

# 2002 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 66

No. of entries: 2,437 (Children's category: 1,374 / Youth category: 1,063)

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

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

- *Harmony is My World*  
Anastasia Rakava (Age 11, Belarus)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Harmony*  
Liat Margalit (Age 18, Israel)

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

#### Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Harmony*  
Mariam Tazeem (Age 11, Pakistan)
- *What is Harmony? [Chowa towa Nan deshoka] (Original in Japanese)*  
Akane Ueda  
(Age 9, Japan <Living in U.S.A.)

#### Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Harmony on Earth: A True Magnum Opus*  
Allison Zbicz (Age 18, U.S.A.)
- *Generations of Harmony for the 21 Century*  
Dario D'Andrea (Age 18, Italy)

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

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

- Takuma Okubo (Age 15, Japan)
- Munam Arshad (Age 11, Pakistan)
- Ulfath Nizar (Age 15, Sri Lanka)
- Maho Saito (Age 12, Canada)
- Rida Fatima (Age 12, Pakistan)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- Shi Jia Yu (Age 18, China)
- Kuniko Wada (Age 17, Japan)
- Kaluachchi Gedara Lasanthi Manjula Bandara  
(Age 16, Nepal)
- Ornwipa Rugkhla (Age 22, Australia)
- Irene Kabura Gakaho (Age 24, Kenya)

### Honorable Mention

#### Children's category (25 entrants)

- Fatima Ahmed (Age 9, Pakistan)
- Samantha Karlin (Age 10, U.S.A.)
- Aliona Yefimova (Age 10, Lithuania)
- Sneha Shah (Age 11, U.S.A.)
- Dasha Komisaruck (Age 12, Belarus)
- Masha Korshunova (Age 12, Belarus)

#### Youth category (21 entrants)

- Yuri Asada (Age 15, Japan <Living in U.K.>)
- Fang Lei (Age 15, China)
- Tatiana del Carmen Gomez Coronado  
(Age 16, Panama)
- Susan Marion Robertson (Age 16, Canada)
- Divya Vaze (Age 17, Hong Kong)

- Yuki Sano (Age 12, Vietnam)
- Yuka Hamamura (Age 12, U.S.A.)
- Rhoda-Jane Ilave  
(Age 13, Papua New Guinea)
- Junichi Nishi (Age 13, Japan)
- Cole Brian (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Yurina Ichikawa (Age 14, Canada)
- Wang Mei Yi (Age 14, China)
- Yumiko Okazaki (Age 14), Italy
- Miho Takahashi (Age 14, Venezuela)
- Sara Rasul Bangash (Age 14, Pakistan)
- Elias Ezequiel Romero Farias (Age 14, Chile)
- Kate Pobortseva (Age 14, Belarus)
- Naomi Erlewine (Age 15, U.S.A.)
- Umara Alam (Age 15, Pakistan)
- Yasith Udara (Age 15, Sri Lanka)
- Madoka Oki (Age 15, Tokyo)
- Zachariah Khadudu Odhiambo  
(Age 15, Kenya)
- Zain Khalid (Age 15, Pakistan)
- Annabel Sawyer (Age 15, U.S.A.)
- Jacqueline Paulina Herrera Carrasco  
(Age 17, Chile)
- Natalie Gvozdikova (Age 17, Belarus)
- McKenzie Kehoe (Age 17, Canada)
- Andrea Susoliakova (Age 17, Slovakia)
- Anton Adriana Diana (Age 17, Romania)
- Katie Firth (Age 17, Canada)
- Rafael Belfor Rios Munoz (Age 17, Chile)
- Mao Ya Min (Age 17, China)
- Saurabh B. Singanapalli (Age 19, India)
- Sara Meshino (Age 19, Japan)
- Yumiko Ito (Age 21, Japan)
- Aya Okada (Age 21, Japan)
- Kaoru Goto (Age 21, Japan)
- Noriko Ando (Age 22, Japan)
- Daisuke Karakama (Age 22, Japan)
- Evguenia Malaia (Age 23, Russia)

### **Best School Award (2 schools)**

- O.P.F. Girls College (Pakistan)
- Musashino Higashi Junior High School (Japan)

## Harmony is My World (Original)

*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 I. It seems to me we are 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 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 interfere into its life. People must always have in mind the consequence of their activities, so as not to destroy fragile nature's 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 their 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 full moon at 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 but mention the Chernobyl explosion that broke out in spring of 1986. I was not born yet at that time, but know about it quite well as at present time, all 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 either mushrooms or berries in the forests. Life itself has become impossible there, as 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 much afraid for my future life and for life of my children.

