

**2022 International Essay Contest  
for Young People  
(1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> prize winning essays)**

**Theme: “My Values”**

**The Goi Peace Foundation**  
**[www.goipeace.or.jp](http://www.goipeace.or.jp)**

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022



## **Congratulatory message for the 2022 International Essay Contest for Young People**

I sincerely congratulate the Goi Peace Foundation on the success of the 2022 International Essay Contest for Young People.

I would like to express my respect for the passion and efforts of everyone involved in organizing the Essay Contest this year, despite the challenges of holding contests and events over the past two years due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I learned that this year's contest received some 20,000 entries on the theme of "My Values," from children and youth in 152 countries around the world.

My congratulations go to the two first prize winners, who have both received the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Award, and to all the other prize winners.

For today's young people, who face an uncertain and unpredictable future, I believe it is important to continue refining their own values, by being exposed to diverse perspectives and deepening their sense of mutual understanding and respect.

I am aware that the International Essay Contest for Young People receives many wonderful essays each year. Through this initiative, I sincerely hope that young people from all over the world, who are tomorrow's leaders, can meet and interact with one another, helping to bring about world peace and the creation of sustainable societies and regions.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

YANAGI Takashi

Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan

# 2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

Theme: "My Values"

No. of participating countries: 152

No. of entries: 19,986 (Children's category: 6,507 / Youth category: 13,479)

\*All ages are as of June 15, 2022.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Being Who You Are*  
Waka Sato (Age 12, Japan)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *You Cannot Kill People.*  
Sofia (Age 20, Russia)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (3 entrants)

- *Kindness with a new twist*  
Hiranga Bandara Suraweera  
(Age 11, Sri Lanka)
- *My Values are My Life*  
Padalko Arina Aleksandrovna  
(Age 13, Ukraine)
- *Through this Pair of Ears, We Build  
Tolerance*  
Elora Khlar Nareswari  
(Age 14, Indonesia)

#### Youth category (3 entrants)

- *My Personal Journey In Understanding  
The Value of Community Service*  
Ian Harris Hashim (Age 15, Malaysia)
- *The Values of a Banana*  
Kyo Lee (Age 15, Canada)
- *I am Peace*  
Estifanos Mekonnen Adem  
(Age 19, Ethiopia)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize

#### Children's category (5 entrants)

- *Values and Identity*  
Afina Liang (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- *Values of life or death*  
Anastasia (Age 14, Ukraine)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- *My Value, My Life*  
Eniola Oluwatomisin Deborah  
(Age 15, Nigeria)
- *My Values for Living in the 21st Century*  
Mei Katayama (Age 18, Japan)

- *Values We Must Not Change*  
Mayu Someya (Age 14, Japan)
- *Life Is Now: The Importance of Taking Opportunities We Encounter*  
Mizuki Hayakawa (Age 14, Japan)
- *My Cherished Values*  
Tomoka Yoshida (Age 14, Japan)
- *My Values: Instructions to a Sustainable Life*  
Gamaliel Jordan B. Languido  
(Age 22, Philippines)
- *Ethical codes*  
Tuyishimire Theogene (Age 23,  
Rwanda <Living in China>)
- *My Values*  
Udeobi Obioma Jennifer  
(Age 23, Nigeria)

## Honorable Mention

### Children's category (25 entrants)

- Shohki Hirako (Age 8, Japan & China  
<Living in Japan>)
- Arefin Kaisan Araf (Age 10, Bangladesh  
<Living in Malaysia>)
- Chad Kurematsu (Age 10, Japan)
- Leigh-Joy Kendi (Age 10, Kenya)
- Gatik Goyal (Age 11, India)
- Leon Shidou Zschacke  
(Age 11, Germany)
- Umar Abdulquadri Olaitan  
(Age 11, Nigeria)
- Akane Hirayama (Age 12, Japan)
- Honoka Takahashi (Age 12, Japan)
- Jotham Foo Yue Zheng  
(Age 12, Singapore)
- Alya Ahmed Rasheed  
(Age 13, Maldives)
- Harusa Fujii (Age 13, Japan)
- Keita Minorikawa (Age 13, Japan)
- Momoe Endo (Age 13, Japan)
- Nao Omata (Age 13, Japan)
- Oriza Udagawa (Age 13, Japan)
- Subarna Timilsina (Age 13, Nepal)

### Youth category (25 entrants)

- Aye Su San (Age 15, Myanmar)
- Florence Angeli Dairo (Age 15, U.K.)
- Shiori Jokei (Age 15, Japan)
- Tejaswi Kathireddy  
(Age 16, Singapore)
- Albogochieva Amina (Age 16, Russia)
- David Jun Sung (Age 16, South Korea)
- Fabian Egede Ogbewu  
(Age 16, Nigeria)
- Rajwa Nadia Lathifa  
(Age 16, Indonesia)
- Tamami Sumi (Age 16, Japan)
- Elise Gimpert (Age 17, U.S.A.)
- Jedidah Wangari Chege  
(Age 17, Kenya)
- Koko Miki (Age 17, Japan)
- Kokone Kumazaki (Age 17, Japan)
- Kokoro Fukuzawa (Age 17, Japan)
- Pakaporn Bunmak (Age 17, Thailand)
- Zehra Uslu (Age 17, Türkiye)
- Shreenabh Moujesh Agrawal  
(Age 18, India)
- Angelina Alicia Chu (Age 19, Malaysia)

- Yu, Wei-Syuan  
(Age 13, Taiwan of China)
- Anastasia Zibareva (Age 14, Russia)
- Dana Yang (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- Kaz Onuma (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- Munmun Dey (Age 14, India)
- Sho Tanaka (Age 14, Japan)
- Sisam Bhandari (Age 14, Nepal)
- Kanon Fujii (Age 15, Japan)
- Anastasiya Bohomolna  
(Age 19, Ukraine)
- Maryhilda Obasiota Ben Ibe  
(Age 20, Nigeria)
- Noy Ben-Sade (Age 20, Israel)
- Nguyen Thi Van Anh  
(Age 22, Viet Nam)
- Jhun-Jhun Q. Agustin  
(Age 23, Philippines)
- Polina (Age 23, Russia)
- Alisa Sterlikova (Age 24, Russia)

### **Best School Award (3 schools)**

- Koka Gakuen Junior and Senior High School for Girls, Tokyo (Japan)
- Suma Gakuen Junior High School, Hyogo (Japan)
- Tokyo Metropolitan Oizumi Junior High School (Japan)

### **School Incentive Award (64 schools)**

- Antique Vocational School- Special Program in Journalism (Philippines)
- Arsakeio Secondary Schools of Thessaloniki (Greece)
- Baljagriti English Secondary School, Bagmati (Nepal)
- Beaconhouse Sri Inai International School, Selangor (Malaysia)
- Biotechnical Centre Naklo, Gorenjska (Slovenia)
- Boston Education, Los Angeles, California (U.S.A.)
- Brest Gymnasium No 1 (Belarus)
- Bukhara region Karavulbazar district School N1 (Uzbekistan)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School, Illinois (U.S.A.)
- Colégio Dr Walter Bellan, São Paulo (Brazil)
- Colégio Vital Brazil, São Paulo (Brazil)
- Drukgyel Central School, Paro (Bhutan)
- Écoles Al Madina Site Californie, Casablanca (Morocco)
- Écoles Al Madina Site Polo, Casablanca (Morocco)
- FPT University, Hanoi (Viet Nam)
- Fuji Sacred Heart School, Shizuoka (Japan)

