

Debate: Agree to Disagree

The author Michiko Kakutani is a book critic and reporter who chose to write an article for the New York Times. It was published in March of 2002, and gained wide spread popularity as it explored various issues towards identity and labeling. It is based on the generation born after 1985 and through research, interviews, and the use of comparing and contrast, the author really deepens the question, what is the consequence of the loss of the debate skill of students today.

Michiko begins her article using jargon familiar to people of all ages but mainly focusing in on high school and college level students, this makes it easy to spot who the intended audience is. Michiko compares debate rooms of today with classes before the 1980 s, she finds a considerable change, the debate rooms of today are more quite, residual, more formal than before, she states that it lacks the passion it once held long ago. An excerpt found in Neil Howe and William Strauss s book entitled *Millennials Rising* in summary, states that “people born during and after 1980 have a much less rebellious outlook on life and value team over self, honor over feeling, action over words.” The authors use of that source really lays the foundation of her thesis and allows the reader to think of what our country has had to endure in the last century. Michiko also finds a source which appeared in the Fall 2001 issue of “Amberst magazine” which stated that students of today are more respectful and adhere to public disputation. This source again follows through with students of our day in age losing that passion to speak our mind in fear of hurting someones feelings.

After gaining the readers interest with her research, we see the authors Ethos into work. She had an interview with an English professor at Princeton University who stated that, “Debate has gotten a very bad name in our culture.” Through this interview we, as the reader, are reminded how taboo it is to bring up politics in our society. We see the author use Pathos as she then begins to describe students as sheep being rounded up, not really wanting to go a certain way but do so without question, in fear that the student might stick out in a certain way; being different is bad. Students will try to climb the ladder rather than buck it if they are

in high disagreement of the matter of what we as students try to accomplish during a debate. With a hierarchical figure students will try to climb the ladder rather than buck it if they are in high disagreement with the matter.

But through all her examples she does share a silver lining in the cloud. She does state that even though students have lost that passion to speak out their mind we have developed a higher tolerance of other races, religions, and sexual orientations. Michiko brought this up to many of her sources and they have found that students have a great desire to get along with others. Much to the fact that most people will make it easier to say, "I just disagree." To further emphasize this Michiko adds an example of "ravers," a term coined to define people who are in or around a musically loud environment with bright lights and techno music. The ravers she saw were wearing shirts with the acronym P.L.U.R which stands for "peace, love, unity, and respect. Ravers are known stereotypically to use a drug called "ecstasy" which gives an effect of euphoria and brings everyone together in a peace loving manner. To further add to the culture of college students, Michiko talks about Oprah and how her teachings have brought together like-minded people with like-minded people and filtered out the rest. This is a great example to show where you the reader stands, and asks if we really challenge ourselves mentally or just go with the flow.

In closing Michiko does a great job comparing the theory of loss of debate in a sophisticated manner. Even though her article was less an argument than a point of view, she still captures the importance of keeping our democracy with logic and passion rather than losing it to stagnation and complacency. The author highlights the importance of debate and its vital role in engaging with the world logically and passionately.