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My Outlook on Iraq

The War in Iraq is an event that has shaped history and heavily influenced today's generation. Many are opposed to the war, while others are strong supporters. I personally am not a supporter. Though I know very little of the subject, I do feel that it has had more negative affects on the United States and Iraq than positive results. Because I am so uninformed on the War in Iraq, it is hard to support it. To me, supporting the war is supporting the countless number of deaths of American soldiers. If there are sufficient reasons as to why the U.S. is still so heavily influenced in Iraq, then maybe I could reconsider the entire situation. However, until I see any good coming out of the War in Iraq, I have to disagree with it.

It gets more painful everyday to **listen to the news** tell of yet another American who has been killed while serving our country overseas. What makes it even worse is not understanding why our men are still over there and continuing to be sent there. It is really hard for me to support the war when I still have no clue as to why we are fighting what seems to be a losing battle. The fact that I am so uninformed on the War in Iraq is probably the reason why I feel the way I do about the subject. In actuality, I do not know enough to form a reasoned opinion on the war. This could be seen as one of my impediments to supporting it.

Although I know that the war is mostly impacting my generation and those following thereafter, I have not done my part in keeping up with current events. I tend to catch things here or there when flipping through channels on the television, but I have not made it habitual to watch the news daily or research the war for myself. In his book *Learning to Think Things Through*, Gerald M. Nosich discusses a particular impediment to critical thinking that could be related to most people in the U.S. Nosich says that we as people tend to rely on the media when forming a picture of the how the world is. Though I have not been using **the news as a resource for world events**, I do watch enough of it to have formed some sort of idea in my head of what is going on around me. Nosich says that “Even if you don’t watch the news or read newspapers much, you indirectly form a good deal of your picture of the world from the news” (19). Nosich goes on to say that we also base our world views on the opinions of our friends and television networks such as MTV, when in actuality they get a lot of their information from the news. If Nosich’s theory is true, then I have unknowingly based my views of the war on the opinions of others instead of finding out about the war for myself.

Even though I am not in support of the war, I do believe that is unfair to feel this way when I have not researched it. Maybe if I knew of positive outcomes caused by the war my feelings would be different. However, because I have chosen to remain ignorant of the subject, I have formed a negative picture of the activity in Iraq based solely on the **imagery portrayed in the news**. Though the news probably does its best to give an insightful interpretation of America’s involvement in Iraq, there is no way possible for it to show every aspect of it. The media tends to concentrate on the bad occurrences that have happened in Iraq. Because of the violent and unfortunate stories that they display

on the war, that is exactly how I see the war in my brain. Whether or not these negative occurrences outweigh the good that is coming from the war is completely unknown to me. The only way for me to truly understand our situation with Iraq is for me to stop being complacent with relying on others, and to also set aside my fear of knowing exactly how the war is affecting me.

Like many others, sometimes I try to ignore an issue or problem because I am afraid of facing it. It is easy for me to pretend that everything is “okay” in my world because I do not have the war going on in my backyard, but in the back of my mind I know that I am never one-hundred percent safe. Ever since the historical event of September 11th, my feelings of security and safety were never quite the same. For that day, it did seem that there was a war in my backyard. Many Americans died that day unaware that it would be there last, but the scariest part was that this event could have happened to any person, anywhere in the U.S. It could have been my parent’s place of employment that was attacked or a friend or family member that was aboard one of the airplanes that came to a deadly crash. September 11th was a day that completely changed my outlook on the world. Up until that point I viewed our country as this safe magical place where I had the right to be safe and not worry about all the problems in the world. That image of America is now completely erased from my mind.

This fear that I have attained is definitely a barrier to my drive to learn more about the war. I do not like to remember how I felt that day when every news station repeatedly showed the video of the airplanes hitting the famous World Trade Centers. I do not like to think about all of the soldiers that have given their lives fighting for my right to feel safe again and also the many who will give their lives in the future for that

same right. However, the scariest thought is the idea that regardless of all the people risking their lives for me, another event such as September 11th or worse could happen again. Although people in Iraq and other countries surrounding it face those types of terrorism on a daily basis, we as Americans have been fortunate enough not to experience it to that extreme. Yet I am inclined to wonder if and when that terrorism could again spill over into the United States. Aside from the vast rise in gas prices, when is the war going to directly affect me? This is a question that I have trouble asking myself because I truly do not wish to know the answer to it.

