

# Dear 2016,

(the 16th year of the 3rd millennium, the 2016th year of the Common Era and Anno Domini designations, the 16th year of the 21st century, the 7th year of the 2010s decade, and the most tumultuous leap year of the Gregorian Calendar!)

I hope this letter finds you well rested. It has been a rough ride and I know you are just as exhausted as I am. So many things have happened. So many "I can't EVEN" moments. You were raw, 2016. Cruel, at times, even.

Fake news. Fires. Flint. The dark terror of Orlando. Nice. Lahore. ISIS attacks on Istanbul. Brussels. The rise of religious persecution in Egypt. Iraq. India. The humanitarian tragedy that once was the city of Aleppo.

Bowie. Prince. Umberto Eco. Harper Lee. Muhammad Ali. Fidel Castro. So many icons died in this year alone, it seems unbelievable that it was only a few months ago that we were mourning the loss of the great Zaha.

In a historic referendum, the United Kingdom left the European Union. Once again, an arrogant decision of a single nation left the entire world reeling. The government of North Korea conducted its fifth and reportedly biggest nuclear test. Not a single serious enquiry was made, no eyebrows raised. The pressing issue was Jon Snow's return.

And 2016, did you really need Zika? What were you trying to prove?

You brought war, wacky weather and warped world views. You brought great suffering - from refugees fleeing toxic homes to the extinction of gorgeous species I hadn't had a chance to see yet, all the way to the coldest winters ever experienced!

You saw the worst fears of a young progressive nation come to life. You saw the wheel of enlightenment reverse direction. You saw a woman with big controversies and a man with small hands dominate every day conversation. You saw the turmoil of the past, the blood and sweat of our ancestors, and above all, civilization itself being forgotten. You saw faith held up as a torch while its flames burned those under it simply because they were not white enough, Christian enough, Muslim enough, Jewish enough, rich enough, straight enough, male enough, conservative enough, loud enough, quiet enough!

Rio. Lochte. Even the sacred games were now profane. Contamination. While helpless Syrian children waited for their heroes to save them, Batman battled Superman, failing humanity altogether.

Somewhere in Japan, the last-ever video-cassette recorder was manufactured. A rich past was put to sleep. Two paintings by Van Gogh, which had been stolen in 2002, were recovered.



Is this a cosmic balance towards neutrality?

I mean, Patrick vs Pritzker?

We endured the social media chatter. Of. So. Many. Morons!

To be fair, you did give us a fleeting ray of sunshine with a few remarkable moments. Pokemon Go! That made us all smile. Even in its shocking brevity. It was priceless.

The Kepler Mission announced the discovery of 1284 new planets, including nine that were potentially habitable. This gave us hope that somewhere out there, around a star much like ours, we can eventually discover another Earth. Another host to our parasitic existence.

And, of course, the Mannequin Challenge. Now that had something for everyone!

Bjarke and SpaceX reassured us that the supersonic HyperLoop would transform the way cities are designed. Yes, Hope. The heart found joy in little things.

For 2016, you were a strong blow to our faith in humanity.

You made us face our fears, our weaknesses and our disappointments. You were like one

long-overdue intervention. Honestly, I don't remember a time in my life that I felt more disturbed with the world and its problems. You shook us and woke us up to the suffering around the globe. Of people. Of women. Of innocent little children!

And, you forced us to rethink our indifference.

You trashed our perfect Instagrammed lives and brought us face-to-face with real issues. You forced us to look into the mirror and evaluate our combined sins.

2016, I thought you'd never stop and that 2017 would never arrive. But like clockwork, it did, just in time. Farewell, now. I promise your caveats will not be forgotten. I promise we will stay attentive, stay real. I promise 2017 will be different, better.

*Come gather around people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
And if your breath to you is worth saving  
Then you better start swimming  
Or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changing...<sup>[1]</sup>*