

## **We Can Do It Together**

(Original)

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I live in a war-born country.

Growing up, there are annual drills in school of what to do in case of a missile attack. I wish I could say I never had to use that knowledge drilled to me, but I can't.

The sound of sirens is familiar to me, as is the experience of dropping everything and running to a safe place. It never stops being terrifying. And every time, I wish again I never had to live through that. To be used to it.

It shouldn't be like that.

And missile alarms are the case where we get a warning. Too often, there are terror attacks on the streets. Every one of them is one too many, and if a few happen in quick succession? Going outside will feel like a life or death mission.

It shouldn't be like that. Children should grow without existential fear. Young adults should be able to plan a future without fearing everything will be gone in a matter of seconds in an act of hate.

I often ask myself, why do we fight each other? Don't we all want the same thing - to live?

It feels to me like we are locked in a cycle of hurt - they hurt us, so we need to act back. Or, we need to do something before they will be able to hurt us, even if this will hurt them.

We are blinded by pain. But all we do is cause more of it.

Perhaps we forget that on the other side there are people who only wish to live, too. Perhaps, some people never got the chance to learn.

So, we should teach. Open our eyes to see that we are all humans who want the same

thing.

We want a world where every one of us can live their life peacefully. Where different people can co-exist quietly next to each other - work, study or go out without a fear of a hate crime. We want to have the simple joys of life - a walk outside, a hobby, art, music - without worries.

For us to have that world, we need to teach how to solve conflicts without violence. How to settle disagreements with words. We need to show that humans are different, but the same in all the important ways.

In older generations, there could be too many old wounds for a real, deep change to happen. But children are our new start, our gentle spring after the cold winter. They don't have to carry our pain and fear into a new cycle of hate. We can teach them better. Perhaps they'll even teach us back.

We can organize programs that will bring together children from different backgrounds every once in a while, to do simple activities with each other - art lessons, planting trees, cooking. Simple stuff to show that everyone enjoys the same things. Through those examples, children will learn that it is possible to live alongside people different from them.

There are people that believe they cannot live quietly because the people on the other side of the conflict don't want them here and will not stop until they will be gone. They often pass on this belief to their children. If we can manage to have those kids, too - all the kids - in the meeting programs - we can begin to break the cycle of hate and fear.

I know of groups that bring together hate crimes survivors from both sides, to talk and reach an understanding. They, too, want to break our painful cycle. But their compassion, as important as it is, is one born from shared tragedies. We can do better - we can build compassion from positive experiences.

And us youth people, we don't have to wait for the next generation to bring change. We can start our own - treat each other with respect. Talk like we are equals. Look each other in the eyes and say - you are different from me. But that's okay. We both want peace, and that is what we will work to create. Together.