FRIEDENSNOTE NR. 29

What Goes On Inside Us

In his song „What's Going On", Marvin Gaye regards respectful mutual understanding as the fundamental condition for peace.

With „What's Going On", Marvin Gaye achieved in 1971 not only one of the most significant songs in the history of music, but also an unforgettable appeal for peace and mutual respect. In the face of the growing police violence connected with the protests against the Vietnam War and racism — and probably also because of his own childhood, marked by paternal violence — „What's Going On" stood for a turning point in the life of the artist, who until then had been known above all for his love songs.

No less a figure than Barry Gordy, the founder of Motown, at first vehemently rejected the song because of its socially critical content, indeed considered it one of the worst singles he had ever heard. Until „What's Going On", with more than 2 million copies sold, became a superhit and respectful mutual understanding rose to become a message of peace for the whole world.

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SONG	What's Going On
PERFORMER	Marvin Gaye

> *Picket lines and picket signs*
>
> *Don't punish me with brutality*
>
> *Talk to me*
>
> *So you can see*
>
> *Oh, what's going on (What's going on)*

There is much to suggest that an essential factor behind wars and social violence lies in emotionally cold and traumatising family structures. Peaceful coexistence in later life, by contrast, is likely to draw its strength from the originally warm-hearted and loving relations within families. Love is regarded as a symbol of life. If a child experiences no love, is indeed traumatised early on, its further development is shaped by feelings of threat, fear and aggression against itself and others.

With „What's Going On" by Marvin Gaye I have chosen a song for the Friedensnoten that grapples with the family as the nucleus of social coexistence within a society. In recent years in particular, many families have been torn apart over differing views on Corona. Many children and adolescents had to suffer because their parents quarrelled over how to deal with COVID, and even separated on account of it.

Many children and adolescents were forced to be vaccinated even though they did not want to be. Or they resisted the most varied forms of social isolation, resisted the wearing of masks and the vaccination, and were punished for it with rejection, blame and violence. The Corona crisis produced abuse, traumatisation and violent conflicts within families. That the associated suffering of children and adolescents did, and will yet do, more harm to their health than the virus could ever have been capable of doing, is one of the paradoxes of the Corona crisis.

With „What's Going On", Marvin Gaye created a symbol of peace, love and respect, as an artist pointing out in a deeply moving song that a willingness to cooperate and mutual understanding can prevent destructive conflicts, or at least defuse them.

Perhaps the protests against the Vietnam War and racism, more keenly perceived in the mid-1960s, reminded him of his own experiences of violence, which he had to endure at the hands of his father from earliest childhood. The aphorism „What's Going On" therefore stands for Gaye's deep struggle for de-escalation in dialogue, for empathising with the other person's point of view, and for respect towards one's counterpart.

How tragic and paradoxical that, years after the release of „What's Going On", a conflict within the family became his fatal undoing: Marvin Gaye was shot dead by his father on 1 April 1984, one day before his 45th birthday, after taking his mother's side in a quarrel between his parents. As if he had already foreseen all of this in „What's Going On", when he sang:

> *„Mother, mother*
> *There's too many of you crying*
> *Brother, brother, brother*
> *There's far too many of you dying*
> *You know we've got to find a way*
> *To bring some lovin' here today, yeah*
>
> *Father, father*
> *We don't need to escalate*
> *You see, war is not the answer*
> *For only love can conquer hate*
> *You know we've got to find a way*
> *To bring some lovin' here today*
>
> *What's going on (What's going on)*
> *What's going on (What's going on)*
> *What's going on (What's going on)*
> *Right on, baby*
> *Right on, baby*
> *Right on"*

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Christian Schubert, Jahrgang 1961, ist Arzt, Psychologe und ärztlicher Psychotherapeut. Er ist Professor für Med. Psychologie, Psychosomatik und Psychotherapie am Department für Psychiatrie, Psychotherapie, Psychosomatik und Medizinische Psychotherapie der Med. Universität Innsbruck. Dort leitet er seit 1995 das Labor für Psychoneuroimmunologie. Sein Forschungsschwerpunkt betrifft die Entwicklung eines Untersuchungsansatzes zur Analyse psychosomatischer Komplexität.

Er ist Autor zahlreicher Fachpublikationen. Im Dezember 2021 erscheint als schonungslose Abrechnung mit dem derzeitigen Corona-Regime das Buch „Stresstest Corona — Warum wir eine neue Medizin brauchen“ (BOD).

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