

Breaking down walls

We are all strong enough to break down our own walls. Yet we don't, we sometimes let the walls stand and grow. They can be a reminder of fate or a reminder of hatred. Walls separate us and can represent biases or prejudices. Every so often one of these walls falls down. The wall is a break in society and when it falls down you see both sides of a perspective. We even tear down our own walls, like Marjane Satrapi did. She tells her story as a memoir of her childhood during the Islamic revolution.

Marjane writes and draws about the friends, families, and neighbors who shook the walls and protested the Iranian government's strict rule. The walls of freedom did not topple right away. Instead of being rewarded, those who protested were punished as criminals. They were seen not as saviors but as terrorists, spies, and antigovernment officials. Many died like Marjane's uncle, Anoosh, who was seen as a spy and executed. Others were tortured, put in jail, and like Marjane's uncle, killed.

In Marjane's world, the brave protesters chipped away the walls. So when the Shah gave up rule and left the country there was great rejoicing. Yet those walls still stood, sealed with fear and hatred.

Throughout her childhood Marjane learns that we can't let ourselves be separated by hatred or prejudice. Although as a girl she was defined by her shows of rebellion: not wearing her veil and experimenting with her self-image of a modern girl growing up in a hate-driven dictatorship. She does not defined herself by these images. She is her own creator. Through Marjane's writing, she tears each wall down one by one. She realizes how her new world works; she wears a western-style jean jacket and tries to create a new life. She is now a prophet of peace rather than a seeker of revolution--one full of love and equality. She wants to live in the new world that she dreams of. Her message is that while we need to break down walls, we also need to create one united world.

At Eckstein Middle School there are also walls; we live in our own worlds. We separate into groups of friends, or away from those who are different from us. Maybe the walls are between teachers, administrators, or other students. We go into our own groups of friends and stay in our own cliques. We define each other as ugly, pretty, annoying, or nice. I see it every day--clumps, groups, living in our own worlds--all in the same space but separated from other people. Like Marjane, we have our own expectations. We need each other to help change our community. Together we can change our world, unite, and create a better life for many--combine many voices, not just a few.

We need to take Marjane's incredible journey and tear down our own walls of hate and prejudice. We need to take her message to Eckstein and together build a solid foundation--right the wrongs and make a difference in our lives. When I read Persepolis it changed the way I saw the world. I was transported to the rebellious world of Iran. I saw how we could prevent things like walls dividing us. We can learn from others' past mistakes and we can take down our own walls and change our own worlds. We can make our lives full of love and not hate.

Satrap, Marjane. *Persepolis*. New York, NY: Pantheon, 2003. Print.

"The Iranian Revolution." *The Iranian Revolution*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Mar. 2013.