



2nd PLACE
2024 STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST WINNER
What Voting Means to Me

By Elizabeth Currier, Helena High School

A VOTER'S VOICE

As an immigrant born in China who grew up in the United States, I am well aware my voting privileges have not always existed. Women gained the right to vote in 1920; however, Chinese immigrants did not gain the right to vote until the Chinese Exclusion Act ended in 1943. Today I have a voice those before me did not have, and I can let my voice be heard through voting. Voting for the betterment of the country I believe in.

Being able to vote when so many people in history were denied this privilege makes voting so much more meaningful. All the people who came before me have paved the way to the voting opportunities that exist today. Because they were not able to vote yesterday, I can vote today. Because of this voting makes a difference, and I want to make a difference. I can make a difference. I will make a difference.

Being able to vote means letting one's voice be heard. It is a great privilege to have the ability to vote in the United States, for some countries do not allow their citizens to vote. Voting means I play an active role in society and use my voice to fight for what I believe in. Having the ability to vote also means using my voice where other people cannot. My vote can go towards supporting those who may be

too young to vote, are in prison, or don't feel they are able to vote. I can vote for people that will promote equality and justice for all.

If we as citizens do not vote, we are accepting that the state of our country is good enough. Without voting we are not advocating and pushing for a society that is better. Without voting, we directly deny this country of progress. As a voter I will not let this happen. I will push for progress, because this country will never be as good as it could possibly be, and personally I am not willing to settle for anything less than what is possible. Additionally, not voting means I do not have a say in the policies that impact my life. By not voting, I am letting others determine my rights. I cannot decide not to participate in voting and then be upset with the outcomes of elections. The candidates elected can pass legislation that will either benefit me and what I believe in or directly endanger it. For this reason, it is my sole obligation to vote for someone who will turn my desires and beliefs for this country into policies and legislation that will benefit my causes. Without a voice I am nothing. So, if I have the ability to use my voice, I can be something. A something that is a proponent for not only a better state, but a better nation, and not just a better nation, but a better world.

Voting is how I exercise my voice in society. As a person of color, it is paramount that I can vote, because those who came before me did not. They had voices, but they were silenced. Today I will not be silent. I will not let the country pass legislation that directly puts me and my beliefs in jeopardy. I will vote because all those before me could not. I will vote because my voice is worth hearing. I will vote because I am tired of letting my voice and others' go unheard. I will vote because this is my time, my future, and my life, and it is time that others see that too.