



## WE DIDN'T START THE FIRE

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo  
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas  
B.S. Medical Technology

The Billy Joel hit of 1989 basically took the headlines between 1949 and 1989 and put them together in one song. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We\\_Didn't\\_Start\\_the\\_Fire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Didn't_Start_the_Fire) )It has been parodied countless times, but the original song still remains the best. Its refrain goes thus: we didn't start the fire; it was always burning since the world's been turning. The song seeks to exonerate the current generation at that time from the ills that had beset the world.

The song could very well be this generation's song, too. No generation can be held completely responsible for everything that has happened in the world. Although 1949 is about a couple of generations away from today's generation, there can never be one generation more significant than another. All of us have had significant milestones in our own generations, and no matter how civilization has grown, it has still not evolved as rapidly as past civilizations.

Life was simpler back then. All man had to do was put a roof over his head, hunt for animals to feed his family, clothe himself with tree bark and leaves, and stay alive. Now, staying alive seems to be a bigger concern than clothing oneself (ever wonder how fashions seem to espouse shorter skirts and near-to-naked blouses?), feeding one's family (mad cow disease, parasites in food, food- and water-borne illnesses) and housing (even your two-storey house can get flooded!). The world keeps getting smaller, but man seems to be getting nowhere near guaranteed safety and survival.

We face the world as civilized people able to make sensible decisions and wise choices. Yet, how many of those choices have led to one misstep after another? We have many who have double degrees, multiple master's degrees and doctorates, and yet the world has become more complicated and more convoluted in thinking. Our values have been eroded. We live in a world where freedom is never absolute in the sense that rules and responsibilities are not to be bandied about so easily. Many have trampled on the real meaning of freedom and have chosen dishonesty, cruelty and deception as supplements to the freedom they possess.

Our civilization has grown from emancipation of slaves to hate crimes against people deemed "not normal" or "so unlike us". Notions of civilization have encouraged misspellings in messages, and letters used in place of whole words (wer r u? y r u hir?) See, even autocorrect refuses to recognize those sentences.

Despite the advances in civilization that we have spawned, let us not forget the true essence of civilization: to create a more contemporary concept of conventional things without leaving the more desirable values and virtues behind. Let us not become more barbaric in our movement through civilization.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the elements of civilization, in your opinion?
2. What advances in civilization do you like the most? Why do you like them?
3. Which country is the most civilized one in the world? Why do you think so?
4. Are there any nations which you would like to be more civilized? Why do you think those nations need to be more civilized?
5. What's the difference between a third world country and a first world country? Is there a second world country? Cite examples of each.