

YOUTH ENVISIONING A PEACEFUL WORLD

Goi Peace Foundation – UNESCO
International Essay Contest for Young People
Award Winning Essays 2000 – 2010



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Goi Peace
Foundation

YOUTH ENVISIONING A PEACEFUL WORLD



Goi Peace Foundation – UNESCO
International Essay Contest
for Young People

Award Winning Essays 2000 – 2010



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Goi Peace
Foundation

About the Goi Peace Foundation – UNESCO International Essay Contest for Young People

The International Essay Contest for Young People is one of the peace education programs organized by the Goi Peace Foundation. The annual contest was started in 2000—the International Year of the Culture of Peace designated by the United Nations. Since 2007, it has been a joint program of UNESCO and the Goi Peace Foundation. Currently the contest is endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), Nikkei Inc. and the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, and is supported by Felissimo Corporation.

The purpose of the essay contest is to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in promoting a culture of peace and sustainable development. It also aims to inspire society to learn from its young minds and to think about how each of us can make a difference in the world. The contest has grown considerably over the years, with more than 7,200 essay entries received from over 140 countries in 2010.

This publication presents the first-prize winning essays from 2000 to 2010 in the Children's category (ages 14 or 15 and under, depending on the year) and Youth category (ages 15 or 16 to 25) respectively. Coming from young people of various cultures, environment and backgrounds, the essays express the deep thoughts, passion and courage of youth who are committed to making use of their energy and creativity for building a better future for their communities and the world.

About the Goi Peace Foundation

The Goi Peace Foundation is a member-supported, public benefit organization established in Tokyo, Japan in 1999. It was granted Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 2004, and admitted to official-relationship status with UNESCO in 2006.

The Foundation aims to support the evolution of humanity toward a sustainable and harmonious new civilization through educational and awareness-raising programs, research and studies, initiatives to promote international understanding, and by building cooperation among individuals and organizations across various fields, including education, science, culture and the arts.

For more information about the Goi Peace Foundation – UNESCO International Essay Contest for Young People, please visit www.goipeace.or.jp or contact:

The Goi Peace Foundation
1-4-5 Hirakawacho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0093 Japan
Tel: +81 (3) 3265-2071
E-mail: essay@goipeace.or.jp

contents

2000 Peace

- The Children Must Begin It** Jason Crowe (13, United States) 6
Peace Maiya Shamurshanova (23, Kazakhstan) 8

2001 Respect for life

- The Earth Calls Out, “Treat Life with Care”** Jiang Weiqiong (14, China) 12
My Dream Will Come True Kathevan Kandelaki (19, Georgia) 14

2002 Harmony

- Harmony Is My World** Anastasia Rakava (11, Belarus) 18
Harmony Liat Margalit (18, Israel) 20

2003 My vision for the future

- Regarding the Soul – Love Changes Ephemeral into Eternal**
Teodora Mihoc (15, Romania) 24
Serenity of Our Life Miranti Daniar (19, Indonesia) 26

2004 Making the most of my qualities

- I Am the Music Maker** Tomohiro Alexander Nibe (13, Japan/United States) 30
With Love Hang Su (24, China) 32

2005 Caring for our planet

- My Job Is to Feed My Hungry Neighbor** Burunciuc Mihai (14, Moldova) 36
Healing the World: How We Can Care for Our Planet
Nusrat Haque (18, Bangladesh) 38

2006 Learning to live together

- Making Friends with Diversity in Globalized Societies**
Adam Moscoe (14, Canada) 42
Let’s Drink Black-and-White, Discrimination-Free, Multi-Cultural Coffee!
Grosu Luciana (18, Romania) 45

2007 The role of media and ICT

- Unity in Diversity: Media’s Role in the Making of a Peaceful World**
Sneh Shah (8, United States) 50
Amplifying Peace Across Borders Anna Rosario A. Elicaño (24, Philippines) 52

2008	My project for sustainable development	
	Joined by a Cookbook Martin Kotarski (14, Croatia).....	56
	Carrying Life Valeria Cortez Vaca Díez (18, Bolivia).....	58
2009	The role of science	
	Our Sea, Our Future Christ Soselisa (11, Indonesia)	62
	Science and Struggle: The Fusion of Research and Compassion	
	Parwiz Abrahimi (23, Afghanistan/United States)	64
2010	My role in creating a peaceful world	
	My Peaceful World and I: I Won't Let It Be Destroyed!	
	Angelina Yudina (10, Russia).....	68
	Journey of All Aline Kabbatende (22, Rwanda).....	70



theme 2000

Peace

What kind of a world do you envision for the 21st century?

What does peace mean to you?

How do you think we can achieve peace?



The Children Must Begin It

by Jason Crowe

age 13, United States

The future. A world of endless dreams of what will come to pass. But these dreams will never come to fruition if peace doesn't become a reality. In a peaceful world, there would be no rivalries, no violence, and war would be something only heard about in textbooks. To achieve this idyllic world, we must make peace succeed in every aspect of our life. This process begins when we realize peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is a way of life, a culture in which all life is respected.

We are the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow. But we are more. We are the youth leaders of the present and have much to offer in advancing a culture of peace. We have idealism, energy, and creativity, which many adults have lost. Given tools and the opportunity, we can change the world while we are still young.

As a young leader, I can see subtle changes in thinking that everyone needs to adopt to bring us closer to a culture of peace. For example, we need to update our 20th century idea of putting aside cultural differences with an attitude of tolerance. In the new millennium, we must realize true peace requires a spirit of appreciation, not an attitude of tolerance, and true peace will come only when we stop putting aside our differences and learn to embrace them. It is only when we appreciate and embrace our differences that we realize living united in diversity is not a contradiction of terms but rather a state of peace.

Another idea that needs updating is the popular slogan "think global, act local." We live in a world where technology gives us neighbors across the world in addition to neighbors across the street. We live in an environment in which all life depends on other life. We can no longer "think global, act local"; rather, we must think and act both "global" and "local" simultaneously.

So what can young people do at the local, national, and international levels to further the cause of peace? Locally, we can join and/or start peace clubs and multicultural service clubs where kids learn about peace and then put that knowledge to practice in the community. Nationally, we can express our desires to congressmen

and the President and join national organizations such as Students Against Violence Everywhere. Internationally, we can use the Internet to establish multi-cultural connections by creating peace web pages and participating in online international discussions. We can join international youth organizations such as Peaceways and Global Youth Action Network.

Personally, I am quite active in peace building. As a ten-year-old, I heard the story of a Bosnian cellist, who witnessed the massacre of innocent people and knew he had to act. The following day he went to the site and played his cello while snipers fired. To me, his musical harmony represented social harmony, the only answer to war. I knew I had to keep this message alive. I organized a cello concert for peace at a local university, and later, Harmony in the Park as a memorial vigil on the 5th anniversary of the massacre.

By 11, I had founded a not-for-profit corporation, The Cello Cries On, to unite and empower youth across cultural lines to promote peace. I commissioned a peace statue to be sent to Bosnia as a gift from children worldwide to say, "We don't want more war and genocide; we want peace and harmony." Through my international newspaper, *The Informer*, the Internet, M.I.T.'s International Online Junior Summit, and speeches I give in schools and at state, national, and international conferences, I've united hundreds of youth to spread the message of harmony and raise money for the statue.

At 12, I created Youth for Peace in the Year 2000, an international delegation of youth to meet with Bosnian youth (at the time of the statue's unveiling) to work on peace building. This past year, I founded Youth for Harmony in Action, a multicultural group of middle and high school age youth.

We assess local needs and then go out, "diverse but united," to meet those needs, showing the community people can work together harmoniously.

I have no long-range goals such as serving as an ambassador, mediator, or my country's president. But I know whatever my vocation, my avocation will always be peace building. In the near future, I will continue raising money for The Children's International Peace-and-Harmony Statue, and writing, publishing and speaking at conferences to motivate more youth to take action. We are at a point in history where the future of the world and the future of peace lie with the children in an unprecedented way. Gandhi said, "If we are to have true peace in the world, it must begin with the children." I say, "If we are to have true peace in the world, the children must begin it."



Peace

by Maiya Shamurshanova

age 23, Kazakhstan

Peace... When I speak of peace I see the kind eyes of my mum. I hear the laughter of children. I feel peaceful and restful. Peace is the silent ticking of my clock in my apartment. Peace is peaceful people, walking on streets. Peace is bright stars above my head. Peace is our Earth without distress and suffering. As I write these words, it seems wild and unfair that somewhere in Yugoslavia, a five year old hungry girl cries and picks at the doll, while millions of other girls of her age are living in peace. It is wrong. We all need air, the sea, the stars, meadows and flowers. I need every smile, every dismissed flower, every grain of beauty. I hate war.

People are born to be happy. It is a Great Truth. And what about the Earth? It is a place of trial for Truth. How can we achieve peace? I do not know exactly, but first of all, we must inspire peace in our hearts and in our souls. We live in an important time. We live in the new millennium, so we must change the face of our planet. We can swim as fish, we can fly as birds, but we cannot live as people. We are self-murderers because we are dangerous to ourselves. Every day we lose one kind of plant, every week we lose one kind of animal. Our indifference is a dreadful disease. People must remember that, for hundreds of generations, millions of people that lived before us believed in a fair future, loved life, dreamed of a peaceful life, fought for it and sometimes laid down their lives. But I believe that our generation are not just murderers. I believe in the power of kindness.

I know a very clever story. On a very dark night, two men are going home. One of them looks down and sees only a dirty road. The other man looks up and sees only stars. How can we achieve peace? Hope, believe and look forward.

