2007 International Essay Contest for Young People
List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 138
No. of entries: 4,029 (Children's category: 1,315 / Youth category: 2,714)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Unity in Diversity: Media's role in making of a peaceful world*

    Sneh Shah (Age 8, U.S.A.)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Amplifying Peace Across Borders*

    Anna Rosario A. Elicaño

    (Age 24, The Philippines)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Mass Media Like a Mirror*

    Alexandra Girel (Age 10, Belarus)

- *SMS Alert : "Peace, Man! :p"*

    Yunitha Ratnadilla T. A. K.

    (Age 14, Indonesia)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Communicating Peace*

    Yukari Nemoto (Age 16, Japan <Living in USA>)

- *Hearing each other, Hearing ourselves: The need for 'Radio-Forums' to create an ongoing Space for Peace*

    Sara J. Wolcott (Age 25, U.S.A.)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- Momone Ozawa

    (Age 9, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)

- Wendyll Ermac Mejia

    (Age 12, The Philippines)

- Yurika Sakamoto (Age 13, Japan)

- Kazuki Soejima

    (Age 13, Japan <Living in Malaysia>)

- Elmad Ochieng (Age 14, Kenya)

Youth category (5 entrants)

- Margarita Mischinova (Age 17, Bulgaria)

- Joanna Pietrzak (Age 17, Poland)

- Takuto Sato

    (Age 18, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)

- Veerle Vrindts (Age 20, Belgium)

- Tara Yvonne Finglas (Age 23, Ireland)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Raúl Andrés Villanueva Ambríz

    (Age 8, México)

Youth category (25 entrants)

- Sharon Rogart (Age 15, U.S.A.)

- Raphaela Stock (Age 15, Austria)

- Mayu Ebashi
  (Age 9, Japan <Living in Canada>)
- Christiana Louisa T.
  (Age 9, Australia <Living in Indonesia>)
- Denise Anne Castro (Age 11, The Philippines)
- Pilar Villarmarzo Grisoni (Age 11, Uruguay)
- Gleb Dubovski (Age 11, Belarus)
- Anob Asif (Age 12, India)
- Shuri Imai (Age 12, Japan)
- Yoshika Ichihara
  (Age 12, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Kazuki Chikuma
  (Age 12, Japan <Living in USA>)
- Haruki Nakayama (Age 12, Japan)
- Shani Beradt (Age 12, Israel)
- Yudai Abe (Age 13, Japan)
- Bista Isato
  (Age 13, Japan&Nepal <Living in Nepal>)
- Keita Ochi (Age 13, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Miho Kato (Age 13, Japan <Living in China>)
- Yumi Araki
  (Age 14, Japan <Living in Canada>)
- Alexander Grace (Age 14, Australia)
- Moe Okada (Age 14, Japan)
- Minori Ota (Age 14, Japan)
- Kensuke Sugino
  (Age 14, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Tatiana Puzirchenko (Age 14, Ukraine)
- Vanessa Ivanova Vazharova
  (Age 14, Bulgaria)
- Ayane Yamashiro
  (Age 14, Japan <Living in the Philippines>)
- Yuri Yokawa (Age 14, Japan)
- Glendon Kok Jun Wei (Age 15, Singapore)
- Emily Adlam (Age 16, New Zealand)
- Eunji Kim (Age 16, South Korea)
- Moemi Kubota (Age 16, Japan)
- Alesia Kuzminava (Age 16, Belarus)
- Shuhei Sato
  (Age 16, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Katharina Deutzmann (Age 17, Germany)
- Taichi Shimuzu (Age 17, Japan)
- Hwayong Shin (Age 17, South Korea)
- Soumitra Subinaya (Age 17, India)
- Citlin Jacques (Age 18, U.S.A.)
- Chi Ninh Ngoc Lan
  (Age 18, Vietnam <Living in Canada>)
- Eri Watanabe (Age 18, Japan)
- Elnara Mehdiyeva (Age 19, Azerbaijan)
- Seigo Yokomine (Age 19, Japan)
- Zhivko Tomov Darakchiev (Age 20, Bulgaria)
- Rodimiro Rodrigo Flores (Age 20, México)
- Nonyelum Sandra Umeasiegbu
  (Age 20, Nigeria)
- Nicole Apel (Age 21, U.S.A.)
- Michael Vercauteren (Age 22, Belgium)
- Michael Collins
  (Age 23, USA <Living in Japan>)
- Fernando Yunuen Francisco Téllez Flores
  (Age 23, México)
- Ana Maria Mayor Jiménez (Age 23, Colombia)

Best School Award (1 school)

Battle Creek Japanese School, Michigan (U.S.A.)

