

Better People: A Song Analysis of Teen Culture

The song, “Better People” by Xavier Rudd is a song that speaks to people of all ages. It exemplifies a large part of the culture the world lives in, including aspects of teenage culture that are not normally considered. Though there are countless songs, music videos, movies, advertisements, etc. that advertise the “sex, drugs, partying and crime life” to teenage audiences, there is still a distinct niche in the media market for songs encouraging teenagers to become better people and to change the world one person at a time. Another song that bears a similar message to teenagers is the song “Waiting on the World to Change” by John Mayer. “Waiting on the World to Change” talks about teenagers’ frustrations at their inability to be taken seriously when trying to make things happen. While not a very well known song, “Better People” carries an enduring message; one of reaching your personal potential, doing good deeds and ultimately becoming a better person.

“Better People” talks about a wide array of things fairly explicitly. One important aspect of teenage culture that is not overtly talked about in this song is material goods. However, if one was to examine the text carefully, one would realize that there is a great deal of meaning to every line of this lyrical song, including references to material goods. For example, the line “We have everything we need” could refer to a number of things when simply glanced at. However when examined in context of the lines surrounding it, “Cause there is freedom around us/we have everything we need/and I will care for you/‘Cause you care for me” the meaning becomes more apparent. The writer of this song, Xavier Rudd, is likely referring to the wealth of resources available in order to make a difference and could further be inferring the ease at which one can acquire these resources. While these are not the material goods talked about in many other teenage pop songs (such as cars, clothes, shoes, etc.) he is talking about things that are already available to us and could be available to others if we used our resources (such as food and shelter).

In addition to this, Xavier Rudd talks about the attitudes of all people towards change. Though it is not implicitly stated, the words chosen to describe this attitude also seem aimed towards young adults and teenagers: “And we all have opinions/some of them get thorough/but there’s better people/with more good to do.” These lines describe the almost lackadaisical viewpoint of teenagers towards many things. In the song, these lines refer to the outlook towards personally making a difference; however it can also be

easily applied to the mindset of teenagers in general, the idea that even though you have an opinion, someone else can and will do it, and they'll do it better. And this means you should not even try. It seems that in the writers' opinion, this is a major flaw in the thinking of teenagers and all humankind.

The song "Better People" also discusses the behaviours of people. A major focal point of the song talks about what actions, or lack thereof, the general population is making to bring about change. It brings to attention the attitudes of people, as discussed previously, towards personally taking action. "People saving whales/and giving your thanks to our seas/my respect to the ones in the forest standing up for our old trees." These lines consider how there are the few people who do what all ought to do, such as standing up for our trees. It almost implies the question, "How can you do nothing, sit back and let others stand up for what *you* believe in?" The song continues on to say how these few are the people who give food to the hungry, hope to the needy, life to a baby and care for free. These people should be our ideals; we should aspire to be more like these few individuals who are so selfless and yet self aware and globally aware.

"Better People" is a song that fits perfectly into that media niche, urging all people to be more aware of what is going on and to take action to bring about something better. Throughout the song, much of the lyrics can be applied to people of all kind, their material goods, beliefs and attitudes. However there is one part in the song that makes the entire song seem intended for teenagers, a part that is deeply moving and the basis for writing the song: "Our children keep growing up with what they know/From what we teach, and what they see...Like Giving food to the hungry/Hope to the needy..." This verse is an incredibly poignant statement about how teenagers will raise their children in the future. If we continue to raise children in ignorance and allow them to be unaware of the world, we will continue to have a world where too few people are fighting for too large a cause, and in the end this could literally be the end of people. But if, we as teenagers are able to embrace this message and become a little more selfless, we will be able to raise children who will in turn give food to the hungry, hope to the needy, life to a baby and care for free – and this is the hope of Xavier Rudd.