

There are so many different paths in life, some well-traveled, others nearly empty or overgrown with an intricate pattern of sharp thorns. There is a fiercely independent power in most youth of today that entails the ability to choose your own course. A young person may even set out to find a new trail where no one else has thought to traipse. It is each person's decision and no one else's. The power of youth can be found in all its possibilities and opportunities.

Youth appears in many forms, but the universal property of youth is that there is more to come. Take milk for example. The number of transformations it may undergo can seem endless. Cheese, butter, sour cream, yogurt, and ice cream are among the many different forms that milk may reach. In many instances, milk is lightened, thickened, or flavored. With flavoring added milk can be brown or pink, while unflavored it is always the same single color: white. The color white is the color of youth, of the newness of fresh snow, of a blank sheet of paper, of an empty canvas, of the future.

What will be written on that blank piece of paper? There are many prospective choices for young people to think about today. The most important thing is for them to be aware of these choices, unlike the afore-said milk. The growing movement of conscientious young adults is proof that those holding the power of youth are becoming aware of its implications. One instance in particular is the abundance of politically active young people taking part in the recent presidential election. Obama won with the support of the younger generations at his side, and they believe in his message of change.

Change is something that everyone has experienced, but it often affects the youth

of the time most strongly. For example, the feminist movement changed the world young women grow up in and the way they think, and their parents realized this change. As Tillie Olsen pleads in the powerful narrative passage of *I Stand Here Ironing*, “Only help her to know –help make it so there is cause for her to know –that she is more than this dress on the ironing board, helpless before the iron.” Nowadays, young men and women live on equal terms.

What is most precious element of youth is the blessing of time. The time to grow and to change is the unappreciated gift of youth. Oh how great a prize it is, time, but most do not realize what they have until it has slipped from their grasp. How many stories of regret are there, for those who squander the power of youth? Let there be no more of these lamentations, because unlike so many other important resources, there will never be a shortage of youth, whether it is in young people or in those young at heart. Understand the power of youth, with all its possibilities, and live in freedom, in happiness, in autonomy.

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