- Fukuoka Prefectural Ogori High School (Japan)
- Fukushima Prefectural Aizu Gakuho Junior and Senior High School (Japan)
- Ghiyasuddin International School, Male' (Maldives)
- Gymnázium Šrobárova, Kosice (Slovakia)
- Ikeda Junior High School attached to Osaka Kyoiku University (Japan)
- International School of Milan (Italy)
- Iskandhar School, Male' (Maldives)
- Jamaluddin School, Male' (Maldives)
- Jonan Gakuen Junior High School, Senior High School, Osaka (Japan)
- Joso Gakuin Junior & Senior High School, Ibaraki (Japan)
- Kagoshima Gyokuryu Junior & Senior High School of Kagoshima City (Japan)
- Kyoto University of Advanced Science Junior & Senior High School (Japan)
- Labuan International School, Labuan (Malaysia)
- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
- Midori Elementary School of Itabashi City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Milan Hoshuko (Italy)
- Motherland Secondary School, Pokhara Lekhnath (Nepal)
- Mukogawa Women's University Junior & Senior High School, Hyogo (Japan)
- Mutiara International Grammar School, Ampang Jaya (Malaysia)
- Nan Hua Primary School (Singapore)
- Naragakuen Tomigaoka Senior High School, Nara (Japan)
- Nobeoka Technical High School, Miyazaki (Japan)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Otsuma Ranzan Junior and Senior High School, Saitama (Japan)
- Ozel Cagdas Bilim Koleji, Muğla (Türkiye)
- PECHS Girls School, Karachi (Pakistan)
- Preparatoria num. 11 Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
- Preparatoria Regional de Colotlán, Jalisco (México)
- Santo Tomas Elementary School-Annex, Laguna (Philippines)
- Satriwithaya School, Bangkok (Thailand)
- School 11, Cherkasy (Ukraine)
- Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sri Nipah, Kelantan (Malaysia)
- Sekolah Kebangsaan Minden Height, Pinang (Malaysia)
- Setagaya Junior High School attached to Tokyo Gakugei University (Japan)
- Showa Women's University Junior-Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)

- SISA - School of International Studies in Sciences & Arts, Punjab (Pakistan)
- SJKC Kong Min Cawangan Kedua, Penang (Malaysia)
- SMJK Chio Min, Kedah (Malaysia)
- SMK Taman Pelangi Indah, Johor (Malaysia)
- Southern Taiwan University of Science and Technology (Taiwan of China)
- St. Agnes' Junior & Senior High School, Kyoto (Japan)
- St. George's School, Brunei Muara (Brunei)
- Sydney Saturday School of Japanese, New South Wales (Australia)
- Toyama University of International Studies High School (Japan)
- Toyo Eiwa High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Yamaguchi Prefectural Karyo Senior High School (Japan)
- Yamanouchi Junior High School of Yamanouchi Town, Nagano (Japan)
- Yaroslavl College of Industry and Economy, Yaroslavl (Russia)

## International Essay Contest for Young People

### Panel of Judges:

|          |                   |  |
|----------|-------------------|--|
| Chairman | Genshitsu Sen     | Former Grand Tea Master of Urasenke,<br>UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador             |
|          | Shinji Hattori    | Chairman & Group CEO, CCO<br>SEIKO GROUP CORPORATION                           |
|          | Koïchiro Matsuura | President of The Africa Society of Japan,<br>Former Director-General of UNESCO |
|          | Suzue Miuchi      | Cartoonist   |
|          | Junji Narita      | Senior Advisor, Hakuhodo Inc.  |
|          | Masami Saionji    | Chairperson, The Goi Peace Foundation  |
|          | Shunichi Tokura   | Composer   |
|          | Kazuhiko Yazaki   | President & CEO, FELISSIMO<br>CORPORATION                                      |
|          | Shomei Yoh        | Picture book author  |

Organized by: The Goi Peace Foundation

Endorsed by: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan,  
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Federation, Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, Japanese  
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## Being Who You Are

(Original in Japanese)

*Waka Sato*

*(Age 12, Japan)*

*Tokyo Metropolitan Oizumi Junior High School*

The things I like and dislike are often different from what other people like and dislike, so people often say I'm strange.

A long time ago, something I liked was rejected, and I was told that I was strange. I realized that I was different from others around me, and I felt very hurt. After that, I was afraid to be called strange again, and I rarely showed my true self.

Some time later, I was talking with my close friends during our break time. At first, we were talking about TV, music, and other pleasant topics, but when the bell rang, everyone started saying "Oh, no!" I felt confused because I didn't know why they were saying that, and then I happened to see the day's schedule. I checked what class we had next period, and saw that it was math. I was getting ready, wondering if everyone hated math, when my best friend came up to me and said, "I hate math, don't you?" and wanted me to agree. I didn't know what to say, because I really like math. But since all my friends were saying that they didn't like it, I answered, "Yes."

Another day, I was talking with the same friend about music, and she told me she liked a popular song that was relaxing and calming. To be honest, I didn't care for that song, because I prefer fast songs. But my friend said, "It's such a great song. There's nobody who doesn't like that song," so I felt I had to agree, and I told her I liked it.



In this way, I told a lot of lies, thinking that they were good lies because if I agreed with my friends, we would maintain a good relationship. I thought I was satisfied, since people came to talk to me thinking that we could get along.

But as day after day went on like that, I began to feel badly about not being able to tell the truth. I started to question why I was the only one unable to say what I like and dislike, when other people could state it clearly. Was it really okay not to tell them? All this time, was it okay not to let them see my real self? As I thought about these things, I decided that, from now on, I would clearly say what I really thought.

The next day, we had math again, and as usual my friends were complaining about it, but I said, "I like math, so I'm looking forward to it." At first, my friends were surprised and said, "I've never seen anyone who likes math!" I was a little hurt, but at the same time, I felt so much joy for being able to tell the truth, that I didn't really mind.

After that, I continued saying what I really liked, and just as before, people called me strange. But somehow, I wasn't hurt by it. Instead, I felt happy, and I even became proud of being "strange." Then, naturally, other people started to accept me.

Thinking about it now, I think I was able to accept who I am, and that feeling was passed on to other people. *Be honest with yourself, accept yourself, and others will accept you, too.* These are the values I hold now. Each person has their own values, but I believe that this is the most important thing for me, and essential for me to be happy in my life. If you are not afraid of others, and act based on your own will, then I believe people will eventually come to accept you. For that reason, I would like to continue cherishing these values of mine.

## **YOU CANNOT KILL PEOPLE.**

(Original)

*Sofia*

*(Age 20, Russia)*

It has always been so clear and obvious for me. An axiom that does not require any proof. Fire is hot, ice is cold, every life matters. Something you do not need to explain to others.

However, it changed about three months ago. As the country I live in started the WAR.

The WAR. It comes out of nowhere and hits you on the head. Pain for people who are dying and losing their families and home, despair over not being able to stop it, fear of how it ends all at once permeate you, making you want to hide, to forget, to imagine it is fiction. But it is real. And it turns the world you live in upside down.

The values you have always believed in, the values you have cared about, the values that have been the cornerstone of your life principles seem to have all been turned into ashes by that cruel destructive fire called WAR.

Peace.

Since childhood I was taught the importance of living in peace. Every person remembers the great price that was paid during the Second World War. Despite all the cruelty and violence, dedication and courage of our ancestors gave us a chance for a peaceful future.

However, the tragedy that is happening right now gives Victory Day a new meaning. It seems impossible to me to celebrate it knowing that at the exact same time people of the neighboring country fight and die for clear blue sky above their heads. The great day in honor of the memory of the fallen heroes is filled with hypocrisy and falsehood as the person who ordered to bomb a city lays flowers to its stele, as the festive fireworks cannot coexist with rumblings of the batteries in my mind.

Freedom of speech.