We think that we are the best creatures because we can think and create. But we forget that we have a heart which can feel and love. In the newspaper, there was an article about two boys from the USA. They stood near the road and began to wave to moving cars. Some drivers waved back to them, too. That is all. A smile, a nod, a wish of good luck. Of course it is a trifle thing, but all kinds of things in our lives begin

with trifle things. The boys began to count the number of people who answered them. Out of one thousand cars, the number of cars which answered them was 990. I think you will find such boys everywhere, on different roads, in different countries. Even if you do not see them, they do exist. How can we achieve peace? Begin the day with a smile!

I want to say a few words about my country. The population of Kazakhstan is about 16 million and only 8 million of them are Kazakh. The other 8 million people are people of different nationalities: Russian, Ukrainian, German and others. In my Peace Club also, there are children of different nationalities. I think it is a good example of a peaceful country. I was born on the 1st of May. In Kazakhstan, it is the Day of Unity of People of Different Nationalities. I think this indicates my mission, because many wars of humanity are fought between different nations. My Peace Club is the first of such clubs in Kazakhstan. In February, the number of children in the club was 20, and in May there were 40. I have spoken about our club to all the teachers in my town, and have written an article in the newspaper. On May 9th, we organized a concert dedicated to our veterans. On the 1st of June we organized a concert called 'Children against War'. How can we achieve peace? All people should do their favorite business and place importance on culture, because the culture of any nation holds the idea of peace.

Kazakhstan is one of the first countries to have refused nuclear weapons. All countries must do so. I dream of the Day of Peace, when all wars will cease, and many people will gather at the sculpture of Peace to pray...

I walk up the hill and see an eagle in the blue sky. The eagle is a symbol of freedom and peace. I dream that my children will never need to fight for their happiness and freedom. Because we are all one, and everything is in our hands, both strength and kindness!



theme 2001

Respect for life

What is life?

What does it mean to respect all life?

How can human beings live in harmony with one another and with all life on earth?



The Earth Calls Out, “Treat Life with Care”

by Jiang Weiqiong

age 14, China

Dear humans, I am the planet Earth.

Today I want to appeal to you as your mother.

Ages and ages ago in space I had many children. And after millions of years your ancestors were born. I have loved all living things very dearly. Under my loving care they developed and grew up as good friends. Human beings, animals and plants all lived freely with the blessings of nature. It would have been better if this situation could have lasted forever, but when the humans began to prosper everything gradually changed.

You have fought many wars and my lovely body is scarred all over, but you don't stop your foolish behavior. Didn't I always teach you “not to be cruel to other life”?

You have been too greedy and you cut down so many trees that many natural forests have become deserts. My body is covered with freckles. Don't you want to live?

You have killed many animals that were once your friends and you have enjoyed your life at the expense of others. Animals come daily to tell me about their suffering. I am now full of wrinkles and my nature has become rough. I have sent lots of warnings through earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions, but you do not change at all. Where are the good children I once knew? I never thought you could behave so badly.

On top of this, you have poured dirty water into the ocean which is my blood, so it is now polluted. And you have infected the air with unhealthy gases, so my body temperature has gone up, my skin has been peeling and there is a big hole over the South Pole.

Of course, I cannot allow you to disrespect your parent. You have not only killed many living things but you are in danger of destroying all life in the world. Where are the intelligence and reason you are so proud of?

You are my children after all, so I do not want to see you suffer. I want all the

countries, who are members of my family, to stop wars and help other members who are in difficulty.

These days, there are some wise people who are trying to cure nature of her illness. Please make me healthy again. You cannot separate human life and your survival from what happens to the rest of nature. In order to live you must look after the natural environment. Humans must think carefully about what to do. If you go against nature you will not only get no profit from it but you will not be able to survive.

As a mother nothing can make me happier than to see my children growing up safely. You are the cleverest of all of them and I am proud of you, but you are not my only children and I love you all equally. So I want you to respect the other living things. I do hope you will listen to me and have long and happy lives and be good friends of nature.

From your mother, Earth



My Dream Will Come True

by Kathevan Kandelaki

age 19, Georgia

Imagine a large field of flowers... Every second a unique plant emerges from the ground. If we care for it, give to it some sun, water and love, green leaves and marvelous blossoms will grow up. But if we step on the plant, tear it selfishly from the ground or leave it for the winds, the field will die away. Life is just like this meadow of flowers. Our every move, breath and thought leaves its deep mark on this field, and no rain can wash it away.

We know how precious is the rainbow in the sky, the first cry of the newborn child, the eyes full of tears of joy, the funny puppy playing with the bee. And what do we do afterwards? We throw bombs all around, then proudly do not buy ozone-deadly hair sprays. We murder mothers and then congratulate each other for building new orphanages, we slaughter animals and then create laboratories and watch the only one left from the breed. We courageously roar when running in the field of war, with the weapons in our hands. Then we sit and retell in the TV shows what new phobias the war had created. We do not know how to respect life, how to care for it correctly. Meanwhile the field of life is trying to stop us with hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, because the planet is so close to devastation...

But what is the correct way to treat life? Take the flower and give it to the kid. Then watch his thankful eyes, his sincere laugh and joy, how he answers a smile with a smile. The children are the ones who can teach us respect for the beauty around us. Their eyes tell us that to honor all life is to be thankful for every kind of existence, and the unique differences between people and among plants and animals. Their smiles show that the African in Zimbabwe is the partner of the Eskimos, that we are all equal and similar, sharing mutual responsibility for the planet Earth.

Yes, even if we do not feel it right now, we all truly need each other, and with every new war, we kill the unique part of us, murder it forever. We need the earth, and with the new toxic fumes we burn our air, the air to breathe.

People have wasted so many centuries on greedy wars, selfish tree-cutting and mindless animal slaughtering. The 21st century has come and we still live wrongly, never managing to establish harmony on Earth. Now it is the last chance for us to survive, to make peace with nature and with people around us. We have to look deep inside ourselves, find the little kid with the flower who is still living deep inside our hearts, listen to the song of our soul and throw the flags in the air, white and pure as snow, the flags of peace...

I grew up when the civil war was ravaging in Georgia, when everything was black, and tears were pouring out in the streets of Tbilisi, and mourning for the dead ones frightened the birds in the skies. But as I walked past the whistling bullets, I never gave up the hope that as a grown up person I would manage to change the world for good. I have seen Tbilisi as a swamp. But I believe in a brighter future...

And soon a clear spring will burst from the mountain, not resembling any other flow. And no one will manage to stop it, a new page in history... This new generation will bring peace to our hearts and harmony to the world. It will stick posters of peace on the evil faces and establish pacification-study schools in the storage rooms of weapons.

Right now, all I can do is to write essays like this one, hoping that it will change someone's manner of thought. In autumn I will establish a peace club in my university. It will unite people from Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Macedonia... We will create a little world to show grown-ups how to cooperate. We will come together and show all the Balkans that we can be partners, friends and couples...

In future, I will do all it takes to educate everyone around me about the importance of peace. I will establish schools where children, along with grown-ups, will learn to love the earth, nature and each other.

I see it now. Big blue sky and green trees, happy children and peaceful parents, friendship and endless handshakings, food for everyone and harmony for each and every person. Somebody will think, "she is dreaming", but I am not alone. The future generation is all dreaming like me, and we will make the world one big land of peace.



theme 2002

Harmony

What is harmony?

How can we achieve a world in which every individual and every nation can freely express their individual qualities, while living in harmony with one another and with all life on earth?



Harmony Is My World

by Anastasia Rakava

age 11, Belarus

Peace and harmony are the most precious things that people have. In my understanding, harmony can be of different kinds: harmony with people, nature and animals, harmony with your own self.

I think each family must live in harmony. It makes no difference if it is small or large. My family is not large but it is very harmonious. We are a family of three: father, mother and me. It seems to me we are each a part of one thing. If we have some problems, we solve them together. My father is an international route driver, and when he is far from home, I miss him badly. I often ring him up though it costs a lot of money. But I want to hear his voice, and it fills me with comfort and peace. When father is not at home, it seems to me that a part of us is far away. And it hurts me. But when we are all at home, we are never bored. We make jokes, go shopping, and visit our friends and relatives.

We have two pets at home. They are a dog—his name is Max, and a kitten—his name is Levka. They are still very small. The dog is only three months old, and the kitten is two. But in spite of their age, they have become a part of our family, and we can't imagine our life without them.

Harmony with nature in general is also very essential. Nature is our mother and to live in harmony with it is our duty. We must protect nature in every possible way; we must help it; we must first think and then intervene in its life. People must always have in mind the consequence of their activities, so as not to destroy nature's fragile links. People who live in harmony with nature never offend it; they always enjoy its beauty. Nature is admired all year round—in spring, when it wakes up from its long winter sleep, when trees and bushes put on fresh leaves, when gardens are blooming and birds are singing their wonderful songs. In summer, we enjoy fields and gardens full of flowers, we watch insects at work, bees collecting nectar, butterflies fluttering from flower to flower, dragonflies dancing their magic dance in the sunshine. In winter, we are charmed by sparkling snow and brilliant stars shining in

the dark skies. The snow and trees covered with snow seem unreal under the magic light of a full moon on a frosty winter night. All these magic changes of nature fill my soul with love, peace and harmony. I am so grateful for my Mother Nature that it makes my life happy and enjoyable.

But as soon as nature's harmony is destroyed by man, the consequences of it can be horrible. In this connection I can't help but mention the Chernobyl explosion that broke out in the spring of 1986. I was not born yet at that time, but I know about it quite well, as at present, all the people of my land have to live through its consequences. My native land suffered greatly. About 23 percent of the Belarusian territory is contaminated with radioactive elements. People can't grow crops in these areas; they can't gather mushrooms or berries in the forests, either. Life itself has become impossible there, as an invisible but very insidious danger is everywhere. Many people left their homes and had to start their life anew. A lot of them died or became invalids. The tragedy is going on. Radiation penetrated into our soil, water and air. Many people have already suffered from the radiation, but what is worse, our children and grandchildren will suffer, too, from the irresponsible action taken by their grandfathers. And I am so afraid for my future life and for the lives of my children.

