

A photograph of two young women from behind, embracing each other. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a black tank top and blue jeans. The woman on the right has curly dark hair and is wearing a brown and white striped long-sleeved shirt under red cord overalls. They are standing in front of a row of colorful buildings, including a prominent pink one on the left and a blue one on the right. The scene is bright and sunny.

# AGE OF EMPATHY

REIGN MAKERS' NEXT  
CHAPTER

**BDG**



IN 2018, WE  
IDENTIFIED  
REIGN MAKERS,  
AN INFLUENTIAL  
COHORT OF GEN



Reign Makers are the THINKERS & ACTIVISTS of their generation—individuals who have volunteered in their community, participated in a political rally, made a donation to a cause, wrote to their representatives, or championed their

## INDIE KINGS AND QUEENS



## AMERICAN DREAMERS



## FREE RADICALS



## CHALLENGERS





THE  
END  
IS NEAR

BUT A LOT  
HAS  
HAPPENED



So, we checked in to see how the last two years has changed young Americans' attitudes. What we found is that young Americans are very much living in the AGE OF EMPATHY: a society rooted in human connection



# METHODOLOGY

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- 20 “PROCLAMATION OF CHANGE” WRITTEN PROJECTS
- ART IN PROTEST COMPETITION
- 1,500-PERSON NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE STUDY AMONG 18-34 YOs





# Gen Z's Savior Complex

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MOVE OVER  
MILLENNIALS:  
ZS WILL  
CHANGE THE  
WORLD

—CAMPBELL



## THE LATEST GEN Z SAVIORS

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# UNICORN CULTURE

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2020





## POLITICS AS USUAL

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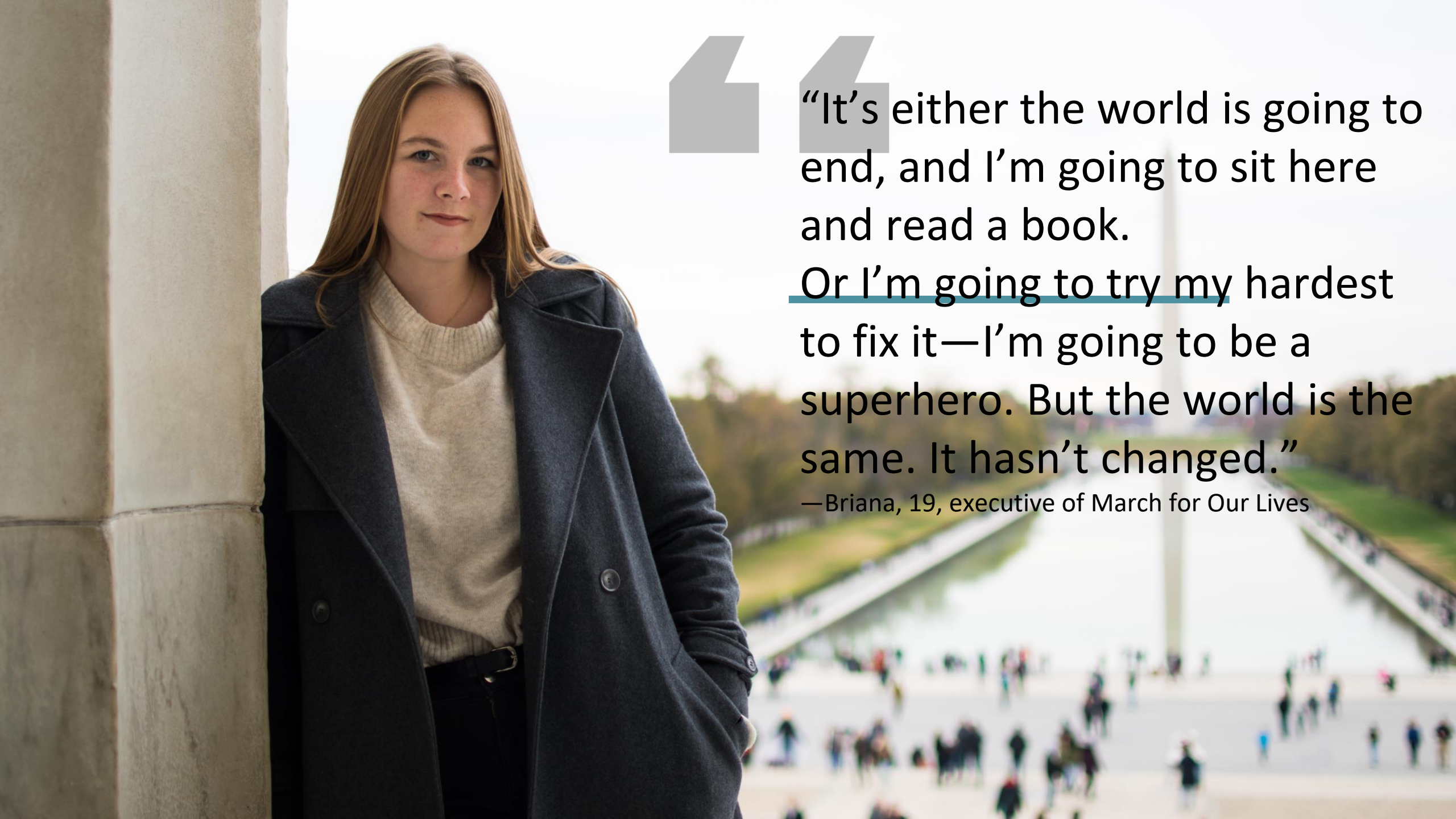
**2%**