You may ask what can be even worse than that? I can tell you. It is inability to openly speak about what is going on. The illusion of free speech can be simply revealed as you try to share your opinion. One “wrong” word – *war* – can become a spark that will lead to an explosion. We are not allowed to call *it* that way. We are not allowed to say “no” to *it*. We are not allowed to want peace.

I got used to live in the world where people can share their opinions with each other without being punished for that. I remember listening to different points of view in the media. It is over now. All the people, who do not agree with the government have been called “foreign agents”. It is tantamount to strangulation. I am literally feeling a rope tightening harder on my neck, robbing me of the opportunity to breathe.

Human life.

Why are people looking for excuses for killing innocent people? Why do they believe somebody has a right to destroy others’ lives? Genocide is tragic and gruesome and must not be justified.

Nevertheless, I still have to prove it to others.

*“You really do not understand? People are dying!” I am screaming at the top of my lungs, tears threatening to make their way down my face.*

*“That is their own fault.”*

*“Have not you watched TV?”*

*“It is politics, it is never that simple.”*

Every word hits me worse than a bullet, leaving more gaping holes in my damaged heart. Confidence and cold indifference in their eyes make my soul and my mind cry in horror. Has the world gone mad? Do I miss something?

No. I do not. I am sure of that. And as the world I was used to begins to collapse the faith I have helps me to hold on, helps me to put the pieces together.

Somebody may tell I sound naive, but I believe that good triumphs over evil. I know I am not alone. I trust together we can change the situation. Peace, freedom to speak, people's lives. This is something I stand up for. These are *my values*.

And I am right because it is just so simple –

YOU CANNOT KILL PEOPLE.

## **Kindness with a new twist**

(Original)

*Hiranga Bandara Suraweera*

*(Age 11, Sri Lanka)*

*Trinity College, Central Province*

On my way to school a few weeks ago, I saw things I have never before witnessed in my life. There were lengthy queues outside gas stations and distributors of LP gas.

Supermarkets were filled with customers piling up heaps of goods in their trolleys. I heard the word 'inflation' being used by my parents when passing by such scenes. There were protests in the center of the city by people wearing black clothes and carrying black flags.

When I came to my class, there were fewer students and teachers. I got to know many of them were unable to come because the public transport in their areas was not functioning due to the unavailability of fuel. There was frustration and disappointment all around.

Observing these sad situations around me, I realized there is a lot I can do with the two values I strongly believe in. They are kindness and being mindful. I like to merge these two together and call it 'kindfulness', as in a book that I read recently. What I want through kindness and being mindful is to gather wisdom to resolve the problems in the society around me. Wisdom does not come when your mind is restless; it only happens when you are peaceful and calm.

How can 'kindfulness' come to the rescue? Let me share what I did over the past few days. I got together with my parents, made some snacks, bought some bottled drinks and distributed among those who were queueing outside gas stations and LP gas distributors. I came up with this idea because when I looked closely at those people, I realized how parched they looked by having to queue for so long in the hot sun. This might seem like a small act of kindness, but I know it will give these people the strength to uplift their spirits to get the task done.

Recently, I suggested to my parents to convert the queueing time outside gas stations into

family time. Given how busy my parents are and how much I am involved in school activities, we hardly get the time to spend with each other. What we do now is take some refreshments in our vehicle, sometimes even my guitar, sing songs and have a good time in the queue until it is our turn to pump petrol. I actually enjoy queueing outside gas stations now! My mother shared this experience in her WhatsApp status, and now, many of her friends seem to be doing the same as well.

Whenever any of my friends called and shared that they are unable to come to school because they do not have any method to travel, I got together with my parents and arranged for someone who is passing by that area to pick my friend up and bring him to school. To further solve the issue of traveling to school, after discussing with my classmates, we decided to car-pool. Not only was this something generous, we got to know later on during our Civics lesson in school that car-pooling is one way to overcome the energy crisis around the world because many passengers will be sharing one vehicle.

Every time we turn on the news these days, there seems to be war and conflicts happening everywhere around the world. This is because there is so much craving and desire in people's hearts. Craving comes from being restless and not accepting things as they are. I hope the day is not too far, that all of us are content with whatever we get. For this to be achieved, I strongly recommend my two core values of kindness and mindfulness, or rather 'kindfulness'. As you can see from the experiences that I shared, it is amazing as to how something which seems so negative can be transformed into something positive by mindfully seeing it as an opportunity to be kind to ourselves and to others.

## **My Values are My Life**

(Original)

*Padalko Arina Aleksandrovna*

*(Age 13, Ukraine)*

*Kharkov Gymnasium No.43, Kharkiv*

February 24, 2022. Kharkiv, Ukraine. I wake up to explosions at about 4 a.m. I go to my parents' room and ask, "Did you hear that? What's going on?" And in response, I hear, "Yes, the war has started."

The parents of my classmates started writing that their child wasn't going to school, they weren't going to work, and were leaving town altogether. It was in the moment that I wondered a lot. Was it that bad? It was horrible... When you have to urgently evacuate your city. When you can't celebrate in two days the birthday of the dearest person in your life that you've been preparing for all last year. When all your family and friends call and ask, "Are you alive?"

I never thought that in the 21st century, I would go to the basement not to look at my grandmother's cucumbers and tomatoes, but to hide in a basement.

While arriving at the safe house, I wanted to abstract myself from it. Close my eyes and ears. Imagine it was just a dream. At the moment, a world-famous quote came to me. "Appreciate what you have." Before that, everything seemed ordinary, somewhere boring, not lively, an everyday routine. What are my values after that?

My values are life. I began to cherish it more, to treasure it. You realize that this day could be your last. You don't know where the next missile or bomb or plane will land. Life is moments, good and bright or bad and not safe. Even when you're in the basement, you're with your parents. They support, help you believe in the best, hope, and just wait.

If you think about it and remember what it was like. Going to school in the morning, coming



back and doing homework, going to the gym with your mom, going for a walk with your friend's dog. Going to laugh, be happy, or cry over a bad grade. These are all moments in life that are especially precious. We don't remember them for long, but when we do, it makes us feel alive.

To appreciate, to love, to rejoice. Life is a gift. If you understand that, your path, your life, flows in the best way possible.

You can't foresee today or tomorrow or what will happen in a week. But you can build that future. My values create my future.

## **Through this Pair of Ears, We Build Tolerance**

(Original)

*Elora Khia Nareswari*

*(Age 14, Indonesia)*

*Bakti Mulya 400 School, South Jakarta*

Next to my house is a proper Christian family. At the end of each year, they look very happy because the Christmas celebration has arrived. Christmas is a very special Christian religious celebration for those who celebrate it. I saw that afternoon, that their family was active on the terrace while decorating the plants with beautiful lanterns. They also sing along to the strains of the Christmas spiritual songs they are playing. It has become a habit in my area. If there is a celebration of a religious holiday, then we and the neighbors send food to each other. For example, during Eid al-Fitr (Muslim holiday) we send each other Ketupat and Chicken Opor. And Muslims also always distribute buffalo meat during Eid al-Adha to all the people in my area regardless of their religion.

Well even at Christmas celebrations, my next-door neighbor who is a Christian, distributes cakes that are packaged beautifully and uniquely to all who pass in front of her house. We were also offered to stop by her house to eat a halal menu for Muslims. There was a voice from the terrace above her house, her father called the youngest children.

Laura...Laura....turn off the song! It's the Azan of Maghrib (call for praying)."

The Christmas songs that they played that afternoon were stopped immediately, replaced by the chanting of the Azan Maghrib from several mosques around my area. I hurried up to take wudhu (ablution) water to fulfill my obligation as a Muslim, namely maghrib prayer. While feeling the fresh splash of Wudu water wet my face, there was a sense of calmness entering my heart. I mumbled "This afternoon, two different voices have come in alternately to stop by my ears. Even though they are both with different beliefs, both of them of course with the same intention, namely to invite us all to goodness."

