

Teun A. Van Dijk Discourse Analysis of Social Issues in the song “know Your Enemy” and “21Guns” by Green Day

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Abstrak

Social issues are often represented and maintained through discourse, reflecting and reinforcing the existing power structures and inequalities in society. The thesis writer use method Qualitative design, qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of phenomena in natural settings, providing rich and detailed insights into the subject matter. In collecting data in the study using 4 stages, among others, selection of song, collection of lyrics, review of lyrics, contextual information. the research results obtained are in the Lyrics songs "know your enemy" emphasizes themes of awareness, rebellion, and resistance against oppressive systems, while "21 Guns" songs portrays themes of emotional struggle, loss, and the search for peace. Language and Power In "Know Your Enemy," repetition and imperative language create a call to action, urging listeners to recognize and oppose systemic oppression. "21 Guns" employs metaphor and rhetorical questions to engage listeners in a reflective dialogue about the cost of conflict and resistance. Ideological perspectives from this song that challenge authoritative power and advocate for social awareness. "Know Your Enemy" aligns with anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment ideologies, reinforcing the importance of recognizing and resisting control. "21 Guns" takes a more introspective approach, questioning the consequences of violence and encouraging reconciliation.

Keywords: Social Issue, Know Your Enemy, 21 Guns.

PENDAHULUAN

Language is one of the tools for human communication, used to convey messages, thoughts, and feelings between individuals. According to Chomsky, language is a natural object, a component of the human mind, physically represented in the brain, and part of the biological endowment of the species (Chomsky, 2002: 1). According to Roman Jakobson (1960), a prominent linguist, song lyrics are a form of verbal art where the poetic function of language is dominant. In this context, lyrics serve as a medium that emphasizes the beauty of sound, rhythm, and language structure, which then collaborates with musical elements to convey complex and layered meanings.

Through lyrics, songwriters can express ideas, feelings, and specific messages that may be personal, social, or political. When viewed through the lens of Teun A. van Dijk's Discourse Analysis (DA), song lyrics can be analyzed as a form of discourse that reflects and shapes social reality. Van Dijk defines discourse as "a language unit larger than a sentence, which has a complex structure and organization, and which is used for certain purposes in certain social contexts" (1997). When viewed through the lens of Teun A. van Dijk's Discourse Analysis (DA), song lyrics can be analyzed as a form of discourse that reflects and shapes social reality. Van Dijk defines discourse as "a language unit larger than a sentence, which has a complex structure and organization, and which is used for certain purposes in certain social contexts" (1997).

By applying DA, song lyrics can be examined not only for their poetic and aesthetic qualities but also for their role in shaping and influencing social perceptions. In this research, the writer intends to use Van Dijk's Discourse Analysis (DA) to analyze social issues in two songs by Green Day: "Know Your Enemy," and "21 Guns," by Green Day. By applying Van Dijk's theory, this research aims to provide deeper insights into how Green Day's music reflects and critiques social issues. Through analyzing the interaction between content, context, and assumptions in their lyrics, this research aims to better understand how language and art are used to shape worldviews and drive social action concerning the social issues raised in their work.

METODE

This study adopts a qualitative research design, in line with the approach suggested by Creswell (2014). Qualitative research is very suitable for exploring complex social issues, particularly through the lens of language and discourse. The primary source of data in this study is the lyrics of selected songs by Green Day: 'Know Your Enemy', and '21 Guns'. These songs were chosen for their explicit engagement with social and political issues, making them ideal candidates for Discourse Analysis. The data will consist of the complete lyrics of these two songs, which will be gathered from reliable sources such as official lyrics databases, album liner notes, and other reputable music platforms. In this research, the steps include finding links to verified, context-rich, accurate, and widely used song websites, with genius.com selected as the main source. The lyrics

were then downloaded and printed for analysis. Afterward, the researcher conducted a thorough reading of the lyrics, followed by the process of coding to identify and categorize the relevant data. The data analysis in this study adopts a thematic approach (Creswell, 2014) combined with Van Dijk's (1997) discourse analysis. The process includes analyzing the historical, cultural, and social contexts of the songs, as well as examining the use of language in shaping public perceptions. Furthermore, the analysis identifies underlying assumptions and ideologies embedded in the lyrics, revealing how the songs reflect or challenge societal values.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

This study presents the finding and discussion based on the analysis of the social issues, the use of language, and the ideological elements in the songs "Know Your Enemy" and "21 Guns" by Green Day. The analysis is carried out using Teun A. van Dijk's Discourse Analysis (DA) framework, focusing on content, context, and assumptions.

