



Physicians for Social Responsibility
10 Dumfries Court
Sacramento, California 95831
www.sacpsr.org • info@sacpsr.org
916-955-6333

2020 High School Scholarship Essay Contest \$1,000 Award Winner

Rohit Jhawar
John F. Kennedy High School, Sacramento

Peace in a World of Prejudice

A 16 year old boy in San Fernando Valley was recently trampled by bullies until he bled. A Los Angeles middle schooler was beaten until he was hospitalized. An innocent woman in a New York City subway was punched and kicked in the face repeatedly for wearing a mask. These are all stories from here in America; responses to the recent coronavirus outbreak. It may have taken a global pandemic to expose, but racism, discrimination, and exclusion have always plagued our country. Until they are stamped out, we will never be at peace. We must not fall victim to the tip of the iceberg phenomenon, and pretend that this behavior is solely connected to the virus outbreak. Broadening our viewpoint easily reveals that this is reflective of an ongoing trend in society; a resurgence of hateful and racist ideas. Every day, more and more people are making judgments based on the melanin in other's skin rather than the makeup of their minds.

These prejudices quickly grow larger and larger. They first infiltrate our interactions with offhand remarks and dirty looks, used to exclude those who don't talk, eat, pray, sound or look like us. They then go from words to actions, causing institutionalized discrimination against minorities; policies like a Muslim ban, that are often glossed over with the label "democracy." Soon enough, these prejudices expand from fueling civil barriers to igniting uncivil actions. The FBI reported in 2018 that hate crimes have reached an 18-year high, because our loose gun laws consistently give firearms to bigots who conduct heinous crimes. America could end all its wars overseas - we still wouldn't be at peace. Racism and discrimination will continue adding to an epidemic of interpersonal violence that kills thousands every year.

Still, the most important part about this quote is its dual meaning. It's not just that there's more to peace than ending war; it's also contending that these other issues make ending war impossible. Just look around us. Discrimination has fueled a War on Drugs that makes African American men more likely to get put in prison than go to college. Exclusion has fueled a War at the Border where innocent children are locked in cages like animals. Racism has fueled a War on Terror that's massacred thousands of innocent people in the Middle East and razed their homelands. The absence of war by itself may not mean peace, but the enduring existence of these other factors always means war.

Abraham Lincoln warned that "A house divided unto itself cannot stand." If we want to see a world of unity and harmony, we must first diagnose our own biases and prejudices, and work to

cure those. We must all realize that we are all pieces of the large puzzle that is society; unique and different, but each one as important as the other. Only when society treats each piece as an equal and integral part of the whole will we be able to achieve a world of peace.