of global parliamentarians are  
under the age of 30, even though  
in a third of countries the  
qualifying age to run is 25

**19%**

are women





“It’s either the world is going to end, and I’m going to sit here and read a book.  
Or I’m going to try my hardest to fix it—I’m going to be a superhero. But the world is the same. It hasn’t changed.”

—Briana, 19, executive of March for Our Lives

## GEN Z VS. GOLIATH

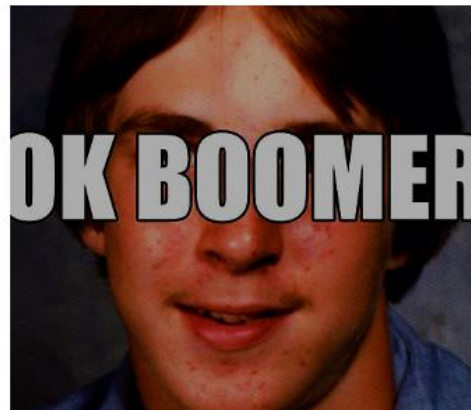
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OK BOOMER  
OK BOOMER



*“A rallying  
cry for  
millions of  
fed-up kids.”*

—New York Times







## The 2020 Emotional Brink

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02

## 'SAVING THE WORLD' GOT REALLY REAL IN 2020

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91%

were directly impacted by the events of 2020

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79%

say they have no idea what life will look like *next month*

Leading up to 2020, young people were already championing social change. Today the intensity for change has reached fever pitch: The global pandemic and BLM protests have rocked the world, a recession is looming, education is in limbo and the presidential election is bringing four years of divisive politics to a head.

—Kelly, 24, Brooklyn, NY



## THE EMOTIONAL BRINK

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STRESSED  
DEPRESSED  
BURNT OUT  
DISCONNECTED  
OFF-BALANCE  
NOT MYSELF

## DAZED & CONFUSED

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50%

I need **direction** right now

50%

I need a **distraction** right now



Match.com  
Video



BRAND EXAMPLE:  
THE 2020  
EMOTIONAL BRINK

MATCH.COM  
When Satan  
Met 2020



## MENTAL HEALTH AT THE FORE

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**#1**

MENTAL HEALTH IS  
THE TOP ISSUE FACING  
REIGN MAKERS

**#1**

IT'S ALSO THE LEAST  
DIVISIVE



03

# Age of Empathy

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## EMPATHY IS A CULTURAL CRY FOR HELP



## FROM UNICORNS TO UNITY

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61%

say **empathy** is more powerful than **action**

UNITY

Is the **best way to create positive change** according to Reign Makers —beating out “youth,” “creativity,” and even “access”

75%

prefer **compassion culture** to Cancel Culture (25%)



## INDIE THINKERS

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**LEFT**

**43%**

**INDIE**

**49%**

**RIGHT**

**31%**

A photograph of two young women laughing together. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a brown sweatshirt with blue and red stripes on the sleeves. The woman on the right has long blonde hair and is wearing a black crop top and pink camouflage pants. They are standing in front of a brick wall with graffiti and a green door. The text 'THE AGE OF EMPATHY IS A CULTURAL RE-CALIBRATION' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# THE AGE OF EMPATHY IS A CULTURAL RE- CALIBRATION

Many “ages” have moved us forward—the Industrial Age, Machine Age, Atomic Age, Space Age and most recently the Information Age. But the Age of Empathy will be the first that is decidedly human rather than technological, marking an entirely new metric for progress and style of leadership. And Reign Makers are at the fore of it.



