

Trying to explain this phenomenon, adults call it "delinquency," they call it "the dropout" or "teenage problem," or "just the new generation," and, to dismiss it they look for personality defects in the youth himself or particular problems in the home environment of the family.

When we attempt to relate our definitions of these youths to reality, we discover that adolescents are no longer where we put them. They have forged a culture of their own which is practically impenetrable to an outsider who is unacquainted with the particular signals by which these adolescents share with one another an understanding of their situation and their aspirations for the future.

But nothing is more important today, however, than that society come to grips with themselves as adults and their relationship to this culture of youth. It is born out of the general moral crisis of our time and its fundamental lack is adequate images of significant humanness.

This challenge of youth to civilization is directed toward every segment of our society—the family, the state, the academic structures, the welfare services, the religious organizations, and the economic order.

Assuming these statements to be valid, the imperatives upon society begin to come into focus. They are subsumed under four major categories:

First and foremost, the world of youth must be recognized, acknowledged, nourished, and wisely counseled and directed.

Secondly, youth must be seen in the light of urbanization and ministered into the broader context of knowledge of the city and its problems, whether or not he lives there.

Thirdly, it is essential to the young that society apprehend, refine, and boldly communicate a new definition of men, relevant to our times. Here is a generation which desires to be dedicated, which asks to be used for the sake of a more human adventure.

The Peace Corps is one model of such corporate youth action. Society must legislate channels and structure which will harness the passion of youth and direct it toward social mission.

Fourthly, education can no longer be understood as a desirable for tomorrow, or even a preparation for tomorrow, it is an urgent necessity of today and it must be functional to the felt needs of youth. Its design must guide these youth to facts about and adequate contact with life out of which new moral machinery must be forged with which to construct a more just and human society.

These imperatives constitute the challenge of youth to civilization. To continue to pretend that it is not here, that youth today are like youth of other days, is to deny our times and thereby to expose ourselves to the future accusation of a lack of courage to take into ourselves this confrontation. Such a course of serious recognition will require a difficult act of humility on the part of the older generation.

We must now carefully listen to these strange fledglings who are sending out signals about the shape of the future, and are evidencing unsuspected wisdom, courage, and dedication in their upending of past patterns, attitudes, and symbols which have become empty hulls before them. We must become willing to learn deep lessons of life from our own "children."

We of the older generation must initiate a sincere effort to communicate to the young our desire to work out a partnership with him