

# 2006 International Essay Contest for Young People

## List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 135

No. of entries: 4,029 (Children's category: 1,688 / Youth category: 2,341)

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

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

- *Making Friends with Diversity in Globalized Societies*  
Adam Moscoe (Age 14, Canada)

#### Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Let's drink black-and -white, discrimination -free, multi-cultural coffee!*  
Grosu Luciana (Age 18, Romania)

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

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

- *Learning to live together: promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies*  
Fatimah Jejelola Sanni (Age 14, Nigeria)
- *Kindness and Courage*  
Soh Yu (Age 11, Korea)

#### Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Building the Defences of Peace in our Minds*  
Yoko Bizen (Age 24, Japan)
- *Learning to live together: promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies*  
Mustapha Omotolani Mariam  
(Age 23, Nigeria)

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

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

- Nadezhda Neusypina (Age 11, Russia)
- Erina Suzuki (Age 12, Japan)
- Rebecca N. Drobinski (Age 11, U.S.A.)
- Babington Omotola (Age 13, Nigeria)
- Clara (Jung-Hyun) Kim (Age 14, Korea)

#### Youth category (5 entrants)

- Anton Gramovich (Age 17, Belarus)
- Lina Al-Ejeilat (Age 23, Jordan)
- Andriamahefa Nirosoa Malalaliana  
(Age 21, Madagascar)
- Jacqueline Dekkers  
(Age 17, The Netherlands)
- Alice Wellum (Age 21, Germany)

### Honorable Mention

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

- Eri Buten Murakami (Age 8, Japan & Canada)
- Marah Medhi Al-Abduwani (Age 9, Oman)
- Satoko Sato (Age 11, Japan)
- Weilu Shen (Age 12, China)

#### Youth category (25 entrants)

- Saurabh Signh (Age 15, India)
- Bushra Gul Siddiqi (Age 15, Pakistan)
- Monika Sobočan (Age 15, Slovenia)
- Kayoko Suzuki (Age 17, Japan)

- Yu Hangaishi (Age 12, Japan)
- Sonomi Yamaguchi (Age 12, Japan)
- Saori Yoshida (Age 12, Japan)
- Rachitha Shashani Vitharana (Age 12, Sri Lanka)
- Amanda Dickens (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Ozioko Chidiogo (Age 13, Nigeria)
- Chukwulete Emmanuel Chinonso (Age 13, Nigeria)
- Chivukula Deepika (Age 13, Nigeria)
- Harika Rayala (Age 13, India)
- Lana Chebib (Age 13, Canada)
- Lisa Liang (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Afrah Saleem (Age 14, India)
- Amna Javed (Age 14, Pakistan)
- Onyeneke Steve Chima (Age 14, Nigeria)
- Christina Dacruz (Age 14, Mauritius)
- Zilfimyan Tatev (Age 14, Armenia)
- Doulin Xu (Age 14, Canada)
- Hazura Bazeer (Age 14, U.K.)
- Manami Hirose (Japan)
- Pema Dorjee (Age 14, Tibet)
- R. A. Thilini Prasangika Randeni (Age 14, Sri Lanka)
- Hanifa Asra Silmi (Age 17, Indonesia)
- Svetlana Per'kova (Age 17, Russia)
- Chimay Posavec (Age 17, U.S.A.)
- Tomohiko Amanuma (Age 18, Japan)
- Alexey A. Korenev (Age 18, Russia)
- Poteeram Yashvind Kumar (Age 18, Mauritius)
- Pong Shi Min (Age 18, Singapore)
- Garin Çavusyan (Age 19, Turkey)
- Gregory Otieno (Age 19, Kenya)
- Jacqueline Furtado (Age 20, Australia)
- Ng Pin Quan (Age 21, Singapore)
- Cheow Sze Chyi (Age 21, Malaysia)
- Brian R. Dickson (Age 21, Canada)
- Lovin Rama Chandra Sharma Kasseeah (Age 21, Mauritius)
- Cameron Karsten (Age 22, U.S.A.)
- Yanto Jakop (Age 22, Singapore)
- Ilene N. Manchera (Age 23, The Philippines)
- Christa Anna Neubacher (Age 23, Switzerland & Austria)
- Fatima Mourad (Age 23, Australia & Lebanon)
- Olaniyi Solomon Adebayo (Age 24, Nigeria)
- Kai Neptune (Age 25, U.S.A.)

## **Making Friends with Diversity in Globalized Societies**

(Original)

*Adam Moscoe*  
(Age 14, Canada)

"Who are these people? They are taking our jobs. They talk funny, they smell funny." <sup>1</sup> "They" are your new neighbours.



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

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

In Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Jem and Scout Finch had the potential to reverse "time-honoured" prejudices between Blacks and Whites, and contribute to the building of

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<sup>1</sup> Cheney, Peters. "Operation Colour Blind..." *Globe and Mail* 10 June, 2006 F4

<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org)

momentum that fuelled Martin Luther King Jr.'s Civil Rights Movement. The children also learned two valuable lessons, which practise and preach every day: to see the world from another's point of view and to treat others as you would want to be treated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

My vision for "Planet Dynamix" is to shape today's youth into tomorrow's sensitive leaders. It will rely on financial and political support and on our educators' dedication to invest in a better future, in the midst of so much poverty, hatred, disease and counterproductive policy-making. Through encouragement and experiential learning, stereotypes can be squashed and racially diverse children will live and work together, setting an example for the world to emulate. They will recognize a Muslim's need to pray, a Sikh's need to carry his kirpan, how to deal with tension between Israeli and Palestinian teenagers, how to strengthen school spirit and unity...

Are you ready for change?

2006 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 1<sup>st</sup> Prize]

## **Let's drink black-and-white, discrimination -free, multi-cultural coffee!**

(Original)

*Grosu Luciana*

*(Age 18, Romania)*

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



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

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

The "inter-cultural" café should also offer free video/audio counseling for youth. Every person will have access to a personal account on a computer. Alone, in a special room, youth will speak about their problems in front of a camera. The counselor's response will be videotaped, too, and sent to their personal account the next day. However, youth won't be able to view the

video, unless they will accept first to respond to another help message sent by other teen. The computer program will “match” youth of different ethnicities, thus determining them to communicate and help each other. However, all the video messages should be checked by a specialist and youth who use bad language or give inappropriate replies should lose their right to free counseling. It is known that youth often find it hard to speak in front of an adult counselor. At the same time, many of them also dislike writing because they don't know the language very well or because they are too nervous to find the right words. If they chose between video or only audio messages (for anonymity) youth would speak freely and also learn to respect each other.

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

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

The “inter-cultural” cafes may also organize discussions and invite youth of different races to participate. The debates should be moderated by a young communication-specialist, but they should be informal and easy-to-follow even for a young person who doesn’t know the language very well. Basically, youth will be asked a set of questions and then allowed to talk freely. In order to attract youth, the moderators will have to state that this is “the right place for telling exactly what you think”. However, the moderator will have to put as many questions as needed in order to find out the real reasons of youth` anger, hate, frustration or pain. These debates could help the authorities and the NGOs understand better the problems that affect youth and prepare new strategies.

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

After debates, coffee and soft drinks should be offered.



**Learning to live together:  
Promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies**  
(Original)

*Fatimah Jejelola Sanni*

*(Age 14, Nigeria)*

The world has become a global village with the aid of advanced technology; hence it is inevitable that people of different nationality, race or religion cannot escape living and working together.