Twilight always brings beauty. Like this afternoon, it has taught me how twilight has

drowned the human ego and led me to understand the meaning of tolerance through our ears. Is tolerance important? Yes, tolerance for us who live in a country that has a lot of diversity in religion, culture, ethnicity, race, and different skin colors, makes tolerance something that is expensive. Because there is often friction in society because of differences that should not have happened. The church that was hit by the bomb during a religious ritual, the mosque that was burned, and religious leaders being threatened and injured are real examples that tolerance is still great hope for all of our people in Indonesia. For those who have bad intentions, taking advantage of the many diverse and differences in our country, Indonesia is used as a tool to incite and divide. And while our ego is rubbed off of wanting to win on its own and feels self-righteous, that is what will bring our nation was torn apart and hostile to each other.

But in our area, the generosity of the people can foster a spirit of tolerance. The differences in society in it have been transformed into a powerful energy that will grow eternal love for us neighbors and side by side for all time. Then, who is most responsible so that differences do not trigger conflict, and who will transmit the spirit of tolerance to the next generation? The answer is that all of our nation's people are hereditary and are continuous. And the big task of the current generation in the future is to pass on tolerance for any differences on this earth so that it will create a society in a peaceful world full of harmony. That's how we take care of the smallest things, through our ears so as not to be easily provoked by those who have an interest in destroying tolerance, and realize that it is this pair of ears that filters out differences to be beautiful to enjoy.

## **My Personal Journey In Understanding The Value of Community Service**

(Original)

*Ian Harris Hashim*

*(Age 15, Malaysia)*

*Cempaka Damansara, Kuala Lumpur*

In life, values give us clear objectives. Positive values serve as a guide on how we behave and act in everyday situations, which normally steer us in the right direction. Having the right values determines our paths in life: how we behave, how we interact and respond with others, and how we make important decisions that impact our lives. I believe that values play an important role in society. As an active member of society, I think values such as community service, volunteering and teamwork are very important. These values act as the foundation of a healthy and positive community. I believe that a person is shaped by the society in which he/she is brought up in. One is educated by their experiences, and guided by their values. Whether one is kind or nasty, right or wrong, these are all determined by the environment one lives in as it shapes one's character.

I mentioned 'community service' as one of the values I hold dear. To me, community service means to aid or contribute to an effort or cause in one's community. To some, going out of their comfort zone to be of service to others requires great effort and motivation. Not all can do this. Before, I believed that if it wasn't my problem or it doesn't concern me, I should ignore it and carry on with my business. But my perspective changed when I got involved in an act of service that changed my life.

During the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, Malaysia went into total lockdown. Everyone was not allowed out of their houses unnecessarily, be it to work, school or to run errands. Families were forced to stay indoors to protect themselves from contracting the virus. While this idea worked for a while, the country began seeing negative side effects, especially socioeconomically. Many people were struggling to make ends meet as a result of not being able to work. Those in the lower-income brackets were hit the hardest. The news

was plastered with headlines of woes and cries of desperation of those who were affected.

This troubled me greatly. I was uneasy at the thought that many families were hungry, unable to pay rent, their bills and other basic needs. I was comfortable at home as my family were sheltered from these problems. While I could've ignored the problems of those around me and stayed in my own carefree bubble, I just couldn't shake it out of my mind.

So I decided to do something about it. Together with my brother, we decided to start an online-based, fundraising campaign to raise money to help those in need. We started an Instagram account called @The10RinggitProject, where we hoped to get donations of as little as RM10 (USD2.50) from our friends and family to help a local orphanage in Pahang. The campaign was a success. In one week we raised more than RM16,000. I felt so euphoric handing over that money to the orphanage, as it helped lessen its burden. I felt compelled to help more.

Since that campaign, my brother and I launched several more fundraising campaigns that benefited a hospital, a children's library, and flood victims, among others. Over the next two years, we managed to raise over RM140,000. Every cent went towards the different organizations that we campaigned for and the effect was profound. We received pictures of brand new furniture, books, and clothing for orphanages, equipment for hospitals, and books and devices for libraries that our campaign helped buy. Within each picture, the brand new items weren't the most prominent thing. It was the gleaming, appreciative smiles of the beneficiaries that made me decide that 'community service' is a value I treasure. By being a contributor to community service, I could give back to my community and make a positive impact on people's lives. It makes me feel proud and motivates me to keep going.

## **Values of a Banana**

(Original)

Kyo Lee

(Age 15, Canada)

Banana. Yellow on the outside and white on the inside, the term banana is used to describe Asians or Asian Americans who are perceived to have assimilated into Western society and do not conform to “Oriental culture”. A representation of stereotypes, psychological segregation, racial bias and Asian hate, banana is a nickname that followed me through childhood and has continuously played a large role in my personal, social and cultural values.

I immigrated from the Republic of Korea to Canada at a young age and assimilated quickly into North American culture. Consequently, while my early adolescence and family upbringing was mainly influenced by Asian culture, a large portion of my youth was shaped by Western values. This often resulted in contradictory principles. For instance, the increasing individualism in mainstream Western society as opposed to the collectivism in its Eastern counterpart, confused my perception of relationships. Everything from my mannerisms, my view on social issues, my opinions, my lunch and my fashion, my values were always multifarious.

However, growing up as part of a Diaspora, I was always striving to completely assimilate into Western society. Assimilation represented acceptance and belonging while resistance resulted in exotification, ridicule and racism. Occidental media’s positive portrayal of white characters alongside racist Asian tropes like Yellow Peril in Iron Man’s Mandarin or Long Duk Dong in Sixteen Candles, only further damaged my view of my culture, as did backhanded compliments like “You’re cool for an Asian!”. Even my Korean heritage, being heavily influenced by Western imperialism and cultural colonialism, subtly fuelled the pressure to assimilate.

In various methods, I have always been told: *the whiter you are, inside and out, the better*

*you are*. This internalised principle that anything stereotypically Asian about myself was negative resulted in an attempt to eradicate my Korean philosophies. I remember deliberately distancing myself from my family to reinforce my individualism or performing worse academically to reject the Confucian tradition of learning.

As a “banana”, I was always too Asian or too white, never Asian enough or white enough. An excluded berry amidst perfectly divided fruit groups. I did not accept my homeland as my home but America did not accept me as its own.

However, when my geography class watched a video interviewing diverse groups of generational youth and their experience with cultural conflict, my perspective completely changed. I learned that this complicated societal disconnection was a shared experience; I was not alone. When the youth shared their struggles about accepting their multiculturalism, it also made me question, *who am I? What are my values?*

Before, I had always thought that being Asian or white were mutually exclusive. If I wanted to be white, if I wanted to fit in and call America my home, I had to throw out my Asian values. But now, I am learning that it is okay to be a melange of cultures. I am in the process of reformulating my values to accurately articulate who I am, to encompass everything about myself including my relationships, experiences, heritage and identity.

My heart lies in equality, empathy, courage, humility and love. I believe in Asian American justice, Indigenous reconciliation, anti-racism, cultural diversity, arts, education and interpersonal relationships. My values are a unique mosaic constructed with colourful pieces from my experience as an Asian immigrant, a 2SLGBTQ+ woman, a friend, a daughter, a student, a person, an identity and a banana.

These values define myself and the world around me. Currently, I’m working on recognising my own microaggressions, educating myself and others and advocating for Asian American rights in my community and around the world through various organisations and movements.

I’m in the process of defining what Asian American means *to me* because being Asian is not a monolithic experience and it certainly does not define a biological or geographical state. Rather, it is a broad idea that each of us must shape into our own. So, I will not be reduced

to simple colours such as yellow and white because I have a much more complicated story to tell made up of rainbows.

