

## OUR INHERITANCE

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Our inheritance, our mantle of life is hardly a clean, wholesome and untattered one. Its edges are occasionally frayed by boiling hot then frigid cold wars, its interior marred by revolution. Rather than a pure and peaceful white, its color is a shocking blood red. Such is the environment in which today's youth is turning its back on and rejecting.

A few years ago, it was fashionable for social scientists to picture the college youth of America as empty of any desire to change or improve the society in which they lived. Their eyes were presumable set upon a secure, undemanding life in Suburbia, U.S.A. Prof. Daniel Goulding, Chairman of the Speech Dep't at Oberling College said, "My generation of the 50's was given the disparaging label of 'The Quiet Generation'."

Whatever validity this description may have had a few years ago, it is becoming evident that it is no longer satisfactory. In the early 60's, students in small, Negro colleges in the South joined to form one of the most militantly non-violent of the civil rights organizations. It is the safe, security oriented college youths who have joined certain professors in teach in demonstrations to protest U.S. military involvement. And it was in Berkley, Calif. that one of the largest institutions of higher learning discovered one night to its everlasting embarrassment, that a group of Apathetic students were lying down wall to wall in an administration building, chanting and protesting. Yet, we should not be surprised when these who have been taught to think, these children of Sputnik, attempt to change our perspective of the world. Their perception tells them that it is often unnecessary to make for oneself one's own custom and tradition. Too often the old road, the old way simply will not do. It is often a compulsion felt especially by those individuals from a newer tradition, from, let us say, a newer generation, to take the initiative and refuse to accept everything concerning the status quo. These upsetting events demand the concern of the existing older order. But more importantly, they cause antagonism and breaches of faith. They are considered revolutionary, yet as President Kennedy once said, "They are but part of an evolutionary process".



Moreover, these upsetting events often freeze contact between the generations, between the solid establishment of our elders and the reactionary young and new. Many times the first step taken by the parent is to squelch the voice of the questioning child. The obvious tragedy is the misunderstanding that results, not because the new voice is totally unreasonable, but because the parents simply refuse to listen to the voice of inexperience.

Perhaps the older generation should recall some of his roles in recent history. (The background into which we have had to mature and develop our own ideas) Since the close of the First World War (which some near sighted person labelled "the war to end all wars.") there are the stories of WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the insanity of a WWIII.

The older generation could remember its role in such places as Nagasaki, Hiroshima, Budapest, the Bay of Pigs, Dachau, and Aushwitz, or of their having beautified the globe with such decorations as the Iron Curtain, the Bamboo Curtain, or its sturdy well-built wall in Berlin.

I list these contributions to 20th Century life, not to embarrass the old, nor to intimidate the young; not to suggest that those of older generations bury their heads in shame, and certainly not for grist for youth ful mills of protest and rebellion. I list these realities because they are a part of the fabric of 20th Century life, the fabric into which we must soon weave ourselves. If the cloak we inherit from the previous generation is spotted and bloodied, rumpled and torn, so be it. We must learn to accept life as it is, learning to live with fact, not fiction. To shout accusations at an older generation because the fabric passed on to us is tattered is meaningless. To do so serves only to weaken the few remaining strands between generations. Invectives will not change our inheritance.

This inheritance is one of an age characterized by processes which slowly humanize the machine and dehumanize man, ignore God, while deifying beats and hippies, an age forgetful of what happened to Sodom and Gomorah, and the Roman Empire.



But, of greater importance, ours is a period of choice and of decision, a time when those of the "establishment" and men of the new generation may soon have to choose between destroying the world in which they live, or unite with each other for the making and remaking of civilization.

To give direction to the mending of our society would seem to call for some sort of visionary process. But this attitude can only lead to uncompromising attitudes which in turn could divide us even more, because the last one-third of this century belongs in large measure to the young. Thus, mankind's future, whether optimistic or not, depends at least to a degree upon what we decide to do with the seeds planted in us at our respective institutions. We can neglect those tiny organisms or we can nurture them, but will be in no condition to guide destiny if our travels are a continuation of the current escapist routes of sniffing glue or getting high on pot and hashish.

Editors constantly point out something that is wrong with today's society. They say that the war in Vietnam and our domestic problems of poverty are the cause of our concerns, thinking that if we ended the war or pumped in a guaranteed income to the poor, many of our troubles would be over. But these are only shallow treatments for the widespread loss of faith of today's youth in our society.

The challenge then, is for today's youth and the established order to further develop carefully considered and informed opinions on the vital issues of our times, developing searching and inquiring minds with a final molding of our ideas for responsible commitment, protest and social action. This is but a beginning, but with new open minds perhaps we can put the accent on our points of agreement rather than on our differences. New open minds can help us stress our likes rather than our dislikes. Let us be the generation who listened to the wise counsel of William Faulkner when he stated, "I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man will endure. But I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. Man is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit, capable of compassion, sacrifice, and endurance."