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College Essay

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 Every year, for two or three days, the only way to leave the half-mile island that

my neighborhood sometimes becomes, is by canoe.

 The combination of early spring rains and melting snow sends the nearby river out of its banks, spilling over the road on both sides of my house and for these few days, my neighborhood is forced to unite against the unpredictable and unstoppable force of flowing water. It’s a remarkably eclectic group: Karen and Miriam on the corner, a retired lesbian couple who run a horse farm; Joe, Lee and their extended family of self proclaimed rednecks; Georgette the obstinate but fiercely independent woman in her seventies who still cuts and splits her own firewood; a newlywed couple and their baby; an aging hippie; a family of four hailing from Cuba; and my own family, but it doesn’t matter that we differ politically, religiously, economically, and morally, or that almost all of us have had our disagreements at times. The river does not care about our differences, and so neither can we.

 Before the flood reaches Karen’s house, Lee’s son Rusty makes numerous trips to clear out the massive amount of knick-knacks “bound to come in handy someday” that Karen has accumulated. My dad brings his canoe to the Diaz’s for everyone’s general use, and spends much of the day ferrying people back and forth to buy groceries or get to work. Horses and goats are relocated to my backyard, which stays the driest, and hourly checks on the water level become something of a social event. In the end, is only by pooling our collective resources and knowledge that everything can be accomplished.

 One year, the water did not recede like it had in all years previously; instead it just

kept raining and the water kept rising. It soon flowed through one house, and threatened to pull another family’s trailer-home away. When faced with a serious challenge, my neighborhood quickly rallied into action to secure the house. Rope was found, and those who could began tethering it to nearby trees. Others simply brought warm drinks or an offer of some friendly company.

 The varied backgrounds and viewpoints did not hinder our efforts, but in fact because each person brought something new to the table. With a combined expertise in teaching, farming, editing, hunting, delivering babies, carpentry, nursing, mechanics, architecture, and professional sports, we joked that together we could survive pretty much anything.

 This annual experience taught me more than how to canoe through a current

or how to work a sump-pump; it taught me the value of putting aside differences

and working together. I now appreciate that no matter how vast or insurmountable the differences may seem, if the initiative is taken, all can benefit and grow.