To live in harmony with your inner self is not less important than to live in harmony with other people and nature. I understand it in the following way. If a person has to make a very important choice to find a way out of a difficult situation, he should listen to his inner voice. He should understand his inner world. If he is a harmonious person, his choice will be right. He will make no mistakes. We should follow the call of our heart more often, then we won't make tragic mistakes, because we are a part of nature and nature won't let us down. But we must keep our eyes and ears and heart open to it.

I am sure that if harmony prevails in the world, our planet will live a peaceful and happy life without wars, diseases and hunger. Children will have a happy childhood, while their parents and grandparents will lead a quiet life.

Let harmony prevail in the world. This is my greatest desire.



Harmony

by Liat Margalit

age 18, Israel

“The wolf also should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together” (Isaiah 11:6).

Coming from the tough reality dictated by the everyday life of the Middle East, writing an essay about harmony is a great challenge. For the last two years, we have been living an ongoing, daily, and some would even say, chronic war between two peoples sharing a land—or at least two nations that are supposed to share a common land, Palestinians and Israelis. And yet, things weren’t always like this. Once, we too knew the meaning of true harmony and coexistence. Instead of writing a definition of what harmony is, I would like to tell you about an experience I had—a story that on days like these sounds almost imaginary, and yet might bring some hope.

In the year 1998 I became active in a program called Seeds of Peace, a youth movement that brings Arab and Israeli teenagers together for a summer camp in the State of Maine [in the United States]. The aim of this movement is to allow coexistence to take place on neutral ground, while the teenagers get to know each other and re-humanize the face of what had once been called “the enemy”. Seeds of Peace became not only a summer camp for me, it became a way of life. I therefore made a decision. I chose to remain an active member and bring more people together from both sides to terms of understanding. That was the beginning of a personal journey, which allowed me to explore what is called “the other side” and its culture, a culture that was hidden from me throughout my entire life.

I have so many stories to tell, but I chose to write about this one, since the atmosphere was indeed one of harmony and true love. Allow me to take you three years back.

The time is Christmas Eve of 1999. The place is the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem. The sights are glorious; the sounds are wonderful. The new millennium

is soon to arrive. Hopes for peace are flowing within people's hearts. I don't think I can find enough words to describe the sights I witnessed. Hundreds if not thousands of people from all cultures, all nations, and all religions came to the Church of the Nativity from all over the world, some because of their own faith, and others in order to observe.

Among all of those people, you could find me, too, standing within the crowd, a Jewish teenager who never dreamt she would be standing on the square of the church. I was there as part of a group of young, brave people who decided they wanted to live the dream of the forever promised peace, who decided they have the will and power to fulfill it. Along with my fellow Seeds of Peace, in a group consisting of Jews, Christians and Muslims, we stood there hand in hand, arm in arm, and within ourselves, heart to heart.

I remembered the words of prophet Isaiah taken from the Bible, which was said thousands of years ago. All of a sudden, those words became a reality. Palestinians and Israelis CAN live together; Palestinians and Israelis CAN love one another. And when I think about harmony, and those words come to my mind, I see this picture of myself with my Palestinian friends, on that Christmas night—this is harmony.

The ability to coexist and live peacefully with each other—we learnt from one another, we educated one another, we understood each other. We found out things we didn't know before. I know from experience that we can live in harmony. We can achieve a world in which every individual and every nation can freely express their individual qualities, while living in harmony with one another and with all life on earth, by reaching mutual comprehension, and most importantly, by respecting one another.

I will continue my efforts to bring together as many people as possible here in my region, and help them through my experience and stories to accomplish a dialogue. This is something I have been doing for the last four years of my life, and I don't plan to stop, despite all difficulties, and despite criticism I get from people who'd rather fight in order to achieve their goals. I plan to go on until one day, if not I, then my kids will live in peace and harmony. My kids will know that what is called the enemy has a face; what we have thought to be a monster is a human being, just like me, just like everyone else. And hopefully, one day, when I have kids, they too will stand with their Palestinian friends in the Church of the Nativity, within a crowd of people coming from all over the world, UNITED.



theme 2003

My vision for the future

What are your hopes and dreams for your future and the future of our world?



Regarding the Soul – Love Changes Ephemeral into Eternal

by Teodora Mihoc

age 15, Romania

Human society has always been in evolution. By saying this, I don't mean only physical and material evolution, but also the evolution of the soul. I want to draw attention to the difference between the first two kinds of evolution and the last one. Physical and material progress can be continued through the generations. It started several million years ago and it still goes on. However the evolution of the soul is a special progress that each person has to begin individually. In this case, one has to choose for oneself the best solution.

I have to express my hopes and dreams for myself and for the world, but I have the same message for both, because the whole world and I are all human beings.

The whole world is so large that I really have to analyze it step by step. I feel that something is missing and I want to find the piece that fills the empty space. Nowadays, society has lots of qualities: so much intelligence and so many scientific and technical achievements. It has reached an amazingly high level on the scale of progress. People live in a much more comfortable way now than in the past; they have increased in knowledge, and have such interesting and smart concepts about things in the world and about existence, that it is very hard indeed to comprehend them all in one's mind.

However there are also lots of defects: huge poverty, starvation, lots of wars and murders, and plenty of wrongdoing. The list can continue for hundreds of pages and still come to no end. But this is only one of the aspects of the world: the social state. This is based on material things. There are so many defects in the world because people don't care about each other, because so many of them look for perfect happiness on Earth. Most of them don't have any idea about what life means for them. Most of them have never tried to find a reason for this earthly life. They have their ephemeral things that create an ephemeral state of comfort for their ephemeral bodies. For them, love means a carnal and ephemeral desire of their bodies and minds,

life is a space where they make a lot of fuss about almost nothing and, after all that, they have to die. Most of them have no God, no principles, and no values for good and evil. People do not see the need for true love and compassion. Human beings have come to think that selfishness and possessiveness are their natural rights. The world appears to be making incessant progress that proclaims the value of the human being. But, as it seems, it only proclaims the qualities of an animal that is able to think, an evolving animal with an amazingly developed mind. The soul can create space for the mind, but the mind cannot do the same for the soul. That is what the world shows us.

I wish that people would realize their need for God. I wish they would see how much love can bring them. In my opinion, every problem of the world can be solved by true love between people. I wish people would love each other in the noblest way. This is what I wish for them, this is what I wish for me. But as love needs no plans, I don't know how I will ever reach my aim. But if it ever happens, I will really be able to call myself and the whole world "happy".



Serenity of Our Life

by Miranti Daniar

age 19, Indonesia

What is my dream and hope for my future and the future of our world? When I read about this topic, only one thing came up in my mind: serenity of our life.

If you live where I live, there is nothing you want more than to see things to go back to normal, not to be afraid anymore to go outside, and not to see more and more riots everywhere you go. The economic crisis in 1997 put my country in a very deep, dark hole and caused nothing but suffering. And the effect of this economic crisis spread to all aspects of life just like a disease.

There are so many incidents that have happened in my country since the crisis. Every day I hear about people getting murdered, demonstrations turning into riots, military crackdowns against communities, controversy between different religions or clans, politicians arguing about the best political movement, and recently I heard how the government is trying to subjugate the movement called Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) in Aceh, which has already sacrificed many human lives. People get depressed because of the difficulties of life. To be honest, I can say there are lots of people who have nothing to eat tomorrow and don't have a home. I guess because of that, people can now easily hurt each other and no longer pay attention to their faith. People get mad because of the situation and don't know whom to blame. Facing this situation is like a never ending story. Each human tends to be selfish and tries to fill their needs no matter what, even if it means one has to steal from someone else, or even worse, kill someone else. All they know is that they have to eat and feed their family, and this is a reality that happens where I live.

I'm sure what happened in my country also happens in other places. I'm sure no one wants to be in this kind of situation, no one wants to feel this suffering. But how can we heal these diseases if we still fight each other instead of helping each other? I think unity is the most important component to build serenity in our life. I'm here to encourage you to think about how we should be more appreciative of others and

try not to be selfish. How can we not be selfish? I think by being grateful for what we have. When we feel grateful about ourselves and what we have, we'll never feel unsatisfied. We always have something to be grateful for; basically, I think we should be grateful because we are born and given a chance by God to live.

After we are able to be grateful for what we have, then we should start to look around us and realize that there are so many humans who are not as lucky as we are. Helping others is always such a beautiful thing to do. Have you ever felt that when you ease others' pain, there's warmth in your heart, and you feel the happiness of seeing someone smile because of you... I think that is the most wonderful feeling in the world!!

I imagine all people appreciating and helping each other. I imagine people in this world becoming united, and there will be no more wars between nations. I imagine the Earth as a peaceful place to live, where every human can live with serenity and feel no fear to live day by day.

I hope my dream for the future of our world will soon become a reality, because I'm sure that deep inside our heart, no matter who we are, we all miss the peacefulness on Earth. I'm sure we are compassionate human beings that God created to love each other. I know we are, and can make this Earth a better place to live.

theme 2004

Making the most of my qualities

Each person has their own unique qualities.

What are your positive attributes? What do you like about yourself?

How can you best make use of your qualities for the benefit of the society?



I Am the Music Maker

by Tomohiro Alexander Nibe

age 13, Japan/United States

My mom says I talk too much, I like to be the center of attention and my voice booms. The very qualities that drive my family crazy are the ones that may help me achieve my dreams. Looking at my reflection, I see a unique person who loves tradition, admires the Classics, and loathes conformity. When I stand on stage, I feel like I'm on the top of the world. The people in the audience smile at me and I believe that I have the ability to make them happy. My dream is to inspire people of the world with music the same way that music has inspired me.