The spate of riots, killings and wanton destruction of properties across the world for example, the Darfur crisis in Sudan was as a result lack of tolerance. It has become the norms for certain persons in the world to capitalize on ethnic, religious or other disagreements to initiate and execute the slaughtering of innocent persons and destruction of properties. Thus it is not a secret that all these losses are due, often to manipulated violence under the cover of religion or worldly affairs like political or economic reasons.

God has never discriminated between nations, in that all potentials of greatness are granted to all races. The earth is created for example, as floor for all peoples. These attributes of God teach us that we too should behave kindly towards our fellow beings since most people of the world adhere to one religion or the other – Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, etc. None of these religions condones nor teaches violence. Rather, all of them teach peaceful co-existence, tolerance, humanness, love, caring and sharing as well as respect for constituted authorities.

Many young people grow up viewing others of different religion or race through the eyes of their parents or guardians, who themselves had been misinformed, thus, full of prejudices, misconception about others beliefs and culture.

Peace and harmony continue to elude the world because man has refused to acknowledge that we are indispensable to each other, if a calamity besets one nation, others cannot escape sharing the consequences.

Some of the ways people of diverse cultures and backgrounds can live together peacefully are:

- to focus and work on the common values and teachings of different religions and cultures of the world instead of emphasizing on the differences that tear us apart. For those with no religion, keen observation of nature is recommended because nature is always at peace with itself.
- to behave like friends to each other with pure heart, sympathy and good intentions.
- to let decent behaviours, sincerity and kindness be our second nature in life.
- to desist from abusing and insulting other peoples' holy personages, cultures and races.
- nations should avoid policies that are only beneficial to themselves. For example, immigration policies, that hinder the coming together of people of different beliefs.
- to show respect, love, understanding and tolerance to all humans irrespective of race and religion.

Young people like me can contribute to the creation of dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies by:

- promoting cultural integration among ourselves, for example, learning at least two foreign languages or when we are old enough, by not hesitating to marry outside our nationalities.
- forming ourselves into groups that will focus on peculiar global issue for example, advocacy on HIV/AIDS, child-trafficking or labour.
- not viewing issues through the eyes of fixed prejudices, misconception and biased stories of our parents and guardians.
- Adopting compassion and sympathy by not considering others as weak and oneself as strong.
- Appreciating and understanding other peoples' points of strengths and weaknesses and accommodating them accordingly.
- Imbibing the spirit of forgiveness and unconditional love.
- Having pen pals from different parts of the world to enable the exchange of spectacular issues and happenings in our different environments.

- Taking our studies seriously in order to get good grades so that in future we will be highly placed individuals, so as to be part of decision-makers in our different countries.

The kind of projects I can start to achieve dynamic and harmonious multicultural societies include:

- Setting up Library for young people where they will have interesting literatures, biographies and educational materials to read so as to be acquainted with other peoples' cultures, beliefs, histories etc.
- Organizing a strong Children's Parliament that can monitor signing of treaties of peace and enforcing heavy fines and sanctions against troublemakers.
- Starting a monthly magazine with the name MESSAGE OF PEACE that would have prominent citizens of the world like Dr Desmond Tutu of South Africa, etc as Columnists so as to share their wealthy experiences with us. Articles for publication would be accepted from children across the globe.
- Forming network of young people to encourage solidarity and promotion of social interaction and peaceful co-existence.

The diversity in cultures, races and religions of the world are so rich and beautiful, that if properly harnessed and appreciated, the world will be a peaceful place indeed. May Peace prevail on earth!

## Kindness and Courage (Original in Japanese)

*Soh Yu*  
(Age 11, Korea)

Recently, a newspaper article<sup>3</sup> caught the attention of my family. Published under the headline “‘Non’ to Deportation of Immigrant Children,” the article said that a movement to foster children of illegal immigrants was spreading rapidly throughout France. There are many illegal immigrants from Algeria and North Africa in France, and the French government is making vigorous efforts to deport them.



Support organizations comprising parents and teachers are springing up one after another at schools attended by children who could be targeted for deportation. These groups are trying to help the children targeted for deportation by registering foster parents, collecting signatures and holding rallies.

In the newspaper, there was a photograph with the caption “Elementary students in the Latin Quarter of Paris on May 31st appealing for support for their classmate, an Algerian immigrant facing deportation.”

On reading this article, my father said, “France is a country that is very aware of human rights,” and my mother said, “Isn’t it great that they do so much for other people.” Even if you want to help a friend, you need courage to actually do something, so I thought the French children were amazing.

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<sup>3</sup> Asahi Shimbun, dated June 8th, 2006.

Lots of people from lots of different countries live in Tokyo. In fact, people from lots of different countries live in Shinjuku where I live. They have lots of different jobs. Some are English teachers; some are cooks; others may work as cleaners or baby sitters.

Near my house, there are various foreign restaurants such as Indian, Vietnamese, Thai and African. Whenever I pass the Indian restaurant, there is an old Indian man busily baking delicious looking nan. At the Thai restaurant, I couldn't help laughing when I heard there was a dish called "Tom Yam Kun." The name sounded so strange! Then in the station building, I sometimes see South American men and women doing their best to keep things clean. On the main street, Korean and Chinese students chat happily as they walk. They all come from far away and are simply doing their best. Their countries, languages and customs may be different, but they are all residents of our town. Thanks to them, we can eat food from different countries and learn about their customs and cultures.

However, for some of them, their lives and jobs are so difficult they can't even look after their own children properly. Unable to make themselves understood in a foreign country, many of the children feel lonely. I think I should help these children as the French do. One thing I can do now is to teach these children Japanese language and culture kindly.

When my mother first came to Japan she had a hard time because she didn't understand Japanese, but she says lots of people helped her. I want to have a kind heart like the people who helped my mother. And just like the French children in the newspaper article, I want to become a considerate and courageous person.

I intend to keep things like this close to my heart forever.

## **Building the Defences of Peace in our Minds** (Original in Japanese)

*Yoko Bizen*  
(Age 24, Japan)

“Since wars begin in the minds of men,  
it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”

Excerpt from the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO

“This is what I think.” “I see. But, this is what I think.” A history lesson in an international school in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. I lived in Japan until junior high school and was accustomed to made-in-Japan “history” where we simply took notes in our notebooks, and I remember being surprised to see my classmates declaring and debating their personal views of history in class. It was there that the seeds of common understanding were planted among the students, that they all had their own views of history based on their respective countries, religions and ethnic groups.



Perhaps it was because it was an international school in a United Arab Emirate where 80% of the total population comprises expatriates from neighboring and other countries that an environment in which people could engage in a free discussion like this, analyzing causes and process and evaluating historical facts about one such historical phenomenon existed.

However, is environment the only important factor? Certainly, people who live in a place with people of many nationalities may have a better mental attitude towards coexisting with different ethnic groups and cultures. I am ashamed to say, I lived in Dubai without ever really knowing what kind of country it was. That is why I ended up viewing friends from countries with strained relations such as Iranians and Iraqis, and Pakistanis and Indians with one-sided stereotypes such as “no wonder they don’t get on”, “they seem kind of aggressive” or “scary”. Initially, my friends also viewed me as a so-called “Japanese”. However, by sharing interests

and cooperating with friends of many nationalities through club activities and the student council, we were able to get rid of all of our biases, and both my friends and I came to regard each other as individuals rather than people of a given nationality.