To live in harmonious 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 harmonic person, his choice will be right. He will make no mistake. 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 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.

2002 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Youth Category – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize]

## Harmony (Original)

*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. Having that for the last two years, we live 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 to 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 of 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. The aim of this movement is to allow coexistence to take place on a 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 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 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, all religions, came to the Church of the Nativity from all over the world, few because of their own faith, and others in order to observe.

Among all of those people, you can 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 a part of a group of young brave people, who decided they want 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 some thousands 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 Nativity, within a crowd of people coming from all over the world, UNITED.

## **Harmony** (Original)

*Mariam Tazeem*  
(Age 11, Pakistan)

No matter how important you think material things are in life-and they do make it more comfortable-inner peace and harmony are key.

If you control your emotions, no one can control you. If you are at peace, then all good things will come your way. Have a dream, remember nothing is impossible. Don't let anyone or anything deter you from your goals in life. Repel the negative, and absorb the positive. Always be yourself and have a good time. Visualize yourself as you want to be and you will be it.

Peace begins within our own being where God resides beyond our seeing, and peace is one thing you'll never find, when you are at war in your own heart and mind.

Love comes in all shapes and sizes. When it comes into your life, grab it, hold tight to it, and allow it to warm your heart and soul forever. How rare and wonderful is that flash of a moment when we realize we have discovered a friend.

Friendships are the one thing in life that can be constant. No matter whether you speak often to each other, or time passes. Sometime you will find that your thoughts wing their way to your friend, just as they are also at that time, thinking of you.

Peace within you must come first. It comes in many ways. It may quietly overtake us, or it may burst upon us, showing us the way. What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.

Today, something is happening to the whole structure of human consciousness. A fresh kind of life is starting. Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world are seeking each other, so that the world may come into being.



Of course people don't want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally ordinary people don't want war in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany either. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

I have so much faith in people. I just think they cannot all be stupid. This is a time when the entire planet can see we have to change. I think that really matters. I think it makes a difference.

A human being is a part of a whole, called the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few people nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

When we become aware that we do not have to escape our pain, but that we can mobilize it into a common search for life, that very pain is transformed from expressions of despair into signs of hope.

I think it's possible that we can live in Peace in this World - beyond, and in spite of, all our different belief systems. Surely it is possible that we can let go of limited concepts that divide us, and arrive at a place that includes all of us.

I believe there is a Source of all things, by whatever name we call it, and whether we are scientific, religious, atheist or agnostic. If we all have the willingness, we can live in a World beyond borders, and enjoy being in a human family beyond race.

We can find a way to include all of us, and live in mutual respect. I believe the World is my Family, and most of all, I believe we all can be friends.

Life would be meaningless without the feelings of your heart, but it is not enough to have them, you must share them.

## 調和とは何でしょうか

(原文)

上田 茜 (9歳)

日本<米国リッチモンド市在住>

スプリングフィールド パーク エレメンタリー スクール

私の通っているバージニア州の小学校にはいろんな国からのお友達がいます。肌の色も違えば、もともとの話す言葉も違っているうえに、年れいも、まちまちだったりします。でも一人一人が仲良く楽しい学校生活をすごしています。先生もやさしく、しかし時にきびしく教えてくださいます。

先生が、いつもみんなに言われることは、すべての人を、リスペクトしなさいということです。これはクラスのお友達に対してだけではなく、バスの運転手さんやカフェテリアの先生など、ふだん私たちがお世話になっている多くの人たちも、ふくんでいます。

みんなが仲良くらすためには、自分だけの事を考えていてはむりで、まわりのいろいろな人たちのことをリスペクトしなくてはならないと思います。これは一人だけで、かいつできることではなくて、一人一人みんながその気持ちをもたなければ、きづくことの出来ない問題だと思います。

