

Essay by Ryan Suleiman

Listening to the news often makes me feel distressed. The consequences of climate change are occurring faster than predicted, war is devastating lives and cultures throughout worldwide, and the nuclear arms race continues to spin out of control; meanwhile, world leaders rattle swords at one another and their peoples point and shout in confusion. The cost of all this, human and environmental, is deeply troubling.

That's why Einstein's message is so compelling. The two most important changes to make to our current method of thinking are (1) an emphasis on sustainability over short term capital gain, and (2) mutual respect and cooperation by recognizing one global, human civilization instead of separate national ones.

There are some values held by society that I think we should be concerned about. One problem is the value we are placing on material wealth and short term results. A major reason the public is so reluctant to invest in, for example, public transit, or building up instead of out, is that it tends to be stuck on short term fiscal results, glazing over long term benefits for the community, and the environment. If everyone in the world had the same standard of living as the average American, we would drain our planet of its resources. And developing countries around the world are looking to the US as a model. We would last much longer as a civilization if we could be less concerned with such material things as owning a car or a big house, and more about preserving nature with efficient and sustainable lifestyles. We should live in a way that would be realistic if adopted by everyone in the world.

Another problem with the current method of thinking is our reliance on threats and militarism to achieve national instead of global interests. The deep sense of fear and suspicion harbored by different governments towards one another is what drives the nuclear arms race and military violence. We often talk about world powers struggling for global dominance and "new players" on the world stage, but shouldn't all nations respect each other's interests instead of this endless power struggle? We are all citizens of Earth; while we have many differences, we also have a lot in common. We breathe the same air, share the same seas, and hold many of the same dreams and aspirations for our respective sub-societies. Instead of trying to exploit one another for power and resources, we should be looking out for each other's interests. A world engaged in a civil war with itself is no better off than any other country engaged in a civil war. Until we recognize that we are members of one Earth community, our thousands-year civil war will never end, and we will never achieve peace or end the threat of nuclear holocaust.

I think it's important for us to make an earnest attempt at understanding and appreciating one another. To value people instead of trivialities such as money or power. Only then can mankind survive.