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## **I AM PEACE**

(Original)

*Estifanos Mekonnen Adem*

*(Age 19, Ethiopia)*

It was a strange voice. I never heard anything like that before. First, I thought it was a storm, but in summer how could it be. Then I started to feel my bed shaking and the windows and door too. Maybe it's an earthquake, I thought. But it didn't happen before in my town and geography class, I learned, that it only happens in the rift valley area, where my town isn't located. Then an explosion-like sound is heard. It surrounded the house and I felt the shaking for about five seconds. I was at my grandmother's house and it was only the two of us. She was next to my bedroom. And I heard her saying "It's started!"

My country, Ethiopia, has been in a civil war since November 2019. Since then we never lived the same. Every day we lived in fear that the war might reach our cities and town. Today, the war is over, but we are in a situation there is no peace and no war. When you have lived in a place that is world acclaimed for its peacefulness, you don't realize how much being able to go out in the morning and do what you want to do and be back home without feeling fear is valuable until you lose that peace you have. But I don't think to know the value of something; we must not wait until we lose it. For me, it was too late to understand how valuable peace can be. And I guess the war was an awakening experience for me. But how many explosions do we need to be awake? How much suffering, and how many lost lives do we need to see, to understand how being in peace is valuable. As human beings, we have seen enough bloodshed, enough wars, and enough suffering, but what did that give us in return; nothing. The lost ones are lost, but we, the remaining still fight as if we can gain something.

So if someone asked me what my values are before, achievement, ambition, ethics and family, and friendship would be my answers. And I believe as human beings we failed to maintain peace because we don't recognize peace as a value. Anywhere in the world now, dispute resolving method is becoming war only. People are starting to think, that the way

they can make their voice heard is only by violence. Peace is now becoming something that we used to have, not we do have. As time passes we are forgetting what it is like to live in peace. My grandmother that night, being so calm, I always thought how she was like that. And I asked her the next day why. She said "Back in my day, we lived in harmony. People were more listening than speaking. We only thought about how to make the world a better place. But as time passed and human beings started to desire more, we started to fail. This generation had it all; the knowledge, the freedom, the sources, yet, the unlimited want they have made them forget they are humans. They lost humanity. See, my son, that's when I know it was only a matter of time for us to lose the peace we never valued when we had the chance."

Peace starts within us. A peaceful person will always promote peace. As a citizen of the world, I hope to create a society whose biggest concern is maintaining peace and will always be willing to promote it whenever and wherever. I want to make a world where I would feel safe enough to have children and not be afraid they might get hurt or lose them. I want the world to be the safest place where anyone can go anywhere and live as anything they want to be. I want to be a peaceful person with a peaceful world. When we are in peace, the world becomes peaceful too. So, let's value peace. Let's be peace.

## **Values and Identity**

(Original)

*Afina Liang*

*(Age 14, U.S.A.)*

*Canyon Crest Academy, California*

At 14, I began to develop individuality and observe the world from a different perspective. Shredding innocence as I gradually step into the real world can be exciting and full of adventures but also dangerous and frustrating. At a vulnerable age when things influence you easily, it can be easy to forget who you are and be lost amongst the crowd. The teenage years are crucial to a person's identity-forming process and worldview. It is their first time being outside the cocoon, lacking knowledge and experience. To me, my values are like reflections and lessons I gained from learning and communicating with others. As if I am an incomplete puzzle, I need to collect the missing pieces from society through media, family/friends, and books. However, a pre-condition or requirement is essential to find the right part: open-mindedness.

At the start of middle school, it was the first time I realized the diversity of people and the different stories everyone has. If I was not open to meeting new people, I would have never known my best friends. Even when people have contradicting beliefs, being open-minded provides new perspectives and opportunities too. The first step to not judge can be the start of a strong bond, and it enables empathy. Only through communication and sharing can humans understand each other, therefore it leads to my second value: empathy before judging. Empathy is very different from sympathy or pity, it is being a listener and being them. Harper Lee cleverly defines empathy in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as to "climb inside of [one's] skin and walk around in it." It takes courage and being vulnerable to open up, but it also takes effort to know someone. However, when you can conquer the obstacles and fear, you realize "Most people are [nice]... when you finally see them" (Lee).

Accepting and understanding others help to form your values and parts of yourself. Refusing to explore is equivalent to choosing ignorance and prejudice. One's bias can often put others

in a box, diminishing individuality and empathy. Stereotypes are then formed because it is a simpler way to judge others. A society without empathy and open-mindedness breed hatred and misunderstanding. An extreme example would be the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist terrorist and hate group. The group used terror and violence because they believe that one race is superior to another. On the other hand, a society with mutual understanding and acceptance of diversity can initiate teamwork and awareness. Instead of categorizing and discriminating against others based on their differences, society should view all its citizens as humans. Sounds possible in words but impossible to achieve in actions since humans cannot be perfect. Sometimes, demanding fair treatment for all means abandoning privileges for some. Nevertheless, society today is imperfect but certainly has room for improvement.

In my life, I try my best to listen to others when they have something to say. Because knowing how being marginalized or down feels, I would try my best to comfort or at least be with those who need support. Because there was a kind person who helped me, I want to carry on the kindness to others. Compassion and empathy can make small changes in someone's mood and make big changes like fighting for justice and equality.

Still exploring the world, my identity puzzle is not completed. However, I will continue to gain meaningful connections and knowledge as I meet new people. Facing the negative is not the worst part but becoming it. To conclude with Mahatma Gandhi, "Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny."

## **Values of life or death**

(Original)

*Anastasia*

*(Age 14, Ukraine)*

February 24, 2022. A cold winter day that changed me, my worldview and what was most important to me. At the moment, when my watch was showing about 5 o'clock in the morning, and outside the window there were terrible sounds of explosions, I seemed to become someone else. "The war has come", words that will never be forgotten. I realized that the most important thing for me now is life. Not only my own life, but also lives of people dear to me. All other values have receded into the background, and the problems, that bothered me before seem to have disappeared. Everything changed in one day, in one moment. I am the child of war. What? Why? Even the ordinary words "I love you" have taken on a different meaning... I was ready to give everything to bring peace back to my country.

Life values are different. For some people, it's a career success, an expensive car, or an amazing villa near the ocean. For someone, it's first love, family and friends. But for someone it's important only to receive a message with the text "I'm alive".

Why do so many people have to die to protect the lives of millions of others? It's not fair. Soldiers, sitting on the military front, want only one thing – to survive and return to their families. And it was the war that took hundreds, thousands of innocent lives. Someone's heart will never beat again, someone's smile will never appear again someone will never feel the beauty of life again. Never. Instead of bloody bodies only red poppies will grow and will rustle in the wind, as if saying their last words.

Peace in the world and mercy for others must be a priority. People need to know about the horrible consequences of war. We can change everything. Let our children never know what "war" is. Make love, not war.

## **Values We Must Not Change**

(Original in Japanese)

*Mayu Someya*

*(Age 14, Japan)*

*Joso Gakuin Junior High School, Ibaraki*

During the May holiday week, I took a walk with my grandmother. The rice paddies were filled with water, which shimmered as it reflected the May sky and the fresh greenery. The cool breeze felt good. As I passed by the elementary school, I remembered the large stone monument that stood in front of it. I had gone there every day for six years, but this was the first time I really noticed it. I asked my grandmother what the monument was for. With a slightly gloomy look on her face, she told me that this monument was built as a shrine for the souls of those who died in the war.

My grandmother invited me to go up and take a closer look. It was an impressive stone monument, nearly three meters tall. On it was written: “*Chūkōshi* (monument to the faithful who died in battle).” There was a light green moss growing on the monument, as though it had been there for a long time.

