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Apathy, ICE and the American people

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Nearly 2500 years ago, Plato issued a warning to his students: “the price of apathy in political affairs is to be ruled by evil men.” Sadly, as we enter 2026, this quote still holds true- in part due to its predictive nature. Apathy has long been the accomplice of injustice. In moments of exhaustion, as with the Nazi party’s rise during Germany’s economic collapse following World War 1, hatred and bigotry are allowed to thrive. In today’s world, we still face down many of the same injustices, albeit in a new font: political corruption, environmental collapse and racism continue to flood our daily headlines. However, rather than galvanizing any change for the better, this mass influx of information instead produces a dangerous alternative: a public growing increasingly numb to the hate that has come to dwell among them.

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This seeming paradox of excess exposure breeding ignorance is not new to environmentalists, who have even given the phenomena a name: climate fatigue. The term describes the emotional exhaustion that surrounds climate change efforts of large scale and frequency, often causing the public to tune out the issue in a sense of hopelessness. Everyone wants to save the world, but in times of crisis, nobody thinks to be the first to step forward. Yet this fatigue has escaped the bounds of environmentalism and seeped into daily life. Now, when faced with routine injustice, we have been conditioned to make a quick remark and move on. How many of us have reposted a headline to our social media, only to do nothing to back up this seeming outrage? Consider the recent killing of Renee Good at the hands of ICE agents: While the moment did generate brief outrage and continues to generate protests in Minneapolis, where the shooting occurred, no real nationwide reaction has been sparked. While any

one person on the street may remark their disapproval of the incident, our nation as a whole has made no large strides forward to prevent further tragedies, or to end the federal agency that is enacting these violent crimes. This growing culture of inaction and disinterest is not with-

the wellbeing of its people is not. These feelings of apathy have led to increasing patterns of disengagement. Social disconnect and avoidance have become trendy, with “nonchalance” and apathy becoming an idealized standard. Experts were quick to amplify this message. 2024’s popular “Let

ing on controlling, reacting, or dealing with other people’s actions. However, although personal boundary-setting can be psychologically beneficial, its widespread adaptation has instead coincided with a wider trend towards apathy. If we allow ourselves to consider personal needs above the needs

individuals often feel less compelled to act alone. Instead, they expect the next person to act instead. When projected across society, this creates a mass bystander effect, where everyone assumes that someone else will be the one to intervene, speak

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up, organize or resist. This deferral of duty has become widespread enough to notice generationally. How often have we, as the younger generation, been told we will be the ones to “fix things.” Sure, the last generation may have messed up, but surely their children will be the ones to fix it. The implication of this mindset is subtle, but dangerous: it reinforces the idea that change belongs in the future, not the present. Yet the crises we face now- from climate change to violent bigotry- are the sole results of delayed action. Even today, many argue that the changes needed to address these issues cannot or will not happen in our lifetime. For every brave scientist willing to plan a departure from fossil fuels, it would seem there is a critic arguing that the grid “simply isn’t ready.” Change always remains a possibility- but only if we remain willing to take it upon ourselves. The evil Plato once warned of thrives only on our own passiveness. For every act of commentary without commitment, it grows. We have allowed ourselves to mistake mere awareness as action and hesitance as realism. Yet the crises we face are not for the future generation, nor are they out of our ability to solve. We must learn to utilize the skills we have to make change. Get involved. Find the cause you’re passionate about. Build your network. Advocate for the policy you want to see and lead the initiative to get it done. Even small acts of commitment are enough to generate generational change. The question of action has never been whether change is possible- instead, it has only ever been if we are brave enough to act before the cost of apathy becomes irreversible.



A couple holds an upside down American flag at a protest against ICE. An upside down flag signifies that the USA is in extreme danger and distress.

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out its roots. Among Americans, particularly younger generations, expressions of patriotism and attachment to our nation have sharply declined. While feelings of skepticism towards our political institutions may be justified, channeling that into indifference about

Them” theory, for instance, from psychologist Mel Robbins, preached self-removal from the world’s troubles- advocating to turn from an external locus of control to an internal locus of control. Subscribers to this thought sought to focus on personal goals, rather than focus-

of the community, we risk becoming complicit in the action taken without our engagement. Our retreat from civic life has only been reinforced by the psychological phenomenon of the “diffusion of responsibility.” When accountability is spread across an entire population,