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Citizenship for Metics and Slaves

Metics and slaves have been a critical part of our economy and success before, during, and after the Peloponnesian War. Some metics funded whole triremes and slaves acted as oarsman on these triremes to defend our way of life (Ober, Norman, & Carnes). These two groups played a large role in our success throughout the past thirty years. All have contributed and lost the same amount as any natural-born Athenian. After this loss, it is only right that they be given a single vote and citizenship in return for their contributions to the survival of Athens. Many of them paid the ultimate price for our freedom, a vote is a valid repayment for their contributions. The storm of destruction is passed and we must start to rebuild our economy, defenses, and voting body. We have the resources to accomplish all of these objectives, but only if we are willing to adapt. With metics and slaves as citizens, there could potentially be at least 1,000 more voters in our Assembly, more representation from different backgrounds, and less opportunity for our democracy to be overturned (Davis 56).

Lest we forget, metics and slaves fought alongside our warriors to save our way of life from the Spartans. Lysias is one metic in particular that contributed to our cause. Some of you may recognize him for his prominent speaking skills and speeches he has written (Lysias), but he alone funded 200 fighters in the struggle against Sparta (Ober et al. 86). He also personally contributed a trireme with a full crew to the Athenian naval forces. The goals of metics are very similar to our own. They want to promote trade and stimulate the economy. Even if they are not born with their toes in Athenian soil, that does not change where their loyalty and livelihoods lie. Metics transport our goods to foreign states and slaves produce the products they trade (Davis 52). We thrive because of them. They have served us loyally. It is their reward to vote and finally be considered citizens within our democracy that they have helped create and defend.

This very democracy that they have helped create and protect may be threatened after the great drop in numbers that we have suffered as an assembly. This loss of life leaves us vulnerable to an attack on our city and an attack on our government. Not all inhabitants of our marvelous city are supporters of the way we live. With the Thirty’s supporters still among us and fewer people to oppose their influences, our democracy is in danger. The only way to secure our way of life is to increase the number of minds that tyrants must sway towards tyranny, oligarchy, or another form of government. With more minds there shall be more walks of life and occupations represented to decide what is best for Athens. If we give servants and metics the right to vote they will legally become invested in our future. They will then have a social responsibility to free and democratic Athens.

If these people were to become invested in our causes, our economy would continue to thrive. Slaves are particularly crucial to our society. They clean, cook, sell, and serve. Enslaved individuals are immersed in our culture, our beliefs. In war, they have proven their loyalty and made the ultimate sacrifice for our cause. In their daily lives, slaves worship in the same temples and to the same gods that we do (Davis 54). These 1,200 people in our society have proven their potential worth to us time and again, through battle and service. There is little else they could do to prove themselves more worthy of a vote in the Assembly.

One thing to keep in mind is that this vote is not to be freely given to all wanderers in Athens. It is possible to distribute this reward conditionally. My proposition is that only metics that have been of Athenian residence for five years may vote, and slaves over the age of five and twenty who have also served for a minimum of ten years. The honor is not to be disgraced and given to all. We are still the great city of Athens and this diplomatic inclusion will make us that much stronger.

Because of the Peloponnesian War, Athens must rebuild its government, economy, and defenses against future evil. Even though the war brought much destruction and loss of land and population, this was not a disaster in its entirety. The opposition between Sparta and Athens took many lives, but many more would have been lost without the aid of slaves and metics. It is true that these people of our society were not born on Athenian soil, but their contributions were vital to Athens’ success. For what is a true Athenian, but one that will give of their life to ensure its survival. This is exactly what metics and slave showed in their support of Athens. They gave of their money, resources, and lives to further Athens. It is only right for our democracy to give them citizenship and the right to vote.

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