1 Result

a. Social issues in the songs "Know Your Enemy" by Green Day

Social issues, as we know, are problems that arise in society at large and have an impact on society related to inequality and power structures. According to Van Dijk (2008), "Social issues are often represented and maintained through discourse, reflecting and reinforcing existing power structures and inequalities in society." Through Van Dijk's Discourse Analysis, the song lyrics are analyzed to reveal how these issues are constructed in the text and how they reflect social reality. a. Analyze the lyrics of the song "Know Your Enemy"

1). The first verse of the lyrics of the song "Know Your Enemy"

Do you know the enemy? Do you know your enemy?

Well, gotta know the enemy, rah-eh

Well, gotta know the enemy, rah-eh

Do you know the enemy? Do you know your enemy?

Well, gotta know the enemy, rah-eh

In the first bait, the first line of the lyrics of this song, which reads;

Do you know the enemy? Do you know your enemy?

The word "Enemy" is more often used in the context of conflict, both in warfare and in social resistance. This word conveys the impression that resistance against this enemy is a matter of great urgency and seriousness. (p.6-p.34)

Data	Social issues		
	PA	I	P
1. Enemy	✓		✓
2. Violence	✓		
3. Energy	✓		
4. Choir	✓		
5. Infantry	✓		
6. Honor		✓	
7. Effigy	✓		
8. Majority		✓	
9. Foreman		✓	
10. Control	✓		
11. Silence	✓		
12. Demon			✓
13. Soul	✓		

14. Insurgency	✓	✓	
15. Blood	✓		
16. Eyes		✓	
17. Eternity	✓		

Table 1. Data Power Abuse, Inequality, and Prejudice, used in the song “Know Your Enemy” (p.33.-p.34.)

Indicator descriptions according to Van Dijk:

- a). PA (Power Abuse): a form of illegitimate or destructive use of power—including oppression, physical control, or narrative manipulation. Van Dijk emphasizes that abuse of power is a form of domination that violates the values of democracy and justice.
- b). I (Inequality): indicates an unequal distribution of power or social access—such as in majority-minority relationships, industrial hierarchies, or honor systems. Van Dijk links dominance to ideology and the reproduction of inequality.
- c). P (Prejudice): encompasses stereotyping, demonization, or Manichean framing that creates a moral “opponent.” Van Dijk describes this as how prejudice is produced through text and narrative.

Based on the data table above, the process of classifying social issues is carried out by analyzing song lyrics, then classifying words that have power in the lyrics, so that they can form social power that can choose people to influence others, organize others to act, or invite others to fight together against those in power. Additionally, grouping words with strong and weak power is done to identify categories of power inequality. From the analysis of song lyrics addressing power inequality, the social issues to be conveyed in the lyrics can be determined.

B. Analysis

1. Social issues in the song “Know your enemy”

Data 1. Enemy

Description: The word "enemy" falls under the category of social power abuse.

Because the "enemy" here is not a personal enemy, but rather a symbol of those who wield power over society. The lyrics highlight the power relations between those in power and the common people. The government, capitalism, or media mentioned in this interpretation represent systems that can manipulate or oppress to maintain power. (stanza 1, line 1).

Data 2. Violence

Description: The word “Violence” (noun) is a word types of social issues; Power Abuse and Inequality

The word “violence” describes acts of violence used to oppress or maintain power. In the context of the song, violence refers not only to physical violence but also to systemic forms of oppression. Violence often arises when those in power attempt to silence or control vulnerable groups, thus creating social inequality. This symbol can also reflect the resistance of the oppressed against a system they perceive as unfair. (stanza 2 line 1)

Data 3. Energy

Description: the word “Energy” is the type of social issue; Resistance to Oppression

Reason: The word "Energy" here refers not only to physical strength, but to the power, spirit, or collective strength to resist oppressive forces. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," energy symbolizes the motivation and moral strength of oppressed groups to resist. This relates to social issues because it refers to the efforts of people without power to challenge unjust power structures. Energy symbolizes that resistance requires collective strength, both mental and physical. (stanza 2 line 1-2)

Data 4. Choir

Description: the word “Choir” is the type of social issue; Ideology and Social Influence through Media/Institutions.

