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Dear Beautiful Minds Judges,

After the recent presidential election, a lot of students at my school were shocked and angered by the results. My journalism teacher told us that if we were angry, we should go out and do something. That night, I realized something: the thing that I do best is write. This led me to start a Wordpress blog to talk about my thoughts after the election.

And yet, I felt like I was trying to do something else. I've been in a philosophy class this semester, and it's gotten me thinking not only about the topics we've studied, but also about how best to discuss things. That combined with my neurobiology class has taught me a lot about the emotional brain vs. the rational brain, and I've realized that what I am really trying to do is change something about the way people talk about controversial topics, i.e., get people to use their rational brains over their emotional brains.

In most circles, when a controversial opinion is raised, it's often met with an attack. Sometimes, it's because the opinion is genuinely malicious, but oftentimes, it's because the attacker simply doesn't understand the perspective of the person who shared their opinion. The presidential election was basically one attack after another, and we never got to hear all that much about actual policies. If people attack each other rather than hold actual discussions, no one learns anything.

What I want to do is promote a different kind of discussion: the kind where people explain their viewpoints to each other, and together they try to understand each other and come to some form of agreement. The best way I can see to do this is to lay out my opinions and let others weigh in, which I am currently trying to do on my blog at <https://thephoenixaflame.wordpress.com/>. I let thoughts percolate in my head for a couple of days, and then I put them all down in a blog post. I invite anyone and everyone to respond.

Through this, I've learned about myself and my own thoughts, for one, and I've learned how to sit and think things through. Writing down thoughts is a good way to sort them out, and I'm glad I've given myself the opportunity to do that. I've also learned how hard it is to fully think through an opinion and why I have it. This blog is the result of a lot of different thought processes I've been having lately, mostly about what to think and how to think it, and in the end, what I've really learned from those thought processes is that even though everyone hated Socrates, being a gadfly isn't a terrible idea. I improve as a person when I question everything, and I would like a world in which the unexamined life is truly considered not worth living. I hope to continue exploring my thoughts through this blog, and I hope that others will explore their thoughts on the same topics in the comments.

However, I haven't had much luck with the interaction side of it, though, which is why I've set up a Twitter account (twitter.com/aflame_phoenix) and a Facebook page (facebook.com/thephoenixaflame). Another thing that I am in the process of learning is how to promote a blog without becoming just another item in a feed desperately trying to get clicks. I'm hoping that sharing my posts on these social media sites will garner a larger audience, and I will, of course, continue posting.

Overall, this blog is improving my own ability to have thorough thought processes, and it reflects a change in myself that I would like to spread throughout the world. It is a slow change in both cases, but it is a worthwhile one.

Thank you for considering my entry.

Sincerely,
Phoenix Bieneman