In general, I think resistance to equalization throughout the world, which is proceeding under the name of globalization, is causing an increase in closed ethnocentrism in each region. It is probably because I went to senior high school in Dubai and was able to acknowledge and respect differences in race and ethnicity, culture and religion among my multinational friends whilst associating with them as human beings, that I was able to build “defences of peace” in my mind and become the kind of person who refuses to reject other people as “barbaric” or “uncivilized” in international circumstances where a “catena of violence” continues.

At graduate school, I conduct research on education for reconciliation and mutual understanding in the Middle East. For example, in Israel, where Jewish and Arab students are locked in dispute, encounter programs<sup>4</sup> are offered by the School for Peace<sup>5</sup> in the village “Oasis of Peace”. For each of these programs, 30 Jewish and Arab students participate in a 3-day program. The participants are split into 4-5 groups comprising equal numbers of each ethnic group. Once they have gotten to know each other, they engage in activities as a group, such as debates on cultural and political dialogue and pseudo-negotiations on various social and cultural issues existing between them. A total of approximately 1,000 people attend such programs every year. Such activities are valuable. However, can simply introducing your own culture or conveying the history of your own suffering in this way really instill tolerance towards others and create a society in which diversity is respected?

In most cases, exchanges begin with self-introductions, but if the names of people’s countries and ethnic groups are omitted, perhaps they could be freed of the framework of minority and majority, and interact without the biases implanted through education and the media. Perhaps this could provide a means of overcoming closed historical perspectives.

Of course, on a national level too, as with historic dialogue between former enemies Germany and Poland, efforts to change ethnocentric histories, which were designed to heighten mutual biases and hostility, to open histories that promote mutual understanding are important. But surely practice in such dialogues is an issue that should be tackled by flexible young people.

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<sup>4</sup> “Oasis of Peace” URL : <http://nswas.org/>

<sup>5</sup> “The School for Peace” URL : [http://sfpeace.org/index.php?\\_lang=en](http://sfpeace.org/index.php?_lang=en)

For example, having a multinational/multiethnic “mixed-up group” comprising mainly young people visit a historic site and comparing the common views of history held by the majority and those of the minority could offer the advantage of historic fieldwork that discovers historic facts unknown to the majority. This would teach them that just as we acknowledge differences in culture and nationality, different perspectives on individual historical phenomena exist, and lead them to respect such differences and forge mutual understanding. Perhaps this could foster peace among rival groups if it went beyond shallow cultural exchange and became dialogue among equals towards harmonious co-existence. Let us build the defences of peace in our minds.



**Learning to live together:  
Promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies**  
(Original)

*Mustapha Omotolani Mariam*  
(Age 23, Nigeria)

Life is full of puzzles! It is amazing how wonderful a family can be, with the tender-loving care experienced by all members-father, mother and children.

But we should be quick to remember that even the happiest family on earth was founded by two complete strangers, who decided to live together as one, forgetting all their differences and diversity in orientation, culture and beliefs to become husband and wife in order to raise a family.

In not too long a time, other strangers in the name of children will be added to the group of strangers, and they still call themselves family!

Why family? They have realized that living together requires a lot of tolerance and acceptance of the uniqueness of each individual; that though we might diver in opinion and origin; we can live together by accepting each other as "ours" thus, "family".

In a country like mine-Nigeria, where over 400 ethnic groups with different social-cultural values and diversity of religious interest, live together under the canopy of a nation, it should not be difficult to understand why we need to live together in tolerance.

We have had our fair share of ethnic rivalries and violent religious clashes and political upsurges all leading to the death of hundreds of thousands. The story is same in other parts of Africa and the world at large. There are incessant terrorist attacks, wars and man-made disasters. It's almost becoming the order of the day to see people die- both young and old. No one seems to ask the question! Why?

Perhaps somewhere and somehow we are still ignorant of our being family. We still discriminate against each other on ethnic basis we take advantage of others because they do not belong to our own little group, we pursue our selfish interests not minding its effect on our fellow citizens. No wonder the frustration of our people!

With these realities on ground, how do we then live harmoniously?

Starting from my own little family of four, as small as the number is, I used to dislike my only sister-with passion. There was no particular reason for this; we just didn't get along well. It continued so until we visited a family friend with a set up just like ours, I saw their two girls connecting spontaneously and getting along pretty well. Indeed life is beautiful, was what the sight could tell.

I looked at my relationship with my only sister, and I desired a change. Change? It wasn't easy! I chose to accept her person, tolerate her excesses and be responsible for my actions. Since then our relationship has been blissful. Now we are real sisters with the sense of oneness that should be seen in a family.

Having achieved this in my family, I decided to take a step further. If workable in my family, it can also work out in my community! So I decided to make an impact in my school. This propelled me to get involved with the organization of things in my faculty.

I later became the vice president of my faculty. I had to deal with people of diverse interests, culture, religion and background, but with these differences, I still had to figure out a way in which we could all work as a team.

I started with education. I organized series of lectures and seminars with the help of my dean, lecturers and other executive members. It turned out to be huge success! I began to see a change in the attitude of my fellow students.

Though it did not happen overnight, people began to forget their differences, they placed what we have in common above the differences then we started discovering the ever-increasing need for one another.

I was encouraged that if it worked in my faculty, it can work in my bigger community.

With the help of the opinion leaders, Chiefs and the paramount ruler of my community, I should be able to get the school children, artisans, youths, market women, and even the aged at different forum to address. I hope to educate them on various topics that bother on co-existence and tolerance.

I have the aim of organizing seminars and lectures on “celebrating unity in diversity” and I hope to get the same result I got in my faculty.

Since a single tree cannot make a forest, I hope to affect my community and induce a positive change to the extent that, we will cease to see the less privileged as such, but as integral members and respectable citizens of our “World” who can be helped with the collective resources at our disposal to get a meaning out of life.

I am looking forward to a day, when this scheme will gain global acceptance. When everybody will see the other person as a member of our single “world-family”; when we will all live as responsible citizens of our world irrespective of culture, religion, language barrier, nationality or race.

Then an immigrant in a foreign land will no longer be seen as an immigrant but a fellow citizen of our “World-Family”. When there will be no more discrimination and no need for explosive clashes among people as a result of feeling cheated, neglected and isolated.

This is the world I believe in. This is the ideal way the world should be! Where everybody can sing this song wholeheartedly as written by Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe;

My life has been a joy to me,  
No matter where I go,  
I have learnt to live  
In harmony with kindly friends or foes.

For life must roll and men must sway  
Like atoms of the air,  
And live we must from day to day,  
To dodge the devils air.

## **Are we really that different?**

(Original)

*Nadezhda Neusypina*

*(Age 11, Russia)*

People are different, but we are all people, Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist. I have lived in several countries and naturally met many people of different nationalities, and I learned that we all are not that different at all.

I was born in Russia. My mother is from Turkmenistan, from Central Asia. I lived in both countries and traveled between them until I was seven years old. When it was cold in Russia, my mom took me to Turkmenistan to my grandparents. In summer, I came back to Russia. I went to kinder garden in Turkmenistan and even learned to speak the Turkmen language. Later, my mom went to study to United States for two years and took me with her.

When I lived in the US, in Georgia, in our neighborhood, a lot of people from all over the world also lived there: a Chinese boy, Andy, a Guatemalan girl, Samantha, two Russians, me and a Jewish Russian, Eugene, my Mongolian friend Noma, two brothers from India, Harpol and Manu and two black American kids, Joe and Naya. We all lived together and we all were friends. We divided not by nationality or religion. We divided by boys and girls. All the girls liked the same things. We wanted to look cute, talk about school and boys, and we liked to have sleepovers at a friend's place on the weekends. All the boys wanted to play sports and win. Even our parents didn't differ much from each other. Our mothers wanted us to study and behave well. They wanted neat and clean apartments, they wanted our dads to be home early, and they liked to shop from time to time. Our dads tried to have a good job, bring money to their families, and they also wished us to study well. Yes, we all went to different churches, but does it really matter?

