

**The Importance of Taking Down Barriers:
Why We Mustn't Cling on to Labels**
(Original)

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I open Instagram and I find a post on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict. I scroll through the comments which are either “team Palestine” or “team Israel.” There isn’t a single comment which truly addresses the root of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict, and I don’t find any solutions in the comments. When I turn on TV, I see protesters who are for and against the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Left-wing media only interviews pro-choice protesters, while right-wing media only interviews pro-life protesters. From these, I realize that everybody is focused solely on the label they put on themselves. This situation has become so natural for us that we don’t question it; however, why is it that we all have to be in a particular category and either agree or disagree on a topic? Why can’t we at least try to understand what the opposing side is trying to claim? This is precisely the reason why we aren’t able to achieve peace: because nobody tries to understand each other.

Our society is obsessed with categorizing people because this makes us feel as though we belong in a particular place. However, what we don’t see is that these categories are meaningless, and that by labeling ourselves, we are simply putting up walls which prevent people with different opinions from understanding each other. When we categorize ourselves as being in a category, we naturally refuse to even consider the other side’s claims. In the United States, division is now a problem larger than ever, with most people categorizing themselves as either democrats or republicans. Unity and cooperation is necessary in order to solve international issues, and because this division is preventing us from understanding each other, we are ultimately preventing ourselves from solving these social issues.

I have had the privilege of living in Singapore, one of the most racially diverse countries in

the world and there, I experienced true diversity. "Look around, isn't it beautiful that people of so many skin colors and religions are gathered in this classroom?" Every year, we would have Culture Day, where we would all present our own unique cultures; it was a day when everybody would be proud of their own culture. I would go home, prouder of my Japanese ethnicity than ever. We were different, but that didn't mean anything to us because we didn't have values set by society that said one race was superior while one wasn't. It was only when I started to pay attention to politics and started social media that I first realized how divided people were. That was when I realized that us young people need to be the ones taking action, since we are going to be the ones shaping the future.

In order to finally take down the wall among ourselves, we mustn't cling onto our categorization by society, and we should strive to educate ourselves on all sides of an issue. My friend and I, who realized that there are very few platforms which truly look at an issue from all perspectives, have been planning to set up a website and a social media account in order to raise awareness of the fact that we aren't truly trying to understand other people's opinions. What we realized was that young people do care about social issues, and what we are missing is our understanding of each other. Therefore, the opportunity to learn about the other stance is key to solving social issues. If we do not even know what other people's opinions are, how are we even able to argue against that opinion?

It might seem as though social issues in our current world are impossible to solve, because nobody is willing to change their opinions. But even before trying to convince others, we need to start with understanding why others believe in what they believe. There are even many cases in which both sides of an argument are ultimately trying to achieve the same goal; it is simply that the way they are trying to achieve it is different. Therefore, I strongly believe that breaking down barriers between us and cooperating with each other will surely lead us to a peaceful path.