In the book, Nosich notes that fears can be obstacles when it comes to critically thinking about a subject (22). **The fears that I have concerning the War in Iraq** are definitely impediments to my thinking on the subject, but choosing to ignore the situation altogether may not be beneficial to me. The fact is that ignoring a problem does not make that problem magically disappear. Unfortunately, problems such as wars do not just disappear. Not only am I reminded of the war through the news and through the campaigns of this year's presidential election, but also through the personal testimony of my close relative who is serving in the war.

My cousin Dré is twenty one years old and has been in Iraq for about six months. He is married and recently became the father of a baby girl. Before being shipped to Iraq, he was stationed in Germany, where his wife and child still reside. My cousin and I grew up together so on learning of his deployment to Iraq, I was greatly distressed. Before he was deployed, it was much easier for me not to dwell on the war, but when Dré left for Iraq it really hit home for me. Just hearing his voice on the phone is comforting because it is reassurance that he is alive, yet the tone of his voice sometimes sends a chill

down my spine. Dré works in a hospital in Baghdad, so luckily he does not have to be involved in combat. He does not have to worry about a gun being shoved in his face but he does hear the gunshots at night when he goes to sleep. He has never been attacked by a roadside bomb, but because of his job in the hospital, he does encounter the victims who have. When we talk, Dré sometimes tells me some of the horror stories that he has lived out since his stay in Iraq. Just envisioning the horrific things that he has seen in and out of that hospital is hard for me to do, so I can only imagine his reactions to seeing these people who have been disfigured due to bombs and/or gunfire.

Though Dré has been lucky enough to avoid being injured, his life is still in danger because there is currently no safe location in Iraq, especially Baghdad. I think of my cousin frequently, but I do not get to talk to him often. His priority to phone calling obviously goes to his wife, but he does attempt to keep in touch with my family and I. Every week that goes by that I do not hear his voice, I get more worried. The worst part is not knowing if he is alive or not, but I have to have faith that he is just as alive as he was the last time I talked to him. Usually that fear of losing him goes away because as soon as I start to feel that way, the phone rings and I get to talk to him again for that moment.

Having someone so close to me involved in the war gives me another reason not to support it. Out of all the things I do not know about the war, I know that someone I love is put into danger everyday for the sake of it. Even though I am concerned for the other soldiers who are also serving in Iraq, I cannot help but to think distinctly of the safety of my family member. **This sort of thinking is egocentric on my part.** Nosich says that “We live in the middle of our feelings, pains, and pleasures, the things we want

and the things we are afraid of, the experiences that have shaped our lives and attitudes, whether we know it or not” (24). This quote relates to my feelings on the war because my reservations are based on the involvement of my family and the fear of how the war is going to affect me. Though it may seem selfish and maybe even a little shallow to have this outlook, it is human nature. The human race is filled with people whose main focus is themselves and I am no different. No matter how much I would like to think that I am always concerned about the feelings of others, that is simply not true.

In all, my reasons for not supporting the war add up to fear, egocentrism, and relying solely on the media. I believe that my personal FBI's show that I do not use my ability to think critically unless I am trying to work things out for my benefit. I am lazy enough to let people form an opinion for me and go along with it and I typically do not respond to issues unless they directly affect me. Recognizing these impediments will probably help me in the long run because they are not healthy to my critical thinking. Now that I am becoming an adult I am going to have to branch out and find out what is going on around me. I realize now that the world is not going to press pause just because I pretend that it is a perfect place. Whether this means I will make it a habit to research the war or do something more subtle such as researching clubs and organizations on campus, I will try to be more outgoing in terms of getting involved in what is going on around me. I know that this goal will be challenging for me, but if I persevere through my impediments they will be much less of an issue.

Works Cited

Nosich, Gerald M. Learning to Think Things Through: A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River, 2005. Print.