Self-Reliance In Society Essay, Research Paper

Dear Editor

I have recently read Self-Reliance by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and with ample time to analyze the passages I have come to the conclusion that even though it was written before our generation it still applies to it fully. Society today has set the laws for both moral behavior, and social behavior. The current generation, just like every one before it, has followed these laws of society like a dumb, but innocent, flock of sheep. I believe it is now time for the public to be aware of its actions. It is time for a light to be shone through the darkness of conformity, and a nation to realize its own shallowness.

Society today sets the standards for both life and social behavior. If you notice justice is not served by what is truly right and wrong, but instead by what society believes is right and wrong. A magistrate sits behind his bench and conforms to the beliefs of the majority. A jury is drawn from the same pool that follows the not only the majority, but the other members of the jury. Doing so has made society itself Judge, Jury, and executioner. This defeats the whole purpose of Justice. How can we gain the truth of a subject when every investigator is mirroring his colleague? It is the same as if you were digging a hole with two persons, only that one is digging deeper while the other is filling it up. Neither knows what the consequences of their actions, they only know that that both of them are digging, and in their minds that is the “right” thing to do. Whether they accomplish anything at all does not matter, so long as that they feel in their hearts that they are pursuing what is right.

Another conformity that may hit closer to home for myself and my peers is social acceptance. As I walk through the hallways of school I see nothing more then sheep. There is not one person that stands alone in this school that truly thinks for him or herself. In some way or another every person here cares about what people may say about them. They wear the clothes that are in “style”, and listen to the top 40 music selections. Even those that oppose the majority are in themselves conforming to each other. They gather as a group, choose the same attire and together they rely on each other to oppose the norm.

There are those that try to reach self-reliance, but they logically they can not. One may have a grasp on what it may take to achieve this goal, but being raised in the same society that they try to rise above makes it impossible. There is not a single man or woman on this Earth that does not rely on society for some reason or another. There is not a single man or woman here today that is not influenced by the other human beings surrounding them, and unless one was segregated from the entire world and lived life as a hermit, no one man or woman would ever truly achieve self reliance.

There is no real solution to the subject at hand. The only thing that we can do as the human race is to try to start thinking for ourselves. We can try to not let society influence our decisions, but that is the only thing we can do, try. Anarchism and extremism is not needed. We need not to overthrow the government, but instead rely on our own instincts. We need to break away from the flock of sheep we live in and explore the world for ourselves. In my mind that is the only way that we can reach even a remote state of nonconformity and reach part of true self-reliance.

Respectfully,