## THE NEW CONNECTIVITY

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53%

This is the **Age of Empathy**—  
the future depends on **emotional  
intelligence**

47%

This is the **Age of Information**—  
the future depends on **technological  
advancement**

# CONNECTION OVER CONNECTIVITY

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87%

of Reign Makers say they are  
nostalgic for at least one aspect of  
the predigital era

## LIVING IN THE MOMENT

Rather than documenting my life

## OLD-SCHOOL DATING

Courtship in the real world, not on Tinder

## SERENDIPITY & SURPRISE

Running into a friend, getting caught in a rainstorm, etc.

## MODESTY

No more selfies please!

## MEMORY

Remembering a good friend's number, or directions

## THE LIBRARY

Google is just too exhaustive



# Drivers License Video

**NYLON**

MENU

# OLIVIA RODRIGO

IT GIRL

OLIVIA RODRIGO ON 'DRIVERS LICENSE,' TAYLOR SWIFT, AND WHAT COMES NEXT

LAUREN MCCARTHY



PHOTO BY ASHLEY OSBORN

2.4.2021 9:00 AM





# Reign Makers in the Age of Empathy

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04





TRUTH IN  
THE GREY

# The New Cornerston



NEW COMFORT  
ZONES



## es of Leadership

INTERSECTIONALITY  
OF ISSUES





## INTERSECTIONALITY OF ISSUES

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**Reign Makers are taking a holistic approach to issues.**

“Being actively anti-racist is important, but it is not enough to just be actively anti-racist. You must be actively anti-sexism, actively anti-homophobia, actively anti-transphobia, actively anti-capitalism, actively anti-Christian hegemony: you must actively be anti-oppression. That is the only way true change can transpire.”

—Claude, 20, New Orleans, LA

**84%**

of Reign Makers agree,  
“I believe all issues are  
intersectional.”



## 'INTERSECTIONALITY OF ISSUES' IN POP CULTURE

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## NEW COMFORT ZONES

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**Reign Makers are actively questioning their privilege, beliefs and actions.**

“Creating norms around consent pushes people to safely step beyond their comfort zones and embrace newness and difference.” —David, 29, Oakland, CA

**82%**

**of young people have had an uncomfortable conversation about a political or social issue with friends or family**



## 'NEW COMFORT ZONES' IN POP CULTURE

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## TRUTH IN THE GREY

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**Reign Makers are more moderate than they've been portrayed.**

“As soon as somebody says something about guns, it’s like either you want to own an M16 or you want to take all guns away from everybody. There is absolutely no nuance between nothing and everything. There’s no grey area on these issues. And that’s a problem because all solutions start somewhere in the grey.” —

**Ari , 19, Washington, DC**

**#1**

**Gen Zs are most likely to be registered Independent (49%) vs. Democrat (43%) or Republican (31%)**



## 'TRUTH IN THE GREY' IN POP CULTURE

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## ALTERNATIVE ACTION

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**Reign Makers are using art to communicate their causes across cultures.**

Vietnamese artists Ali and Isabel won our “Art in Protest” competition with the film “[Hope](#),” which shows the power of art to champion causes half a world away. On the film they say, “Hộ(p)e is a short film about the importance and the beautiful art of listening.”