私は、いじめがきらいです。なぜならば、いじめをする人は、はっきりと自分の意見を言わない人で、いつも強い方の味方に付くような、ひきょうものだからです。これはアンフェアだといいます。自分の意見をきちんと主張し相手の事も考えていくように一人一人が気をつけたらいじめは必ずいぶんへるだろうと思います。

アメリカの学校にきて、お友達や先生がほんのちょっとしたことでもすごくほめてくれることに気付きました。けれど、お友達のことを悪く言うと、先生はすごく怒ります。たとえ、おにごっこをしていても、鬼になったお友達をあまりはやし立てると、先生はそれをみていて、いじめた子供をすごく厳しくしかっていたことがありました。日本ではあまりこんな事はなかったのでびっくりしました。

リスペクトとは簡単に言うと心からほめてあげる気持ちだと思います。ほめられると、うれしいし、もっとよくなって、人の役に立とうという気持ちもわいてきます。

もしも、今のアメリカのクラスが日本にあったら私は少し、ぞっとします。見た目がちがったり、年もちがったりすれば理由もなくいじめの子供がいるでしょう。調和とは日本の学校のようにみんな同じ人種でいたり、同じ服そうやぼうしを身につけることではないと思います。一人一人の相手に対する親切な気持ちで作られる、ふんい気が調和のもとだと思います。おたがいをリスペクトする気持ちが、私たちの生活の調和をつくるもとだと思います。

私も毎日の生活の上で、すべての人をリスペクトする気持ちを忘れないように気をつけようとおもいます。

2002 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize]

## **Harmony on Earth: A True Magnum Opus**

(Original)

*Allison Zbicz*

*(Age 18, U.S.A.)*

Though difficult to attain, harmony is not just some abstract utopian ideal. It is more than the mere cessation of gunfire, more than "peaceful coexistence," and more than the serenity of a beautiful spring day. Just as in music, where harmony is the coming together of varied and distinct parts to create one glorious masterpiece, harmony between people is the coming together of diverse peoples to create one glorious masterpiece: a united humanity.

To obtain harmony between people and among nations, we must call for an appreciation for all people, regardless of religion or political beliefs. Harmony necessitates understanding, forgiveness, respect for life, and trust. If the world can attain these things, the world can attain harmony and peace.

All nations and people have, at some point in their history, wronged others and been wronged by others. A nation that "keeps count" of grievances is always able to enumerate the transgressions of other nations, but is conveniently blinded to its own wrongdoing. Regardless of how morally questionable or corrupt its actions may be, no country or person actually perceives itself as an unjustified aggressor. Even Hitler was able to convince himself that the Jews were somehow deserving of their fate. As a result of our biases, we must come to realize that our suffering cannot be compared with the suffering of others, that sometimes we must compromise our idea of "justice" for the sake of peace. The healing of divisions cannot begin until the fighting has ended.

In the tragic ongoing conflict in the Middle East, both the Israelis and Palestinians continually harm each other. Because both sides are unyielding, it does not matter which group is more innocent and pure. A change in leadership cannot cause the people to forget their past sufferings, so how can we expect peace in the Middle East unless these peoples can learn to forgive each other their debts and start over? Unless they can learn to respect and value all life,

regardless of ethnicity, unless they learn to tolerate and even appreciate diversity, unless they can trust the integrity of each other's promises, they can never have harmony. While leaders certainly have a responsibility to help guide people along the right paths, I along with all the citizens of the world have an obligation to help those who need it, to hope and pray for reconciliation, and to try to understand those who persecute us. Who am I to judge the motives of other's actions? Who am I to hate those who are themselves hurting and misguided? Every generation in every time and place has had their own burdens to bear, but working towards harmony is a never-ending struggle, something we must keep working towards even when it seems hopeless, especially when it seems hopeless.

How can we catalyze this desire for peace and harmony in the world? How do we get people to forgive in spite of their pain? I believe that a true and complete harmony is not created in one sweeping action, but rather, one person at a time. Through education, we can weaken and dispel many social prejudices. By helping people try to look at the conflict from a different perspective, by helping them see that different is not the same as evil, we can work towards a more peaceful earth. In music, a magnum opus, or great work, is created by hundreds of themes woven together on a grand scale. As the name implies, the composer dedicates his life to the creation of this work. For us to create a harmonious world, we cannot just expect it to happen on its own, we must dedicate ourselves to this great work. We must be the composers of a harmonious future.