We are the music makers,

We are the dreamers of dreams ...

We are the movers and shakers

Of the world forever, it seems.

— Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy Ode: "We are the Music Makers"

When I first heard a performance by Pavarotti, I knew deep down that I wanted to be like him. His voice inspired me: I felt hopeful about the future; I felt excited; I felt motivated to pursue my dreams. Sometimes, by seeing or hearing something or someone so wonderful, we feel that we can do anything. A great work of art or an extraordinary performance can fill us with such awe and be so uplifting that we walk away believing that we too can achieve our potential. I had the privilege to sing on stage as a choirboy with the Hungarian Opera company during their performance of "Tosca." Backstage, the butterflies churned in my stomach but when I saw the audience before me and felt the presence of the opera members about me, I suddenly felt confident. This is where I wanted to be. I think that I can combine my stage presence with my voice and love of music to inspire other people and bring them hope and happiness.

I hadn't considered a career in entertainment seriously until I read the story of Eric Liddell. Eric's family expected him to become a missionary but when he realized that he had the gift of running, he wanted to be a runner. He made the best use of his talent by preaching to the crowds who gathered at his races. My teachers expect that I will use my bilingual and bicultural background in a career as a translator. During the past year, I performed in several concerts and musicals that have made me realize that I want to be a singer, perhaps in opera or live theater. These days, most entertainment is so impersonal. I, on the other hand, feel a need to connect with real people. The Internet can connect us but it is void of emotion. By singing or acting on stage, I can share my feelings and I can communicate with people on a more personal level. The theater would be a great forum for my voice and personality.

Theater is not my only option. As everyone tells me, I talk a lot. Maybe, because I'm bilingual, I have twice as much to say! Growing up in Japan with an American mother and Japanese father has allowed me to develop my language skills and given me plenty of chances to practice translating. Talking too much and wanting the center stage can be a real advantage, as I found during the Children's World Water Forum in Osaka. Even though I attended as an observer, within a few hours I found myself translating for some of the meetings. The participants came from 58 different countries and I provided a small bridge between Japan and the rest of the world. Somehow, I ended up on center stage and organized our members into singing a round of "We Are the World" (Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, 1985). At that moment, I felt I had really accomplished something that touched many people in a personal way. I knew that I could use my voice, my music and my ego to bring joy and happiness to others.

Music and theatre are universal forms of communication that unite the people of the world. Rhythms, sounds, lyrics and movement can carry a message across all borders. When there is hardship or heartache, music can comfort and encourage the listener. For me, it provides an escape from my worries. I have found so much inspiration in the musical arts, opera and traditional music. I hope that someday, by combining my stage presence, my voice, my love of music and my bicultural skills, I can inspire the dreamers and bring them hope and happiness. I want to be the one who moves and shakes the world with music.



With Love

by Hang Su

age 24, China

I had just come back from Barcelona where I sat in the street to do portraits for passers-by. Back to work in the orphanage in Macau, I read an advertisement: "Write an essay on making the most of your qualities, and how you can make use of them for the benefit of this world."

From working in this orphanage as a volunteer for two years, I would like to say: I do things with love.

I remember very well the day when I first visited this orphanage: in one big room, a group of kids were dancing cheerfully; on the other side, another group were reading loudly by following a teacher; in the corner, the elders were helping prepare the dinner table...I have never seen a picture as harmonized as this before. After knowing that most workers here were volunteers and it needed more helpers, I joined in this warm family right away. I do drawings with kids: I teach them basic techniques, while explaining to them that the first important thing for drawing is not techniques but heart. By doing this, they are able to put more zest in their work, so that I receive more lovely masterpieces which really fascinate me and melt me. We run a riddle competition: every time, I feel like I myself pass through a brainstorming, and when I announce the result, I see there is on that little winner's face an expression of cute rapture, which I am sure appears on my face as well. I mingle with all the kids here. I love them. If you saw such pleasant pictures, would you think of these kids as orphans?

Every day there are people coming in to adopt children, while there are orphans being sent to us as well. Love decorates the world, while hatred destroys it at the same time. I am reminded of my recent trip to Barcelona. I was there learning portraits from one of my Spanish friends. I met a lot of talented street artists, and the best one I have ever seen was a 16-year-old boy, who, unfortunately, became an orphan after the Madrid train bomb explosions not long ago. When he was drawing, I observed a pair of quivering, glittering eyes. Those were with love, obviously.

One day, when I was thinking hard where to erase some lines on my work, I heard a soft voice: “It is pretty good...I see you draw it with your heart.” It was him: “That is the most important. You have done that.” I thanked him and passed him my impression of his artwork. He smiled and nodded, “Art needs love, life needs love...” If you were in my position, would you match this respectful boy with the victim of a terror attack?

The current world shows us a kind of contrast: love versus hatred, peace versus violence. The elements on each side may be extinguished or fortified. If we keep adding good elements in this contest, we can send away more and more bad ones. I want to optimize my positive attributes in this evolution, to transfer love to others. I plant love in every song I sing with children; I transfer love in every stroke I make in portraits. I want to share my love with others, then others can share theirs with more and more “others.” I believe inner sunshine warms the heart of the owner, and moreover, of all that come in contact with it. If I love others, they will love me in return. That is one tiny step of adding good elements, but it is essential. It is like forwarding an email: maybe you can only transfer it to friends you know, but never ignore the multiplying power—there are friends behind your friends, so there are enormous forces for fighting against negative components in the world.

I know that I am not alone. There are so many volunteers and young people, using our hands and love, helping this orphanage or that organization. Pairs of quivering, glittering eyes, here and there. We are together sending and circulating positive elements. Not only in Macau, not only in Barcelona. Universal benevolence beams.

I go out for shopping for the next week with one of my colleagues. We buy that beggar in the park a lunch as usual. On the way back to the orphanage, we already hear the joyful songs ahead of us. High up in the blue, a lark that is soaring towards the gauzy cloud is singing, as if in choir. We are embraced by peace and harmony. That is an up-and-coming panorama of the world: by the power of love, no violence or terror will rock the world, no misfortune or defects will befall humanity.



theme 2005

Caring for our planet

We human beings are enabled to live through the blessings of nature and relations with other people.

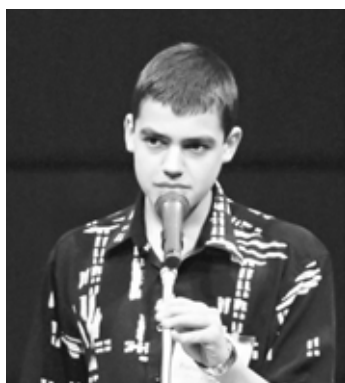
However, human activities are harming our planet in various ways.

How can we build a global society in which everyone can enjoy a good and happy life while caring for our planet?

My Job Is to Feed My Hungry Neighbor

by Burunciuc Mihai

age 14, Moldova



The Planet is everything that surrounds us, but one cannot care about all of the millions of issues and problems that occur around the world. It is humanly impossible to suffer for every starving child, every hunted animal or every suffering living being in the world. This is why my philosophy is not to concentrate on helping the entire world, but to focus on lending a hand to my friends, neighbors and community. I improve the Planet by improving a tiny part of it.

Several years ago I was convinced that solving problems is the job of my parents, governments or some authorities, but not mine. I believed that being a simple 13-year-old guy, I have no power to make any difference. But it happened that a friend of mine invited me to participate in Youth Millennium Action, which was an international project aimed at motivating children all over the world to solve global problems at the local level. I will always remember our first team meeting where our group coordinator told us, "Maybe some of you came here hoping that you will change the world in one day. Dreamers, forget about this. We don't have enough money, power and influence to help the entire planet. But we do have resources to help our community. Then let's start here, help here, make a difference here and right now." This is how we started to make differences.

Our first project was to clean up the banks of our local river, to build some benches and plant trees there. We worked for two months, and honestly speaking, we didn't transform this abandoned place into some sort of fancy beach, but obviously it turned out to be a nicer place than it was before we came there. The second project initiated by our team was aimed at helping our local school for blind children. When we met our mates from that school, we found out that most of them hadn't read any book in their lives; because of lack of money the school couldn't buy any books or newspapers printed in the Braille alphabet. Our team decided to help those children in the simplest way we could. All we had to do was to buy some audio tape, borrow

dozens of books from the library, read them aloud and record everything. Those blind children couldn't read, but they could listen to fascinating stories articulated by us. When the big day came and we handed those tapes to our mates, I couldn't decide who was happier: our team or our new friends. They were thankful for such a gift and care, while we were glad to realize how valuable our work is.

We started our project as a game—some sort of entertainment—but step by step it became real work for us. Finally I started to realize that I am able to change something, and that solving problems is my job, too. Also, I learned that the world is composed of individuals, and if every person will somehow ameliorate his or her community it will result in a global improvement—it will make my and your life better.

At the end of the project our coordinator gave us small cards where she wrote, “Dear dreamer, if in the future you will try to feed the hungry world, first of all, don't forget to feed your hungry neighbor. You must think globally, but act locally.” This experience changed me in a way I cannot explain. I didn't become some sort of Mother Teresa, but still it transformed me into a nice guy who doesn't forget to feed his neighbor, and through this I am changing the world.



Healing the World: How We Can Care for Our Planet

by Nusrat Haque

age 18, Bangladesh

*“Heal the world
Make it a better place
For you and for me
And the entire human race”
— Michael Jackson*

I watched in awe as the thirty-eight people chorused this in unison, till all I could hear was the echo bouncing off the white-washed walls of my classroom. The program ended there and I slowly started my way back home, the lyrics of the song still ringing in my ears. I looked around me and what I saw came as a sharp blow. The roads looked battered and defeated with all the grimy waste thrown over them—there was yesterday’s Coke can, a sandwich wrapper, plastic bags, all meshing together and forming a solid bond that no amount of scraping could clean. For the first time I saw the overflowing drains crying to be repaired and cleaned. This was the road that I had walked past for the last twelve years, always running to reach class on time, always ignoring what was happening to the surroundings and always thinking that there were other people who could do something about it. Now, I realized how naïve and foolish I was to think that way—how a small effort from me could change people’s perspective about our entire surroundings.

