

"We can bomb the world to pieces, but we can't bomb it into peace." Michael Franti

Essay by Lindsay Schrupp

Davis Senior High School, Davis, California

When I was a child I grouped the word "peace" with all the other words I heard often but did not understand. Soul. Gut. Conscience. All of these things I could not locate on my body or on a map. I was told they existed, but had no physical evidence.

Peace does exist, even if we cannot see it. Even if we cannot remember it ever existing. Peace will only disappear if we cannot picture it existing in the future. But before looking into peace as a future goal, it must be addressed as a present need. To confront the challenge of international squabbles that sacrifice countless human lives, every country must reconsider what a national vendetta is truly worth. Cultures, religions, and ethnicities bring rich uniqueness to our global population, but, when clouded by fear or propaganda, they divide, suppress, and then transform the fertile soil of diversity into a barren homogeny. Rather than dissolving physical and cultural borders, we must work across them, uniting nations under a common goal of peace.

Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh wrote, "It is our task to look deeply into the violence, hatred, and fear to see their roots." Therefore, it remains each country's responsibility to reach an understanding with its people and neighboring nations that we are all citizens of the same global community.

Some argue that war today will bring peace tomorrow. But we have tasted the same poison for so long, that all we drink is our own obliteration. When we sacrifice human lives to such a myth, we give up that dream of peace and trade it for something artificial and short-lived. We are all prisoners of war. We are chained by a mix of propaganda and national pride, but sometimes we chew the hoax because it's sweeter than the truth.

Michael Franti's words, "we can bomb the world to pieces but we can't bomb it into peace" sing to a global audience, but they must first reach individual ears. Every person must first have access to information, education, and the truth before evaluating affairs at home and abroad. Peace cannot emanate from propaganda or fear. Senator Hiram Johnson said truth is the first casualty of war, but truth is also the first step to achieving a long-lasting peace.

Borders are redrawn, languages evolve; but truth is unvarying and cannot be confined by borders or governments. Truth is needed in the United States, the Middle East, and every corner of the earth touched by human life to better assess the total impact of war. We cannot revive a life lost in war, but every day offers new opportunities to launch a global search and discovery of peace.

As I grew older I became less puzzled by words like conscience or gut. I learned that my soul was not located near my stomach, my heart was not a bright pink valentine, and, most importantly, that peace is not a myth; it is both a universal goal and an individual responsibility.