“It’s so big,” I said spontaneously. After a short pause, my grandmother said, “If they didn’t put up this monument, the parents who lost their children in the war wouldn’t have been able to feel at peace. Even now, the pain and grief for those who died still has not gone away. This area lost a great many people in the war.”

There was another stone monument next to it, with the names of many people who died in the war. Each name represented a life. In my history lessons on the war, I had learned that many people died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in the Tokyo air raids. But I was surprised to find that there were still scars from the war right in my own neighborhood. My grandmother told me that even after the war was over, many people’s lives did not return to normal. For years after the war, people who had lost their homes,

their families, and everything lived on the streets, and came to her house almost every day to ask for *onigiri* (rice balls).

"I'm sure they wanted to live longer, and wanted to do more." My grandmother gently stroked the monument with her hand. I put my own hand on it, too. It was a little rough, but warm. Then, without saying a word, we put our hands together in prayer.

When I got back home, I looked up "*chūkōhi*" on the internet. I was amazed to see how many such monuments there were — maps came up completely filled with little markers. When I saw this, I couldn't help but look away. *Could there really be so many? No way...* In the city of Josō, where my elementary school was, there were 18 sites, and in neighboring Tsukuba there were nearly 50. All over Japan, there were so many scars from the war. They were silent scars, yet they had not vanished. The war was not that long ago. And peace is not absolute.

Day after day, the TV shows news from Ukraine. There have been reports of nonresistant civilians being killed, with their hands and feet tied. It is frightening to me. Those Ukrainian people have done nothing wrong, and even now, they should be living a happy life, no different from ours. The war took that away. It pains my heart to see those unbelievably cruel news reports.

Even though we learn in school about the Sustainable Development Goals, I feel helpless because I am unable to do anything. Every moment, precious lives are being snatched away. My grandmother says that what is happening in Ukraine seems to overlap with her own experiences.

It's said that in the Meiji period, a bag of rice cost two yen, and a thousand yen was enough to build a house. Now, we can't build a house with even 10,000 yen. The value of money has changed. The value of money and goods will change, but there are some values that should not change. The importance of human life and peace should be our most cherished values. But in reality, the interests of the country are sometimes placed above human life. I strongly believe that we must do all we can to uphold our most essential values.

## **Life Is Now: The Importance of Taking Opportunities We Encounter**

(Original)

*Mizuki Hayakawa*

*(Age 14, Japan)*

*Senzoku Gakuen Junior High School, Tokyo*

"You are free to write about your past accomplishments, or anything you have been working hard on recently." I look around, and see everyone's pencils moving instantly. I panic, because I am not special. I have no amazing accomplishments, or unique talents. However, something I did not know then was that life isn't simply about luck and talent. Luck and talent aren't the only factors to living a life full of challenges and adventures. Whether we can accomplish what we consider as success, and whether we can say that we are satisfied with our lives is all up to us. Although we cannot decide whether we are born with talent or not, we can decide what we do after we are born. We can do so much in a lifetime, but only if we are willing to; willing to take every opportunity that benefits us or people around us. Valuing this will ultimately lead us to live a much more fulfilling, adventure-packed life.

The life-changing experience that allowed me to think this way was meeting a friend, the same age as me, who had brain cancer. She was not in school for many days, since she was always in and out of hospitals. But she was a vital member of our class, since she motivated all of us to take on many challenges. When asked if any of us wanted to audition for the drama club, she was the first one to raise her hand. When our teacher was collecting volunteers for a charity run, she was more than eager to participate. She reasoned her actions by saying that she didn't know for how much longer she would be able to live. She wanted to take as many opportunities as she could in her limited time, so that she could have the same amount of experience that everyone else gains by the end of their lives. When I thought about this, however, I realized that this does not only go for her; in fact, it applies to everybody, since everyone has the possibility of dying tomorrow.

Opportunities are scattered everywhere. We inevitably encounter thousands of them every



day. The difference is whether we take that opportunity or simply push it away. In a way, they are similar to people. Humans are all over the world and we can find them anywhere, but the people that we can interact with are a handful. When we see someone on the train, it is likely that we will never encounter that person again.

Opportunities work the same way. Once we encounter an opportunity, that same opportunity will never come to us again. Therefore, if we see something that might be beneficial to us or others in the slightest way, taking that opportunity allows us to have a chance to gain countless lessons, knowledge and experiences that we would have never had otherwise.

Although taking as many opportunities as we can is challenging, what we can learn out of the experience is often a life-changing lesson. We could receive criticism, since we are trying out something new – something that we have no experience of. It could make us unmotivated and discouraged. However, the criticism we receive helps us in numerous ways: become stronger to criticism, realize our weak points, and use the criticism to grow. Moreover, it is not only criticism that can be gained from taking opportunities. By having enough experience, success will definitely come to us. It will give us confidence, which will motivate us to take on more challenges, which results in a positive cycle of us having a more fulfilling life and being more satisfied with ourselves.

Regretting and saying to ourselves, “Oh, I should’ve volunteered for that activity,” or thinking, “I actually wanted to participate in that club,” happens to everybody on many occasions. We cannot change what we’ve done in the past, and regretting does not change anything. However, we can change our actions in the future, and be more willing to take any opportunity that comes our way. Taking these small opportunities that we encounter daily – these opportunities that have the power to change our lives – should definitely be something that we all value in our lives.

## **My Cherished Values**

(Original in Japanese)

*Tomoka Yoshida*

*(Age 14, Japan)*

*Koka Gakuen Junior and Senior High School for Girls, Tokyo*

The values we hold differ for each person. I think our values are shaped little by little, influenced by our circumstances, our school, our friends, and the experiences we have had up to that point. Therefore, even siblings who have the same parents won't necessarily share the same values.

The basis for my own values is, of course, my close family. My father has had a particularly strong influence. My father works at a hospital as a surgeon, and he performs major surgeries to save people's lives. From my perspective, my father is so dedicated to his work that I feel he prioritizes his work and his patients over his family. Even on weekends, when he is not on duty, he goes into the hospital to visit post-op and newly hospitalized patients. And even when he's at home, he watches surgery videos or reads books on surgery, studying hard every day. Seeing my father's devotion to his work, I feel I've learned what it means to act with sincerity, compassion, and a sense of responsibility toward patients.

I once asked my father why he works so much and puts work above everything else. He replied, "A doctor's duty is to heal patients." My father, too, saw his father and grandfather, who were also doctors, hard at work, and he must have learned compassion and responsibility through their actions.

In addition, I am the second of three sisters, so I've always been exposed to different ways of thinking. My older sister insists on having things her way, and my younger sister also insists on having her way but relies on me when she needs help. The three of us all have different ways of thinking, and we often get into quarrels. At such times, it's my role to settle the situation. I have always had a neutral position, and often, after listening to the other person's feelings and what they have to say, I think about what they want me to say

and give my point of view. This value of 'harmony' is one that I formed by growing up in my family. Thanks to this value, I feel that I've been able to build good relationships with my friends, both in elementary school and now.

Last summer, I volunteered at a senior citizens' center in Kunitachi City. Because of the pandemic, I couldn't volunteer in person, so I thought about what would make me happy if I were an elderly person. Since I couldn't interact with them, I came up with the idea of making something that would please them visually, so I made birthday cards for each of the people who went to the center, and delivered them to the facility. I wrote messages in large characters that were easy for elderly people to read, and I made origami cakes and flowers and pasted them onto colorful cards. I felt myself motivated by imagining the joy on their faces when they received the cards. I realized that, without even being aware of it, my own heart was fulfilled by the desire to bring joy to others. At that time, I understood a little about how my father feels toward his patients. Although I haven't been able to do anything great like saving lives the way my father does, it was the first time I felt that I could bring joy to people who were near me. That was the moment when I realized the values of 'compassion' and 'feeling happiness through other people's joy' inside myself.