In a country like Bangladesh where people receive almost no education on creating awareness for the planet, it wasn’t surprising that people ignored caring for the earth. I knew it was time for me to step in and lend a hand to really make this world a better place.

The next day at school I knew what I had to do. With the help of my principal we launched our first program; anyone who saved twenty drink cans and submitted them to the school cafeteria would receive a free ticket to the water park which was newly constructed. I held my breath for the next few days, and it looked as if no one

really took this seriously and no one bothered. But then, after almost a week, we started receiving the cans and it seemed some of them had been picked up from the roads, too. This meant people were littering fewer cans all over the place. I was excited and knew this was going to work after all. The next day I found myself delivering a speech in the morning assembly on creating a society where we would act like literate civilians and would put a stop to polluting the environment. The principal then reinforced the use of bins, and anyone caught littering would have to stay an extra hour after school helping the cleaners clean the school.

I started with my school and slowly worked my way to the area where I lived. With the help of my father and the Rotary Club, where he was the former president, we launched door to door waste collection. People now did not have to go all the way to a certain point in a field and dump their waste from where the government trucks would pick them up sometimes even a week later. Now all they had to do was put their waste at their front doors, from where the collectors would collect it, and then it would be disposed of in the far away waste lands where it would be recycled. Suddenly one could feel the change in the area—there was less of the pungent smell in the air that used to come from the waste land pits. The area looked much cleaner and one could actually walk past the fields without holding their breath.

I continued my campaign on creating a better society and encouraged the various clubs like the Rotary Club and the Inner Wheel to start working on various programs so that globally they could start creating a better and healthy society. Pamphlets were made encouraging people not to use plastic bags; medical institutes were requested not to dump their waste directly into the nearby rivers but to make maximum use of their incinerators. My school organized a student rally where students marched all over the town with banners demanding a green society where they could breathe fresh and clean air.

From that point on, it grew stronger. People responded more to these programs, and suddenly it was not only me concerned about our environment and the society. I knew it was still a far cry from the time when the whole country would stand against polluting the environment, but someone had to start somewhere. I guess I just started and I would always look upon the time when we can all sing out...

“Heal the world

Make it a better place

For you and for me

And the entire human race”

...and feel the pride for making it truly a better place for the entire human race.



theme 2006

Learning to live together: Promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies

In our modern world, people of different nationality, race or religion often find themselves living and working side by side.

How can peoples of diverse cultures and backgrounds live together peacefully?

How can young people contribute to the creation of dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies?

Making Friends with Diversity in Globalized Societies

by Adam Moscoe

age 14, Canada



“Who are these people? They are taking our jobs. They talk funny, they smell funny.”¹ “They” are your new neighbours.

As the globalization of society accelerates, and cultural barriers are collapsing as did the Berlin Wall, people of diverse backgrounds find themselves ‘in the same boat’ at work and in life. The need to integrate, not segregate, and respect, not just tolerate, is ever apparent. If today’s youth hope to cultivate a culture of equality and collaborative prosperity on a global scale, they must learn from a very young age the importance of accepting one another’s differences. Meanwhile, bringing together diverse youth is a huge challenge, but I believe that if we work together, today’s youth can achieve the dream of creating “dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies,” hereafter known as The Dream.

Equity means “giving equality to all citizens regardless of faith, colour, ethnicity... sexual orientation...”² Similarly, healthy diversity requires sensitivity to another’s needs, desires and feelings. It demands civility, the protection of minorities, and peaceful conflict resolution. Diverse societies create environments in which people can achieve their full potential. The Dream will be realized when humans of all colours of the rainbow accept that there is no perfection, no “Master Race.” Finally, we must have faith in today’s children to be catalysts for change.

In Harper Lee’s novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Jem and Scout Finch had the potential to reverse “time-honoured” prejudices between Blacks and Whites, and contribute to the building of momentum that fuelled Martin Luther King Jr.’s Civil Rights Movement. The children also learned two valuable lessons, which they practise and preach every day: to see the world from another’s point of view and to treat others as you would want to be treated.

Meanwhile, how can youth actively strive for a culture of empathy and respect? I firmly believe that the path to The Dream lies in unbiased education and outreach.

Schools have more potential to inspire change than most educators realize. They range from close-knit, xenophobic centres in predominately White towns to houses of extreme multiculturalism in urban areas. This is especially true in Canada, with its high immigration quotas. For example, after a murderous act of racism, one Vancouver school adopted the acronym ROARS (Respect, Ownership, Attitude, Responsibility and Safety) to promote social justice. Here, schools have a choice: allow ignorance to spark conflict or transform these junior enemies into friends, promising a brighter future. The latter is where I come in, to lead by example.

I am currently developing a program, which I hope will inspire youth all over the world. The project is called “Planet Dynamix” and is founded upon the belief that through intercultural dialogue, we can attain harmonious coexistence, the path to peace in a shrinking world. The three stages of the program are to be integrated into the classroom and be complemented by a marketing and communications campaign to raise awareness among all citizens.

Exploration (kindergarten through second grade): This stage introduces young children to the wonders of the world. Emphasis is placed on the socialization process and breaking the barriers between visible minorities through play. Students will also explore music and stories from a variety of cultures.

Development (third through eighth grade): Students will develop healthy debating skills by actively discussing current events and exploring religious beliefs and traditions. The possibilities for cross-cultural activities are endless: visits from community spiritual leaders, a multicultural book club, a music and food festival, sports teams in which participants are united towards a common goal, leadership retreats to foster co-operation, and a pen-pal program between two distant nations, allowing students to see the world from another angle. Also, the core academic curriculum will incorporate studying international art, literature, history, geography and languages.

Leadership (ninth through twelfth grade): By this point, students will have made friends with peers of diverse backgrounds and are ready to take on leadership roles, under the direction of a mentor, by organizing events that promote social tolerance and making their unique voices heard. These catalysts for change will be strong enough to overcome adversity while pursuing The Dream.

My vision for “Planet Dynamix” is to shape today’s youth into tomorrow’s sensitive leaders. It will rely on financial and political support and on our educators’ dedication to invest in a better future, in the midst of so much poverty, hatred, disease and counterproductive policy-making. Through encouragement and experiential

learning, stereotypes can be squashed and racially diverse children will live and work together, setting an example for the world to emulate. They will recognize a Muslim's need to pray, a Sikh's need to carry his *kirpan*, how to deal with tension between Israeli and Palestinian teenagers, how to strengthen school spirit and unity...

Are you ready for change?

1. Cheney, Peters. "Operation Colour Blind..." *The Globe and Mail*, 10 June, 2006, F4.
2. Source: www.takingitglobal.org



Let's Drink Black-and-White, Discrimination-Free, Multi-Cultural Coffee!

by Grosu Luciana

age 18, Romania

Tolerance and diversity can be achieved only by togetherness. In every neighborhood, an “inter-cultural café” should be created. Here youth of different nationalities should be encouraged to promote their country’s traditions and culture with music concerts, art-expositions, dance and theatre. These events can be organized at least once a month. The spectacles would be free and every young person, regardless of race, should be allowed to get involved or simply attend.

The “inter-cultural café” should also organize writing, painting, singing, graffiti and sport contests every week-end. The contests may have a certain theme inspired by one country’s culture or a general message like “peace”, “communication”, or “tolerance”. There will be no individual participants, but only teams. Youth with different cultural backgrounds will thus learn to collaborate and understand each other better. The contests will offer real prizes—if not money, subscriptions to gym clubs, free access to the internet, or tickets to concerts and cinema.

These centers should also offer classes for the students who find school difficult. The classes should be free for all those who consent to form a “study-group” with a member of another nationality. Also, youth could become teachers themselves and teach their national language. Allowing youth to learn from other youth would represent a new and original idea and could attract many people. Students should then have the opportunity to take a real language exam and obtain a certificate.

The “inter-cultural café” should also offer free video/audio counseling for youth. Every person will have access to a personal account on a computer. Alone, in a special room, youth will speak about their problems in front of a camera. The counselor’s response will be videotaped, too, and sent to their personal account the next day. However, youth won’t be able to view the video, unless they will first consent to respond to another help message sent by another teen. The computer program will “match” youth of different ethnicities, thus making them communicate and help each other. However, all the video messages should be checked by a specialist, and

youth who use bad language or give inappropriate replies should lose their right to free counseling. It is known that youth often find it hard to speak in front of an adult counselor. At the same time, many of them also dislike writing because they don't know the language very well or because they are too nervous to find the right words. If they choose between video or only audio messages (for anonymity), youth would speak freely and also learn to respect each other.

Many youth search for a job. The "inter-cultural café" should offer a list of job opportunities for young people and also give recommendations for those who want to be hired. These "recommendations" should be taken into account by all companies as a guarantee that the young person is serious, reliable and honest. In order to obtain the right to a recommendation, a young person should first volunteer three months in a project against racial discrimination or participate in a teaching-learning program.