I am thinking now, what was the difference between all of us: Russians, Chinese, African-American, Mongolian, Indian, Spanish, Jewish and Americans? Maybe the food I suppose. When we first moved to that apartment complex, we had an international Food Party

where every family had to bring a national dish and introduce the food and the country it was from. That was a great fun! We were running between tables while our parents were trying food and making new friends. I think that was a great idea to help people to let to know each other.

When my family had to leave the US, I left all my friends there. Now, all those countries have faces for me, the faces of my friends. When I hear about India, I remember the two brothers, Harpol and Monu; when I read about Mongolia, I remember Noma's smile; and when I see something about China on TV, I remember how Andy and I played chess together. Now I think how can I not like a nation if it is my friend's nation? I think people may finish hating each other if they personally know friends from that country. I don't even want to think that when we grow up we might be 'enemies'.

WHY WOULD THAT HAPPEN? And how can we solve this problem? How can nationalities be cross with each other, but their kids can get along with each other well? The way to stop hating each other and live in peace is to let people to know each other better. We should create more organizations that would unite people from different countries to work and live together. Organizations like that would have foreigners work together with local people. They would have holidays and birthdays, they will share their good and bad days. That way, in time, a certain amount of people would forget all their bad thoughts to each other, and would see that there really is no difference between them.

...Now, in the long Russian winter, when all is in snow for months, I come from school, open the internet and read e-mails from my friends from all over the world: some of them are still in the US, some went back to their home countries.

I am thinking to introduce my Russian classmates to my classmates from the US and organization International Internet Club. They can start to write to each other, practice their English, make new friends and know more about different cultures. We can find connections with kids from different countries, and who knows? People may become friends, visit each other, and later work together when they grow up. The Internet helps to destroy borders between countries and break borders between people. And for more people countries will have faces, faces of their friends, faces will have hearts, and hearts will grow with friendship and love for other people.

## **Beginning with “Xie Xie” Thank You**

(Original in Japanese)

*Erina Suzuki*

*(Age 12, Japan)*

“Chinese people look scary.” This was my image of Chinese people before I came to China. An unforgettable news broadcast had burnt this impression into me. “Why do they throw plastic bottles at sportsmen who have done their very best?” “Can’t sports become a bridge to link the world together?” This is how I felt when I saw a news program showing Chinese people surround Japanese sportsmen after a game and shower them with uncontrolled anti-Japanese sentiment and violent behavior. I imagine a lot of other people also felt sad upon seeing this news and got a bad impression of China.

So when I came to China, the thing that surprised me most was how kind Chinese people were. For example, when we went shopping, shop ladies were extremely friendly even though we could hardly speak Chinese. On the bus, both men and women readily gave their seats to elderly people and small children. These are just little things but they made a big impression on me. Although it was just a news broadcast, I had preconceived ideas about Chinese people being scary, and I regretted seeing it simply from a Japanese person’s viewpoint and automatically deciding that the Chinese were in the wrong.

Now, I am extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to live in China and to have been taught that it is wrong to regard the Chinese and people from countries worldwide with arbitrary preconceived ideas. At the same time, I have also come to wonder how I can become friends with the Chinese people who show me great kindness.

In Dalian where I live, I am often surprised to see taxis driving recklessly without a thought for traffic rules, bus drivers and shopkeepers arguing with customers, and other things inconceivable in Japan. But the kind smiles on the shopkeepers’ faces and the kind way older boys give up their seats have made a much deeper impression. Gradually it has become natural to say “Xei Xei” when getting out of a taxi or off a bus. And when I say “Xei Xei”, the taxi

driver who had been driving recklessly as if he were angry or the bus driver who had been shouting at a customer looks back and nods or waves their hand and smiles at me. At such times, drivers with whom I can't even communicate seem familiar and kind.

So although it may just be a very little gesture, I want to continue saying "Xeï Xeï". Because perhaps, continuing to do this little, taken-for-granted thing might just help join our hearts.

Through war, the Japanese have caused many Chinese people to suffer. This fact can never be erased. However, in the twenty-first century, if Japanese people living in China can say "Xeï Xeï" in Dalian and indeed throughout China, we will come to understand the value of each others better and better.

Nearly two months have passed since I left Japan. The part of me that thought "Chinese people are scary." was really me. That is why I want to record the changes in how I felt before coming to China, how I felt immediately after getting to China, and how I felt after witnessing the kindness of the Chinese, firmly in my heart. And at the same time, I want to remember that it is only when people go to a country and encounter various cultural and environmental experiences that they begin to see the real picture.

I want to begin by saying "Xeï Xeï" and learn to speak Chinese, I want to interact with lots of Chinese people by shaking hands or exchanging smiles, and I want to deepen our mutual understanding so that I can hold my head high and say, "Chinese people are kind."

## **Enabling World Peace** (Original)

*Rebecca N. Drobinski*  
(Age 11, U.S.A.)

When will world peace come into our lives? It's as simple as working together. To create world peace, we – the children – need to get along with one another and learn not to judge people by the way they look, worship, think, act, live, or believe. We need to let each other live their own lives and not interfere with their cultures or individual beliefs. We must allow them to be who they truly are and not force our beliefs on them. We need to create a project to enable world peace.

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

When a person is working alone on a project, it may seem very hard work, especially if the project is global peace. The goal of world peace starts with one person. Then, let me share my project with my friends. They, in turn, share it with their friends, and in a matter of time, we will be able to see that what we are doing is making a difference. Other people will notice the difference and will be moved to participate. The goal will be achieved. It becomes easier when the young people are working together for the same goal.

### **How can people of diverse cultures and backgrounds live together peacefully?**

My mom recently visited New York City and discovered it is home to over 170 diverse cultures living, working, and worshipping side by side in peace. How did they accomplish peace? It seems to me that kids judge or make fun of other people because they are either trying to cover up something or are ashamed of themselves. As human beings, we all have weaknesses. It is much easier to go through life when we help each other.



We also assume if we hurt other people emotionally or physically, we won't be teased for our weaknesses. Negative attention is turned away from the individual. People might fear us, and won't discover our weakness because of their fear. When we decide to help each other, we do not have to worry about hiding our own weaknesses. We all have weaknesses, whether it is the way we think, act, live, believe, worship, or look.

### **Let each other be**

To enable world peace we need to be who we really are and accept each other for whatever way they choose to be. Once we learn to accept each other for our true selves, we as humankind will be able to create world peace. We must look at each other with tolerance and compassion and keep our judgments to ourselves. As long as my neighbor is not asking me to change my beliefs, I can tolerate hers. Let each other be.

### **What projects can be started to achieve this goal?**

To spread the goal of world peace, I would create multicolored rubber wristbands with a small picture of the earth and the peace sign on the front of the wristband. All around the wristband would be people of different colors and sizes joined hand in hand. This represents humankind working together for their goal of world peace. The wristband is a reminder that world peace is the goal and it begins with the person who wears the bracelet.

