

## **“CAPITALISM CAUSES EXTINCTION! NUCLEAR WAR IS IMMINENT!”**

Initially, debate seemed nonsensical: lambasting opponents while arguing improbable scenarios. But over time I've learned that it's more than competition that drives me to stay up all night looking for evidence: I love learning about the political and ideological underpinnings of our society and the way they shape us.

On an easy debate tournament weekend, I research foreign diplomatic agendas and synthesize the information into coherent debate evidence. When tournaments become more hectic, however, I delve deeper into the works of philosophers and social critics and translate the knowledge into debate argumentation. While researching foreign policy, critical theory like Heideggerian phenomenology and constitutional details, I've developed an ability to critically analyze argumentation, make sense of the world around me and creatively express myself in an academic setting.

My hard work has paid off. In the past four tournaments, I've received a Top 10 speaker award for the varsity division consisting of about 50 debaters. This trend has increased my credibility in my debate league to such a level that my partner and I were invited to participate in a series of public debates at LA City Hall to defend the water policy for the drought. The opportunity allowed me to actually impact the public's awareness and accept a larger responsibility in the workings of my community.

More importantly, however, debate has taught me to strategically choose my battles. When I prepare my arguments, I know that I can't use all of them in the end of a round. I have to focus. I've learned to maximize my strengths and not try to conquer everything. Moreover, I've learned to be responsible with my choices. A wrong argument can mean losing if we can't defend well. Not only do I now know how to zoom in from a bigger picture, but I also know how to pick the right place to zoom in to so I can achieve my goal.

Debate has turned me into a responsible optimizing, scrutinizing and strategizing orator.