

Graduation Message For The Current Dark Age

by John W. Whitehead via joyce - ICH *Wednesday, May 23 2018, 6:29am*

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Those coming of age today will face some of the greatest obstacles ever encountered by young people. In addition to being overtaxed and underemployed, they will also be forced to march in lockstep with a government that no longer exists to serve the people but which demands they be obedient slaves or suffer the consequences.

Unfortunately, we who should have known better failed to guard against such a future.

Worse, we neglected to maintain our freedoms or provide our young people with the tools necessary to survive, let alone succeed, in the impersonal jungle that is modern America.

Based on the current political climate, things could very well get much worse before they ever take a turn for the better. Here are a few pieces of advice that will hopefully help those coming of age today survive the perils of the journey that awaits:

Be an individual. As John F. Kennedy warned, conformity is “the jailer of freedom, and the enemy of growth.” Worry less about fitting in with the rest of the world and march to the beat of your conscience.

Learn your rights. We’re losing our freedoms for one simple reason: most of us don’t know anything about our freedoms. So grab a copy of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, study them, and stand up for your rights before it’s too late.

Speak truth to power. Don’t be naive about those in positions of authority. People in power, more often than not, abuse that power. To maintain our freedoms, this will mean challenging government officials whenever they exceed the bounds of their office.

Resist all things that numb you. Resist all things that numb you, put you to sleep or help you “cope” with so-called reality. As George Orwell warned, “Until they become conscious, they will never rebel, and until after they rebelled, they cannot become conscious.” It is these conscious individuals who change the world for the better.

Don’t let technology turn you into zombies. Techno-gadgets are merely distractions from what’s really going on in America and around the world. If you’re going to make a difference in the world, you’re going to have to pull the earbuds out, turn off the cell phones and spend much less time viewing screens.

Help others. None of us can exist very long without help from others. If we’re going to see any positive change for freedom, then we must help one another. That will mean gaining the courage to stand up for the oppressed.

Give voice to moral outrage. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.” There is no shortage of issues on which to take a stand. Choose one and start making your voice heard.

Cultivate spirituality, reject materialism and put people first. We must change our values to reflect something more meaningful than technology, materialism and politics. Standing at the pulpit of the Riverside Church in New York City in April 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. urged his listeners:

[W]e as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a “thing-oriented” society to a “person-oriented” society. When machines and computers, profit motive and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

Pitch in and do your part to make the world a better place. Don't rely on someone else to do the heavy lifting for you. Don't wait around for someone else to fix what ails you, your community or nation. As Gandhi urged: “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Say no to war. Addressing the graduates at Binghampton Central High School in 1968, Twilight Zone creator Rod Serling declared:

Too many wars are fought almost as if by rote. Too many wars are fought out of sloganry, out of battle hymns, out of aged, musty appeals to patriotism that went out with knighthood and moats... do not accept the shedding of blood as a natural function or a prescribed way of history—even if history points this up by its repetition... find another means that does not come with the killing of your fellow-man.

Finally, prepare yourselves for what lies ahead. The demons of our age—some of whom disguise themselves as politicians—delight in fomenting violence, sowing distrust and prejudice, and persuading the public to support tyranny disguised as patriotism. Overcoming the evils of our age will require more than intellect and activism. It will require decency, morality, goodness, truth and toughness. As Serling concluded in his remarks to the graduating class of 1968:

“Toughness is the singular quality most required of you... we have left you a world far more botched than the one that was left to us... Part of your challenge is to seek out truth, to come up with a point of view not dictated to you by anyone, be he a congressman, even a minister... Are you tough enough to take the divisiveness of this land of ours, the fact that everything is polarized, black and white, this or that, absolutely right or absolutely wrong. This is one of the challenges. Be prepared to seek out the middle ground ... If you must swing left or you must swing right—respect the other side. Honor the motives that come from the other side. Argue, debate, rebut—but don't close those wondrous minds of yours to opposition. In their eyes, you're the opposition. And ultimately ... ultimately—you end divisiveness by compromise. And so long as men walk and breathe—there must be compromise...”

The only way we'll ever achieve change in this country is for the American people to finally say “enough is enough” and fight for our founding principles and the things that really matter to humanity.

It doesn't matter how old you are or what your political ideology is. If you have something to say, speak up. Get active, and if need be, pick up a picket sign and get in the streets. And when civil liberties are violated, don't remain silent about it.

Wake up, stand up, and make your activism count for something more than petty politics.

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