I would start the project at my church, asking the religious education director to allow me to tell classrooms of kids about my idea. Everyone that agreed to live by the rules of compassion and tolerance for each other to promote global peace would receive a wristband. Each person would then go and tell their friends and family about the project. Every person supporting the project would receive a bracelet at a cost of \$1. In order to pay for the first supply of bracelets, I would ask my community businesses to get involved. I imagine the project spreading from church to church, school-to-school, community-to-community, state-to-state, and country-to-country. If I could involve people from other countries in the beginning of the project, the project would be started from many directions. It will take children to create this program working together to enable world peace. Let my generation be known as the peacemakers.

**Learning to live together:  
Promoting tolerance and diversity in a globalised society**  
(Original)

*Babington Omotola*  
(Age 13, Nigeria)

Differences create the challenges in life that open the door to discoveries.

The world is a bag full of diversities. Diversity is more than just racial differences; it includes differences in language, interest, religion, dressing and so on. We are all different on the inside, just as we are on the outside.

Being able to see a situation from others point of view and getting along with people are the some of the necessary steps to create a harmonious society. The deepest need of the human heart is to be understood. Everyone wants to be respected and valued for who they are regardless of their nationality, their accents and their mode of dressing. There is a saying that 'people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care'.

Using others physically or emotionally for our own selfish reasons, making others inferior to us or seeing life generally as a competition creates a never ending cycle of distrust, hurt and humiliation.

Some people are intimidated by differences. They enjoy ridiculing those who are different because of their insecurity. Insecurity makes people jealous and threatened by others success. They won't hesitate to get physical about it if they have to and will often join gangs or cliques who feel the same way.

Others believe that everyone has a right to be different. They don't shun diversity and they don't embrace it either. Although they come close, they never get to synergy because they see differences as hurdles not as potential strength to build upon.

We should learn to celebrate and value differences, see them as an advantage, not as a weakness. Two people who think differently can achieve much more than two people who think alike. Celebrating differences doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with those differences, only that you value them.

It could be the lousy neighbor next door, it could be the beggar at the corner of your street, and it could also be the new girl at school. It could be you.

Synergy doesn't just happen, it is a process and the foundation of getting there is by celebrating diversity. To attain the peak of synergy, you have to understand others first before sharing your ideas with them. We should listen to people sincerely without judging them or being selective of their words.

Racism is one of the world's oldest problems. It becomes a problem when your group of friends becomes so exclusive that they begin to reject everyone who isn't just like them.

To attain synergy, you have to;

- Listen to other's point of view
- Be able to define there problem
- Providing possible solution
- Express yourself
- Reach a compromise

Make someone feel loved and special it makes two happy people.

## **World peace is impossible!**

(Original)

*Clara (Jung-Hyun) Kim*  
*(Age 14, Korea)*

How can people with different cultures, religion, race and nationality learn to live together, without hatred and prejudice? Can we live together? Is it possible for us to live in a multicultural universe?

Ever since I was little I have been wondering if these questions will ever come true. This is why I believe writing this essay is one step forward to helping our people, our friends and family, our future children to live together without prejudice and diversity and live with tolerance and love.

At the age of two my family moved from South Korea to New Zealand. As I was so young I grew up as normal kiwi girl, apart from the eyes, skin tone, hair colour and my parents couldn't speak English properly. Although we spoke Korean at home I still felt as if I was kiwi. I grew up with my friends since I little, this was probably what made me feel kiwi inside. In kinder-garden I didn't know anything would change. When I got to primary I used to get bullied by the boys. Teasing me and calling me names

"Asian! Asian! Go back to your country with your ching chong eyes."

These words made me cry and upset, but later in my years I accepted that I was different. My friends would comfort me but I always knew I wasn't that same as them. I always knew there was a line between me and the other kids at school. I knew there was diversity. I accepted it, but WHY? Why should I accept it? Why should we accept diversity? We shouldn't accept this awful thing called prejudice and diversity! God made us all the same, we are all human. This is why I believe we need to make world peace and live side by side with people we don't even know how to pronoun their names.

World peace. World, The inhabitants of the earth; the human race. Peace, Freedom from quarrels and disagreement; harmonious relations: roommates living in peace with each other. ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))

World Peace is the human race living in freedom from fighting and disagreeing.

I truly believe if everyone in this universe believed in world peace we could make it happen. It is those who do not care about others, it is those who are greedy who ruin the chances of world peace. If we all try and help a little, we could make it happen. This is a very complex task, it will not happen over night. It takes time and patience.

One step closer to world peace would be learning to live together. The first step to living together would be accepting others into your life, accepting people from different cultures into your life.

Accepting people into your lives would be great but can we do more? What kind of projects can young people start? How can young people contribute to help the world become a multicultural place? I have always wondered if I could start world peace but then I realized that it is already beginning. In the olden days there was a strict line between black and white, now there can be both. I don't think there is anything we can do that will dramatically change this prejudice world into a loving, tolerated family. Love would be the most important step. If we all love each other and get rid of hatred we are making world peace. If everyone learn to love each other and talk to their foreign neighbour across their house they are learning to live together in globalized societies. Talk to the kids at school who don't have friends, become their friends. Talking to someone on the street that seems lonely, ask them about their country. One little chat is the biggest step to making world peace, it is the biggest step to a multicultural family.

"Learning to live together: promoting tolerance and diversity in globalized societies."

Living together in a globalized society is not an easy task as a whole universe; it will take time but is an easy task for individuals. One small chat, one small good deed is all it takes.

People believe world peace is an impossible task, I believe impossibility is an impossible task!

## **Compassion as the way to manage Rage**

(Original)

*Anton Gramovich*

*(Age 17, Belarus)*

The Earth is our patient and caring mother, and her innumerable faces – vast oceans, shady forests, immense deserts and magnificent mountains – has always provoked deep feelings in man, inspired him to greater efforts and gifted him the wonder of harmony. But as every naughty child man hasn't managed to inherit the feature of Peace properly, but what he did inherit fully was Rage, the feature of his Mother which he didn't only take from her but multiplied greatly. The overwhelming violence of volcanoes and tornados, incandescent with Rage, is unfortunately easier to find in the human soul than the Patience and Tenderness of an unfolding bud. And this is natural, for no deed requires less effort than Destruction and no act can be as difficult and peaceful at the same time as Creation.

Through the centuries of the world history human civilization was developing being divided into many comparatively small communities. Those communities didn't mix much with each other and thus existed isolated from the rest of mankind. This is the reason why today's ethnic groups differ from each other, both in appearance and in the way they perceive the surrounding reality. But the previous century has brought innumerable changes in the life of our planet. The process of globalization of economy and politics went side by side with technical and scientific progress and has become the sphere of active international cooperation. But unfortunately, the negative side of the process is also obvious. This is where human Rage finds its reflection: where peaceful cooperation could take place, there is a fierce rivalry, where could be friendship, we find boundless hatred. And the most confusing thing about that is that in the numerous and destructive wars the humanity has unleashed the most dangerous weapon turned out to be racial prejudice, the quality of a person which is the most inhumane and all non-essential for people in the globalized society of today.

The traditions of a nation, its culture, religion and language affect the moral values and the way of life of the nation's representatives. Due to the fact that the nations of the world had

different ways of development, the mentality of one nation often does not coincide with the mentality of another. With the development of international affairs the conflicts between the ethnic groups became tenser than ever. We know a great number of examples: the acts of genocide committed by Nazis against Jews and Slavs, ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, and Rwanda.

But what seems even stranger is that racial conflicts take place more often not between the countries, but within one country between the representatives of different ethnic groups. The discrimination of ethnic minorities, negative attitude towards immigrants and regarding them as intruders is an extremely frequent event nowadays. Evidently, we have something to do to avoid all this, for we must not allow national pride turn into racial prejudice.

