

## DISPUTATION CLXXXVII

September 20, 2018

Dear Peucinians,

Last week we rejected epistocracy, deciding that intelligence, knowledge, morality, and privilege should have no bearing on one's right to vote in a democracy. Will we now fight to enfranchise felons and legal minors? If so, how best to do it? How best to change society more generally? Two veteran Peucinians take the lectern on the issue.

### **RESOLVED: THE WRITTEN WORD IS THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

**Affirmative:** Louisa May Alcott '19

**Negative:** Σαπφώ of Lesbos '19

The resolution reminds me of a quotation that pops up when you unlock the Compass technology in Civilization V (this is a computer game):

“I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it,—but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”

—Oliver Wendall Holmes Sr., *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*

As Peucinians, we are committed to the notion that we as individuals—and society—could be better. When navigating society toward the port of heaven, how best can we light fires in the hearts of our neighbors, breathe passion into the lungs of the apathetic, and make allies and friends of enemies?

Ought we [visually capture suffering](#)?

Ought we [eternalize the horrors of the past](#)?

Ought we [broadcast hope and perseverance](#)?

Ought we [demand justice, loudly, at risk to our lives](#)?

Ought we [expand executive power to protect the common good](#)?

Which did more for the civil rights movement of the 1960s: King's [Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#) or the Selma to Montgomery marches? Is that even an answerable question, or a useful one?

Peucinians, if history tells us anything, it's that society changes. Do we have any say in what direction we're moving? What is the most effective way to effect change? What is the most just way?

**Thursday, September 20th**

**7:45 PM**

**Third Floor of Massachusetts Hall**

**Semi-formal attire encouraged (see Postscript)**

PLSH,  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
President, Peucinian Society

### **POSTSCRIPT**

Why do we dress up?

Although our dress code can seem uninviting at first glance, we use it as a way to distinguish our discussions from the rest of the week's activities. This marks disputations as something special and worthy of our attention. In choosing to dress ourselves differently, we convey respect for the event and for each other, much in the same way one would for *a capella* or mock trial. If you choose to attend a disputation, feel free to dress in a way that is special and comfortable for you.