

2019 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Unconditionally

(Original)

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(Age 24, Germany)

“It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”

— Mother Theresa

Upon commencing my Business Management and Economics studies in Glasgow, I was sure I could use my coming knowledge for something beneficial for society. I accepted the theories without a question, studying very hard. This allowed me to spend my second year in a partner-university, - in Hong Kong.

What a change! That year, I spent most of my time running in the mountains, volunteering as an English teacher in China, and playing mahjong with my roommates - all sorts of things other than studying economics/business. I loved my year abroad. During my summer holidays, I even got the opportunity to work for two months in Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh.

Upon arrival in Europe, I fell into a strange “shock-state”. I realized how big the houses were, how many cars we had, how we took food and accommodation for granted, while in Hong Kong a whole family would share a tiny apartment and in Cambodia starvation was apparent in many people's faces. The contrast showed me European's wellbeing, and beyond that: its waste and exaggerated commerce. We have more than we need, and still keep on consuming and producing.

Going back to studying for my degree was suddenly hard. I realized I was doubting a lot of the material I had earlier swallowed without a problem. Why did I calculate this car company's profit? And why make somebody feel bad for not being able to afford a car? Why marketing? Why sell more soda-drinks if I have seen those very bottles accumulating in Cambodia's most sacred mountains?

Somehow, I bit myself through my remaining years of university. Yoga and meditation helped me to avoid this “black hole” inside my head. My attitude changed though. I was pessimistic about a lot of things, often criticizing others, disagreeing with teachers and

fellow students.

Thankfully, this is not the end of my story. After finishing my four-year-university-degree, I decided to go backpacking in Europe. I started with volunteering in a yoga community, and as one place led me to another, I soon discovered a very different world of “economics”: the real world.

A world, where there is indeed a lot of injustice... but there is also hope, love and kindness. There are people who see money not as something to accumulate or limit, but where it can enable. Only what we can do with money, is important (not money itself). The people I met were some of the most special people I have ever known. They were no big entrepreneurs donating money or famous artists making campaigns, - they were humble, often poor people. But they taught me something that I will take away with me for the rest of my life: unconditional love.

I will never forget those farmers that were sharing their meals with me, and the many drivers that picked up a backpacker walking in the rain or the blazing sun... that smiling yoga mother singing her mantra on the street for the stressful people who pass her without a glance... I have never experienced such devotion before. It touched my heart.

So what did I decide to do then? I continued volunteering, and followed the signs on my way, - which have led me to my current volunteering teaching position at a primary school in Bogota. And I love the children I teach, and I love people again, - and beyond that, I love my life.

I do not stress myself anymore to use my studies to impress others, or to join some big company and have a good image in helping people. I do not search to be recognized for my acts anymore. I simply want to give back to the societies around the world, and to Earth itself... and whenever I feel down, frustrated, in a “dark hole” again, I just close my eyes and recall those moments, and those wonderful people I met on my way... who have given so much, unconditionally.

Bibliography:

Teresa, Mother, and Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu. “Mother Teresa of Calcutta - Quotes & Stories.” Crossroads Initiative, 5 Sept. 2018, www.crossroadsinitiative.com/saints/quotes-from-blessed-mother-teresa-of-calcutta/.