

CIVIC

Fast forward

By: Daliborka Uljarević

What is it in our air that breeds such resignation and sense of impotence? What is it that makes some fantastic people in this country to speak these self-limiting words? What is it that makes us think that we should give up, pack and leave? Why are we not celebrating the genuine, small successes like we would celebrate the big ones, and instead fall apart, like a wave hitting a cliff, into splinters of failed expectations?

So, instead of sitting and waiting, if you really care, fast forward!

The culture of human rights is still not at home in Montenegro. But it is up to every one of us, as citizens, to change that, to make sure that it fully enters our society.

Sometimes these efforts come as great, visible steps, and sometimes as a multitude of tiny ones, which take a lot of time and patience to leave a trail. Both are equally valuable, because both really bring us closer to change, and change can be healthy, which, one should not forget ever. Especially in a country which is not prone to change and where everywhere there is a fear, typical of underdeveloped political cultures, the fear that it can only get worse, that the status quo should be accepted as the only or the best possible solution.

Recently a dear friend of mine, whom I suggested to write an article from his intellectually and in value terms important and relevant angle, pointing on a serious and system based problem which concerns him personally – replied: “And if I do write it, what will that change?”

Lately, I hear a similar answer from many interlocutors.

From those who have never tried anything but accepted in advance that their efforts will be in vain and voluntarily removed themselves from the struggle for social changes. But also from those who have given a lot, sacrificed even too much, trying to change the system on the level of personal destinies or of the broader context, and found themselves disappointed and unmotivated due to the lack of adequate social response.

What is it in our air that breeds such resignation and sense of impotence? What is it that makes some fantastic people in this country to speak these self-limiting words? What is it that makes us think that we should give up, pack and leave? Why are we not celebrating the genuine, small successes like we would celebrate the big ones, and instead fall apart, like a wave hitting a cliff, into splinters of failed expectations?

The answers to these questions might shed the light on the causes of all these symptoms which we have been lamenting about, extensively and impotently: from the amount for which some of us would sell their vote to the unchangeable government, to a host of smaller and bigger deviations in all spheres imaginable. But as long as we deal only with the consequences, mourn our destiny or throw up our hands in advance, things will not change. Why would they? Those who are happy with the things as they are have no reason to rock the boat, and you are perhaps one of those who think that alone you can do nothing – which is a sure recipe for maintaining the status quo.

Let's remember that some of the greatest and best stories began with an individual, or a small group of people, led by the power of ideas, spirit and courage. Yes, there are risks, but what kind of a life is

it if you never provoke, never take the risks, do not constantly question yourself or find new questions and answers that keep you going and growing.

There's still courage to be drawn from the words of **Margaret Mead**: "Never doubt that a small group of thinking, dedicated persons can change the world. Indeed, that's exactly how it has always been".

And, to go back to the initial dilemmas of those dear people.

No, one article will make no big difference here. It will not undermine those who see themselves as the sole owners of all sorts of processes in the state of Montenegro. But it will show that we are not obedient cattle, that there are people who think with their own head and have the courage, personal and civic, to publicly stand behind the words they usually speak in the company of a chosen few, over a drink. This little-big step will lead to a real change: it might encourage another, and then yet another person to speak up, to do something, to make that feeling of uncertainty which now plagues those of us who do not believe in power of their words and acts engulf those who are now threatening them...

And more importantly, if you try, you will find out how great and difficult it is. And there will be more and more of us who will know how to value those who have been trying, regardless of whether you like their style, approach or expression, and that, I believe, will finally yield that public reaction that has been, unjustly, missing in the past.

Additinal push in that direction is the film festival on human rights "Fast forward", which is now opened to the public in Podgorica and which, according to the words by the festival selector **Kumjana Novakova** "will not change anything, but only if you don't let it".

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The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE)