

**Cuius regio, eius religio?—From Blood-Stained Bridges to a Bright Future:
Uniting Youth For Better Tomorrow**
(Original)

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It has always been said: kill or be killed. There is no right or wrong option here, just an option. We as a nation always chose to be on the receiving side of the knife and never fought against “neighbor's blade”. Balkan Muslims have been exterminated over the course of ten horrifying genocides that stretched through history from 1683 till 1995. Oppressors excused their behaviour based on what Church taught: “Outside of Church there is no truth, justice, goodness and true relationship with God”. How can these words justify genocides against non-Christians?

God did not give anyone right to take something that is not theirs to be taken. Life is something to be treasured. Why is it portrayed as something good if it pains another human? Why can something so heinous be done in the name of something sacred like religion? Is religion something that should oppress people?

While I was looking for more information on all genocides, I noticed that there was hardly any on the ones before the last one and a thought suddenly struck me. This cycle will keep repeating as long as we keep forgetting and forgiving once the 100 year mark passes as if there is an expiration date for genocide.

Life is like a river, it has its beginning, turbulent times filled with obstacles and an ending where everything dies down and only memories remain. Every big river has that one bridge. The one that followed us through many unfortunate events was “The Mehemed Paša Sokolović Bridge”, built in 16th century. A bridge so beautiful yet soiled by blood of its own people. Hard stones carry so much pain and anguish that it is a wonder how they did not break.

Peace is as fragile as human bones. Once broken and if it does not heal properly, it will be strained and hurt every time it "rains".

No one is born purely evil, but life is not a fairytale with guaranteed happy ending for the good people. Evil and good reside in everyone. It is up to people and their environment to choose which side will govern.

Hate directed towards other ethnicities is the main ingredient for misery. No healthy apple survives in such an environment. It is horrifying how children get affected just because they were surrounded by people who believed in inequalities based off of religion and ethnicity.

While older generations cannot be changed, it is important that youth does not get affected by their discrimination.

Once we start listening to what our hearts tell us and stop complying with unreasonable demands of adult world we will start seeing progress. It will be slow, but progress nonetheless. Some things have already been achieved through social activism and I believe that everything will be resolved naturally as children do not judge people based on their skin or ethnicity without parental influence.

History is very dark and scary, but we cannot live in it. We have to look ahead and keep fighting.

The future is being built on new generations, not on the past. The world can still be saved if every child unites and works on creating peaceful future. The most innocent and creative ones are those that do not look for their selfish needs and personal gain, but enhancing overall life conditions. While there will always be battles between good and evil, good will always come out victorious. Sometimes you need to learn the lesson the hard way. You will not be able to feel others' pain unless you experience it on your own skin. You should not allow anything to go into the land of forgotten memories, but you also do not have to base your whole life on the past. The most valuable thing you could do is not forget, neither forgive but allow the pain to help us grow together.

Long ago, the world was completely divided based on status, race, ethnicity and those on the throne made all decisions. We have come so far where young people make huge impact.

We have to get up, unite and say NO to oppressors, because we represent the bright future, while they symbolize a bloody past.