

## THE "PUNK ROCK PHILOSOPHER" COLLEGE ESSAY EXAMPLE

I am on Oxford Academy's Speech and Debate Team, in both the Parliamentary Debate division and the Lincoln-Douglass debate division. I write screenplays, short stories, and opinionated blogs and am a regular contributor to my school literary magazine, The Glue stick. I have accumulated over 300 community service hours that includes work at homeless shelters, libraries, and special education youth camps. I have been evaluated by the College Board and have placed within the top percentile.

But I am not any of these things. I am not a test score, nor a debater, nor a writer. I am an anti-nihilist punk rock philosopher. And I became so when I realized three things:

1) That the world is ruled by underwear. There is a variety of underwear for a variety of people. You have your ironed briefs for your businessmen, your soft cottons for the average, and hemp-based underwear for your environmental romantics. But underwear does not only tell us about who we are, they also influence our daily interactions in ways most of us don't even understand. For example, I have a specific pair of underwear that is holey, worn out but surprisingly comfortable. And despite how trivial underwear might be, when I am wearing my favorite pair, I feel as if I am on top of the world. In any case, these articles of clothing affect our being and are the unsung heroes of comfort.

2) When I realized I cannot understand the world. I recently debated at the Orange County Speech League Tournament, within the Parliamentary Division. This specific branch of debate is an hour long, and consists of two parties debating either side of a current political issue. In one particular debate, I was assigned the topic: "Should Nation States eliminate nuclear arms?" It so happened that I was on the negative side and it was my job to convince the judges that countries should continue manufacturing nuclear weapons. During the debate, something strange happened: I realized that we are a special breed of species, that so much effort and resources are invested to ensure mutual destruction. And I felt that this debate in a small college classroom had elucidated something much more profound about the scale of human existence. In any case, I won 1st place at the tournament, but as the crowd cheered when my name was called to stand before an audience of hundreds of other debaters, and I flashed a victorious smile at the cameras, I couldn't help but imagine that somewhere at that moment a nuclear bomb was being manufactured, adding to an ever-growing stockpile of doom. And that's when I realized that the world was something I will never understand.

3) When I realized I was a punk rocker philosopher. One summer night, my friend took me to an underground hardcore punk rock show. It was inside a small abandoned church. After the show, I met and became a part of this small community. Many were lost and on a constant soul-search, and to my surprise,

many, like myself, did not have a blue Mohawk or a nose piercing. Many were just ordinary people discussing Nietzsche, string theory, and governmental ideologies. Many were also artists creating promotional posters and inventive slogans for stickers. They were all people my age who could not afford to be part of a record label and did something extraordinary by playing in these abandoned churches, making their own CDs and making thousands of promotional buttons by hand. I realized then that punk rock is not about music nor is it a guy with a blue Mohawk screaming protests. Punk rock is an attitude, a mindset, and very much a culture. It is an antagonist to the conventional. It means making the best with what you have to contribute to a community. This was when I realized that I was a punk rock philosopher.

The world I come from consists of underwear, nuclear bombs, and punk rockers. And I love this world. My world is inherently complex, mysterious, and anti-nihilist. I am David Phan, somebody who spends his weekends debating in a three-piece suit, other days immersed within the punk rock culture, and some days writing opinionated blogs about underwear.

But why college? I want a higher education. I want more than just the textbook fed classrooms in high school. A community which prizes revolutionary ideals, a sharing of multi-dynamical perspectives, an environment that ultimately acts as a medium for movement, similar to the punk rock community. I do not see college as a mere stepping stone for a stable career or a prosperous life, but as a supplement for knowledge and self-empowerment; it is a social engine that will jettison us to our next paradigm shift.