Every project against racial discrimination started by youth with the help of an adult mentor should have three steps: an "awareness-raising campaign", "new solutions and ideas" and the "communication and interaction" concrete part. The awareness-raising campaign will give youth the chance to design posters and create slogans in order to support the cause they chose to fight for. They should be free to choose the public places where they prefer to talk (schools, malls, clubs, etc) and they should also be allowed to speak on radio and/or TV. The publicity may attract a lot of young people, as it is known that they associate the idea of mass-media appearances with success and wealth. The second part implies that the youth group comes up with an original proposal for combating racism and discrimination. This idea can be that of a national/international project for youth, a suggestion for a change in the educational system, a demand for a new law to be passed, etc. Youths' ideas would be published, and the authorities should consider putting them into practice. Young people have a lot of ideas, but because they feel nobody listens to them, they don't express their opinions. The "inter-cultural café" should prove that youth can determine real changes. The last part of the project will give youth the power to decide what kind of event they would like to organize in order to raise attention to the need to end violence and discrimination. This event can be a festival, a protest meeting, a debate, etc., but it should involve as many young people as possible and it should make them start a dialogue.

The "inter-cultural cafés" may also organize discussions and invite youth of different races to participate. The debates should be moderated by a youth communication specialist, but they should be informal and easy to follow even for a young

person who doesn't know the language very well. Basically, youth will be asked a set of questions and then allowed to talk freely. In order to attract youth, the moderators will have to state that this is "the right place for telling people exactly what you think". However, the moderator will have to put forth as many questions as needed in order to find out the real reasons for the youths' anger, hate, frustration or pain. These debates could help the authorities and the NGOs better understand the problems that affect youth and prepare new strategies.

Finally, every "inter-cultural café" should help victims of discrimination by appealing to the institutions or authorities that can solve the young person's problems. For example, schools will become responsible for students that say they have been bullied; the city's police should intervene in the case of youth being victims of street violence; hospitals, enterprises or even public places like restaurants or discos should take measures in order to end discrimination.

After debates, coffee and soft drinks should be offered.



theme 2007

The role of media and information and communication technologies in building a peaceful world

TV, radio, Internet and other forms of media have great influence in shaping our lives and society.

What should be the role of the media and communication technologies in the future?

How would you make use of these various tools of communication to help create a better world?



Unity in Diversity: Media's Role in the Making of a Peaceful World

by Sneh Shah

age 8, United States

Till some time back, I did not know much about the role of media, but then I spent one whole year in India. Till then I lived in New York. In India, I saw beggars for the first time. I saw how religion can divide people. When I was in India I came to know the words *communication* and *media*. Also in India, everyone would ask me what I was. Me being a girl, being a human being was important but still people wanted to know whether I was Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew, etc.

India is the biggest democracy in the world. I belong to Gujarat, a region where lots of people got killed some time back. The locals did not like them, because they were not following a specific religion. I love traveling and have family all over the world. I have been to Europe, Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, and many other places.

Wherever I have been in different parts of the world, language is different, the colour of people is different, the way they eat, and the way they pray is different. However all of them have two eyes, one nose, two ears. They are the same. Only the way they think and behave is different. Also all of them have newspapers, television and radio. In some places like rural India, internet is still not there.

There is diversity all around. The media can help bring out the unity from the diversity and thereby make a peaceful world.

For example, the media can do stories of how a Muslim and Christian are best friends, how they celebrate Eid and Christmas together. I think television cartoons and animation films can tell us stories about how different countries and cultures are and make us appreciate it. When I had not gone out of New York, I had no clue about various cultures and various festivals. The media can make us more tolerant of other cultures, countries and their people. If we know that it is perfectly normal for Muslims to pray in public or to dance with open swords during a Moharram procession, we will not be shocked when we see that for the first time.

Muslims think Christians are too forward thinking and they are very rigid about religion. However if we show that Christians and Muslims can be best friends and that they have a lot of things in common between them, it will bring more tolerance. When tolerance comes, peace comes automatically.

I know that a peaceful world can come when there are no wars. But there will be no wars only when there is tolerance, when we know that Muslims cover their heads because of their history of invasion. They wear robes not because they are Jihaadis but because it is so hot in the Middle East.

Hindus do not eat beef because they worship cows as holy. We should not laugh at them because there are historical stories and proof of how this worship came into practice. Muslims don't eat pork. Christians eat turkey.

We can have a peaceful world if the media tells us stories of friendship, of compassion, of love and of trust between different people.

Recently my family read about a Muslim saint. Saibaba, a holy and famous saint where 50,000 people visit every day at his temple was a Muslim, but even today most of his followers are Hindus and Christians. This is because Saibaba was very secular and he was like Martin Luther King, who said don't judge people by their color but by their character. I am sure there are saints like Saibaba everywhere, including Iraq and Bosnia and Russia, and the media can tell us about it.

Community or colour does not matter. Why should I be treated differently because I am not white? Because my best friend is black and I am brown? The media should give more stories that help the world understand that behind every white, black and brown there is red blood only—that being yellow, white, black or brown does not matter. We are all one.

Everyone calls me a global citizen. I am proud of it. That is because I love Mexican and Chinese food. My best family holidays happen in Europe. My family is Indian and I live in America.

The media needs to highlight the fact that it is not only technology that has to be global. Why is it that we can see the Disney or Pogo channel all over the world but we cannot see the same love among different people in the world? If the media plays an active, positive role in highlighting simple truths of life, a peaceful world will become a reality and not simply remain an essay topic.



Amplifying Peace Across Borders

by Anna Rosario A. Elicaño

age 24, Philippines

I met two of my closest friends at an international youth conference. Although the three of us went home to places with different zip codes, we were still able to talk to each other every week afterwards. Thanks to the Internet, a computer, and a headset, our long distance talks—just like our friendship—have remained completely free.

Never before have media and communication technologies been as personal and encompassing as they are today. When my parents were teenagers, what they knew about their Asian neighbors came from an encyclopedia and black and white television. I imagine that the information they got was general, maybe even stereotypical. Four decades later, despite the oceans between us, I have the benefit of knowing foreign friends better. I can easily direct them to the website of my favorite local band. They can, just as easily, tell me how their day at work went via instant messenger.

I celebrate the intimate connection brought about by media and communication technologies because it allows me to understand people and their cultures more. This is the same reason why I think my generation has a better capacity for bringing about a more peaceful world. Media and communication technologies have exposed us to a wide and multi-cultural range of information. If hatred and prejudice is bred by ignorance, then it follows that information and understanding can bring about compassion and empathy.

I am inspired by the story of a youth organization in the Philippines which initiated a video conference between students from a school in Metro Manila and a school in Mindanao. Seeing each other for the first time on widescreens, panels of student representatives from each school spoke to each other in real time. They talked about their favorite classes and fun extra-curricular activities. They talked about the conflict in Mindanao and what they thought about peace. More importantly, they talked about their first impressions of each other and how so much had changed after just

30 minutes of the video conference. And as they did that, their teachers, parents, fellow schoolmates, and communities watched.

I am certain that not a few lives were changed that day. For the students in Metro Manila, Muslim Mindanaoans in the south would no longer be compartmentalized into labels such as “separatists” or “terrorists”. As for the students in Mindanao, Metro Manila is no longer embodied by soldiers who can turn them and their families into refugees in an instant. What students from both sides saw were children not unlike themselves. We can only hope that what began with that 30-minute video conference can continue on with a lifetime of understanding and truthful connection.

What happens when media and communication technologies are used with evil intent? The result is disastrous. Media is, after all, just a tool. In the wrong hands, misinformation and “hate speech” can be easily spread. Peacemakers of today and of the future have to capitalize on these tools to amplify the truth as loud as they can, across borders. Tony Blair, Britain’s former prime minister, aptly describes the new struggle: “...because mass media and communication convey powerful images in an instant across the globe, it dictates that struggles are fought as much through propaganda, ideas and values as through conventional means, military or diplomatic.”

It is clear that, in this “information age”, peacemakers are not those who remain silent on the sidelines for the sake of harmony. Bono does it with his music and anonymous writers in Iran do it with their blogs. It is a relief to know that, with media and communication technologies, there are several platforms for peacemakers to speak out.

Each generation has its peacemakers. What this generation will see are peacemakers who will not only sow peace but *amplify* it across borders, empowered by media and communication technologies. Some will speak about specific advocacies. Others, by simply sharing aspects of themselves and their cultures, will foster connection and understanding.

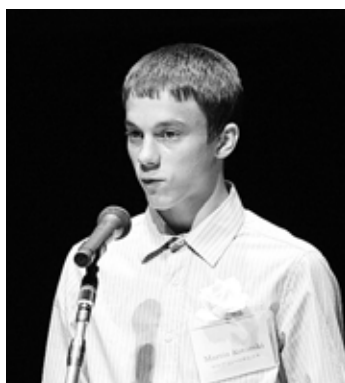
In the information age, the new batch of peacemakers will say that it chooses the Internet, blogs, and television over guns, bombs, and tanks.



theme 2008

**My project to create positive
change in my environment:
How can I foster sustainable
development in my community?**

What are your innovative ideas and concrete plans / projects to address the social, cultural, environmental or economic problems faced by your community?



Joined by a Cookbook

by Martin Kotarski

age 14, Croatia

Society, culture, ecology, economy, citizen responsibility... all words which I, a fourteen-year-old boy, don't know much about. But, a sad friend with no proper food on his table, nice clothes to wear, pocket-money, toys to play with or computer for studying sounds familiar.

One day I came to school and saw that my friend was sad. I asked him about it. He wouldn't tell me at first, but I found out that his father had lost his job and his mother was about to give birth to a new child. He was very depressed because his parents couldn't pay the bills, buy food, or give him money for his school lunch. So he lost some weight, his clothes were worn out and other kids started picking on him. He became aggressive and he fought all the time. He lost his friends and started getting bad marks. He desperately needed help. I wanted to help him but I didn't know how. I had known before about kids with the same problem but I didn't think about it so much till now. Then I came up with an idea for how to solve such problems in my school.

Why don't we make a cookbook with traditional meals cooked by our grandmothers and mothers? We could sell that book and get money for poor people in our school. And not only that, we would bring old meals back to life and throw fattening and unhealthy fast food away. Say hello to delicious food my parents used to eat when they were little. I found a solution for two problems: how to help the poor people and dump fast food.

