

Contemporary Monster: Fear of Change

by Beatrice Burton

We are currently living in a revolutionary time period for the international community. Social media, air travel, and the Internet have all contributed to this rising wave of internationalism. People can communicate from across the globe, exchanging ideas that they then exchange with their friends, who then tell their friends, who perpetuate an endless chain of cultural diffusion. Unfortunately, rejection for other cultures exists, leading to violent attacks like those of terrorism and racism. The fear of change holds humanity back from embracing ideas outside of its comfort zone and holds us back from a better future.

The fear of change is often rooted in a culture itself. Traditions and societal customs govern the way a society is run, and individuals within that society can rely on those customs for a sense of security. By relying on the steadfast traditions, citizens are able to navigate the social aspect of a society more easily. In practice, American society prides itself on being democratic and “the land of the free.” The American people are confident that their voice is valued and thus can be expressed confidently. Freedom of speech along with freedom of religion and the press act as traditions and are widely accepted social constraints that help Americans navigate their communication with each other. Though someone may not like your opinion, these inalienable rights guarantee that your opinion still has merit and deserves recognition. The downside of this is that societal customs often narrow the scope of a citizen’s mind. Foreign ideologies are hard to swallow because they are so different from what you are used to in your experience within a culture. While our country rapidly expands its international ties, the ‘normality’ of society holds

us back from exploring new cultures. Some cultures may accept changes in taxation or women's rights more easily, while others will have a harder time. The shape the fear of change takes within one society is not necessarily the shape it will take in another society because values and customs differ from one to the next.

The fear of change has been around since the beginning of time, but I chose to classify it as a contemporary monster because I believe it has a significant impact on modern society. Fear itself holds its victim back from achieving full potential, but the fear of change keeps an individual stuck in the same place forever. These victims refuse to accept change. Scared to ever move from what they are certain of, victims are never challenged and thus incapable of improving themselves. The victim no longer looks for other ways to go about solving problems or gaining knowledge. The victim rationalizes the need to change, that change is redundant, and they in fact are just scared of losing something in the process. They fail to realize that no matter how hard they wish it to stand still with them, the world will continue to change. The victim feels endangered by surroundings and enters a hermit-like lifestyle. Friends and family slowly fade away as fear amps up the paranoia. The years pass by, and the childhood memories are stained with the bleakness of the present. The only thing that pulls victims out of their blasé state is when change is happening out of their control.

When the federal government ruled gay marriage was legal, thousands of victims were enraged. "How dare they make that big of a change without our consent," they thought to themselves as they rallied around each other's blind anger. "How dare they try and ruin our peaceful lives," they said to themselves as they jeered at newly married couples and wrote letters

of hate. “How dare they let such an abominable act pass when the religious law strictly forbids it,” they said violently protesting federal law and the ‘love thy neighbor’ golden rule they held so dearly. It’s okay if buildings burn and people die because what I’m doing is right. This is the mindset of a victim: narrow and egotistical. Victims can be from all walks of life. The doctor down the road refuses to treat transgender patients. The esteemed lawyer awkwardly refuses a case concerning a Japanese American girl’s rape. The weekly gathering of the Black Panthers takes place in a coffee shop on the corner, and racial slurs float on the morning breeze with the smell of fresh coffee. The fear of change doesn’t discriminate, and no one is safe. At some point in our lives, we’ll all have to face this fear. The quality of the rest of your life depends on whether you choose to roll the dice, or are too afraid to even put your chips on the table.

The one constant in life is change; we can always count on something different to happen every day. It’s easiest to just accept change in stride and move on with your life. The fear of change is an inner demon, meaning it’s only as big as we ourselves let it become. It’s okay to feel a little scared or cautious about something outside of your comfort zone. These emotions keep us from making stupid decisions that we may regret. However maturity comes with those who can look past their fears and towards the potential gains. The grass may be greener on the other side of the hill, but you’ll never be sure if you don’t leave where you began. The first cavemen had to take the leap of faith when they stepped out of their caves and into the vast unknown to find unimaginable rewards, just as we must step outside of our contemporary prejudice to see the merit of the civilizations surrounding our own. We have the technology to connect with the rest of the world; now all that remains is to have the mindset.