I wish for a peaceful world filled with kindness and compassion. When we turn on the TV, we see news of the coronavirus pandemic, wars, and other disasters and tragedies that make us want to look away. Every one of us who is alive today has a responsibility and a duty to create a peaceful society in the future. In other words, if each of us is able to act with kindness and compassion, our actions will bring more smiles, and through a chain of compassion, I believe we can create a peaceful society. That is the kind of society I want to create. Even though I can't yet perform great acts that would open my eyes to the world, I believe that bringing smiles to people near me, like I did as a volunteer, will definitely lead to a peaceful society, so I would like to keep bringing smiles to the people around me. I think I can say that this is my way of life. Eventually, I hope to become like my father, a doctor filled with kindness and compassion who saves many lives.

## **MY VALUE, MY LIFE**

(Original)

*Eniola Oluwatomisin Deborah*

*(Age 15, Nigeria)*

*Destiny International College, Osun*

I realized the true meaning of possessing a value at the age of 12. I lived with my aunt who had two children who were older than I. I always get scolded for what I did not do but circumstances would always make me hold back my tears. When I think of my parents who died in a ghastly road accident, I always feel devastated. They have always been very good parents. They taught me the way to behave and the way not to behave.

It was a shock for me on that bad day when the news got to me that my parent died while going for a friend's wedding in Lagos. My aunt who seems to be the only concerned out of my other family members came to pick me up. Even though I know she can't be like my biological mother, I decided to cope no matter what the situation may be.

My aunt who had always been nice all this while before my parents passed away suddenly turned to a dreadful being. I was shocked when she told me that I will be at home that she can't waste her money sending me to school. I wasn't happy but I had no choice but to obey everything she tells me to do; I do the entire house chores: washing everyone's clothes and cooking food for the family.

It was a sunny Monday. I was the only one at home. I sat down and thought about different things to do but suddenly! I sighted an old man with a small child outside waiting to cross the road. I guess the man could not see well because I could sight an incoming vehicle, so I ran outside as fast as I could and pulled the man back just at the last minutes when they were about to be hit by the car.

I was so joyous about saving a life that I could picture my mother smiling at me. I looked up, smiled, and then ran back inside. On that same day, when my aunt returned from work,

I was accused of stealing the money kept on the table. I knew I saw that money on the table earlier that day and remembered that it was one of her children that took it claiming that it is his school fees, but I didn't bother to question the boy further. My aunt told me to produce the money before the day ran out if not, she would send me out of her house. I told her the person who took the money but she didn't believe me.

The next day, she told me to leave the house immediately. I begged her to let me stay but all my pleas fell on deaf ears; so, I had to leave her house.

I left the house without a destination in mind. I wandered around for about 7 hours looking for a Good Samaritan who would take me in but it seemed there was no one coming to my aid. Thankfully, as I was walking down, a man stopped and took me to his house. He asked me why I was walking aimlessly and I narrated all my ordeals to him. He was shocked that, at my age and with all I am facing, I could still perform such attributes. My story touched him dearly that he decided to apply these lessons to every aspect of his life.

He took good care of me, fed me, clothed me and even sent me to the best school in town. Once again, I felt the presence of a father in my life. Now, I know kindness, honesty and truthfulness are what pay, possessing the right value is like possessing Gold.

## **My Values for Living in the 21st Century**

(Original in Japanese)

*Mei Katayama*

*(Age 18, Japan)*

*Koka Gakuen Junior and Senior High School for Girls, Tokyo*

We live in a society where things are constantly changing at a dizzying pace. What we believed to be correct yesterday gets disproven, what we thought was invincible gets destroyed, and what we once took for granted is no longer a matter of course. On the other hand, we might be able to do things that we could not do yesterday, or understand things that we did not understand before. These changes can take place on a global scale, or quietly within individuals.

A change takes place in me, for example, when I learn something new in school, when I encounter a new idea in a newspaper editorial, or when I see in the media the current tragic state of poverty in the world, or the stains of a brutal war. Each time, some thought or belief within me might soundlessly crumble, or on the other hand, what had been fragmented and disconnected could suddenly take on a fixed form, and in that process my values have been formed.

When we think of values, we have an image of people believing in something and using it as the basis for all kinds of judgments. However, rather than fixating on one thing that I believe in and making it the foundation of my daily life, what I want is to change the way I see, think, and act, little by little and day by day, to adapt to the times, to different people, and to my own growth. In saying this, I might sound like the type of person who is easily swayed by others and tends to lose sight of themselves. But in this world of dizzying change, rather than stubbornly sticking to one thing, I want to turn my eyes and ears to what's around me, and form my values based on what I think is right at the time.

It was the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has been going on for the past four months, that has made me feel strongly about this. I know from studying world history that there has never been a 100-year period of global peace, yet even still, I thought things would be fine in the 21st century, and so it was quite a shock to see how easily peace could collapse. However, I have recently realized that we who live in Japan tend to view Russia from a somewhat pro-American, biased perspective. Because of this war, many of us have become critical of Russia. We say things like “Russia is…” but I have come to strongly feel that the country and people of Russia itself should not be the target of our criticism.

I studied classical ballet from a young age, and one of my teachers was Russian, so I still have respect and affection for Russian art and culture. In addition, looking at the dialogue between the United States and Russia immediately following the Cold War, I realized that Russia is not the only one responsible for this current war. In studying world history, I found that the different perceptions of ethnicity that have caused problems between Russia and Ukraine can be traced back to the Middle Ages—in particular, to the spread of Catholicism and Greek Orthodox Christianity. In the newspapers, I read that this war has had a major impact on the situations in Taiwan and Okinawa. I also learned that in the European countries’ rush to aid and take in people from Ukraine, they did not extend a helping hand to some people of African descent living in Ukraine, and that each country’s way of giving aid was determined by its political policies and diplomatic agendas.

These past four months, my head and heart have been filled with all the things happening in the world every day, and each time I see the news, new emotions simmered in me, to the point that I feel shaken by how my thoughts and feelings are changing and evolving little by little, but through this process I have been able to encounter new values within myself. And now, I’m excited about how my feelings and future values will continue to change. Even though my desire for peace and my wish to make the world a better place will never change, I believe that constantly fine-tuning the way I look at the world is a key to solving various problems in a world that is changing from day to day. And in order to do so, I want to value the learning that happens every day, acquiring new knowledge while not forgetting to maintain a multifaceted point of view.

## **My Values: Instructions to a Sustainable Life**

(Original)

*Gamaliel Jordan B. Languido*

*(Age 22, Philippines)*

*Cebu Normal University*

When I was a child, my grandfather asked me a question: “What would you do if you see a bird’s nest?” My childish heart warmed to the question for I had had longed to pluck a nest so I can keep the bird and her eggs, cage it, and boast about it around the neighborhood. A nest was a child’s hunting trophy after endless days of combing the woods. So I immediately answered: “I’ll watch over the nest at dusk to see if the bird is back and then I’ll trap it with my hands.” My grandfather, already a flickering candle, and had witnessed how others taper without ever realizing the darkness that surrounded them, frowned at my answer as if it was the cruelest thing he’d heard. He then proceeded to lecturing me about how I should be kind, nurturing, and compassionate to all creatures, to the planet in general. On that very moment, my life changed in one sitting. I was no longer the boy who pined for a bird’s nest. My grandfather taught me how to value and sustain life.