I knew I couldn't do it without help. I went to the school pedagogue and told her about my idea. Since she is a volunteer for the Red Cross (and she deals with the social problems of school children all the time) she liked the idea. We made an action plan and she put it in motion. She decided to involve students, parents, grandparents and the whole community to collect recipes for the cookbook. She informed teachers and then they threw themselves to work. They motivated children to talk with their grandparents about the forgotten "old ways" and write down

their stories in local dialect. With students' help, the recipe pile became bigger and bigger. Even my friend, an excellent footballer, brought a whole bunch of old recipes. My Croatian teacher, the pedagogue, and the school librarian took on a big part of the whole job—they read the recipes, prepared the dishes, took photographs, wrote an introduction, and all in all, gave their precious time. The National Foundation for Civil Activities, located in the capital of Croatia, stepped in with a donation of 10,000 kuna (\$2,000) for its publication. The Town Hall, Red Cross, Folk Group Zabok, regional newspapers, ecological organizations and some companies gave us a hand, too. After all, Zabok is a Town Friend of Children. That means that it supports all the programs of our schools, creative workshops and sports clubs.

When it was finally published we presented it to the public. The presentation was held in our school on May 30. Some mothers and grandmothers got themselves involved by cooking some old strudels, local cheese and corn cakes and so on. Two couples performed traditional dances and made the event even more special. I had a small part as well. I had to recite a poem. I forgot some of the words, but never mind. I felt great on the stage when they said it had been my idea. The whole bunch of people came to see the cookbook and taste the meals that were served at the end of the presentation. Many people have bought a cookbook as a gift or souvenir and some were trying to cook meals using the recipes. My friend's mother at first bought three cookbooks and then she wanted five more. "It is excellent! I really like the design—the photographs and the way it is written in the local dialect. That's a nice touch. I can almost hear my old grandmother teaching me how to cook," she said. Others agreed with her, so we have sold five hundred cookbooks and collected \$3000.

We raised enough money to help twenty-five needy families of our school friends in our region. My sad friend was happy, too, because his family was one of them. And not only that. We have become aware of the unhealthy food we eat every day and of the forgotten traditional values. Realizing that, we started visiting our grandparents more and enjoying their old stories and meals. Who knows? Maybe we will "dig out" some more good books.



Carrying Life

by Valeria Cortez Vaca Díez

age 18, Bolivia

(originally written in Spanish)

On my way to school, the movies or downtown, wherever I go, I find a worn out view of my hometown, Santa Cruz de la Sierra. There are lots of plastic bags floating in the air and in the middle of public parks, stuck in tree branches and electric wires. These bags are everywhere, because they're distributed in an irrational way. I find myself greatly concerned about the awareness and education of the citizens towards the environment.

Last year, I had the opportunity to participate in an International Student Exchange program, and I lived in Germany for 6 months. The thing that impressed me the most was the people's concern for the environment. Every single family would separate their trash, avoid plastics, and in my host family, they even sought out hobbies somehow related to nature.

If I could do something to help my city, which currently has over 1,500,000 inhabitants and the largest growth rate in Bolivia, I would apply the great environmental values I learned in Germany in an attempt to significantly reduce the excessive use of plastic bags.

Plastic bags have a highly pollutive effect on our environment, because they are made from an oil derivation (a non-renewable resource that is disappearing). These bags take approximately 100 to 400 years to decompose, and in some cases it never happens. In spite of this, between 500 billion and one trillion plastic bags are still being produced each year worldwide, ignoring the fact that these materials increase the risk of developing cancer because of their toxic chemical compounds.

My proposition to help my community consists of discarding plastic bags and providing the inhabitants with environmental care education, promoting the use of fabric bags with the support of students from every school in the city.

The plan consists of training two students from each middle school who would become "*vidalumnos* (life-students)", a nickname to distinguish them from the rest of the students. The "*vidalumnos*" would give speeches for the rest of the students

and teachers in their schools, regarding the need for replacing the plastic bags they usually receive in shops and supermarkets with fabric bags.

The fabric bags can be sponsored by different enterprises, and would be printed with the slogan “*Cargados de Vida* (Carrying Life)”. The middle school students would bring these bags to their families, motivating them to stop the reckless use of plastic bags.

There are around 150,000 middle school students in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in approximately 500 schools.

The project consists of producing 150,000 fabric bags and training 1,000 students (2 per school) who would be the facilitators and would make sure that each student in their school is given one fabric bag with an educational brochure, so they will then bring them home and explain its use to their families. Every facilitator would wear a special T-shirt and cap to be identified. The total budget for this project is USD \$99,500.

Item	Cost per Unit (USD)	Amount	Total (USD)
Facilitator T-Shirt	1.50	1,000	1,500
Facilitator Cap	1.50	1,000	1,500
Facilitator Training	2.00	1,000	2,000
Educational Brochure	0.03	150,000	4,500
Fabric Bag	0.60	150,000	90,000
Total			99,500

The campaign would require the following items:



Carrying Life!

Did you know 1,000,000 plastic bags are produced every minute, and when we trash them they take between 100 and 400 years to decompose—and in some cases this never even happens?



Plastic bags contain toxic chemical compounds that damage our health and our city.

Carrying Life!

Every person needs to carry food and supplies to their homes. This is vital for our family life. That's how we carry a responsibility. That's how we carry life.



We suggest that the next time you go to the market and buy fruit, vegetables or other supplies you carry them in your "Cargados de Vida" bag.

Carrying Life!

Be responsible to your environment. Cooperate in its care.



Follow your course's "vidalumno" instructions, and don't stop using your "Cargados de Vida" bags!

In order to keep the people motivated in the care of our environment, all shops and supermarkets should charge for every plastic bag they give to a customer, and encourage the acquisition of the fabric bags that will be available at a very low price, thanks to the sponsors.

Representatives of the press and public institutions would be invited to the facilitators' training course, in order for them to communicate the importance of using the fabric bags to accomplish sustainable development.

By complying with this project, Santa Cruz de la Sierra would become a clean city with conscious people who are aware of their duty to protect their environment.



theme 2009

The role of science in building a better world

Scientific progress has brought many benefits to humanity, while some applications of science have had adverse impacts.

What kind of science and technology do you think is needed for realizing a more equitable, prosperous and sustainable world for all?



Our Sea, Our Future

by Christ Sospelisa

age 11, Indonesia

In my life, there are some people that inspire me. They are people that come from different backgrounds, but they have in common their spirit to fight for what they believe, and they made a dream come true. People who dedicated themselves to make a better world for everybody else. They are Mahatma Gandhi for his life principle of truth and non-violence, Albert Schweitzer for his care, love and respect for all living things, Thomas Alva Edison, the great inventor of modern science, and Jacques Cousteau for his passionate love for the sea.

The sea is two-thirds of the world. I live in Ambon, the capital of Moluccas province, Indonesia, where the sea is ninety-three percent of the total province. Moluccas has more than ten thousand six hundred kilometers of coastline. Indonesia has eighty-one thousand kilometers of coastline. The sea and the coastal areas play important roles in our small place. We have many kinds of dishes made from sea products. In some areas, fishermen grow seaweeds to export. Sea vehicles are important as transportation infrastructure. Many people are depending on the sea.

But I am surprised to see that not too many people are taking good care of the sea. Many people only take benefit from the sea but give nothing except pollutants and damage in return. It is like the symbiosis of parasitism. There is a lot of garbage, especially plastic garbage, floating, cast along the coast and sinking to the bottom of the sea. I also saw sedimentation of the sea from the impact of deforestation, which damages the beach and coastal life.

I believe we should give something good to the sea as a return thanks for all the delicious food we eat, nice pearl accessories we wear, the wonderful scene it offers, and so on. Then we can continue to get quality sea products and their carried benefits. It is a cycle of life of giving and receiving.

I live in a time when the world is getting old. Pollution, deforestation, the greenhouse effect, climate change, and global warming are words that I often hear. All

those have a direct impact on the quality of life of sea creatures. I want to participate in action to minimize all of them, even though in the future I want to become an oceanographer astronaut.

Currently, there is some research on the micro algae, also known as phytoplankton, like Bacillariophyceae and Chlorophyceae. These sea products can produce bio diesel and bio ethanol, and its waste used as fodder. There is no waste product, and minimal pollution. I want to participate in this kind of research, to find more products to replace fossil fuels. They are non-polluting, support the endurance of food, benefit us also for medical purposes, and all come from the sea.

Ambon has huge potential and facilities to support me in this research, in nature, expert people, and traditional knowledge. In nature, beside the sea and the coastal areas, we get sunshine almost every day of the year for the photosynthesis process. There is a laboratory and a library to use in the local university, and local experts, both modern and traditional, to consult.

I hope by the time more people realize there is so much life support we can get from the sea, then everybody will start to treat the sea with care and in a responsible manner, with some respect.

In the future, I am going to continue this research at the next level. There are some planets which are like Earth and possible to discover as the next Earth, and have a sea. Micro algae are one of the living creatures that can survive with very limited life support. Micro algae also absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen. This research shall make micro algae as one of the living pioneers to carry to the new Earth. Some scientists believe that life started from the sea. I believe the sea is our future land. Our future life.



Science and Struggle: The Fusion of Research and Compassion

by Parwiz Abrahimi

age 23, Afghanistan/United States

Science and technology seem a world away in the vastly populated Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood of Kabul. Driving along its single congested road, one can see laborers lingering for a day's opportunity to work, donkeys bearing loads of sun-baked bricks, and antiquated buses adorned with colorful streamers and poetic Persian decals. Where the paved street ends, cars are forced to a halt by giant mounds of gravel placed in the middle of the dirt road for nearby construction workers. Hidden behind the mounds of gravel, a hundred meters down a muddy alley lined with dilapidated adobe houses, is a gem lost in the bustle of post-Taleban Kabul: Marefat High School. On the days that I am not instructing the biology and chemistry laboratories at the American University of Afghanistan, I volunteer as a science teacher at this community-led high school. It is here I decided that scientific research combined with social awareness and responsibility could make the conditions we live in better and more sustainable.