In my opinion, these are the basic rules that may help us live together peacefully:

**1. *Prevention is better than cure***

We should understand that prevention of a conflict is much more difficult than its resolution, but it saves more lives and makes the consequences of the conflict less painstaking. That's why people should pay proper attention to the relations between each other and not allow the mounting hatred explode.

**2. *Every single life is precious***

If we have to deal with a military resolution of a conflict, we should always remember that every person has equal right to live. The fewer lives are ended in a conflict - the better its resolution is. It's impossible to build peace on the bones of other people.

**3. *A farewell to arms***

We should bear in mind that taking up arms against somebody is an extreme measure. The world disarmament allows democracy develop. Democracy requires more efforts than warfare, but it is the way to save millions of lives. Such organizations as the UN should be the leaders in establishing peace all over the world.

**4. *The childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day***

Tolerance towards ethnic and religious minorities is something that is given together with the upbringing, from parents to children. Everything has its beginning in the

family. That's why parents all over the world should understand that they are responsible for their children's moral values. But it is not typical of such an institution as family to depend on outer influence. That's why it is up to a person to decide in what way to bring up his or her child.

#### **5. *Better unborn than untaught***

Another great force that moulds child's character is education. This must become a vast sphere of action for those who want peace prevail on Earth. Schools must not segregate children according to their race or religion. Religious education must be optional and a person should have choice of religion to study.

#### **6. *Power should be just***

Governments of the countries all over the world should neither discriminate nor favour any ethnic group which is living in the country. Equal attitude towards everybody is essential for establishing humanity.

#### **7. *Together we are strong***

People should understand that multicultural diverse society brings great benefits to the country, for the problem is always easier to solve if to look at it from different points of view. Promoting pluralism is the best way to prevent ethnic and religious conflicts. The domination of pluralism can be achieved by creating proper international and domestic legal norms.

My project is titled 'Compassion as the way to manage Rage'. In my opinion, nothing but compassion can establish peace on our planet. The Dalai Lama once said: 'Compassion is not religious business, it is human business, it is not luxury, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability, it is essential for human survival'.

So let us tame that Rage that fills the souls of ours and turn it into Compassion that is mother of Peace!



2006 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **Dare to Question, Dare to be Human** (Original)

*Lina Al-Ejeilat*  
(Age 23, Jordan)

I'm Jordanian. I'm Arab. I'm a Christian Jordanian Arab. I'm not a refugee. I'm not an immigrant. I don't come from a cross-cultural marriage. I can trace my ancestors in this country up to my tenth grandfather.

To some I'm a minority here because of my religion. I'm Christian by faith, but I'm Muslim by collective culture.

Collective culture... what does that mean anyway?

I guess it means that a lot of our practices, values, and consensus on what is deemed right or wrong stems from the traditions and values adopted by the dominant culture, or in this case, the dominant religion.

I live in a society where it's hard to be different, a society where the 'collective' supersedes the individual, and a society where – by choosing to be different - you don't break the norms, but break yourself against the norms.

I live in a society where immigrant workers are treated as an inferior race. You go to many households and see a 5-year-old child treat the domestic worker from a country like Sri Lanka, the Philippines, or Indonesia as if she were some family property. She is labeled as "the maid" wherever she goes, and cannot really have the same social life, freedom, and integration within the community at large like any human being living in a country deserves to.

Young people think that they are exposed to a lot of different cultures through different media; the internet, satellite stations, movies... but the truth of the matter is, it is this media specifically that is keeping them ignorant, and giving them a very superficial view of this

different culture. There was one time when I took a German friend of mine downtown. She has what you might call the "typical" European looks (if there is such a thing as typical) – blond, white, and dressed a bit differently from girls in Amman. As we were walking down the street, a teenage boy yelled from his window, in English: "Hey Bitch! What's up Bitch?"

I was very embarrassed, but she took it calmly and walked on, explaining to me that it is usually only with teenage boys that she gets these exclamations. Now when you think about it, these boys live in a very conservative society that makes it clear early on what the taboos are. Then, through media, TV, and movies, they get an image of a different society where these taboos are not prohibited, and not condemned. In their minds, which are programmed and scripted dogmatically to view this different approach by other cultures and mentalities as "sin", every blond woman is coming out of a "sinful" foreign film.

They don't know that the world outside their narrow sphere is not just one big Hollywood film, they don't know that watching "friends" and "Sex and the City" is not exactly Globalization 101, where they open their minds and learn more about "the other".

So what do we do? How do we educate young people and help them embrace diversity and live in harmony in multicultural societies?

I learned the most valuable lessons in diversity and accepting those who are not like me without feeling that this threatens my values or undermines my culture, throughout the time I spent in International Youth Camps. Not all youth camps are the same though. The idea is not to bring food, music, brochures and souvenirs, and share them in one big festive atmosphere where everyone is just excited about interacting with "exotic" people.

No. The idea is to be able to sit together, and not shy away from asking questions. When we came to a point of admitting ignorance, and asking, not with the intention to judge or form opinions, but to understand and become aware. Dialogue is not easy thing, it is not a casual conversation where you ask, what do you usually have for lunch? And is it ok to wear shorts in your city or not? It also isn't an attempt to prove anything to anyone or to play Public Relations Officer of your country's tourism ministry. No, dialogue is when you agree to lay bare everything you had taken for granted, and everything that was passed on to you and that you accepted unquestionably, and to dig below the surface.

When young people learn to find the courage and venture onto this uncertain playground, where it's not about playing to win or lose, but rather walk through a maze, where players set off at different starting points, but find that their paths intersect and that underneath all the baggage they come carrying, is a simple truth, and that is their humanity... when young people get to that point, their minds will experience a liberation unknown to them before.

Our society, and our education system, is still very answer-based. I believe it should be more question-based. When we feed into the minds of children that there is only one right answer, and that is the answer in the assigned textbook, we program them to be narrow-minded, dogmatic individuals. Let's bring them together, and let's encourage them to ask, and question everything, and look for answers in places seldom trodden. Governments and Institutions should invest more in giving youth experiential learning, travel experiences, and most importantly, chances to see and hear first-hand, rather than be trapped by media scope and paradigms of conformity.

It's a challenge. It's risky. And it might involve a lot of confusion.

I still feel Jordanian... Arab... Christian.

But above all that, I'm human. This is my passport, this is my citizenship. This is my religion.

## **Le grand village de la tolérance**

(Original)

*Andriamahefa Nirisoa Malaladiana*  
(Age 23, Madagascar)

Depuis quelques temps avec le levé des frontières, nous voyons arrivés dans nos pays des personnes venu d'outre mer. Ces étrangers comme nous les appelons si bien partagent nos rues, nos écoles, nos restaurants et font parties intégrantes de notre quotidien. Cependant envers ces gens nous n'éprouvons que du mépris. Au fond quand on analyse les faits, on les considère comme des menaces, on se dit qu'ils sont là uniquement pour nous voler nos filles, nos travaux, nous arnaquer et voler nos ressources. A aucun moment on a essayé de se comprendre. Dans nos université par exemple, personne ne fait l'effort d'être l'ami de l'étranger qu'on voit tous les jours durant nos cinq années d'étude. Pourtant on se voit tous les jours, on trouve toujours des prétextes pour ne pas s'asseoir près de lui ou faire partie du même groupe d'étude que lui, on dit qu'il sent mauvais, qu'il est nul, qu'il fait peur, tous les prétextes insultants y passe. Quand l'étranger prend la parole, on rigole, quand il passe on parle de lui derrière son dos. Le plus navrant dans tout cela c'est que c'est nous les jeunes qui sont les premiers dans ce genre de bêtises. Bête même c'est un peu faible pour qualifié cette mentalité qu'on aurai du dépasser avec le développement qu'on croit connaître si bien. En effet a tout moment de notre vie on est emmené à voyager et je suis sur que personne n'a envie d'être traiter comme des « étranger » . C'est pourquoi il faut mettre fin à cela. Mais personnes n'est mieux placé que ces mêmes jeunes pour changer les choses. C'est pourquoi tous les efforts doivent se concentrer sur ces jeunes.

