

“You can bomb the world to pieces, but you can’t bomb it into peace.”

Essay by Elizabeth Storer

Amador High School, Sutter Creek, California

Bob Dylan was an influential musician who used his political opinions to write morally and ideologically inspiring songs that would forever change the role of music in our nation. He set a precedent for all future musicians by pioneering a movement that fused politics and music into an enjoyable and intellectual experience. He coined the influential mantra "the times they are a-changing," which still holds true today. Michael Franti, a modern American poet, recording artist and political activist has taken after Bob Dylan and has become a powerhouse voice of peace and justice for our ever-changing times. In his song "Bomb The World," he reflects on the changes in our modern world and the global impact of our political decisions.

When reading or listening to the works of Michael Franti, one must take into account the political and social events of our modern society to fully appreciate and understand the meaning of his works. "Bomb The World" was written in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks and the American government's actions following the crisis. Violence stands out as one of the prominent themes of the song, and this is understandable because of the extremely violent events of the world during this time. Franti is a known political activist, and a member of the nonviolent Green Party. As a peace advocate, Franti recognizes that reacting to a bombing attack by going into war solves nothing. It brings us no closer to peace, but only throws us further into the vicious cycle of violence. In this song, he addresses the terrors of the modern world and what is happening around us, and more importantly, what we can do about it.

As a teenager, I am constantly surrounded by violence- it is on television, in videogames, movies, advertisements, and all over the news. I see firsthand how hard it is for our nation's youth to grow up to be politically conscious, active adults in such an environment. Our society's focus needs to be shifted from promoting violence to promoting education. When equipped with information and knowledge, we are able to form our own opinions and act on them. It is perhaps an overused cliché to say that our youth will become the adults of our future, but it is inevitably true, whether or not we young people like to stand up to the responsibility. We need to be surrounded by positive role models who create an environment that supports and encourages us to become politically aware and active, because we learn largely from-example. When we see violence and war as our only examples, it is undeniable that we will grow to accept and support those things in our own lives, forever carrying on the evil tradition. Artists like Michael Franti are doing a great service to society and its youth by challenging society's accepted norms and standing up for their own beliefs. They are the ones setting good examples and encouraging the future of our world to do the same.