

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

When We Love, Peace Will Come

(Original)

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I grew up in a village only known to its inhabitants. Neighbors spread peace across the valley like warm rays of sunlight blanketing over the hills. For five years my life was wonderful. My days consisted of helping (well, more like trying to help) my grandparents with their farming. I was loved and adored without boundaries, a childhood I would never exchange for the world.

The day I left Korea, I was all in smiles. I would be going to America with my mom to live with my dad. When I landed in the new world, I was fascinated by my surroundings. Even the long stretches of cornfields, which would soon get boring, mesmerized me. From thinking cheese sticks as rice cakes to finding everything deep-fried, I tried to embrace the new culture and its people. Upon starting school, my smiles became less frequent. Kids would mock me. An infamous joke they would make would be calling me “ching chong” while stretching their eyes. They would stay away from me, but come close enough to insult my culture and the way I looked. At markets my mother and I were like a single black dot in the middle of a white paper.

As I grew older, I remembered my grandfather’s miracle about how he was able to survive a close call in the infamous Vietnam War- all because he loved first. Around 50 years ago, my grandfather looked towards the heavens, sure this would be his last day. The hurt soldier was an enemy silently sitting, eyeing my grandfather, his fingers one pull away from the grenade pin that would set the clearing in flames and mercilessly kill 2 lives. But it was then that a thunderous voice called out, saying “Love One Another”. My grandfather dropped his weapon, and so did the enemy. They looked at each other for 3 long seconds before hugging and crying.

The enemy was someone’s loving father, husband, brother, and son. To be unable to keep peace with just one other person would be breaking the peace with that person’s family and his society.

To love. What is to love? Is it the warm and profound love we share with our family? Or it is the secretive and playful affection we have with our fated partners? I pondered upon this for years. After much thought I understood that loving one another was to genuinely care for others and value their lives. As I grew older I thought more deeply about my grandfather's story, which left me to wonder how I could love my community- and ultimately the world- more.

This kindled two ideas in my mind. Last August I started a 1000-day project where I would write or draw my thoughts of a proverb or a quote every day. Along with that I started a 1000 people survey where I would go out to the world and ask 1000 adults about a life lesson they would like to share with young people. Currently I am in the 270th day for the collection of proverbs and their explanation from my perspective, and the 316th person for the 1000 people survey. I am working to create a website and to publish a book with the collections of personal life lessons and my interpretations of proverbs. My goal is to distribute the books to schools across the world, in hopes of planting a valuable mentality within the younger generation who have the ability to create a better society in the future.

A new history of peace that will dominate the world just starts with one person, taking the leap and loving first. We must educate everyone, especially adolescents, to love one another first, and, rather than waiting for peace to come, to find how a person can take action to achieve it. Adolescents are society's next leaders. They will become the ones to decide war or peace. Educating adolescents about loving one another is spreading seeds of peace worldwide. When we love, peace will come.