

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

My Values - Integrity

(Original)

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My name is Leigh-Joy Kendi, a ten-year-old pre-teen from Nairobi Kenya. Integrity happens to be one of the greatest values I uphold and live by. Want to know why?

Because I have been taught by my mother and also in church that *"integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching"*. Do I need to turn and look at my back whenever I am doing something just to be sure no one is watching? Absolutely no – because God in heaven is watching even when I am hiding from my parents.

As an only child, I have had the very rare chance to remain with my dad alone in Nairobi while my very hardworking mother travelled out of the country for work. Having learnt from my mother how to do various house chores, I was to be responsible for keeping our house clean, doing my homework and taking care of the basic household duties to help my dad out.

Last year, in 2021, my mother travelled for work in Bangladesh for a couple of months. I would set the alarm on my phone to wake up early by myself at half past six in the morning. I would prepare quickly and wake my dad up to prepare our breakfast so that I don't get late to school.

In the evenings, having carried a spare set of gate and house keys, I would arrive home after our school bus dropped us within our estate and ensure that I lock the door for our house' safety. Having dashed out in the morning in a haste to make sure I do not get late to school, I would then clean up any dirty utensils, do my homework, prepare my early evening snack, polish my school shoes then call my dad and alert him I am home. I would also call my mom through Skype or WhatsApp video to catch up with her, inform her of my

day in school and have the mother-daughter chats. She would encourage me to work hard in school and always uphold my morals.

Over the weekends, I would clean my school and home clothes using the washing machine and clean the whole house. I told my dad since I am the girl in the house, it's my responsibility to keep the house tidy. The he asked me, "but you are a child"? I responded affirmatively, "yes I am a girl and a child, but need to know how to do these things early so that I can also keep my house clean when I grow up and start living independently. Furthermore, we have been taught in school on how to do basic house chores and I need to practice what I have learnt in school".

On various occasions, my mother would call me over skype to check on me over weekends, and my dad would jump over our call and update her that he found the house very clean when he came back from doing his business. Inside of me, I would be filled with a lot of joy.

When she came for her leave, she brought me very many presents and told me that I have become a very responsible girl and that she was very happy with me. She told me that since I was the first born and the only child, I had shown a lot of integrity and when I get siblings, I should teach them the same things.

In April 2022 when our church organized a week long Daily Devotional Bible Study, I was chosen by the church leaders to be the leader of our class because they found me early organizing and directing the other students to tidy up and arrange our class. During the lesson, the Sunday school teacher referred to this Bible verse **Proverbs 20:7** "The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him! Us" and gave my name as an example and how children should emulate me. I was as happy as a king.

I have purposed to do the right thing always without being reminded or watched, for character maketh a man or girl, and my character will define me!