

“Respect”
Lost River Jr/Sr High School
Brittany Martinez-Escobedo
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Respect is something that affects everyone in different ways, especially when it comes to how we live together as a community. Our view on respect completely depends on what we believe it means to us, especially when respect is a topic that does not always come with one clear definition. It is simply how we, as individuals, choose to perceive it. Some people think of respect as the golden rule, which means treating others the way you want to be treated. Others see respect as a way to show relationships between people, a way to recognize someone's identity or dignity, or even as something that can be seen through a person's actions and behavior. Because of these different meanings, respect can look different to everyone, but many people still believe it is one of the most important parts of building a strong community.

Many people believe respect is a fundamental part of building a community, but the question is why. When you look at the different ideas of respect, they all connect to the characteristics that make people who they are. Respect helps people recognize each other's values, opinions, and identities. This is where the idea that respect can shape a community comes into play. However, in my view, it is not just the idea of respect itself that builds a community, but the people who actively show and practice respect toward others. A community is made up of many important qualities such as inclusion, trust, cooperation, responsibility, and the feeling of belonging. All of these qualities are connected to respect. When people include others, they are showing respect for different backgrounds and experiences. Trust shows that people believe in each other's honesty and intentions. Cooperation allows people to work together toward common goals, while responsibility shows that individuals care about the well-being of the group. The feeling of belonging also comes from being respected and valued by others.

When all of these pieces come together, they help build a strong community. However, these qualities must be practiced by everyone for the community to truly function well. Once these elements are in place, respect forms naturally and helps keep everything together. In a way, respect can be compared to the finishing glue that holds all the pieces of a community together. Without that glue, the pieces would not stay connected, and the structure of the community would begin to fall apart.

Thinking about the opposite of respect can also show how important it really is. What would a place look like if everything was built on the opposite of respect? As mentioned before, respect acts like the glue that holds a community together. If that glue was never added, the pieces would not stay together, and the result would be complete chaos. Things would become disorganized and unstable. Moral corruption could become more common, and behaviors such as dishonesty, selfishness, unethical actions, and untrustworthiness would likely increase. People might begin to focus only on their own personal interests instead of the well-being of others. Without respect, trust would disappear and cooperation would become much harder to achieve. This shows that even if respect sometimes seems like a simple or small concept, it is actually a major part of keeping communities functioning properly.

Klamath Falls is a great example of how respect can help shape a community. The town is built from many different organizations and groups that work together to support the people who live there. Organizations such as FFA, FBLA, the Lions Club, FCE, and many local businesses all contribute to building the community. These groups rely on respect in order to keep things organized and working smoothly. They help create environments where people feel welcomed and valued. When members of these organizations work together respectfully, they are able to accomplish many things that benefit the community as a whole.

Throughout history, respect has also played a major role in many important achievements and changes. Without respect for human rights and dignity, many of the freedoms people have today might not exist. For example, women might not have gained the right to vote, hold certain jobs, or pursue higher education if people had not fought for equality. The Emancipation Proclamation, which helped end slavery in the United States, was also based on the belief that every human being deserves freedom and respect.

Several historical figures helped bring these ideas of respect and equality to the public's attention. Abraham Lincoln played a major role in freeing enslaved people and recognizing their rights as human beings. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for equal rights for African Americans and encouraged society to respect human dignity regardless of race. Through his speeches and peaceful protests, he helped people realize that everyone deserves equal treatment. Susan B. Anthony also fought for women's rights and worked to make sure women had the opportunity to participate in voting and political decisions. These individuals all believed that respect for human rights should apply to everyone, and their efforts helped change society in important ways.

While these examples show respect on a national and global level, respect can also be seen at the state level. Oregon has historically focused on protecting workers by supporting fair wages and safe working conditions. This shows that the state values the well-being of the people who live and work there. Because of these policies, many people believe Oregon is a good place to live and build a future. When a state values fairness and dignity, it creates an environment where people feel respected and supported.

Today, Klamath Falls continues to grow and develop, and as the town grows, so do the organizations within it. One example of this is FBLA, an organization I have personally been involved with since middle school. When I first joined, there were not many students participating. However, now during my senior year, it has become one of the largest organizations at the high school. FBLA has expanded and continues to welcome new members each year. It creates opportunities for students to network, compete, and learn valuable skills. One of the reasons the organization has grown so much is because it promotes inclusion and respect. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions without worrying about being judged. Even during competitions, participants respect one another and support each other's success.

Currently, there are also many important discussions happening across the country that relate to respect, including debates about immigration. Illegal immigration has been a controversial topic for many years, with people having different opinions about whether immigrants should stay in the country or return to their home countries. Some people see immigrants negatively, while others believe they deserve opportunities and protection. In Oregon, the state is considered a sanctuary state, meaning that it offers certain protections to immigrants. At the same time, federal agencies such as ICE are still allowed to carry out their responsibilities. The difference is that Oregon focuses on handling these situations in a way that avoids unnecessary violence and encourages respectful treatment of individuals. Leaders such as Governor Tina Kotek have emphasized the importance of respecting human and civil rights while also addressing concerns within the state. By listening to different perspectives and encouraging peaceful solutions, the state attempts to balance law enforcement with respect for people's dignity.

Looking toward the future, respect will continue to play an important role in shaping communities. If future generations continue practicing respect and understanding toward one another, communities like Klamath Falls could continue to grow and improve. As the town develops, it may begin to resemble larger cities nearby such as Bend or Medford. With growth will come more organizations, businesses, and opportunities for residents. Greater inclusivity and cooperation could also help strengthen the sense of community.

At the state level, respect could lead to increased job opportunities, safer communities, and fewer conflicts between people. When individuals feel respected and valued, they are more likely to contribute positively to society. On a national and even global level, respect could help reduce conflicts and encourage cooperation between countries. If nations treated one another with greater respect, disagreements might be solved more peacefully and wars could potentially decrease.

Respect has always been an important part of the world, and it will continue to affect the future as well. If people practiced respect more often, many of the problems that exist today might not be as common. People would feel more comfortable expressing their opinions without fear of being attacked or judged. Communities would be more peaceful, and individuals would feel that their rights and dignity are protected.

Personally, respect will always be an important part of my life. I take pride in the way my parents raised me and the values they taught me growing up. When people compliment my parents for raising a respectful person, it makes me happy and proud. There are times when I might feel frustrated or want to react strongly toward someone, but I try to remember the lessons my parents taught me about treating others with kindness and understanding.

In the future, I plan to continue carrying these values with me as I go to college and begin my career. No matter where life takes me, respect will always be something I try to show to others and expect in return. I believe that respect is one of the most important qualities a person can

have, especially when it comes to building relationships and strong communities. In the end, respect truly acts as the glue that holds communities together and keeps the fundamental principles of society strong.