Unity in Diversity: Media's role in making of a peaceful world
(Original)

Sneh Shah

(Age 8, U.S.A.)

Mcvey Elementary School, East Meadow, New York

Till some time back, I did not know much about the role of media but then one whole year I spent in India. Till then I lived in New York. In India, I saw beggars for the first time. I saw how religion can divide people. When I was in India I came to know the word communication and media. Also in India, everyone would ask me what I was. Me being a girl, being a human being was important but still people wanted to know whether I was Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew, etc.

India is the biggest democracy of the world. I belong to Gujarat a region where lots of people got killed some time back. The locals did not like them, because they were not following a specific religion. I love traveling and have family all over the world. I have been to Europe, Asian the Americas and the Caribbeans and many other places.

Wherever I have been in different parts of the world, language is different, colour of people is different, the way they eat, the way they pray is different. However all of them have two eyes, one nose, two ears. They are same. Only the way they think and behave is different. Also all of them have newspapers, television and radio. In some places like rural India, internet is still not there.

There is diversity all around. Media can help bring out the unity from the diversity and thereby making a peaceful world.

For example, media can do stories of how a Muslim and Christian are best friends. How they celebrate Eid and Christmas together. I think television cartoons and animation films can tell us

stories about how different countries and cultures are and make us appreciate it. Till I had not gone out of New York, I had no clue of various cultures and various festivals. Media can make us more tolerant of other culture, countries and its people. If we know that it is perfectly normal for Muslims to pray in public or to dance with open swords during a Moharram procession, we will not be shocked when we see that for the first time.

Muslims think Christians are too forward thinking and they are very rigid about religion. However if we show that Christians and Muslims can be best friends and they have a lot of things in common between them, it will bring more tolerance. When tolerance comes, peace comes automatically.

I know that a peaceful world can come when there are no wars. But there will be no wars only when there is tolerance, when we know that Muslims cover their heads because of their history of the invasion. They wear robes not because they are jihaadis but because it is so hot in the Middle East.

Hindus do not eat beef because they worship cow as holy. We should not laugh at them because there are historical stories and proof of how this worship came into practice. Muslims don't eat pork. Christians eat turkey.

We can have a peaceful world if the media tells us stories of friendship, of compassion, of love and of trust between different people.

Recently my family read about a Muslim saint. Saibaba, a holy and famous saint where 50,000 people visit every day at his temple was a Muslim but even today most of his followers are Hindus and Christians. This is because Saibaba was very secular and he was like Martin Luther King who said don't judge people by their color but character. I am sure there are saints like Saibaba everywhere including Iraq and Bosnia or Russia and the media can tell us about it.

Community or colour does not matter. Why should I be treated differently because I am not white? Because my best friend is Black and I am Brown? Media should give more stories that helps the world understand that behind every white, black and brown there is red blood only. That being Yellow, White, Black or Brown does not matter. We are all one.

Everyone calls me a global citizen. I am proud of it. That is because I love Mexican and Chinese food. My best family holidays happen in Europe. My family is Indian and I live in America.

Media needs to highlight the fact that it is not only technology that has to be global. Why is it that we can see Disney or Pogo channel all over the world but we cannot see the same love among different people in the world? If media plays an active positive role in highlighting simple truths of life, peaceful world will become a reality and not simply remain an essay topic.

Amplifying Peace Across Borders

(Original)

Anna Rosario A. Elicaño

(Age 24, The Philippines)

I met two of my closest friends at an international youth conference. Although the three of us went home to places with different zip codes, we were still able to talk to each other every week afterwards. Thanks to the Internet, a computer, and a headset, our long distance talks— just like friendship—have remained completely free.

Never before has media and communication technologies been as personal and encompassing as it is today. When my parents were teenagers, what they knew about their Asian neighbors came from an encyclopedia and black and white television. I imagine that the information they got was general, maybe even stereotypical. Four decades later, despite the oceans between us, I have the benefit of knowing foreign friends better. I can easily direct them to the website of my favorite local band. They can, just as easily, tell me how their day at work went via instant messenger.

I celebrate the intimate connection brought about by media and communication technologies because it allows me to understand people and their cultures more. This is the same reason why I think my generation has a better capacity for bringing about a more peaceful world. Media and communication technologies have exposed us to a wide and multi-cultural range of information. If hatred and prejudice is bred by ignorance, then it follows that information and understanding can bring about compassion and empathy.

