

The thirteen american arguments: an evaluation essay sample



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Introduction

Arguments are what makes and keeps America. Howard Fineman offers and introduces the fundamental issues that perennially and perpetually beset the nation which is essential to its becoming. The book did not particularly provided an absolute and final answer to these questions but indefinitely maintains and argues for their open ended nature as inherent and necessary. And the American nation has since its inception, have continually struggled to sip through these arguments to find and create a better future for the people.

The author. Howard Fineman is a journalist and a columnist. He is currently a political correspondent in Newsweek and news analyst at NBC. Following his professional background, he had always been engaged in the unending issues and debates in the political and economic realities and occurrences that afflict people on a daily basis. Through this book, he tried to summarize the underlying primary themes that comprehensively encompass the issues that journalists like him encounter everyday. And unlike an academician or a philosopher that proposes a framework or ideology that will explain events and phenomenon, Fineman simply concluded for the innate character of these issues and debates as a defining element of American identity which is essential for its continued existence. Whether it's unique or what makes this trait unique to America compared to other nations was not covered by the author.

As explicitly contained in the book title, Fineman selected thirteen questions that he deemed are most fundamental to Americans. The inclusion of “

American” created the framework that provided restrictions and assumptions to the issues that was raised, although many scholars may have immediately criticized the parameters or criteria by which author have filtered his selections. For our purposes, this review will focus only on four questions from among the thirteen issues that Fineman raised.

Who is a person? First of all, this question is not exclusive to Americans but pertains to humanity in general. In the American context, Fineman presents that irony that while the Declaration of Independence unequivocally pronounces the inclusion of “ everyone” as a person, it required America to shed blood and to loose lives (during the Civil War and Civil Rights Movements) to apply and realize its own declaration. At the moment, this question persists in relations to issues like abortion and war. While the question indeed is thought provoking and relevant, it is nevertheless too general. It could have been narrowed down to accommodate an American framework in terms of rights and freedom. This in turn can extend its application to delineating animal rights from human rights. How far should we pursue the former at the expense of the latter? One of the flaws of America, which perhaps can be attributed to the current economic and political hegemony it enjoys, is its penchant to see things in their own perspective. The issue of who is a person cannot be single handedly discussed within an American setting because it is universal issue to mankind.

Who is an American? One of the most distinct aspects of the American society is diversity. It is constituted by different people of various races, ethnicity, origin, color, beliefs and even languages. As a nation of

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immigrants and with the dynamic nature of identity, American identity becomes problematic from which issues of racial discrimination, transnational identities and cultural citizenships relates. Fineman's conclusion is thus in parallel with Daniel Mato. "Identities are not legacies passively received but representations socially produced, and - in this sense - matters of social dispute" (Mato, p598)

The Environment. This is one of the important, urgent and timely issues raised by Fineman, which is equally important, urgent and timely to all nations all over the world. While everyone has a stake to the environment and should equally contribute to the effort in saving mother earth, this issue is appropriately addressed primarily to Americans considering that the US contributes majority of the greenhouse or carbon emission that destroys the environment and the planet. However unlike Fineman, this reviewer submits that issue needed no further debate but requires immediate attention and absolute decision and action for its urgency.

A Fair, `More Perfect` Union. In his interview with Heather Wilhelm, Fineman suggested the issue "A Fair, `More Perfect` Union" is the most pressing debate that is central in the previous presidential election. (Time). In this discussion, Fineman again capitalized on the critical role of embarking on debates with courtesy and mutual reverence so that people can be heard. He especially praises the Internet as a modern channel through which people can express their views and opinions, which is necessary to build a consensus for a more perfect union. This view of Fineman reflects his utmost dedication to democratic principles of participation and people empowerment. As part of democracy and of a sovereign people, it is a duty
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of every American citizen to actively participate in the affairs and issues that our country faces.

Conclusion

America is a country of incessant and unending arguments. It is who we are and what we are in our continued struggle of who and what will become of us. Thus, every American is enjoined to engage in debating these issues because that is how we succeeded in the past, how we shape our present and how we define our future. At this moment, "Facing despair and danger, we have always found in our storehouse of conflicting paradoxical traditions a way forward." (Fineman, p243)

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