**Third Place**

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**50 Years from Today: Will We Be Living in a Better World?**

To try and envision how the world will be like in fifty years is a big ask for a teenager who might not be able to envision their own life in five years. The world and its complexities can be a large place for someone who is pushed to focus on the tests, classes, and the social expectations right in front of them. Despite all of this, it has been difficult in the last year to not focus on the state of the world. A feeling of mutual isolation and hopelessness has cascaded over the population at the onset of the pandemic Covid-19, and as everyone turned to their phones and the news, the world and its injustices we have ignored were brought to a new light. So, as I, a sixteen soon to be seventeen-year-old, sat down to try and envision what the world will be like in fifty years, my mind continued to settle on the thought that the world is as a crossroads currently and how it will look like in fifty years depends on vital decisions made in the current climate. Will we start to make real headway in the U.S. against systemic racism? Will the world take global warming and environmental damage seriously? Most importantly, will the generation in power right now stop assuring us that the future is in the hands of the youth and make drastic changes that have real impact today? Honestly, if the answer is no to any one of these questions, I can’t see a better world in fifty years.

Despite positive outlooks that pointed out decreased industry emissions due to the isolation of people, currently, “Global CO2 emissions have returned to pre-pandemic levels and then some, threatening to put climate treaty targets for capping global warming out of reach” (France-Presse). The reopening of CO2 emitting industries around the world as pandemic protocols lightened has caused a sharp uptick in economic activity. If the world continues to harm the environment in this way, the damage in just the next few years could be irreversible and destroy any future generations shot as fixing our planet. There is some hope of course, as truly many many organizations work towards rolling back Global emissions and finding renewable options for energy, in fact “In May, the IEA is to publish its first global road map on how the energy sector can reach net-zero by 2050” (France-Presse). Yet, a damaged planet isn’t the only thing that stands in the way of a better world in 2071. The entire worlds issue with brutality from, police, military groups, and even our fellow neighbors was given a new spotlight in 2020. The outcry in response to deaths like George Floyd, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Ahmaud Arbery, Rekia Boyd, Oscar Grant, Breonna Taylor, and too many more to type caused a global outcry certainly, but an even larger national outcry for the deaths of these black Americans. BLM protests have been as prevalent news this year as the pandemic. As a history buff, I can’t help but look back at the embedded history of terror and violence against black Americans in the U.S. and sadly not be as shocked as I should be. If drastic changes do not happen to fundamentally change the system of oppression against black Americans, this country will not look good, or unified, or better off in fifty years. If an entire portion of our population continues to live in fear, what bright future can this country look towards? Two days before this assignment was due is the anniversary to the day of Breonna Taylors death and yet, true justice for her senseless murder has not been had. This issue specifically is what convinces me that unless real change happens now, no change will happen in the future. “The Justice for Breonna Taylor Act falls short of preventing future murders, and now insulting or taunting a police officer could become a crime if Senate Bill 211 in Kentucky is passed”, how can a country look forward to a bright future if acts like this continually benefit a force that has killed more Black Americans than I can write in the word count of this essay (Peoples Wagner)? Without true changes to the government, conversations throughout the world about racial bias, and the adaptation of accountability culture towards those that attack any minority group, a better future for the world is simply not possible. Not for everybody.

Despite the countless other issues that should be addressed when making an assessment on how the world will turn out in fifty years, the true solution to the problems no matter their route or origin is direct quantifiable action today by those in power. If lawmakers and heads of governments around the world did the best that3 they could today to truly make choices towards a better future, that possibility could certainly be achieved. However, as a teenager who has listened to an overwhelming number of adults prattle on about their faith in future generations to take the reins and make a difference it becomes rather tiring. Why not make that change now? If the future generation, the youth, is so inspiring, why not make drastic changes today and allow us to actually live better lives in fifty years when our children inherit this current world, we inherited from you? I really have no choice but to positively look at this year as a wake-up call. Sometimes a jolt out of ignorant bliss is needed to uncover the horror of what has been happening all along, and if the world takes this wake-up call seriously enough one can only hope that a bright future awaits us in fifty years.

Works Cited

France-Presse, Agence. “CO2 pollution bounces back, climate goals at risk: IEA”. *Dateline: Paris*, 2 Mar. 2021, *NewsBank.*

Peoples Wagner, Lindsay. “Please Continue to Say Breonna Taylor’s Name”. *The Cut,* photographs by Carter, Kennedi, 12 Mar. 2021,