Pour attirer des jeunes à se parler, rien de mieux que les jeux. Le jeux c'est le meilleur façon pour rassembler les peuples. « Le sport par exemple c'est l'école de la vie » comme on le dit, le sport c'est le seul moyens pour faire comprendre aux hommes la notion du travail d'équipe. Le sport est l'unique terrain où la notion de travail d'équipe est effective et où tous les membres se sentent utiles, et ceci est une vérité universelle. Dans le sport on apprend à perdre en sachant que ce n'est que parti remise. On apprend aussi à gagner avec humilité. Le

sport c'est aussi le seul terrain où on se comprend même si on ne parle pas la même langue, quand c'est faute c'est faute pour tout le monde.

Voilà pourquoi je suis sûre que pour instaurer un dialogue entre peuple le jeu est le seul et unique moyen. Je propose un « Global Village » comme nous l'appelons communément. On pourrait l'organiser durant les vacances d'été. On l'a souvent fait au niveau internationale mais là on le fait sur le plan national et on invitera des jeunes de tous les coins du pays quelques soit sa nationalités à venir rejoindre le village mondial. Durant une semaine ces jeunes vont vivre ensemble, partager la nourriture, jouer au même jeu. L'idée sera de donner un plateforme de discussion entre des jeunes qui se croisent quotidiennement dans la rue sans jamais se dire que l'autre pourrait être son ami. Plusieurs activités seront prévues durant la semaine. Une session plénière expliquera aux jeunes les méfaits du manque de communication entre peuple du monde qui cohabite. Une foire aux stands sera aussi organisée, les jeunes se réuniront selon leurs nationalités et présenteront leurs pays et leurs cultures, car plus on connaît l'autre plus on saura comment l'aborder. Afin d'assurer le partage et la communication entre ces jeunes, ils vivront le reste de la semaine en groupe composé de différente nationalité. Ces groupes mangeront ensemble, travailleront ensemble et joueront ensemble. Des travaux de groupes seront organisés et traiterons ces thèmes : Pourquoi les conflits entre peuple qui cohabite ? Quel sera le garant d'une bonne cohabitation ? Quels sont les initiatives que les jeunes pourrait prendre pour mettre fin à cela ? Comment l'idée du Global village pourrait perdurer (forum électronique, réseau des jeunes, ...) ? Quels genres d'activités pourrait on rendre systématique pour pérenniser l'initiative du global village ? Des sorties seront aussi organisées durant la semaine, des tournois sportifs, des projections de film et tous les jours les différents groupes s'affronteront pour gagner à la fin de la semaine le « trophée de la tolérance ». A la fin de la semaine des recommandations seront lus par les jeunes, des engagements seront pris. Parmi les recommandations on soufflera l'idée du « centre de la tolérance » où les jeunes pourront continuer à se voir dans l'adversité. Des associations devront se former et un réseau de liaison devra être mis sur pied. Les jeunes continueront à se rencontrer que ce soit dans le centre ou sur le forum électronique, d'autres jeunes les rejoindront et le mot étranger ne sera plus de recours.

Un jour, un de nos professeur nous a un jour poser la question, « c'est quoi votre rêve », la réponse ne s'est pas fait attendre dans la salle : être riche, avoir des millions, ... enfin des choses banales. Alors le professeur s'est levé avec un grand soupire et dit « vous m'envoyé désolé, pourquoi vous les jeunes vous ne faites que des rêves de fortune et gloire, il est donc

loin le temps où vous rêviez de changer le monde ». Et bien moi je dit, effectivement nous les jeunes nous avons une grande capacité, nous pouvons rêver, et le mieux c'est que nous pouvons les rendre réalité. C'est vrai l'idée du global village est ambitieux, mais la jeunesse a des rêves de monde meilleur, il suffit de leur faire confiance et de leurs donner les moyens d'y arriver.

## **The great village of tolerance**

(English Translation)

Since borders are getting increasingly irrelevant, we can observe people from abroad coming into our countries. These foreigners are sharing our streets, schools, restaurants and are an integral part of our daily lives. However, towards these people, we only feel hate. In fact, we analyse our behaviors, they are a threat to us. It is said that they are only here to take away our women, our jobs, and to steal our resources. We have not tried to understand each other. For instance in our universities, nobody has tried to make friendship with foreign students, although we see each other every day. We have prejudices towards foreigners, saying that they are stinking, losers, threatening and other insulting pretexts. When a foreign speaks, we are laughing at him or blaming him behind his back. The sad thing is that particularly young people have such prejudices towards foreigners. And it is these young people who are traveling in many countries and in that case are also considered as foreigners in other countries they are visiting. And I am sure that nobody wants to be discriminated as « foreigner ». Therefore, we need to make an end to all this. And nobody is in a better position to do that than these young people who have the privilege to travel abroad. Therefore, all efforts to create a shift in the behavior towards foreigners should be made by young people.

In order to engage young people in a dialogue, there is no better way than games. Games are the most efficient tool to bring people together. « Sport for instance is the school of life » as we say. Sport is the only way to make people understand the notion of teamwork and cooperation. While during sport, people can learn to work in one team, and do feel useful. This is a universal truth. While doing sport, we learn to lose knowing that this is only a game. We are also learning to win with humility. Sport is also a way of understanding despite we may not speak the language of our team players. And we become aware that we also take the responsibility for the whole team. If we make a mistake, it is a mistake we do for the whole team.

Therefore, I am convinced that in order to establish a true dialogue among peoples, the game is the only and unique way to achieve this objective. I propose a « Global Village Campus » as we call it already. We could organize it during the summer vacation. We have often organized such a « Global Village Campus » at the international level, but my proposal is to organize it at the national level, inviting young people of different nationalities living in all corners of our country to come and join this global village. During a whole week, these young people would live together, share ideas and food and play together the same games. The idea is to give a platform for dialogue to young people of different nationalities living in the same cities but who in general are not meeting each other although they are passing by each other in the same streets. Various activities would be offered to these young people throughout the week. A plenary session would stress the lack of community among the peoples of the world. Young participants at this event would hold both, introducing their national countries and respective cultures with the objective to teach and inform others about their customs and patterns. Working groups would be created to elaborate and work on the topics such as: Why are there conflicts among people? What would secure a fruitful communication among people? What sort of initiatives could young people start in order to overcome prejudices?

At this « Global Village Campus », during the whole week, sport games would be held, cultural movies shown, and there will be a « Trophy for Tolerance » for those who have expressed the highest quality of tolerance. At the end of the week at the closing session, proposals would be made by young people to improve a stronger partnership among young people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

I could see in each city a « Center of Tolerance » where young people of different nationalities can meet and share and enjoy their unity and diversity. All these « Center of Tolerance » should be internationally linked via the Internet. Thus, young people of different nationalities could meet each other physically as well as through modern communication technologies. This initiative will help to overcome national and cultural prejudices and establish tolerance among young people.