Once, after a class in which I introduced blood groups and blood typing, a female student asked, "If my blood group is Rh negative and my fiancé is Rh positive, what steps can I take to avoid problems during child birth?" She was referring to rhesus-sensitization, in which a mother can develop an immune reaction when bearing a child whose rhesus blood group differs from her own. In a Western high school setting answering this question would have been easy, but in this case I did not know how best to respond. In a resource-poor country like Afghanistan there is little health care infrastructure to address problems such as this. I was reminded of the great needs and meager means Afghans have for health care, and thought long about what future applications of science and technology might do to enhance medicine and health education for Afghanistan and other developing nations. In my vision for the future of science there is greater fusion between scientific research and global health imperatives, creating a more prosperous world through improved health care delivery in the world's most vulnerable regions.

The marriage between science, which seeks to address a fundamental biological question, and global health advocacy, which seeks to reduce worldwide health disparities, is a vital component of my vision for the future. Scientific research must place more emphasis on diagnostic and therapeutic clinical interventions that can be transitioned for use in areas that currently lack human and financial capacity. This requires clinicians with an intimate understanding of basic science, and scientists who have a clinical end goal through which they can promote world health equity by developing culturally sensitive and cost-effective medical solutions that address local public health needs. I envision carving a role for myself at the center of the interaction between clinicians, engineers, and scientists. I am pursuing joint M.D./Ph.D. doctorates which will equip me with the clinical education and research experience to be a successful physician-scientist. I hope to partake in translational pharmacological and molecular medicine research in which I can combine my academic interests in medicine and science with my background in the developing world. I aim to study diseases and new drugs that can help alleviate the clinical burden on resource poor nations at the molecular level.

Through teaching, I have also come to see research and education as complementary. Science instruction in Afghanistan has traditionally been dominated by the look-and-listen pedagogical approach, and does not engage students' interests or encourage them to think critically. Like other schools, Marefat faces many technological limitations. When our electricity runs out, as it does often, we use a mirror and sunlight to illuminate objectives on our compound light microscope. Simple items such as salt, soap, water and rubbing alcohol become reagents to extract cheek-cell DNA. It is not much, but the students gain experience, build confidence in themselves, and are introduced to the scientific method. Accompanying this future direction of science, I see a vanguard of scientists who understand that science has a role outside of research centers, and will champion teaching, public outreach, and advocacy in addition to advancing scientific research. With the right support from scientists who are willing to serve as mentors and advocates, students like those at Marefat have the potential to become future leaders who can help further drive the direction of science in a positive way that benefits Afghanistan and the world at large.



theme 2010

My role in creating a peaceful world

What is your vision of a peaceful and harmonious world?

What can you and the young people of the world do to realize that vision?



My Peaceful World and I: I Won't Let It Be Destroyed!

by Angelina Yudina

age 10, Russia

Dear people of Earth!
Dear children and grown-ups!

My name is Angelina Yudina. I'm ten. I send my most sincere greetings and wishes from the ancient Russian city of Vladimir. My city has a long history. It is more than 1000 years old. In the course of the city's life its people had to go through wars and sorrows, hardships and troubles.

As you know, on May 9, 2010 the whole of humanity celebrated the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II. The citizens of my city, my family and friends were happy that they have peaceful skies over our Russia. My family has first-hand knowledge of war. My Granny was born in 1939, and in 1941 her father was missing in action. The family has never heard anything about him since that time. Unfortunately, there are a lot of such families in Russia. It is so terrible when children don't know their fathers, can't play with them or have fun.

I'm scared when I think that somewhere on Earth there are still war operations, that somewhere small children, women and old men still suffer from war! Unfortunately, not everyone thinks so. Very often we hear about terror acts in different places in the world. The world becomes ominous, and much grief and many tears appear in it.

I always think over what each of us can do to create a peaceful world. It is interesting and significant that in the Russian language the two meanings—"the Universe, the whole world" and "peace"—are one and the same word. I think we must remember that peace is not a gift for us, simple people. We must make it ourselves! That's why we need to try to live in peace with everybody and everywhere.

Firstly, everything starts from family. We must try to love each other, to respect the wishes of our nearest people. My Mom and Dad never argue. There is always peace and happiness in our house. It is great! I often hear from my classmates that they have arguments at home. I think such kids are more aggressive. They don't get

used to living in peace and can become those who prevent the world from becoming peaceful. We need to learn how to forgive another man, to hear him.

Secondly, I think that it is necessary to bring up boys and girls correctly. My brother is 20 months. Neither my parents nor I want to buy him such toys as guns! We consider that a man is strong if he has a clever mind and love for his Motherland and family. I wish that when my little brother Herman grows up, he will want to live in a peaceful world.

Thirdly, to my mind a person of today must be vigilant and careful. It is important to be attentive to what is going on around us. You can't be indifferent if you see that someone hurts animals or birds, small children or weak people! Your indifference will lead to grief and sorrow. That's why you must be ready to defend weak people; you must not be afraid for yourself, but think of others.

Fourthly, I go to Language gymnasium where all schoolchildren love language. I think that if people know their own language, they can communicate with each other, and if we know other languages we can understand other cultures, travel and make friends with our peers. We all need other languages to create a better world. Besides, there are many examples when we say a wrong word, and it keeps giving rise to national conflicts and wars. That's why I want to tell all people to be careful with every word! There is a good Russian proverb: "A word is not a sparrow—once it flies from your mouth, you can never get it back!" I wish we would tell each other only kind and warm words.

I'd like to thank the organizers of this International Essay Contest! It is my second try at thinking over such questions, which other people don't consider questions at all. For me it's not important who will win. All the participants are already winners because children, who take part in such contests and take care of the future of our Motherland and the planet, can make the world better and kinder. I wish there would be more and more such contests and participants each year. Only together we can create a peaceful world, and then all of us will live peacefully and happily on the planet.

I'll do my best to make the world peaceful forever. I won't let it be destroyed! I call on you, dear people of Earth, to all do your best to live in a peaceful world!



Journey of All

by Alline Kabbatende

age 22, Rwanda

My name is Alline Kabbatende and I am a 22 year old from Rwanda. I just graduated from university in the USA. Every time I tell people where I am from, the first thing to spring to their minds is the 1994 Genocide. It feels like I am yoked heavily to my country's dark past. When I landed in the US for the first time, the immigration officer glanced at my passport and immediately posed the question, "are you Hutu or Tutsi?" My answer was simple, "I am Rwandan."

I did not respond to the officer that way just to avoid deeper questions regarding my experience but because indeed, it has taken me years to come to terms with the fact that I lost a lot of family in the genocide for no sound reason other than that we are Tutsi. I bring this up because I hated Hutus regardless of who they were as individuals. This realization opened my eyes to the fact that I had the capacity to do the same to others and also because I have learned, painfully, that my country has no hope of living in peace and harmony until we stop looking through the ethnic lens.

I am one in six billion people worldwide and Rwanda is a minute country, and yet to me the reality of what race, color and economic status can do to the fabric of society is flesh and blood—it is lost friends and family. My story is enough to fuel in me a vision of a world whereby race, color, religion and caste are not merely tolerated but openly celebrated; a peaceful and harmonious world will only be one where we choose to discuss our differences with an open mind to learn from one another. Peace might translate into living together in a conflict-free world but harmony will only be possible when diversity is welcomed and not viewed as a threat.

One way to work on this vision is to be open. It is a reality that I have been raised to think that the Hutu is a murderer or that the white man is my oppressor. That is because this has been passed down—drawn from the experience of our ancestors—the generations. As impressionable youths, we have fed on these ideologies, but we also have the power to change this by opening up and talking about it. Three years

ago I sat down with the daughter of a genocide perpetrator and we shared how much we hated each other's ethnic groups. After sharing experiences, we both realized that we are not different at all; we share the same aspirations in life and tastes in chocolate. I have since realized the shallowness in profiling people based on race or color, but I am where I am because I confronted my warped views.

Poverty tends to provide fertile breeding ground for conflict and corruption, among many things. Economic stability is probably the first step to a peaceful, harmonious world. I am an engineer looking forward to a successful career, but I also know that I possess the skills to make a difference in my third world nation. I plan to use those skills in a non-profit fashion as a means to be instrumental in the fight against poverty. A rapid ascent out of poverty will take much more than acts of philanthropy, but the problem of brain drain—which is draining skill power out of poor nations—is one that cannot be blamed on profiting wealthier nations. It is the responsibility of these young people to realize their power to change the economic situations in their countries and make a choice to enrich their countries, and by doing so, enrich themselves.

No one can claim to know the perfect formula for a peaceful and harmonious world. I have come to accept the power of 'one'—my power not only to change myself for the better but by doing so, change those around me. I have felt deep hatred before, and I continue to struggle with prejudices every day, but the mere effort to pay attention to these feelings has helped me fight and, at times, overcome them. That is what my vision really is—a journey, not a destination. We do not know when the entire world will be peaceful and harmonious, but as young people, we still have time to make a difference. Investing our energy in living in peace and harmony with our neighbors each day will ensure a better world for our children. We know, however, that there is never enough peace and harmony, and that they too, will continue this visionary journey.

YOUTH ENVISIONING A PEACEFUL WORLD

Goi Peace Foundation - UNESCO International Essay Contest for Young People
Anthology of Award Winning Essays, 2000 – 2010

© The Goi Peace Foundation 2011

www.goipeace.or.jp

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this publication and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of the Goi Peace Foundation or UNESCO and do not commit the organizations. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Goi Peace Foundation or UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.