I am inspired by the story of a youth organization in the Philippines which initiated a video conference between students from a school in Metro Manila and a school in Mindanao. Seeing each other for the first time on widescreens, a panel of student representatives from each school spoke to each other in real time. They talked about their favorite classes and fun

extra-curricular activities. They talked about the conflict in Mindanao and what they thought about peace. More importantly, they talked about their first impressions of each other and how so much had changed after just 30 minutes of the video conference. And as they did that, their teachers, parents, fellow schoolmates, and communities watched.

I am certain that not a few lives were changed that day. For the students in Metro Manila, Muslim Mindanaoans in the south would no longer be compartmentalized into labels such as "separatists" or "terrorists". As for the students in Mindanao, Metro Manila is no longer embodied by soldiers who can turn them and their families into refugees in an instant. What students from both sides saw were children not unlike themselves. We can only hope that what began with that 30-minute video conference can continue on with a lifetime of understanding and truthful connection.

What happens when media and communication technologies are used with evil intent? The result is disastrous. Media is, after all, just a tool. In the wrong hands, misinformation and "hate speech" can be easily spread. Peacemakers of today and of the future have to capitalize on these tools to amplify the truth as loud as they can, across borders. Tony Blair, Britain's former prime minister, aptly describes the new struggle: "⋯because mass media and communication convey powerful images in an instant across the globe, it dictates that struggles are fought as much through propaganda, ideas and values as through conventional means, military or diplomatic."

It is clear that, in this "information age", peacemakers are not those who remain silent in the sidelines for the sake of harmony. Bono does it with his music and anonymous writers in Iran do it with their blogs. It is a relief to know that, with media and communication technologies, there are several platforms for peacemakers to speak out.

Each generation has its peacemakers. What this generation will see are peacemakers who will not only sow peace but amplify it across borders, empowered by media and communication technologies. Some will speak about specific advocacies. Others, by simply sharing aspects of themselves and their cultures, will foster connection and understanding.

In the information age, the new batch of peacemakers will say that it chooses the Internet, blogs, and television over guns, bombs, and tanks.

Mass Media Like a Mirror

(Original)

Alexandra Girel

(Age 10, Belarus)

School#4, Soligorsk

A modern person can't imagine himself without newspapers, radio, TV and the Internet. By means of mass media we learn about the events happening in different, even most remote parts of our planet.

The development of modern technologies has given people a chance to watch not only openings of film festivals and MTV rewarding ceremonies on the air, but also to be frightened speechless witnesses of terrible acts of terrorism. I was four years old when the terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center in the USA. At that moment, watching TV together with my parents, I was too small to understand everything. What I did understand is that there was something very terrible. The older I get the more I feel the fear and pain of ordinary people captured in Moscow (in Dubrovka) and in Beslan.

Thanks to Mass Media all these human tragedies became my own. And my heart was aching when I saw the people carrying the burnt and exhausted Beslan schoolchildren on stretchers after they had been freed. Many of them were of my age. It was then when I understood how important the role of mass media in our life is.

Today I read and I hear about blood in Iraq and the war in Sector Gaza. All these help me to understand how fragile our world is. In one second can a monstrous tsunami make thousands of people vanish from the surface of the earth. A second and the terrorist will blow up a big shop in Turkey. And then the greatest desire appears to do the utmost for all people to live peacefully and appreciate each other's opinion. Please adults, politicians find the solution for peaceful coexistence and stop bleeding.

Of course mass media can play a very important role in it. With their help inhabitants of different countries can address to each other, unite and make the world better.

However not always mass media reflect truthfully the reality. Sometimes some editions, TV channels and Internet - sites call people for violence and cruelty, distribute pornography including children's, advertise activities of terrorist organizations and destructive sects. There should not be such mass media in our world, because they are directed against Man and destroy our world and lives.

Therefore, I think, that each journalist, each editor-in-chief, each producer is responsible for what we see, we hear and we read. Maybe it is high time we introduced a severe punishment for spreading hatred and wars by means of mass media.

Certainly, we should be better ourselves. Each person should live fairly, be merciful and respectable, and love the world and people around. And when we change the mass media will change as well. In fact they reflect our life like a mirror. The old Russian proverb says: "There is no point scolding a mirror if your face is curve."

Unfortunately many lacks of modern mass media are connected, first of all, with the fact that some of us want to see horrors and violence on screens and internet - sites.

