

Thomas paine 'rights of man' ap english language 2011 essay



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In 'Rights of Man', pamphleteer Thomas Paine makes it clear that according to him, "by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires". While this may have been true in 1771, it is not so today. While America has a diverse population, whether there is a "cordial unison" among all its citizens is a matter of much debate. For, while they may be given the same constitutional rights, many immigrants and Americans are far from being treated as equals.

In America, as in every other nation, as in every diverse society, there is discrimination by its citizens against its diverse citizenship. Whereas some nations discriminate based on caste or religion, most of the discrimination prevailing in America today is racial between the 'blacks' and the 'whites'. While one may give the example of the first Black President, Barack Obama to counter my point, simply his election is not enough to say that all American citizens are treated equally. Racial discrimination against Asian-Americans, Latin-Americans and Arab-Americans (Islamophobia) is also prevalent.

This brings us to the unlawful persecution of members of the Islamic community post 9/11. Various cases have been reported where people have lost their jobs, or children have suffered incessant bullying because of the religion they follow. Even today, one can see that not all Americans are wholeheartedly accepting of Muslims. Furthermore, due to the average citizen's ignorance, many Sikhs and Punjabis in the United States have also been unjustly accused of being involved in terrorist activities because of their similar physical appearance and habits of maintaining long beards.

Now that we are on the topic of religion, it would do us good to remember how many religious leaders and churches have spoken out against homosexuality, claiming it to be a disease. One would have hoped that in the 21st century, when all other aspects of our social lives have advanced to a tremendous degree of individual choice and freedom, we would be much more accepting of homosexuals. After countless appeals, seminars and support from well known personalities, not to mention perseverance on the part of citizens such as Aaron Finke and Harvey Milk, it is good to know that an increasing number of states have legalised homosexuality and same-sex marriages. However, if we travel towards the south, many states such as Texas still hold the belief that homosexuality is an unnatural disease and a sin and homosexuals are often made to feel unwelcome or even ostracized by close-built rural communities. I fervently believe that, as illustrated above, while all American citizens may constitutionally have the same rights, the poor attitudes and ignorance of many of their citizens prevents others from attaining their rights without fear of persecution and hence prevents them from being, in Thomas Paine's words, "brought into cordial unison".