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I am a United States citizen. But that's not all I am. I am also a citizen of the world. As the world continues to shrink, it would seem natural that nations be brought tighter together. However, the presence of religious, racial, and cultural differences combats this factor; replacing peace with wars, tolerance with hatred, and understanding with ignorance. This effect can still be reversed, however. People by themselves or in groups can be the difference they wish to see in the way nations interact. But it will take everyone to truly build an alliance of civilizations.

In the midst of wars, extremism, and hatred it can be easy to forget that we are all members of the same world. Understanding this, however, is one of the most important steps to ending these crises that separate nations. Once one understands that all humans share this similarity, tolerance for the differences is easily acquired. But currently, prejudice and intolerance for other cultures exist everywhere. Even, ironically, in the United States; a country composed of people originating from countless different cultures and ethnicities. It is very difficult to compel others to replace their prejudice with tolerance. But after one realizes all people are alike, it can be easy to change one's own way of thinking. When it comes to making a long term impact on the way nations cooperate, repairing your own frame of mind is a good place to start.

Another way one can help bring different countries together is to start or join a non-profit organization. Groups such as Doctors Without Borders, Pennies for Peace, and Habitat for Humanity work to give people of all backgrounds what they need to live, learn, and grow by directly reaching out to them. The workers in Doctors Without Borders have provided emergency care for those most in need since 1971. Habitat for Humanity builds homes for homeless families all over the world. Pennies for Peace builds schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan to help give oppressed children an education great enough to empower them to make a change in the future. These are just a few examples of groups made up of ordinary people determined to heal the sick, educate the oppressed, and house the homeless in places all over the world. By joining or donating to these groups, one person alone can help bring nations together while helping those in need.

In the same way non-profit organizations unite people of different nations, foreign exchange programs bring people together one student at a time. Organizations such as AYUSA, ASSE, and CCI promote global learning and exploration by finding "host families" for students interested in studying in a foreign country. These host families open up their homes to the student, provide food and other necessities, and help the student explore the area and learn about the culture. It is important that students have the opportunity to learn about a nation different from their own, and acquire relationships with their host families that can ultimately develop into ties between the two countries. Foreign exchange programs allow individuals to help the global community by sponsoring a student, or making a contribution to one of these programs.

One of the most essential components of society is education. Without it, people would blindly follow whoever was in authority, unable to create their own standards of right and wrong. This is why it is crucial that education be available for everyone, particularly in oppressed regions of the world. Thankfully, several non-profit organizations are currently working to provide education for people in these areas. Take for instance the aforementioned organization Pennies for Peace. Pennies for Peace uses money collected at US schools to build schools throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan. This builds a connection between children in the US and in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and helps educate children that would otherwise likely not receive any education. Not only does this allow these children to gain knowledge about the world around them and earn better careers in the future, but it also helps them develop their own principles and not be persuaded to believe certain ideas. As stated on the Pennies for Peace website, "Literacy, for both boys and girls, provides better economic opportunities in the future and neutralizes the power of despot mullahs and other extremist leaders." Educating children in these areas will help them better understand their capabilities and the world beyond what they know, and their knowledge will give rise to change.

One of the most inescapable influences in modern life is the news media. News on television, in newspapers, on the radio, and on the internet is constantly affecting our opinions, even if we don't realize it. Since the news media has such a strong impact on society, it should be used only to present facts in a clear manner without showing any biases. But recently many forms of news media have begun to display news from a skewed perspective instead of in an impartial way. News is often presented from certain political standpoints, and radio and television broadcasters sometimes seem to be hired for their charisma rather than their intellect. When people view these programs, they can begin to believe what they see and think negatively of the people and countries discussed. This can cause more tension between nations, and build barriers that are very difficult to tear down. As an individual, one can combat these influences by avoiding certain news programs that show biases. Without impartial ideas implanted in one's mind, it is much easier for one not to develop a false resentment towards a person, nation, or idea.

There is not one certain way to help create unity between nations. It can be done in small or large steps, by people individually or in numbers. It can be as simple as turning off the news, or as complicated as feeding a country. One thing is for certain, though- before we can build an alliance of civilizations, we must see ourselves as citizens of the world.

Sources:

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