a thorough and thought-out debate in the two sides regarding Women’s rights. It allows me to express the facts of those who believe change was achieved, as well as those that don’t believe so. I believe that written are many interesting and insightful ideas that most people had no clue about before reading my essay.

The audience for this essay would be feminists and activists who believe that they are succeeding in their fight for change The media used for this essay would be print, but since we cannot meet up in person, we are sending it via word document. Besides for the actual essay, we were required to make a PowerPoint encompassing the information acquired from the expository and argumentative essays. This satisfies course learning outcome 5, which is to understand and use print and digital technologies to address a range of audiences. Writing this essay has also allowed me to fulfill CLO 4, which is to engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes. Through our peer reviews, this has allowed me to engage with my fellow classmates and establish a connection with them while helping them and receiving help back. Our PowerPoint has allowed me to use the social aspects of writing, where I can actually be in front of the class (or with my screen share on) and show them my thoughts and beliefs on this topic.