**56%**

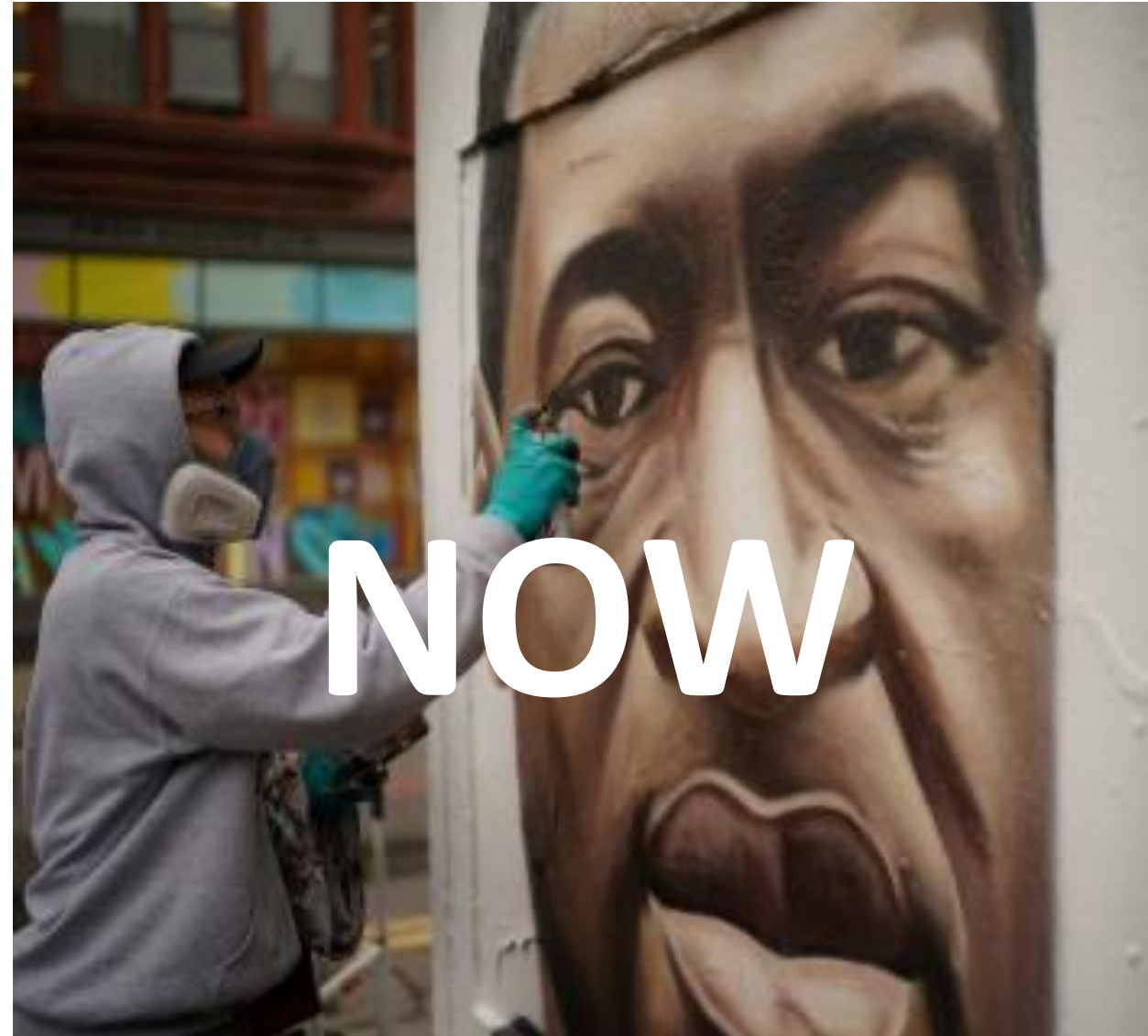
**of Reign Makers say “Art in Protest” is a more powerful way to do good than “March in Protest”**



# Worldz 2 Video

## 'ALTERNATIVE ACTION' IN POP CULTURE

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# Final Thoughts

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# KEY BRAND TAKEAWAYS

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## MAKE SURE NOT TO TOKENIZE YOUNG PEOPLE AS SAVIORS

They are stressed and looking for brands to help champion their causes

## UNITY, EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVITY ARE MESSAGES THAT WILL RESONATE

Reign Makers are looking for brands that can strike common ground

## COMFORT ZONES ARE BEING REASSESSED.

Like young people, take a fresh look at your brand, voice and messages—are they in sync with the Age of Empathy?

## DON'T OVERCORRECT, RECALIBRATE.

Take your time to understand the nuances—don't become a cliché.

## HUMAN CONNECTION IS KEY.

Dimensionalize how your brand connects through art, representation and small moments of positivity.

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