

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

'Stinky Sara': A lesson on Values

(Original)

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Values are one of the many key aspects that differentiate a person from another. Our fundamental values determine who we aspire ourselves to be, and what lies behind our day-to-day actions. The values that most people in a society hold can either make or break the success of their community. Therefore, making sure one's values indeed benefit their self and community is an extremely important to make certain.

It is not often that a person encounters an incident that forces them to truly confront themselves and the values that they hold. Nevertheless, these incidents are bound to happen to a person whether they wish it to or not.

One such event that I recall happened back when I was in primary school...

It was about mid-June. The school was wildly festooned with the warm hues of the annual sports festival. The warm sand of the playground was soothing under my feet, and the sweet taste of strawberry ice-cream was fresh on my tongue. I was having a wonderful time, waiting for my turns on the various sport competitions, while my mother chatted with the other parents. Everyone, young and old, had a great smile adorned on their face, all savoring this occasion- all except for Sara.

I spotted Sara waiting in the duck racing line. I noted this as strange as Sara was never the type to engage in any social activity, unless when forced to. Sara was a sullen girl, always alone, and always the runt of the group. I had heard teachers and parents alike chastise Sarah, the lack of meat on her bones, her untidy hair, unclean clothes, and her shortage of smiles, friendliness, or any childlike emotion. 'Stinky Sara', they called her.

I watched with interest as Sara put on the flippers and paper beak, as was customary in the duck race. She had a glimmer in her eye, the most emotion I'd ever seen on her face. There

was no parent with 'Stinky Sara', only her and her dirty clothes, unruly hair and 'oh so disgraceful' state of manner.

The competitors lined up, hurriedly fixing their little duck beaks and flippers, the announcer blew the horn, and off they went. I watched with bated breath as Sara took off, taking an impressive head start, to the chagrin of many other competitors. The cheers of the parents and supporters were deafening. Though nobody noticed 'Stinky Sara', nobody except for perhaps me.

One boy, in particular, with bulky arms and an impressively large build, took a particular affront to Sara's oncoming success, and determined to win his stake at the competition, took it upon himself to remove the nuisance.

In the heat of the moment, 'Stinky Sara', was pushed to the ground, knees scraping against the sand as her head hit the ground with a frightening thud.

Few noticed as the little girl started crying, only a handful glanced at her, only just to laugh at the sullen girl of the name 'Stinky Sara', was pushed to the ground. Nobody rose to help her. It was yet again another blunder for 'Stinky Sara', the child nobody noticed or cared about.

I stood there watching, as Sara wept into the ground, as she held her bleeding knees. I watched as Sara watch the adults congratulate the winning boy, who was reveling in his unjust victory. I watched as tears ran down her face, at her inability to speak up, at her fear of being mocked, being ridiculed.

I watched, and yet I did nothing.

It has been years after that fateful day, and this incident is one I will remember forever. I will forever regret the values that were ignored that day. The lack of honesty of the boy. The way nobody cared to notice or help the vulnerable little girl. And most of all the fact that I did not dare speak up for what I knew was wrong.

These values: honesty, selflessness, and caring for the vulnerable are values that society severely needs. I will forever regret that fateful day. Seeing how unjustly the vulnerable are treated in the absence of values will always be the reason why I will strive to keep my values.