University of Arizona Honors College Admission Essay

In my opinion, freedom of religion is an essential human right. Throughout history, religious differences have caused discontent among human beings. In some cases, wars have been started. Examples include conflicts in the Middle East between the Jewish and Muslim people and those in Pakistan between the Hindus and the Muslims. Up until the 1700s, throughout Europe, established churches were extremely powerful, and religious persecution was therefore common. This is one reason why the founding fathers deemed the right to freedom of belief without harassment to be vital. However, as current events show, a complete separation of church and state has not yet been accomplished in our country.

At all levels of the U.S. government, religion, specifically Christianity, is quite pervasive. Many believe that religion should influence the government because religion “gives moral values”. In the recent speech given by President Obama regarding the shooting in Tucson, he quoted the Bible frequently. In his speech, he spoke of Heaven and other Christian beliefs, such as good and evil. The message was obviously intended for a Christian audience. What if he had cited tenets of Buddhism instead? Or Judaism? In the history of our country, we have elected very few presidents who were not Christian ([John Quincy Adams](http://www.adherents.com/people/pa/John_Quincy_Adams.html), [Millard Fillmore](http://www.adherents.com/people/pf/Millard_Fillmore.html), [Thomas Jefferson](http://www.adherents.com/people/pj/Thomas_Jefferson.html), [Abraham Lincoln](http://www.adherents.com/people/pl/Abraham_Lincoln.html), [Andrew Johnson](http://www.adherents.com/people/pj/Andrew_Johnson.html), and [William Howard Taft](http://www.adherents.com/people/pt/William_Howard_Taft.html)) Recent history shows a strong preference for not only Christian, but also protestant, presidents. When John F. Kennedy ran for president, his religion (Catholic) was viewed as a negative. The least probable, in my view, would be the election of a president who is atheist. Where then, is the separation of church and state?

As another example, consider homosexuality. As an action between two consenting adults, homosexuality as well as heterosexuality should be protected under the 14th amendment. The stigma surrounding homosexuality clearly stems from religion. The Bible states that homosexuality is wrong, illustrating this in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. I believe that it is for this reason that homosexuals only have the right to marry in five states and in Washington, D.C. In 2008, the state of California awarded them this right, but the law was soon struck down due to fierce opposition by conservative Christians. In essence, homosexuals in that state were denied freedom of religion.

Given the variety of religions, races, and creeds in our society, it is important for citizens of this country to be tolerant to those of views different from their own, if we are to protect the rights spelled out in our constitution. The University of Arizona has made it clear that diversity is very important to the institution. I look forward to meeting students of all backgrounds in the Honor’s College. In my opinion, the key to embracing differences is to study current events dealing with this issue and the historical facts which must frame any discussion. I believe that studying at the Honor’s College of the University of Arizona will prepare me for life in an increasingly diverse society.