Now that I have become a grown man, my grandfather’s question is still very alive with me. It’s growing feathers and wings, flapping uncontrollably inside my chest. Whenever I am caught in the wrong place and at the wrong time, I would recall his question before making a decision: What would you do if you see a bird’s nest? I am ashamed of my answer back then but the values he taught me have been so enlightening and I am using it to make the planet a better Earth to live in; a livable society where every creature can thrive and live their lives to their purposes without being bothered.

I believe that simple acts of kindness are healing elements which can cure prejudice, racism, discrimination, and even prevent accidents. I still remember one night when I was driving home from the town. There was a young cyclist whose bicycle didn’t have lights. The road was very dangerous as he sped his bicycle under the inconsistent streetlights because vehicles might run over him. It was a just a grain of kindness but I slowed down, tailed him



on and illuminated his path with my headlights until he got home. There was also an incident where a stray cat was hit by stones and pursued by children. When the mischievous youngsters passed by, I happily gave them the direction of the unfortunate cat. When they went off, I took out the poor animal from my bag and carried it home. Helping others anonymously gives a different kind of glow. If only people value kindness and compassion, all good things ensue.

What Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan and other belligerent nations need is a simple act of kindness. What the world's thinning rainforests need in order to be thick again is compassion. We humans are very much capable than being harsh creatures. Planet Earth can breathe again if we value life, if we put urgency on the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. We are running out of time. If we don't act all life will perish and it is our own undoing. No one needs to be harsh to attain their desire. And not all desires should be born out of cruelty. We can always choose to be selfless and peaceful people. The citizens of the world should be kind and compassionate if we want to build a strong, interconnected world.

I am just an ordinary person writing to the world among other young people who are also writing for a better world. Hear us and value our values. We are not called together only to disperse. We are here to reunite a divided world. I hope that when you get caught in a bad situation, just remember what my grandfather told me about what to do with a nest. Surely, life would be sustained.

## **Ethical codes**

(Original)

*Tuyishimire Theogene*

*(Age 23, Rwanda <Living in China>)*

*Hanzhou Normal University, Zhejiang*

Growing up, my mom was the community leader at the time and would always tell us about the importance of doing well and being authentic to ourselves and the community. "It is easy to fool society that you do well, but it is even easier to fool yourself, so better be true and good for all shall return." She taught me that; a man harvests what he sows and that whenever life is guided by lies, the soul gets denied a chance to enjoy the genuine joy."

Most of the people who do well in our community are called Inyangamugayo, a Kinyarwanda word that translates to a person of integrity. Growing up surrounded by people who do well, I heard that word so often, and simply because I could not participate in the conversation of elders I always listened with a keen ear and a genuine desire to know.

Among other people I listened to, there was Pascal, a tall brown man who spoke with firmness. To me, he was a transcendent figure and a good example of what integrity looks like, as a child I admired him. Days later it was said that he escaped the country and was nowhere to be found because he participated in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, when I heard about that I felt first shocked and then confused. How can it be that a man whom I took as an example of integrity has participated in the darkest deed any human can ever imagine? He was the man who preached about integrity yet he was also the man I knew in person, that is said to have killed people. As a child, my mind would not grasp this content no matter the context.

What if Pascal has lived upon the value he always preached? Maybe then I would not be shocked and disappointed.

Sometimes we pretend to be well behaved so that people around us can have a good

impression of us, but what matters the most is the heart behind all our activities, the motives to why we wake up no matter how good feeling the bed might be.

The value of integrity is one of my dearest values, and I learned from Pascal that having a value as just a verbal principle is not enough, day to day I try to put my actions in the line of ethical codes, generally accepted principles that reflect the dignity of human life.

To me, Integrity is not just a mere word that my mouth pronounces fluently but my actions scruple to work upon, but rather daily guidance in each day-to-day action, no matter how tiny the movement might be, I try to move with integrity.

When we have integrity we become honest with ourselves and those around us, we can genuinely communicate what we appreciate and what we don't, And by doing so, we give those around us the permission to say what they don't appreciate about us and together, hand in hand correct what would result into conflict and live in harmony.

With integrity we respect our fellow human beings, we do recognize their dignity, and learn to listen to their worries. When we don't have integrity it is easy to think that, the worries that are not our own are invalid, but the truth is that every fear, anxiety, and burden that affects the joy of human life regardless of whose, are valid, and we can only recognize and work on them when we have integrity.

I dream of a world where the entire human race will be guided by integrity, not just in speeches but rather in daily actions. I hope that one-day diplomacy will be at the core center of World politics and instead of justifying wars, politicians settle issues before the public notices them. Communities in which every people regardless of color, height and age will be heard with a genuine heart and feel understood. A world with no hypocrisy, where honesty is a friend to all, and in which when one has done a mistake will acknowledge it and apologize.

## **My Values**

(Original)

*Udeobi Obioma Jennifer*

*(Age 23, Nigeria)*

*Faculty of Chemical and Petroleum Engineering, University of Lagos*

I have been shaped by multiple values, but the values I cherish most, and which are ingrained in me are courage, stoicism and integrity. For as long as I can remember these values have been my guideposts to a fulfilling and impactful daily living.

I could not have written this essay without any mention of my mother. My pillar of strength. A God fearing woman who had to endure years of an abusive marriage, but never once slacked from the weight of raising four children alone, on a teacher's salary. That takes courage and stoicism, and these inspiring values are the foundation of my being. My mother taught me to "just do what you need to do and trust God to make it work". This lesson has helped me through difficult times and through my fears over the years: The fear of starting new phases of my life, fear of having to live with a monster of a father, and now, the fear that I may never be fully ready for God's purpose for me. Inspiration has the power to elevate us beyond our mere circumstances, and I believe that everybody deserves someone who can be an inspiration to them the way my mother is to me. As a pro-feminist, I wish to use the foundation that I have to offer young girls and abused women the support they need to become stoic and courageous. For it takes courage and stoicism to find fulfillment and live your authentic self.

My mother has always tried to instill integrity into all her children, but when you live in a country like Nigeria, where corruption and incompetency is a constant slap in the face, you cannot help but be drawn into that vortex. The reason integrity has stayed with me, is because I have always felt the need to be different. To be the change I want to see. I remember a conversation I had with a classmate a few years ago. She was bragging to me about the fact that her parents sold children for a living. Yes, bragging! Apparently selling children is a "lucrative business." After that unsettling conversation, I did a little research

and discovered that child trafficking in Nigeria has been ongoing since before I was born, and grows worse every year. Young girls are kidnapped and hidden in fake orphanages and private hospitals. These girls are then molested and forcefully impregnated, and the babies are sold to anyone who can meet the prices. I also discovered from my research, unsurprisingly, that child welfare ranks least amongst the Nigerian government's priorities. It was that moment I made a pledge to myself, to be an incorruptible force of change in my country. I have since utilized the various social media platforms to create awareness about child trafficking, but there is a bigger plan. I am currently majoring in petroleum and gas engineering at the University of Lagos. My plan is to enter the oil sector and gain wealth and connections so as to start a project of creating institutions for underprivileged children across Nigeria. These institutions will focus solely on providing a safe haven for the rehabilitation, growth and development of disadvantaged children. I know this plan will, in the long run, address more than just child trafficking because the truth is, today's generation and the future generations are our only hope for a better Nigeria.

"People have no greater calling than to serve the greater good of human kind." This is a wise statement from Japanese philanthropist and entrepreneur, Dr. Kazuo Inamori. A calling is the urge to help people through your God given talent, and many people, like myself, have been blessed to know their calling. However, I believe it is not enough to just know your calling, you also have to HONOR it. And honoring your calling requires having fundamental values. It requires choosing courage over comfort; choosing what is right over what is easy. I having a calling to be a force of change in my country, and my values are how I intend to stay true to that calling.