

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

United we progress

(Original)

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The world of the twenty-first century has developed structures so complex both at domestic and international level that it becomes constantly harder to keep up with its changes. We are moving towards the formation of a 'global village', forgetting what a village is all about, while it transforms our thinking into a conforming mindset, erasing everything that is supposed to constitute the mind. Indeed, a free thinker already became a rarity in our automated system. However, it is exactly in this kind of world, which keeps on changing uncontrollably from minute to minute, that disastrous ideas are born out of ignorance, misinformation, or greed, and that free thinkers, thus, are necessary; creative individuals able to think 'outside the box', moral individuals able to evaluate ideas based on their effects, compassionate humans able to understand what humanity really amounts to. However, it is not enough to know the right way – taking the right decisions and claiming responsibility requires courage and a well-educated personality.

No doubt, there are, and there have been, thousands of talented people in the world throughout history. Some of the most brilliant minds have cured illnesses, given us electricity, teleported us from one corner of the world to the other in just a few seconds. Brilliant minds have introduced literary masterpieces and majestic symphonies. They have also introduced Christianity. They have introduced the Islam. They have given us weapons so disastrous they could wipe out entire cities, medicine so dangerous it could paralyze the body, and ideologies so deadly they could numb the brain. But giving an idea does not necessarily mean we have to use it. This is where education should focus. Had people in charge not been greedy or ignorant, there would probably never had been a nuclear catastrophe in Japan during WWII, there would have never been a refugee crisis in the Middle East, a rapture in the ozone layer would have never existed, birds would have not gone extinct in masses, and peace through interdependence would prevail. On the other side, had followers not executed orders or followed trends blindly, or had they just spoken up, consequences like these could have been

prevented.

We all share our responsibility for the mess we create. There is never only one to blame, and there is never only one to reverse the threat. Surely, it is necessary that we progress as a species and build on the cornerstones our ancestors have put together. Education should teach nature's laws, it should teach the laws of grammar and syntax, and it should generally enlighten the young mind in what field it excels. However, in order to prepare the mind for this kind of education, it must be enlightened on how it works, when it is motivated the most, and how it can be trained to evolve on its own. This is just another interpretation of self-knowledge which, when acquired, is accompanied by self-respect and, in turn, respect for the fellow man, tolerance, moral values, the ability to speak up for one's self, dialogue, responsibility, and ultimately self-esteem and courage.

Only a mind at peace with itself can project peace onto its surroundings. Education should first and foremost cultivate humans and not just produce another pulley in the production chain. When young minds learn how to cooperate with, respect, and tolerate each other, a harmonic environment can be established, in which scientific ideas can be exchanged, political dialogue can take place, and progress can bloom. It is important to understand that a sustainable future for our generation, and the next ones to come, can only be ensured in a peaceful environment. Not only the schooling system, but also the family, the community and society hold the responsibility of teaching the younger generation all these values. We all share our responsibility in making the world a peaceful place. We all have the ability to destroy it. We all have the ability to protect it. We all have the ability to inspire, and we all are role models – because we all progress together.