

Born on September 18, 1945, P.F. Sloan was a pop-rock singer-songwriter raised primarily in New York City. Having his greatest success in the mid 1960's, Sloan performed while writing American top 20 hits for famed artists such as Johnny Rivers, The Mamas and the Papas, The Grass Roots, and The Turtles. Born into a Jewish-American family, Sloan experienced first hand the oppressive and unjust manner of American society as his family was forced to move from New York to West Hollywood due to the prejudicial mistreatment they had endured. However, after receiving a guitar at the age of thirteen and coincidentally meeting Elvis Presley at a Hollywood music store, Sloan discovered his musical talents and soon released the singles "All I Want Is Loving" and "Little Girl in the Cabin" for Aladdin Records at only fourteen years of age. Following five subsequent years of musical endeavours, Sloan wrote his most famous track in 1964, "Eve of Destruction". Although the track was later covered by numerous artists, the most famous version was produced in July of 1965, with Barry McGuire on vocals and Sloan himself playing lead guitar. Although Sloan was not active in any means of activism during his adolescence, his creation of "Eve of Destruction" was made possible through inspiration from perhaps the most volatile period in both the history of the United States and throughout all international relations. Ultimately, Sloan's lyrics serve to criticize American politics, warfare, the hypocrisy of society, and the dire situation of the world.

To summarize his renowned track, Sloan asserted that "Eve of Destruction":

"basically poses a simple question about war and segregation and injustice. I'm saying, look at all these terrible, scary things going on around you—atomic war, assassination, race hatred—and asking, "You don't believe there's something terribly wrong here?" Ultimately, I was trying to say that my generation is not gonna stand for this bull—any more". (Dougherty, 2014)

Unlike many lyricists that had often attempted to criticize society through innuendo and symbolism, Sloan's lyrics in "Eve of Destruction" almost directly reference and criticize the societal and global issues of the time, a defiant and controversial method that prompted many radio broadcasters to ban the track. Within the song, Sloan attempts to disprove the hypocritical and oblivious beliefs of many within society who do not feel the need to better themselves for the greater good, displayed through his questioning in the recurrent phrase within the track's chorus: "you don't believe/We're on the eve of destruction" (LetsSingIt, 2014). Essentially, Sloan believed that despite the alarming and self-inflicted condition of American society and the world itself, individuals remain very relaxed and passive towards contributing to positive change. In order to prove this belief, Sloan provides examples of social injustice, inequality, and unnecessary violence within each verse before referring back to how society is still able to believe that we are not yet on the "eve of destruction". In the track's first critical assertion, "The eastern world, it is exploding/Violence flarin', bullets loadin'/You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'" (LetsSingIt, 2014), Sloan refers to the illogical and premature enlistment age of only eighteen to be eligible to serve in the Vietnam War (Bia, 2013). Consequently, young men who were not yet at the minimum voting age of 21 and therefore did not have a voice in their own country's government could be conscripted into a war that they may not even support or fully understand (Bia, 2013). Moreover, in writing "If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away/There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave"(LetsSingIt, 2014), Sloan alludes to ongoing Cold War that had reached its pinnacle during the Cuban Missile Crisis of only two years prior to the creation of the song. Furthermore, in a more direct condemnation of American society itself, Sloan writes within the track "Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama/You

may leave here for 4 days in space/But when you return, it's the same old place” (LetssingIt, 2014). After once again questioning society’s obliviousness to the ongoing injustices of the mid 1960’s, Sloan applies the example of Selma Alabama within the verse to prove that, as a society, America was in fact on the eve of destruction. During a peaceful protest, African American citizens marching from Montgomery, Alabama to the neighboring town of Selma were violently and horrifically beaten by Alabama state police despite the protest’s calm nature and justified purpose of attempting to secure voting rights for African Americans (*Selma to Montgomery March*, n.d.).

Upon comparison of the views Sloan expresses about both American and Global society and my own, I believe that we share similar ideals and beliefs. Although I obviously do not share the same knowledge and understanding of the societal issues of the 1960’s, I believe that today’s society remains possessive of the same issues that Sloan makes reference to. Despite increasing attempts to prevent and advocate societal problems such as racism, violence, and inequality, I believe that these issues remain incredibly prevalent within both American and Canadian society. Most evidently, I believe that Sloan’s example of the atrocities in Selma, Alabama transcend perfectly to the present day and match my feelings towards the ongoing mistreatment of African American citizens by white police officers. More significantly, I draw a major connection to the basis of Sloan’s song as I too believe that as a society we are oblivious and uninterested in our major issues. I feel that many individuals often choose to be oblivious to the issues we face out of laziness and indifference, believing that if they exhibit unawareness to social injustices, then they can not be viewed as a contributor or responsible to take action.

Upon receiving this assignment, I chose to write about "Eve of Destruction" after remembering a single lyric from one of its verses, "Hate your next-door neighbor, but don't forget to say grace" (LetsSingIt, 2014). As a weekly participant in a church service, I commonly interact with individuals who impose the moral guidelines of religion upon others while surrounded by other members of the religion but are then somehow able to justify immoral acts such as racism, discrimination, and genuine hatred of others. Generally, I believe that the golden rules that constitute the basis of all religions are drastically overlooked within society, a belief that Sloan evidently shares as well.

"Eve of Destruction"

By P.F. Sloan

The eastern world, it is exploding  
Violence flarin', bullets loadin'  
You're old enough to kill, but not for votin'  
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'  
And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin'

But you tell me  
Over and over and over again, my friend  
Ah, you don't believe  
We're on the eve  
of destruction.

Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say  
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?  
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away  
There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave  
[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound to scare ya boy]

And you tell me  
Over and over and over again, my friend  
Ah, you don't believe

We're on the eve  
of destruction.

Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like coagulin'  
I'm sitting here just contemplatin'  
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation.  
Handful of senators don't pass legislation  
And marches alone can't bring integration  
When human respect is disintegratin'  
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin'

And you tell me  
Over and over and over again, my friend  
Ah, you don't believe  
We're on the eve  
of destruction.

Think of all the hate there is in Red China  
Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama  
You may leave here for 4 days in space  
But when you return, it's the same old place  
The poundin' of the drums, the pride and disgrace  
You can bury your dead, but don't leave a trace  
Hate your next-door neighbor, but don't forget to say grace  
And, tell me over and over and over and over again, my friend  
You don't believe  
We're on the eve  
Of destruction  
Mm, no no, you don't believe  
We're on the eve  
of destruction.

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