Let's take such a problem as global warming. Ecologists have aroused the alarm about the irreversible changes of climate on the planet because of unreasonable activities of people who litter the atmosphere and the world ocean. And when human beings hear that the weather becomes abnormally hot or abnormally cold they start thinking it over. Of course, not everybody, but many start to live so as to not cause harm to nature.

We, people, should make everything to keep what we have. I believe that our world can be better. And by means of mass media we shall achieve it.

SMS Alert : "Peace, Man! :p"

(Original)

Yunitha Ratnadilla T. A. K.

(Age 14, Indonesia)

SMP N 8 Yogyakarta

As people know, school should be the most comfortable place to develop our knowledge and gain as much as academic and social experiences in our youth. That is the ideal idea. But in fact, recently, schools are no longer a comfortable place to study in. Why? Because its function has already changed. Not only becoming an education source, but now it also has become a place that I call a battle field. Why I said so?

School is a battle field because the atmosphere of competition is all around. The competition that I mean here is not only about the subjects mark's race between friends, but it is more about the competition of the prestigious life. Doing a social relationship and making friends in my school mean that we have to join a gang, such as in clever students communities, rich students clubs, nerds, cheerleaders, and so on. Majority and minority are the main issue. Until now, this condition has trapped all students -including me- to live everyday with this kind of "rule".

This problem makes me sometimes feel really uncomfortable to be in school because I can not find any peace there. According to my observation, gangs, clubs, groups, of course have the potential to create disputes and jealousy. I believe so because I have ever been in that condition and here is the story:

In my class, the gender dispute often comes up. Usually, the dispute happens between boys and girls. The reason why this could be happened mostly because of a simple misunderstanding or egoism. One problem such as a personal humiliation which is intended to be a joke could be a source of dispute that creates an inter-gendered communication deadlock in my class. When we have this problem, the atmosphere of my class would likely be as cold as Himalaya or as silent as a cemetery. It is true.

Seeing this condition was a heartbreaking moment for me because deep down in my heart I want to be neutral. I want to be fair. I want to listen both sides and still make friends with my boy and girl friends. Feeling tired of this, I was searching for any way to stop this chilling atmosphere. And suddenly I got an idea!! I got this idea soon after I observe that almost my entire classmates own cell phones.

Soon after school, I picked my cell phone and started to write a SMS and sent it to all of my classmates in grade 8-2, with a short message "to all friends that I love: PEACE MAN!(8_2). For me it was a trial and error moment because I had no ability to predict what would happen tomorrow morning in my class. Would there be another madness or what? I even wasn't able to sleep that night!!

In the next morning, with a shaking knee and cold hand, I walked into the class. Along the way that I passed, my mind wildly imagined about what happen inside my class. But when I arrived in front of its door, I was wondered by the situation. You know what? Avice, the boys' gang's leader and Christine, the girls' gang's leader were making a conversation. But this time was not a dispute. They were talking nicely with smiles and laughter. The same things also happened to the rest of the class. They were chatting together. What's happen?

Soon after I was approached by Avice, Christine and the rest of the class. They all thanked me for the SMS that I had sent. They said that by the time they receive the SMS, they soon realized that the disputes had torn our class apart. They said no one ever tell them about it before. No one had the courage to remind them that we, as a whole class, actually in love and care upon each other. They also said that they actually had been missing the feeling of togetherness after all.

That day for me was a magical day. Because it was the moment when I had the opportunity to gain my dream, which is creating peace in my own environment. Starting by my closest environment: friends. I never imagine that technology could help me to spread the seed of peace to my friends.

Taking the advantage from my experience, I really wish that other teens in the world would like to do the same thing like me: using the benefit of technology to break the communication deadlock among the inter-friends disputes. If we can do this, I believe that the seed of peace

would grow. And one day we will be able to see the beauty of the peace-flower that we have been waiting to be harvested. Now, just take your cell phone and send this message to the people that you actually love:

"Peace, Man! :p"

2007 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 2nd Prize]

Communicating Peace

(Original in Japanese)

Yukari Nemoto

(Age 16, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)

Battle Creek Japanese School, Michigan

Has the world ever really been "at peace"? At first I thought peace meant a world without war. However, even without war, disparities and discrimination exist, and even my home country Japan is rife with bullying, suicide and domestic violence—circumstances that are hard to describe as peace. If peace is achieved only when all of these problems cease to exist, then mankind has never experienced "peace." Is "peace" such a difficult thing to achieve?