Reason:

The word "choir" here refers not only to a literal church choir, but can also symbolize a group or institution that collectively voices a particular message. In the context of social criticism, a choir can represent a collective voice directed or exploited by those in power to uphold a particular ideology. This illustrates how religious or public institutions can play a role in reinforcing certain narratives and interests, which can influence public opinion. The social issue relates to the control of discourse and the manipulation of ideology through public institutions or groups. (stanza 2 line 3)

Data 5. Infantry

Description: the word “Infantry” is the type of social issue; Power Abuse and Militarism

Reason: Infantry literally means a troop of foot soldiers, usually on the front lines of war. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy" this could symbolize the military force used by those in power to assert their authority and suppress dissent. This reflects the abuse of power, as the military is often used as a tool to maintain control and oppress groups perceived as threats. The social issue relates to the militarization of society, where armed force is used to intimidate or silence the voices of the people. (stanza 2 line 3)

Data 6. Honor

Description: the word “Honor” is the type of social issue; Ideology and Nationalism

Reason: Honor here refers to values such as loyalty, honor, and morality, often upheld in military or nationalist contexts. In social discourse, the concept of honor can be used to legitimize violence or war by framing it as a noble act for the sake of the nation or a particular ideology. This becomes a social issue when honor values are exploited by those in power to mobilize public support for policies or actions that are actually oppressive. Its significance is also related to the influence of ideology on how society views power and conflict. (stanza 2, line 4)

Data 7. Effigy

Description: the word "Effigy" is the type of social issue: Power Abuse and Symbols of Authoritarianism

Reason: The effigy here represents a symbolic representation of power or an oppressive system. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy" this word can be a critique of dominant authorities who wield great power over weaker groups. Symbols such as effigy are often used to maintain the legitimacy of power or even become targets of public protest (e.g., burning effigies or statues of powerful figures). The social issue relates to oppressive power structures, where symbols of authority serve as both propaganda tools and objects of resistance. (stanza 2, line 5)

Data 8: Majority

Description: the word "Majority" is the type of social issues: Inequality and Power Abuse.

Reason: Majority literally means the majority or the largest group in a population.

In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this term refers to a large group that holds power and influences the functioning of the system. Although called the "majority," this group can become oppressive when it uses its size and political power to exclude or marginalize smaller groups. The social issue that arises is structural inequality, where the majority uses collective power to maintain dominance and disregard the rights of minorities. (stanza 2, line 5)

Data 9: Foreman

Description: the word "Foreman" is the type of social issue: Power Abuse and Labor Exploitation.

Reason: Foreman literally means a supervisor or leader in a work or industrial context. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this word represents a middle-level authority who carries out orders from a higher system or authority.

This position often serves as a tool of control over workers, where foreman enforces rules, exerts pressure, or exploits workers for the benefit of the larger economic structure. The social issue relates to the exploitation of the working class and oppression within a hierarchical economic system. (stanza 2 line 6)

Data 10. Control

Description: the word "control" is the type of social issue: Power Abuse & Social Manipulation

Reason: Control here refers to the ability to influence or direct the behavior of others or the course of events. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this term represents the mechanisms of domination used by those in power to maintain their power.

This control can take the form of surveillance, restrictions on freedom, or manipulation of information that keeps society in a position desired by those in power.

