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PHIL 103L – 202

Assignment # 1 – Self Reflection

As a twenty-two year old college student, working in a financial institution, you would think I would have a better understanding of the world, how it works, and what matters. After all, I, along with the rest of my generation, am the future of this country. But really, the truth is, I know far less about the world and what is going on in it than I should. Sure, I visit cnn.com on a daily basis, yet I immediately scroll past the World, U.S., and Politics sections and head right over to the Entertainment box. And, when the news comes on television, I change the channel faster than you can think, usually to some mindless reality TV show. As I wonder about why I care more about Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie than I do, say, the issues in Darfur, I have a feeling I am not alone. Not only is this a problem with people my age, but it is also an issue nationwide. Many Americans know much less about what is going on in the world, and their own country, than citizens of other nations do. So, upon going home after just the first World Views and Values class of the semester, it got me thinking. What are my feelings and beliefs on what is going on around me in this big, crazy world?

In some regards, I have a very pessimistic view of the world. Something that many people, including myself, hope for is for world peace to be reached. I think this is a very important issue not only from the past and present but for the future as well. While hoping for world peace can be the typical Miss America pageant answer, it is undoubtedly enormously significant. If it could be achieved, world peace would, well, make a world of difference! Humankind would be completely altered as a result of this being achieved. Yet, sadly, I have to admit that I doubt this would ever happen. Realistically speaking, there will always be hate in the world. There are far too many examples of this to be named, but one
recent instance that comes to mind is the situation in Southern Sudan. For years it fought for independence from Sudan, and eventually it was finally accomplished. Yet after that, a civil war began to brew in Darfur, which is still going on to this day. They went through all that killing and hate, only to turn on themselves. This just proves that achieving world peace is seemingly impossible. As I read the quotes on our syllabus, they bring so many different ideas into my mind. One by James Baldwin states, “The world is held together by the love of a few people.” There are so many people out there who want to cause conflict and do not want there to be peace until they have succeeded in fighting. Yet, at the same time, there are still those few who have hope, and who just want the world to be a peaceful place, full of love. While reading this quote gives me a sense of optimism and not such a pessimistic view, reading the next quote I liked by Eleanor Roosevelt brought me back into reality. It states, “When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it.” I feel as though the majority of the world believes in retaliation. Not a lot of people can just let things go, they must get back at their opponent for doing what they did. Just like Eleanor Roosevelt asks, “WHEN” will there be a time that this is not the case? When will the love that a few people have overrule the hate that is within the rest of the world? One can only hope that this occurs within the near future, but in my opinion, this is not ideal.

Many people have a specific religious view of the world, and there is a wide variety out there to choose from. For myself, I have to admit I wasn’t brought up in a very strict household. My father was raised Jewish and my mother Catholic, and while we do celebrate some holidays from both, neither of my parents ever really forced us to choose one or the other to practice. While my brother and I were both raised with values and morals, we never considered religion a huge part of our lives. We were allowed to choose our own paths and how we took on and viewed the world. Just within the past couple of years, I have begun to find in which direction I wish to choose to go in. I have become involved with a local Christian church and have begun to mold myself into a better person as a result. As I have started to come into my own, I have to admit that I now view the world
differently than I once did. I have grown from a girl who has gone with the norms of society to a woman who understands much more than my former self did. I am still young, so many of my friends are still in the party stages of their lives. I have come to realize, however, that the world is so much bigger than that. There are so many more important issues in life and in this world than drinking, or who has the most friends, or who dresses the best. Yet, if someone as a young adult chooses not to conform, they are looked at as an outsider. Quoting Eleanor Roosevelt from our syllabus, she stated, “When you decide what you believe, what you feel must be done, have the courage to stand alone and be counted.”

And, as I take on a new religious view of the world, I find this quote to be very true. Not everyone will agree with each other, but the fact that you have a belief and you are all for it is extremely respectable. Those who have beliefs are more prone to working for a better cause in everyday life. If you are someone who is selfish and doesn’t care about the future, it is doubtful you will do much to help the world and the issues in it. While I still have a lot more growing, learning, and understanding of myself and the world to do, I hope that one day I can make a difference and have an effect on someone or something.

Interestingly enough, many people have opinions on the world, whether they understand it or not. Many people out there are ignorant, yet spew out their ideas and thoughts like they have a full understanding of it all. I have to admit I myself am ignorant, in that I am very unaware of what goes on in the world. I choose not to openly discuss worldly topics, however, for fear of exposing this fact. I never like to speak out on something I know little to nothing about, so as to not make a fool of myself. I doubt I am the only one who feels this way, which could be another reason why a lot of Americans don’t get involved in many issues. A big example of ignorance in this world can be found in The Cave by Plato. The inhabitants of this cave are chained, and are only able to see the shadows of things that pass by, provided by a small fire in the darkness. Those who are chained represent the ignorant people in our society. They believe everything they see is real, since they know nothing else. All their lives, they know nothing but what is inside that cave. They may not even know that anything
outside it even exists, so they have no thought as to question what they see. The objects that pass by are simply an illusion, a false reality, which a lot of people try to make happen in the real world. They try to believe that all the issues in this world will work themselves out; either that or someone else will come along and fix them. This wall which helps cast the shadows represents the limitations of our thinking. We may think small, and of only what we know. But moreover, we need to think in the bigger scheme of things. We must be less ignorant, because if everyone were in this boat, who knows what would happen in the world. While The Cave exposed some interesting allegories, it really makes you wonder how similar we are to the inhabitants of the cave.

As a twenty-two year old college student, you would think I would have a better understanding of the world, how it works, and what matters. After all, I, along with the rest of my generation, am the future of this country. But really, the truth is, I know far less about the world and what is going on in it than I should. When I sat down in class for the first time this semester, I looked at it as just another three credits. What I didn’t realize was how much it would make me think about my actions and efforts in this world. Why do I not care enough about the issues going on in this world? Not only me, but why don’t others care, either? The world is such a huge place with so many different things going on in it. I often would turn a blind eye to many topics for the simplest reasons. Either I didn’t understand or I didn’t care to understand. But the actions of others have huge effects, both positive and negative, on the world. Even now, just a few chapters into reading Soul of a Citizen, and even upon writing this essay, I have realized that every little thing makes a difference. Perhaps if each person only cared just a tiny bit more, it would make a world of a difference.