

Songs of Hope

By Taylor Haase

When you're my age, everyone wants you to be happy.

"You're too young to be so sad," "Enjoy your youth,"
"These are the best years of your life."

But how am I supposed to listen when my own mind
is telling me something else?

How am I supposed to listen when the whole world
is *showing* me something else?

The people around me
have no clue what's going on inside of me.

So how can they make such bold assumptions? Such wild claims?
Such impossible instructions?

Maybe I *am* too young to be so sad,
But at this point, I'm beyond sad.
And whatever this feeling is, I'm drowning in it.

How am I supposed to enjoy my youth
When I spend it looking over my shoulders,
Checking for the monsters trying to get inside my head?

If these are the best years of my life,
then I don't want to see the rest.
Instead, I might as well just let the shadows win.

And no one bothers
trying to understand,
to really see me, you, anyone.

They tell you to look
on the bright side,
then shower you with darkness.

They tell you that you only live once but don't let you live
the way you want to.

Everyone tells everyone
what to do, what to say, what to think, what to wear, what to like, what to
believe.

And if someone doesn't listen, if they don't agree,
suddenly they're strange, or a slut, or emo, or lazy, or insane. Whatever
the people around them decide.

Why does everyone hate everyone, when we're all just trying
to be ourselves?

Why can't we just let other people live their lives
the way they want to?

Let them wear what they want to, look how they want to,
be who they want to.

Let them think what they want to, love who they want to,
live how they want to.

Let my body be mine.
Don't tell me what to do with it.
And don't pressure me to tell others what to do with theirs.

Let our children learn without caution and restrictions, away from
everyone fighting, lying, *killing* to be in control of something that isn't
theirs.

We are arguing over whether people should
live or die, love or suffer, stand up or stay silent, without actually
knowing them, knowing anything.

How can we be happy
when everything we were, are, want to be, is up for debate?

We are told to sing songs of hope, but we don't live in a world
where we can do that.

Let me write my own song of hope, and don't tell me
what to put in it.

Let me sing it.
Let me sing it loud and clear for the whole world to hear.

Let me wear what I want, love who I want,
think how I want.

Let me grow up in a world
in which I believe in my rights,
in which I know they won't disappear once I wake.

Give me something
to write a song of hope about,
because right now there is only darkness.

Let me be able to stand up and sing to the world about who I am, what I
want, what I dream, without fear of being silenced.

Let me be happy again because right now,
I have little reason to be.

Let me go to school
without wariness or anxiety or *fear*, and let others do the same.

Stop judging people,
whether you think you know their story or not.
because there will *always* be something you don't know.

Stop assigning labels to others,
but getting mad when they assign them to themselves.
I will always be who I say I am, no matter what you think.

Stop feeding us poison,
then wondering why we're sick.
Sometimes we are blind to our own mistakes, however grave.

Stop blaming us for everything. Sometimes we make mistakes, but
doesn't everyone?

Stop trying to control others,
and going insane when someone does the same to you.

Stop.
Just stop.
If only for a moment.

Look around.
Is this the world you want to live in?

Look around.
Does any of this
seem okay, *really* okay to you?

Help me give people a reason
to be the voice of change,
help teach them to sing songs of hope.

Help build a world
where we can all sing our songs *together*.