One day, our school teacher has asked us the following question: « What are you dreaming of? ». Most of the students responded: to be rich, having millions of money. Hence, unimportant things. Then, our teacher was nodding his head while saying « you have truly disappointed me.

Do you think that money, wealth and glory are the dreams which make you happy? I was so much hoping that you are dreaming of making the world a better place».

Well, I can say that in fact we young people have a great potential, we can dream and the best of all is that we can make our dreams a reality. It is true that my idea of a « Global Village Campus» is an ambitious project, but I believe that youth has dreams of a better world. We only need to trust youth and to give young people the possibilities to realize them.



2006 International Essay Contest for Young People  
[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **Reaching the sky together** (Original)

*Jacqueline Dekkers*  
(Age 17, The Netherlands)

When I heard about the troubles in France this year, I was very shocked.

Young people with Arabic roots protested in a terrible way because they felt discriminated in France.

Their behavior was of course not correct, but I think that they could not find a better way to express their frustration and impotence to make a positive change in their lives.

It is hard to believe that in 2006 things like that are still happening in Europe.

Haven't we learned from the history how terrible things can happen when people hate another group of people just because they are different from themselves?

In Holland there is also a multicultural society. Here live a lot of people from very different countries. It would be terrible if here in Holland would also happen something like in France.

A lot of adult people in Europe underestimate these social problems. Some people even say that discrimination does not exist here, but in other countries. It seems that they do not want to see the reality.

I think that we have to see all the problems in our society if we want to avoid terrible things. We should try to find a way to prevent social problems before they happen.

It seems to me that a radical change in our society has to occur in order to prevent such awful things. I was thinking a lot about this issue. That's when I got a good idea.

I think that young people have got a lot of power. Young people are very enthusiastic and dynamic and they don't give up soon if they have a goal. We young people have got a dream, we want to improve the world.

In my neighborhood I organized a multicultural festival. When the community heard about my plans to start a multicultural festival they were very excited. So they decided to support my festival. The local newspaper wrote an article about my project. It was a very good idea to promote the festival this way. Other companies wanted to support the festival by giving free food and drinks during the festival. When my friends and my school heard about it they were very proud of me. And of course they were willing to give a hand. I was surprised about the enthusiasm from everybody, young and old. The most important was that young people from all different cultures came together and worked hard on the project.

All of them had the same goal, to understand each other and to learn to appreciate the differences and similarities between each other. We danced, we ate, we song and we laughed together. There were about 500 young people at the multicultural festival. They came from different countries from all over the world such like, Morocco, Turkey, Surinam, China, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iran, and from Africa. It was wonderful to see so much cultural diversity, and how proud all of this young people were about their background.

We organized a cultural fashion show, and there were also different groups who played typical music of all these countries. At the last moment I got the idea to organize a dancing contest. This was a big success. The guests could take part of the contest. This dancing contest was very special because every participant had to give a performance of a typical dance from three different countries. They were not allowed to dance the typical dances of their own country. It was amazing to see how good young people can learn from each other. We had young people from Morocco who learned Dutch people dance their typical dances. We chose four very different dances from around the world: samba, Greek dance, Indian dance and African dance. There were a lot of people who wanted to participate in the dance contest. It was a very exciting contest, and everybody had a lot of fun. The winner was a girl from China, she had really good moves. She won a collection of music from many different countries and cultures.

At the end of the festival everyone was very positive about my project. They even made plans to organize the multicultural festival next year again. A lot of sponsors offered their financial

aid for next year. We have even formed a group of young people who will want to help to organize this event next year.

If more young people would take the initiative to organize an event like this in their own communities, it would help a lot to have a better understanding between young people from different backgrounds.

I know that my project is just a small step to improve the world, but if everyone would also take a small step, then we could even reach the sky!

## **Creating an intercultural community**

(Original)

*Alice Wellum*

*(Age 21, Germany)*

To understand how people of different cultures can live together peacefully it is important to understand one thing: we are all alike. We laugh when we think something is funny, we cry when someone we love dies. These are basic human emotions which (almost) every person shares and which are instantly recognizable across all cultures. Sometimes it appears as though our differences are greater than our similarities. It was this bias that my friends and I sought to overcome with our project.

For the last two years I have been part of a very special community here in Maastricht. It is a beautiful town, full of old buildings and churches and history, with a nice atmosphere. The first year that I lived here I felt lonely. In Maastricht every student has his own room, and even if people live together in one house they live very individual lives separate from one another. I enjoyed seeing my friends, but even so I missed the familiarity of having a home together. So when four of my friends asked me if I would like to move into a house together with them, I jumped at the chance and said yes, of course!

We all knew from the beginning that our house would be different. First of all, all of us came from many different countries. One boy had an Iranian/ Finish background, another boy was Canadian but had spent two years living in Hong Kong. Then there were two Germans and I, an English/ German person who had previously lived in Belgium. All of us had been exposed to many different cultures at one point. We brought with ourselves many ideas, many worldviews, many ideologies. But we all had something in common: the belief that although we were different, we could live together peacefully. Together made sure that every person was accepted for who he or she was, was loved for what he or she brought into the community. We kept an atmosphere of love and trust. Because of this, our house began to grow. Now a Nepalese boy lives with us, a girl from New Zealand and a boy from the US. Guests frequently stay in our living room. We take an interest in one another, cook together and talk about what

is important to us. During the recent troubles in Nepal we kept a close eye on the news and made sure our Nepalese friends knew we were there for him. The house cooks together, we talk about what is important for ourselves, we talk about our feelings. The last part is especially important and contributes a lot to the open atmosphere in the house.

Of course there are times of conflict. So many cultures cannot be together without the inevitable clashing of viewpoints. In those cases it was always important not to 'explode', but to talk calmly and respect the other person's opinion. I've learnt that you do not have to agree with another person about an issue, but that this doesn't have to change your perception about the person in essence. I'm more able to accept now that a person can have a different point of view from mine, but still a person I like and respect, even if we differ in opinions about headscarves and the death sentence. It's one of the hardest things to do for me- liking someone for who they are, and allowing them to keep their opinion and listen to them even if I do not agree. Yet I am learning.

Since starting up this house, we have come far. We have met many people. Some stayed for a while, some moved on. We took an interest in people, so interesting people came to us. Once an immigrant man from Suriname came to our house and talked to us about his life. Another time a girl who had spent some time in a mental institution stayed with us. Those times were both difficult- but it was amazing for me to see that these people too were accepted, and that our house was able to take them. I know that on my own I would not have been that strong.

The ideas we share in our community extend further. The boy from Canada has started up an international student group focusing on sustainability and poverty. It has been going on for almost a year and has thirty members. During a workshop in Hungary I watched several of my 'house' friends naturally bridge gaps between people they hardly knew by accepting who they were and taking an interest in them.

Our house is special because it has the ability to accept people for who and what they are, regardless of their background and culture. Open-mindedness and accepting other people is a necessary essential which has kept the house together for the past two years. For this it is important that people are able to view their opinions without being laughed at, but are taken seriously.

This is what works: love and respect for the other person, open communication, and knowing that you are in a place where you as a person are accepted, regardless of your culture. I believe that my house is not an exception: it is something which is possible to build up anywhere. Indeed, there is another house in Maastricht which has been able to create just this atmosphere and successfully supports people suffering from cancer. Whether the community has a common interest or not, as long as there is a feeling of innate acceptance of the other person, intercultural living and learning is possible. I can guarantee this. After all, it is what has been shown to me again and again over the past two years.