The social issue relates to the control of society through political, economic, or media power. (stanza 2 line 6)

Data 11. Silence

Description: the word "silence" is the type of social issue: Silencing & Power Abuse

Reason: Silence literally means silence, but in a socio-political context, it often refers to the silencing of voices, opinions, or freedom of expression. In the song "Know Your Enemy," this word relates to the mechanisms used by those in power to suppress voices of resistance, whether through threats, repression, or manipulation. Its meaning has two sides; as a symbol of domination (silencing opponents) and also resistance (silence as a form of passive resistance). The social issue relates to the suppression of free speech and the control of the public narrative by those in power. (stanza 2, line 7)

Data 12. Demons

Description: the word "demons" is the type of social issue: Power Abuse & Politics of Fear

Reason: Demons literally mean evil spirits or devils, but in social and political contexts, the word is often used as a metaphor for evil forces or oppressive systems. In the song "Know Your Enemy," the word can describe an oppressive authority that instills fear in people to maintain compliance. The term can also symbolize the internal fears that individuals or groups must overcome to resist oppressive systems. The social issue relates to the use of fear as a tool of control and the dehumanization of enemies to legitimize acts of violence or oppression. (stanza 2, line 8)

Data 13. Soul

Description: the word "soul" is the type of social issue: Power Abuse & Identity Oppression

Reason: Soul literally means the soul or spiritual part of a human being that is considered immortal. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this word symbolizes the core of one's identity, inner freedom, and personal power. Oppressive powers often seek to control or suppress an individual's spiritual freedom and identity, so this oppression is not only physical but also psychological and moral. The social issue involves the deprivation of personal freedom and the attempts of those in power to control a person's thoughts, beliefs, or spirit of resistance. (stanza 2, line 8)

Data 14. Insurgency

Description: the word is the type of social issue: Resistance to Oppression & Social Conflict

Reason: Insurgency literally means rebellion or armed resistance against legitimate or perceived authority. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this word describes the act of opposing oppressive power. This word indicates an active form of resistance, emerging in response to abuse of power or systemic injustice. The social issue relates to the conflict between the oppressed and those in power, where rebellion becomes a means of demanding justice or freedom. (Stanza 4, line 1)

Data 15. Blood

Description: the word "Blood" is social issue type: Violence and Sacrifice in Resistance



Reason: Blood literally means blood, but in social and political contexts, this word often symbolizes violence, suffering, and sacrifice in struggle. In the song "Know Your Enemy," this word represents a conflict involving bloodshed as a consequence of resistance against oppressive power. This symbol can also signify the price paid in struggle, whether in the form of loss of life or collective suffering. The social issue relates to the brutal reality of the struggle against injustice, where violence is often an inevitable part of the conflict. (Stanza 4, line 2)

Data 16. Eyes

Description: this word "eyes" is the type of social issue; Surveillance and Social Awareness

Reason: the word "Eyes" literally means "eye," but symbolically, it is often used to represent sight, awareness, or surveillance. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this word can represent public awareness of injustice or, conversely, surveillance by those in power to control the people. Its dual meaning reflects two social issues: collective awareness that can spark resistance, and social control through surveillance or monitoring. The social issue relates to the dynamic between the people who are aware of oppression and those in power who monitor them to maintain their power. (Stanza 4, line 3)

Data 17. Eternity

Description: the word "Eternity" Is the type of social issue; Perpetual Power and Cycles of Oppression

Reason: Eternity literally means infinite or endless time. In the context of the song "Know Your Enemy," this word can symbolize power or a system that endures forever, whether in the form of oppression or repeated struggle. This word suggests the permanence of a power structure, which, even when resisted, always returns in a new form. The social issue relates to the difficulty of breaking the chains of oppressive power, as well as the view that struggle and injustice are often recurring phenomena throughout history. (stanza 5, line 2)

2. Social issues in the song "21guns" by green day

Data 1. Pride

Description: "Pride" is the type of social issue: Oppressive Nationalism and Ideology

Reason: Pride literally means a feeling of pride in one's own or one's group's achievements. In the context of the song, this word critiques the ideology of nationalism, which is often used to justify the sacrifices of the people for the sake of the nation or political leaders. This pride can be a propaganda tool for those in power to mobilize support, even if their policies or actions are detrimental to the community. The social issue relates to the misuse of nationalist sentiment to maintain power, even at the expense of the people's well-being. (Stanza 1, line 5)

Data 2. Ruins

Description: the word "Ruins" is the type of social issue: War Destruction and Power Abuse.

