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### Gen Z: Agents of Change

French philosopher Pierre Teilhard once said, “The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope.” We do not think about it enough, but that is the exact reason we bother working so hard and fighting for change that will not come within our own lifetimes. Many of the world’s most prominent activists died fighting for their cause and never lived to see a day of their dreams as reality. But for them, that is not a mean of failure, because it is not about themselves – it is about the future. Their actions, words, and courage did not go to waste because *everything* they worked for, everything we work for, will be handed down to the next generation of change makers. Our generation is an agent of change because whether we realize it or not, we have within us the strength from previous generations that fought to make our lives better, and now it is our turn to do the same for those to come.

There are hundreds of causes that have been advocated for years, with real change *still* yet to come. Women’s rights are something that have been battled for by generations and generations before us. It was not relatively long ago that women were not considered righteous of their own vote, their own property, or their own incomes. However, all because of countless brave women and their allies who risked their lives, spoke up, and demanded change, we have gotten so far from where we started. Yet, there is still a significant gap between men and women to this day, whether that be wages, treatment, or opportunity. Change makers of their own generations such as Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Ida B Wells, and immeasurable more have set a path for *us*. As of 2016, on average a woman made 80 cents for every dollar a man earned for the same quality of work– *that* is something to challenge. And it is a perfect example of how our generation must *continue* the fight for our rights, using the foundation that we have been given. Equality, whether it be

sex, race, gender, or whatever else, is something that our generation must push for, because the future deserves better.

It may seem far off, but in reality we have already started. Change is necessary and now. Take the recent tragedies in Parkland, Florida. In the aftermath of a devastating experience, these students have shown incredible will and grit to demand change. With the immensity of what they have accomplished, it is easy to forget that these students are a part of Generation Z, like us. Let that sink in. Our generation is *already* making a choice to be outspoken, determined, and displaying a desire for creating social impact. The students from Parkland are leading the way for the rest of us. By transforming the face of our generation, they have only proved that it is up to us to create our own legacy. As we all mature into our richest selves, we must remember our individual place within this era and ask ourselves:

How do **we** *want* to be remembered?

All these elements combine to make our generation the perfect agent of change just as preceding generations of warriors fought, risked their lives, and made sacrifices all to make *our* lives better. Soon, as we grow into our prime, it will be our turn in the spotlight. Now, *our* actions, words, and the courage we display should be a model of inspiration and hope for all those to come. By way of connecting with each other, we must believe that even if we do not solve all the world's problems, there is a future generation that will build on what we have started and what generations before us have started. We may not ever see a perfect, flawless realm, but as long as we continue to individually *and* collectively fight for a better tomorrow, one could say that the future belongs to us.

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Agents of Change

Why do members of a younger generation stand up for themselves and fight so hard for what they believe in? In the past 50 years or so, we've seen many instances of youth standing up for what they believe in, and effectively raising awareness and bringing change. The 1989 protests of Tiananmen Square were made up of students and young people who still had their whole lives ahead of them. In the 1960s and 1970s, college students and other youth protested the Vietnam War. And, very recently, we have seen students raising their voices for gun control after the Parkland shooting. As they did in all of these cases, a new generation brings new perspective, energy, and determination to the world and to the fight for change.

New generations grow up seeing what the previous generation did right, but also what they did wrong. We have the chance to learn from the mistakes made in the past, and we have a responsibility to find solutions to the problems created. For previous generations, the long-term consequences of their own actions are simply not theirs to solve because they don't have to deal with them. For younger people however, the problems and consequences created are our reality and our future. Since we still have our whole lives ahead of us, we want those lives to be better ones, and we are willing to fight for that. Youth are the ones who have to deal with the problems in the world, because like it or not, we don't have much of a choice. It is impossible for new generations to ignore the problems in the world, because these problems are our reality, and we will have to either fix them or live with them for the rest of our lives.

A new generation may have less life experience than an older generation, but they have more hope and energy to fight for the change they want to see. As children, we grow up imagining of a perfect world, and of what our dreams are for the future. Younger generations bring this optimism and hope to the world. Inherently, a person needs to be optimistic and think that they are capable of causing change in order to be an agent of change. Young people feel like the fight is fresh, because whatever we are doing, we have not been doing it for as long as our parents or grandparents have. Older generations, when they have been fighting for the same issue for their entire lives, will eventually start to tire. Lots of members of older generations have different full-time commitments, like jobs and families, so they have less energy to keep advocating for change.

Young people have been and likely always will be the most effective agents of change in the world, thanks to our hope, energy, and determination. Throughout history, we've seen numerous instances of youth changing the world. Since the school shooting in Florida, a bill to increase school safety and restrict gun purchases has made its way through the state legislature, and the many other youth protests have made lasting impressions on the world. So, whether we use it by holding up signs and marching for a cause, or speaking up for what we believe in, a new generation holds the greatest power to change the world.

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