

2020 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Be the change you want to see

(Original)

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(Age 20, Spain)

Hello,

It's me, Paula, even though there's a slight difference between you and me, 10 years precisely. I am approaching you to describe how the world changed after the coronavirus pandemic and what 2030 looks like. I think it's pretty significant to mention the great goals we have achieved as a species since I could not be prouder of human beings.

You might be on an emotional rollercoaster right now, and perhaps scared. I know you're experiencing a whole new reality, being quarantined at home for 3 months. Studying, looking after your family and trying to be mentally healthy all at the same time. Put your mind at ease, Paula, and please don't be so hard on yourself. Being self-demanding will make you fulfil your dreams, but it can also make things worse for yourself.

It all started when we had to stop our 'normal' life for almost a month. Not only did we see how wild animals came back to big cities and how they wandered around with any sign of fear, but also we realised that the damage done by humans that was boosting climate change was being rectified. It was then when we acknowledged the power we had in our hands.

At first it was all based on small changes such as sustainable tourism. Those scenes where you could see Barcelona's streets packed with tourists started to vanish. Instead, travellers started to care about small businesses and support the local economic development. We realised that in order to evolve as a society the 'classical' distribution should be restructured. In other words, it was nonsensical that poor people were dying undernourished while rich people threw away tons of food. Properties began to be shared with everyone, the meaning of empathy and solidarity blossomed.

I get it, you're probably thinking I am crazy and that a society like that could never be achieved. Trust me, every big change starts with a small step. There's nothing more powerful than an organised collective determined to fight for their ideals. Remember I told

you after the infectious virus spread around the world people changed their minds? It did not only happen economically wise, but was also related to human rights. We seized that we were all equal, no matter what gender, religion or ethnicity you were. From there on, we all battled together the biggest enemy of all: the establishment.

Later on, similar measures were taken. Government and big companies did their bit so a more sustainable lifestyle could be established for everyone. That meant changing our diet as well and initially many people were opposed to that idea. That translated into cutting down on foods we all loved, such as red meat or sugary ultra-processed aliments. It was not about stopping consuming them, but reducing the huge impact of the meat industry which was killing our planet along with other industries. You must be asking how did we do it? We basically stopped consuming products that came from far away and out of season, we valued local seasonal products. Ecological products gained ground since they made sure the workers behind the processing of food were rightly treated.

But enough talking about humans as a species, I'm sure you must be wondering what I (you) did to make this transition happen. Once you finished your Biomedical Science degree you decided to study Medicine, and so you did. In 2025 you graduated and decided to volunteer abroad as a doctor and researcher. You focused on developing countries, raised awareness about how important lifestyle was for our health and worked hard every day to save lives. You educated poor women on reproductive health and such other relevant issues.

I want to simply end this letter by giving you some advice, that might be useful in your forthcoming years. Believe in yourself, you're a strong powerful woman and the only obstacles you're going to find on your way will be your own limitations. You can do whatever you want, and most importantly, you can make other people follow the right path.

Never change,
Paula. ❤️