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Divisions in our Society

Divisions are fundamental to our lives. As time progresses we diverge from friends and family and change and grow into unique and distinctive individuals. The differing of our actions, habits and views from each other is what creates cultures, personalities and the diverse experience that life is comprised of. Competition is a driver of this diversion but when competition exceeds a certain threshold, society becomes rife with divisions that are detrimental to its progress and success. Although competition is not a necessary component in all divisions, I believe that the former is often correlated to the latter.

Competition provides a motivation to succeed, a drive to become the best whether it be competing against an opponent or the clock. It can unite people and provide entertainment. In athletics, competition is thrilling. It provides a break from the monotony of the everyday. It may be for recreation or simply amusement. Competition comes in many forms and in our culture we learn from a very young age to be competitive. We are encouraged to participate in sports and we are driven by our parents to be the best in our class. Is this competitive push that we are given susceptible to dividing us rather than uniting? I decided to look at various instances in which competition has grown beyond a healthy pastime, and has instead sown discord among groups.

The Cold War between the USSR and the Americans is an example of this. The competition between these two world powers after the end of the Second World War created

enormous divisions eventually leading to proxy wars around the globe and the threat of a nuclear war. Many of the divisions that were caused between these two countries were negative but there were some positive advances made from the byproduct of the race for the best technology. From it we gained satellites, long distance calling and the predecessor to the internet--but at what cost? In the Vietnam War alone nearly 2 million Vietnamese civilians lost their lives as well as 1.1 million Viet Cong fighters and 58,000 American soldiers.

Although the divisions were eased between the Russia and the US, it seems that the world is currently moving towards a similar place in which it once was. North Korea and President Trump have recently engaged in contests over Twitter, bragging about the size of their nuclear arsenals. Russia has also made moves in an attempt to show its might with the occupation of Crimea as well as its meddling in the recent US presidential election. The division caused by competition between these nations will hopefully subside as it once did by reasoning and cooperation.

Perhaps the most relevant and frightening example of how competition leads to division can be seen in our government. The leaders of this nation are possibly the most divided by party than they have been since before the Civil War. The partisan split between Democrats and Republicans is creating a stagnancy within our government which is preventing the country from moving forward in a beneficial way. Based off of past actions, it seems that the lawmakers of this country are more focused on winning elections and seats within congress than they are on working together. It is more of a me vs. the "other side" rather than how can we work together to overcome actual issues needing attention in this country and world.

The division between parties is not relegated to career politicians. Civilians of this country are also divided by their voting preference. There have been violent riots and even the shooting of a congressman. “Rather, Democrats and Republicans truly think worse of each other, a trend that isn’t really about policy preferences. Members of the two parties are more likely today to describe each other unfavorably, as selfish, as threats to the nation, even as unsuitable marriage material.” (Badger, Chokshi). This excerpt from an article in the New York Times shows how deep the issue really is. The political environment of this country has sunken to the level of name calling and insults rather than representing the people they were elected to serve and the views which they hold.

Balance is the key to solving divisions which have grown rampant from unchecked competition. Competition is not innately bad but when the flames are fanned, it can lead to divisions that threaten to tear our society apart.

Works Cited

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