

Redefining our Institutions Through Love: The Youth's Path to Peace (Original)

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A peaceful world is not one devoid of conflict but one devoid of needless suffering. Conflict at the expense of others' dignity and well-being threatens humanity. Despite the threat, we lack urgency in attempting to understand why fundamentally we are complicit in systems of exploitation and oppression. Efforts towards a more just and peaceful world can begin with the youth as we closely examine how we think and perceive the world around us. Our more complex institutions and systems are rooted in a way of thinking about the world. The organization of society is dependent on core beliefs. We see this in our precise cultures and routines, from schooling to our economies. The tenets of our systems naturally become ones we also uphold. These tenets are threaded through all societal structures—you sever one end, and it all collapses. We try to conform all our communities to a single doctrine. It is natural for the cosmos to lean towards chaos, yet we cling arduously to rigid order. Our 'modern' societies rely on the foundation of organized systems and structures. Yet, this is exactly what is harming us. Maintaining this order demands that we uphold the underlying beliefs that comprise these systems. The youth can fracture this rigid order. By being agents in our institutions, we can play a crucial role in changing our system.

To eliminate needless suffering, younger generations can begin to challenge the underpinning beliefs of our systems and adopt different approaches. Society does not encourage youth to stop and question if there are errors in the way we are viewing the world and consequently how we treat it. The youth have the power to become more compassionate and aware of themselves, to close gaps worldwide. We are more networked than ever before, yet the threads that tie us together are wearing thinner and thinner. We are stressing the planet and ourselves. We have become engrossed in a state of constant production and activity. It is the job of the youth to recapture the tenacity of love to mend and heal our relationships with each other and the natural world. We cannot expect peace

agreements to be made and wars to be stopped if we do not know what compels us to live collectively and compassionately with one another. Focusing on what makes us uniquely human starts with the youth. Goals of freedom, sustainability, justice, and democracy are unattainable if we cannot be selfless and love completely. Younger generations have the capacity to foster an appreciation of the world around us. The sooner we begin this reconfiguration, the more integrated it can become in our societies. By harnessing the power of love, we can bring ourselves closer to a peaceful world.

We have created neat plastic containers to isolate and preserve ourselves in. Societies impose limited, if any, obligations to the treatment and respect of life. We buy our livestock on Styrofoam plates wrapped in plastic, already pumped to perfection. We do not see nor respect the life that was killed to feed us. We take planes to vacate and escape the stifling airs of our cities, oblivious to the emissions injected into our atmosphere. We are more advanced than ever, yet we do not know how to love. What are we to each other, ourselves, and the rest of the world if we cannot love? Money only feeds an empty heart. Love teaches us the value of reciprocity, collective growth, and respect. To love is to fully appreciate something in its essence. If we extend love to the world, perhaps we would begin to embrace the disorder of the cosmos. Our oppressive institutions can be eradicated with compassion. Love allows us to resist injustice. It is a willingness to transform the world. Imagine what is possible if we begin with the youth loving radically, how the beliefs that constitute our systems would come from a foundation of love. A peaceful world is possible if we as young agents, are willing to challenge the status quo with our hearts.