

Planting Hope: A letter to the young people of the world

(Original)

Naqiyyah Afrah

(Age 6, Brunei)

Dear Young People of the World,

I greet you with the Islamic greeting of peace, Assalamualaikum! And also with a big hello from me, your friend from a corner of this beautiful earth, tucked away on the lush island of Borneo in a place called Brunei. Did you know my country is known as the "Abode of Peace"? And it truly is! There's nothing more peaceful than waking up to the sounds of birds chirping in the nearby trees outside my bedroom window, having a hearty breakfast as I watch the sun rise and the day break, and just looking forward to a wonderful day ahead knowing that I will be safe with family and friends.

I wish for every young people of the world (and even old actually!) to know this peaceful feeling when they wake in the morning. My dad tells me that not everyone in the world can experience this, and it makes me sad knowing that. If only I had the power to change everything for the better, I would! My mom tells me everyday that we young people do have the power to change things, so that the dream of a better, peaceful future can come true. My mom's really smart so I'm inclined to believe her.

So, I've been thinking quite hard about how us tiny humans can make this big dream come true. Just as a big tree starts life as a tiny seed, we need to start with ideas. And I have three that I think could help us create a future filled with peace.

The first seed is kindness. Wouldn't it be awesome to live in a world where everyone is kind to each another? Where we help each other when needed, just like a friend coming to comfort you when you fall during playtime. Where instead of fighting, we talk, listen, and try to understand each other, just like great friends do. I mean, this can be really difficult sometimes with the cheekiest of your friends, but teacher says we have to be equally kind

to everyone. If we plant this seed of kindness in our hearts, and water it with understanding, I am sure we can grow a world that's kind and peaceful.

The second seed is caring for the environment. Our planet is our home, and just like we keep our homes clean, we need to keep our planet clean too. What if we stopped littering, and instead, picked up any piece of trash we saw and put it in a bin? And what about trees, our leafy green friends? In science class, we learnt all about how they give us shade, fruit, and even the air we breathe! So instead of cutting them down, we should plant more, creating forests that are like big, green parties for all kinds of animals and birds. I think it will be a fantastic place to go camping with friends when we're a little older.

The third seed is being healthy. Just like a plant needs the right nutrients to grow tall and strong, our bodies need the right food to stay healthy and energetic. What if we chose fruits, veggies, and all the yummy, healthy food over junk? And what about things like smoking, that are like termites eating away at our health? We should say no to them, just like we say no to an extra homework assignment. Actually, never mind. I would definitely say yes to extra homework assignments. Who wouldn't like learning more?!

Now, I know these seeds of ideas might seem tiny, but our collective ideas, actions, and dreams can change the world. For even a dense forest started life as saplings. And just like trees, with roots firm and branches reaching the skies, our peaceful future will bear fruit, God willing. So, let's take these seeds, plant them in our hearts, and water them with our actions. Let's go and create our peaceful future, one act of kindness, one tree, and one healthy choice at a time.

With all the love and hope in and for the world,
Naqiyyah