

Defend Your Opinions

Donna Jones

My point of view is just as important as the next person's. I made this startling discovery by debating my husband about how much of our tax dollars should be spent on children's education versus adult education.

Our beliefs on this subject were as far apart as the North and South poles. Being an Adult Learner, I passionately believe that education money should be divided fairly with slightly more going to Adult Education. I based my opinion on the fact that parents are their children's role models and their first teachers. Also, the adults who become literate increase their earning power, which means they pay more taxes (the pay back theory) and provide a better lifestyle for their children. People's self esteem generally increases as their literacy skills improve, thus enabling them to take a more active role in their community and in their children's schooling.

Our discussion went on for several hours over a two-day period. (A personal tidbit: you have never met two more bull-headed and determined people.) Whenever I could, I loaded my brain with more information to back up my position.

I don't know what I said that persuaded him to come over to my way of thinking but he did. I was surprised when he came home after a political meeting and mentioned that he advocated for the importance of funding adult education and to support any candidate who would do just that.

I was impressed with myself for standing up for what I believed in.

Now, I firmly believe that if you have a chance to speak up for what you believe, do it! The more experience you have defending your point of view with family and friends, the more comfortable you will become speaking to elected officials and the media. Your self confidence and self assurance will help you get your point across to others.

Since the debate with my husband, I have gone to Washington, D.C., with other adult students and met with my representatives' aides to preach the importance of adult education and to ask them to support increased funding for it. Currently, I am studying advocacy so I will be better prepared to meet with political leaders in the future. Also, I am more confident about encouraging other adult students to speak out for what they believe in. It will take many loud and determined voices to make changes so we can leave the world a better place for the future generations.

DO NOT JUST sit back and wait for change to happen. Be a driving force that makes it happen, and experience the thrill of having people listen to your opinions.

Donna Jones has been an Adult Learner for many years with Project Read in South San Francisco, CA. Her tutor, George Santore, helped her discover her love of writing.



For Discussion

Talk or write about a time that you felt passionate about a political opinion.

Did you ever talk with someone about the way the government uses tax money? What did you talk about? Did you agree or disagree?

Read more about taxes on page 54 and download additional student-friendly lessons on taxes at www.nelrc.org/changeagent/extras.