Reason: Ruins literally means debris or a state of ruin after physical destruction. In the context of the song, this word describes the destructive impact of power structures, especially on communities directly affected by war. This destruction is not only physical (buildings and infrastructure), but also psychological and social, destroying people's lives. The social issue relates to the abuse of power that fuels war, sacrificing people for political or ideological gain. (Stanza 1, line 8)

Data 3. Arms

Description: the word "Arms" is the type of social issue: Militarism and Power Abuse

Reason: the word "Arms" literally means weapons or weaponry, but symbolically represents military power. In the context of the song, this word describes power based on physical or military force, often used to assert dominance and suppress resistance. This symbol reflects militarization as a tool of political control and how those in power maintain power through the threat of violence.

The social issue relates to the abuse of armed force that sacrifices the freedom and security of the people for the benefit of those in power. (Stanza 2, line 2)

Data 4. Fight

Description: This word "fight" is the type of social issue: Anti-War and Anti-Violence Resistance

Reason: "Fight" literally means a fight or physical confrontation, but in the context of the song, it is used as a call to action against war and violence. These lyrics critique military power and war policies deemed detrimental to society. This call encourages an end to violence and challenges the legitimacy of the use of military force as a solution to conflict.

The social issue relates to the anti-war movement and the rejection of policies that maintain violence as a means of resolving problems. (Stanza 2, line 2)

Data 5. Control

Description: the word "control" is the type of social issue; Power Abuse and the Psychological Impact of War

Reason: Control means the ability to influence or direct the behaviors of others or the course of events. In the context of the song, this word describes how decisions by those in power remove individuals from their lives, especially in wartime situations. This demonstrates the psychological impact of conflict, where people become passive and powerless because all important decisions are made by those in power. The social issue relates to the loss of individual autonomy due to policies imposed from above, as well as oppression that undermines personal freedom. (Stanza 3, line 2)

Data 6. Faith

Description: the word "faith" is the type of social issue: Ideology and Manipulation of Belief

Reason: Faith literally means complete trust or confidence in someone or something. In a socio-political context, this term can reflect how power or ideology exploits public trust to maintain legitimacy. This trust can be directed at a particular state, political leader, or system, even when that system is detrimental to the people. The social issue relates to the manipulation of public trust to support potentially unjust policies or actions, by framing them as trustworthy. (Stanza 3, line 5)

3. The social issues conveyed in the songs by using Power abuse (PA), Inequality (I), Prejudice (P).

In this study the songs “Know Your Enemy” and “21 Guns” by Green Day, the author analyzed the lyrics and grouped words, phrases, or sentences that contained elements or indicators of power abuse, inequality, and prejudice in the lyrics of these songs. The author found that the social issues conveyed were as follows:

Social issue	Data number	Quotation	Stanza line
Awareness of the enemy	1	"Do you know the enemy? Do you know your enemy?"	Stanza 1, Line 1-2
Realizing who to fight against	2	"Well, gotta know the enemy, rah-eh"	Stanza 1, Line 3
Violence as a form of resistance energy	3	"Well, violence is an energy against the enemy"	Stanza 2, Line 1
The resistance is getting stronger	4	"Well, violence is an energy, rah-eh"	Stanza 2, Line 2
Collective anger	5	"Bringin' on the fury, the choir infantry"	Stanza 2, Line 3
Revolt against the system	6	"Revolt against the honor to obey (Oh-eh-oh-eh)"	Stanza 2, Line 4
Overthrow the symbol of power	7	Overthrow the effigy, the vast majority	Stanza 2, Line 5
Resist control and domination	8	"Well, burnin' down the foreman of control (Oh-eh-oh-eh)"	Stanza 2, Line 6
Silence is a threat	9	Silence is an enemy against your urgency"	Stanza 2, Line 7
Awakening inner strength	10	"So rally up the demons of your soul (Oh-eh-oh-eh)"	Stanza 2, Line 8
Repetition to reinforce the message of resistance	11	"Do you know the enemy? Do you know your enemy?"	Stanza 3, Line 1-2
The rise of rebellion	12	The insurgency will rise	Stanza 4, Line 1
Violence as an energy that continues to persist	13	"Well, violence is an energy (Oh-eh-oh-eh)"	Stanza 4, Line 2

Table 4.3 Data social issues in the song “know your enemy” (p.54,p.55.)

based on the data table above, the process of classifying social issues was carried out by analyzing song lyrics, then grouping words that contain elements of abuse of power, inequality, and prejudice in the song lyrics, thereby forming a social force capable of mobilizing people to act, organizing others to take action, or encouraging others to unite and challenge those in power.

