

FIND PEACE IN COMPASSION

(Original)

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(Age 21, Nigeria)

In my country Nigeria, the place I lived and grew up was in conflict with other communities. There were constant terrifying sounds of gunshot. More terrifying was the killing and huge losses of lives and properties. Whenever the war erupted, we flee to neighboring allied communities. At the end of each episode of the conflict, the winning side became happy to have killed so many people.

The questions flashed in my mind and I asked, 'Why should a person kill another human being and rejoice over it? Why are we killing each other?' But nobody gave me the answers I needed.

My community was always at the receiving end. We were the victims of the ordeal. After days that led to weeks and months, we returned to our shattered homes and prepared ourselves to attend classes. Another serious battle was the humiliation and frustration we faced in school. It was an unending battle for us. Going to the same school with the youth from the communities that waged war against us resulted to series of bullying, ridicule and mockery. The teachers were aware of this but did nothing about it.

The maltreatment we received in school deeply affected our concentration and our zeal in learning, as well as our general wellbeing. Many of the students performed poorly in class while some dropped out of school. I will not say I was not affected as well.

Rather than drop out of school, I made friends with our bullies. I took it upon myself to talk to them about the values of peace and how great it would be if we live together peacefully. Compassion was my theme.

I started a practice that drew the attention of everyone in the school to what the values of

compassion are. The school we attended was poorly furnished and we did not have enough chairs. The classrooms were always filled with pool of water during rainy season because the roofs were leaking. This caused us to scramble for seats within the dry portion of the class. The conditions generated more quarrels, and chaos sprung up. Rather than fight for seats, I decided to go to school an hour early each rainy day to sweep out the water in the class. After that, I mopped the wet portions, the class became comfortable and engender calmness and peace.

At first, the students from the feuding communities did not feel free to sit where I did the nice job. However, I beckoned them to feel free to sit wherever they want. The places I mopped, I said to them, were not only for my mates from the same community with me. I did it for every one of us in the class. I had compassion for everyone because it was sad to see us fighting with one another.

I continued working to make the class comfortable for everyone regardless of ethnicity. I did this throughout the period of the rainy season. Along the line, the other students collaborated with me. I spoke to the students from the opposing community and those from my own community to have compassion, love and care for one another. We continued to work together and shared whatever we had. Peace was restored and it spread among us.

Fortunately, the classroom got dried up after the rainy season but the peace that grew among us did not dry up. We started to visit each other, and our parents did not stop us. This impacted on others all over the class and the school. Today, we have forgotten the imperfect past and live together peacefully. The crises have also reduced and not as rampant as before.

Be kind, show others you care. All these are encompassed in compassion. The youth all over the globe could unite to show a little compassion here and there to one another. We would get there. The youth can correct the error of the past and build a future where people coexist peacefully regardless of race, age, gender or religion.

If everyone, especially the youth, care and have compassion, we would achieve a peaceful world we yearn for.