

Liz Caile Essay Contest 2007

1st place Stephanie Cook

"If Everyone Demanded Peace Instead of a New Television, We'd Have Peace."

-John Lennon

When I thought about peace, I realized that most of what I know about the topic comes from old Beatles tunes and Bob Marley lyrics. When someone says peace, what comes to mind these days? Perhaps tie-dye t-shirts, circular symbols, doves, or Cherry Garcia ice cream, all which I am a fan of. Interestingly, as I considered these things, I realized suddenly, that I am not just into the fad that peace is, the trend of wanting "peace" but I really do care. Peace is not a bird with white wings, but the ability for two people to respect each other no matter who they are. Peace is the ability for people to be happy, content, and united. To show peace is to respect the world we live in: the people, the deer, the trees, even the spiders.

When I contemplate what most people mean when they put up a peace sign in a picture I think of the Beatle's "Revolution" saying, "you say you want a revolution, well, we all want to change the world." I think they struck oil with these lyrics, as everyone likes to say they want world peace, but when it comes to their every day lives they still treat others badly, disrespect their teachers and peers, and pollute the earth. To me world peace is not necessarily about huge protests and acts of retaliation, it is about doing what is right in your every day life; treating people well, respecting nature, and respecting yourself. I think in terms of this The Beatles might agree with me, that peace should be simple, natural, and if people would only try it, it wouldn't be so complicated at all. This message shines through their many ballads, as they croon

lines like "All we are saying is give peace a chance" and "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one." This makes me think, that maybe unity is possible, if only we would give it a try. After all, does it take any more effort to put a person down than it does to treat them kindly?

Bob Marley also conveys a simple message of peace, unity, and happiness on Earth, but goes a step further to emphasize that we must take it upon our selves to create peace, and not leave it up to anyone else. This idea comes through from some of his most touching ballads like "Redemption Song" where he instructs "emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but our selves can free our minds", to classic lines such as "Get up, stand up. Stand up for your rights." and of course "One love". Marley's message is one of doing what you can in your own life to contribute to the peace of the world, that you must be your own person and when things are not right, to change them. He asks his listeners to be critical of their environment, "Open your eyes, look within. Are you satisfied with the life your living?" and if they don't like it, it is up to them to make the difference.

Maybe it is just from listening to "Redemption Song" on repeat, or committing every word of "Revolution" to memory, but these messages of peace and happiness in the world are sinking in. My collection of music includes over 600 Beatles songs and 12 Bob Marley albums, and continues to grow. Through each new melody and every changing beat the messages of love, unity, and peace stays consistent. Peace is what unites us as a people; it is the connection between a soulful Rastafarian from Kingston and a band of hippies from Liverpool. Peace is not a symbol, it is not an idea, it is a possibility that we each have the choice to make a reality in our every day lives. Peace is smiling when a stranger walks by, helping someone without them asking, showing others that you respect them whether or not you agree with them.

Most importantly peace is accepting the universe around you with open arms, and realizing that we: the plants, the animals, the earth, the sky, the humans, are all one.