b. Social issues conveyed in the Song “21guns” by green day

In this study the songs “Know Your Enemy” and “21 Guns” by Green Day, the thesis writer analyzed the lyrics and grouped words, phrases, or sentences that contained elements or indicators of power abuse, inequality, and prejudice in the lyrics of these songs. The thesis writer found that the social issues conveyed were as follows:

Social issues	Data number	Quotation	Stanza, line
Struggle and Despair	1	"Do you know what's worth fightin' for, When it's not worth dyin' for?"	Stanza 1, Line 1-2
Emotional Burden and Feeling Choked	2	"Does it take your breath away, And you feel yourself suffocatin'?"	Stanza 1, Line 3-4
Suffering and Flight	3	Does the pain weigh out the pride, And you look for a place to hide?"	Stanza 1, Line 5-6
Emotional Wounds and Destruction	4	Did someone break your heart inside? You're in ruins.	Stanza 1, Line 7-8
Giving Up and Accepting Reality	5	One, twenty-one guns, Lay down your arms, give up the fight.	Stanza 2, Line 1-2
Hope and Surrender	6	"One, twenty-one guns, Throw up your arms into the sky, You and I."	Stanza 2, Line 3-5
Loss of Control	7	"When you're at the end of the road, And you lost all sense of control."	Stanza 3, Line 1-2
Mental Exhaustion	8	"And your thoughts have taken their toll, When your mind breaks the spirit of your soul."	Stanza 3, Line 3-4
The Collapsing Faith	9	Your faith walks on broken glass, and the hangover doesn't go away	Stanza 3, Line 5-6
Destruction and Uncertainty	10	"Nothing's ever built to last, You're in ruins."	Stanza 3, Line 7-8
Giving Up as a Form of Acceptance	11	One, twenty-one guns, Lay down your arms, give up the fight.	Stanza 4, Line 1-2
Self-Exile	12	"Did you try to live on your own, When you burned down the house and home?"	Stanza 5, Line 1-2
Mistakes and Regrets	13	"Did you stand too close to the fire, Like a liar looking for forgiveness from a stone?"	Stanza 5, Line 3-4
Fate and Death	14	"When it's time to live and let die, And you can't get another try."	Stanza 6, Line 1-2
Empty Feelings	15	"Somethin' inside this heart has died, You're in ruins."	Stanza 6 line 3-4
Emphasis on the Meaning of Surrender	16	One, twenty-one guns, Lay down your arms, give up the fight.	Stanza 7 line 1-2
Total Surrender	17	"One, twenty-one guns, Throw up your arms into the sky, You and I."	Stanza 7 line 3- 4

Table 4.4 Data Social Issues in the song “21 guns” (p.55,-p.57.)

Based on the data table above, the process of classifying social issues was carried out by analyzing song lyrics, then grouping words that contain elements of abuse of power, inequality, and prejudice in the song lyrics, thereby forming a social force capable of mobilizing people to act, organizing others to take action, or encouraging others to unite and challenge those in power.

CONCLUSION

In this study the Author found the social issues used in the song “Know Your Enemy” by Green Day include power abuse, inequality, and prejudice. These issues are reflected through words such as "enemy", "violence", "foreman", and "majority", which symbolize oppressive systems and authoritative structures. The lyrics express resistance, rebellion, and awareness toward systems of control, reflecting political and social struggle.

And the social issue in the song “21 Guns” by Green Day, the author found, center around emotional trauma, disillusionment, and the psychological effects of conflict and violence. The song presents a more introspective view of social issues such as the cost of war, internalized suffering, and the search for peace. Phrases like "lay down your arms", "you're in ruins", and "broken glass" symbolize the destruction caused by war and personal battles.

The social issues in both songs are conveyed through Teun A. Van Dijk's Discourse Analysis framework, which highlights content, context, and assumptions. In "Know Your Enemy", language is used to incite resistance and expose oppression through direct, repetitive, and imperative statements. In "21 Guns", reflective and metaphorical language invites the listener to question

the impact of violence and seek reconciliation. Both songs use discourse to construct and reinforce ideological messages that critique social systems, emphasizing awareness, resistance, and peace.

THANK YOU

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