Yes, some people in the world have unleashed terrible destruction and have caused immense pain for others, but we must not let vengeance be our motive for action. We must convince our neighbors that it is time to start over with "a clean state," or better yet, with no slate at all. Maybe such a plea will be viewed by the world as youthfully naive and optimistic, but what other choice do we have? A harmonious world cannot be won with tanks and fighter jets, and such a proposition is decidedly absurd. Yet, many world leaders today seem to sincerely believe that violence can put an end to violence, and that diplomacy is expendable. What I ask is this: If we cannot even take the time to try to understand our adversaries, what hope is there for the composition of a peaceful and harmonious world?

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart."- Dorothy Day

## **Generations of Harmony for the Twenty-First Century]**

(Original)

*Dario D'Andrea*  
(Age 18, Italy)

There is a place where love becomes something I can touch with my bare hands, a place where my needs are entirely fulfilled and I feel safe from every kind of danger. That place is my home, where I live with my family. We are a close group of four people who live a simple, yet comfortable, life in a nation ranked as one of the top eight most industrialized countries in the world. We eat three times every day, we have a satisfactory house, two cars, nice furniture and we can afford to go on vacation for one month every year. I live surrounded by serenity, and some of our friends maintain that we live in harmony.

I can't really imagine a better life, for I have received a lot without any merit. I'm a teenager, like many others. I wear nice clothes and have gone to school everyday since I was six. I'm hoping to do something with my life in the future that will allow me to have everything my parents have, if not something more. Sometimes I worry that I'll not pass a test, if a person likes me or not, or if I'll succeed in something useful and productive. But there are moments in my life that go beyond simply whining about these meaningless issues.

There are moments when I feel a deep pain in my chest, as if there is not enough air to breathe. The appearance of harmony in my everyday life vanishes while I wonder - how many people are not as fortunate as I am? How many mothers don't have food to feed their skinny children? How many children have to work in a mine? How many families don't have a place to call home?

All over the world it's happening: hunger, crimes, diseases, homelessness. Though I haven't been directly exposed to such extremes, I know they exist. It makes me thankful, though in some respects, miserable - not being one of them, and being instead one of lucky people who live in the world of abundance. That's the real proof that there will never be true happiness in the world without helping all people who are suffering in the world. My little existence will

never find harmony without dedication to other people, to those less fortunate than myself.

People such as Dr. Albert Schweitzer opened his eyes to the true meaning of life: reaching harmony through helping people who live in Third World countries.

Economists predict that the twenty-first century will be marked by globalization. Others believe the Internet is the real symbol of this century. Why can't we change this century to be remembered in history as the one committed to creating a world of harmony? It was impossible in the fifteenth century for most people to imagine the world as a sphere. It was unacceptable in the eighteenth century for most people to believe that men one day were going to be able to fly. Today there are no boundaries between the possible and the impossible. Today what is considered impossible: tomorrow becomes possible, and just because there are people who believe in making human dreams reality.

There is a place on this earth where people of every nationality have to forgive past mistakes, learn from the errors and look ahead to the future with bright collaboration. The place is the United Nations. I believe the United Nations is the organization that can change the world, the place where harmony can be created and spread over the entire world. For this reason my biggest dream is to be able to work in this organization in the near future. My ambition is to be able to make a change in the world, convincing everybody of the necessity of peace, equality, and justice.

It is a hard goal to achieve, and it will take the commitment of study and dedication. There is something I do everyday that brings harmony within my grasp: within the reach of the world. Every time I respect any belief different from my own, every time I offer my help to people in need, every time I smile at a person I've never met before, I see the marvelous essence of harmony.

I ask you to join me in the mission to awaken emotions such as love, respect and friendship in people's hearts. Life is not a simple sum of success and wealth that a person can reach in some decades. Life is too short, and we'll not bring our wealth with us when we die. Everything we build is our dedication to create a better world for future generations because from generation to generation our dream of harmony will become a true, powerful and wonderful reality!