I think the most important aspect of building a peaceful world is for each and every one of us to embrace compassion. For example, I think something as simple as giving up your seat on a bus or train to an elderly person becomes a step towards peace. A peaceful feeling would germinate not only in the person who gave up his seat and the person who was given the seat, but also in the people who witnessed that act. So how can we share this spirit of compassion with people around the world?

Today, many young people have their own albums on the Internet. They use their mobile phones and cameras to take pictures of themselves, pictures of the sky or whatever, and upload them into their albums. So, I would like to use cameras and the Internet to communicate the spirit of peace. There are many languages in this world, and it would be difficult to share one another's ideas simply by reading text. But, what about photographs? Even if there was difference in race, looking at a photograph of a mother picking up her newborn child would naturally make one smile. Even if there was no explanation given, the feelings of the mother in the photograph would come through clearly.

So I propose creating a web site to show photos where anyone in the world could upload their photos. The theme should be "Things and occasions that make me feel peaceful and secure—moments that make me smile." In my case, for example, I recall an occasion during

my junior high school days, when I saw the sun set right before me as I said goodbye to my teacher and classmates in front of the school gate. I still cannot get over what a peaceful moment that was. Likewise, it could be the sky at the beginning of a new day, people frolicking in a lake or in the sea, or the eyes of a loving grandfather watching his family—anything would be appropriate.

Also, if you are inspired by any of the photos, you could share your impression. In principle, the person who contributed the photograph would not be allowed to express his or her own ideas as a comment. This would encourage viewers to actively and freely add their own impressions and opinions. These comments would then enable people in different countries viewing the same photograph to see how differently other people may feel and think. I believe that it is only when people come to respect one another's ideas, that compassion would grow and we would learn to understand people in distant lands.

Foreseeable problems would be the appropriateness of the photographs and the language barrier. These could be resolved by adopting a membership system. When joining, members would have to agree to build a peaceful society, and accept responsibility for their decisions and behavior. Then, members could be allowed to delete photographs and comments they regard as inappropriate, or translate comments written in their native language by other members. Creating such a system would ensure appropriate behavior, and allow users to feel comfortable about uploading photographs and comments onto the site. To make this activity better known, a contest could be held annually with winning photographs exhibited in countries worldwide.

In the future, the media should enhance its role as a bridge to connect countries in peace. If people throughout the world can share their photographs with one another, completely different peoples in very distant lands could become closer. Even if we don't engage directly in peace activities, if we could inspire and encourage people who feel lonely, people who are languishing, or people who are distressed simply by "taking photographs," and if compassion grew among the people who saw these photographs, then surely the world would come closer to peace. Even in the midst of the dull humdrum of life, surely there must be a time, a place or a thing that makes one feel safe and secure. One of the first steps we can take towards building peace is to notice the happiness in our immediate environment. Why don't we start by communicating that to the world?

Hearing each other, Hearing ourselves:
The need for 'Radio-Forums' to create an ongoing Space for Peace
(Original)

Sara J. Wolcott
(Age 25, U.S.A.)

Mt Elgon in western Kenya is currently erupting in violence. At the base of the mountain, close to the Uganda border, the local tribes and government 'security' officials are killing one another. In one of the largest outbreaks of violence since 'peaceful Kenya's' independence, over forty thousand people have lost their homes and have fled to other parts of Kenya and Uganda while hundreds of women and children have been raped and molested. When I spoke to local peace keepers and community leaders, they told me that while the stated cause is 'land disputes,' decades of being marginalized by the government was also a principle root cause. Marginalization, in this context, can be interpreted as another phrase for 'poor governance.'

The community leaders in Mt Elgon repeatedly told me of their desperation that the government did not give them attention. There was no space for their voices to be heard by their leaders or fellow countrymen.   When I was living in Kenya, I saw this kind of marginalization everywhere I went. People were crying out for the space to be heard – and to hear one another. This is true not only in Kenya but around the world. Frequently, marginalization becomes a principal source of conflict.   Thus, working for peace necessitates actively creating processes for greater inclusion of all people – from commoners to presidents – in the decision-making processes that influence their lives.

Peace must be understood not only as an absence of violent conflict but as ongoing, committed and respectful relationships between diverse people. Peace is a process, not a result; or, as the Dalai Lama said, 'there is no way to peace; peace is the way.' Communication is one of the most essential aspects of building long lasting relationships. Creating a space for that communication to occur on an ongoing basis is vitally important.

I propose creating world-wide Radio Forums: weekly national radio shows where people can engage in conversations with governments, corporations and other powerful entities about the common good – especially the use and treatment of natural resources. These forums would not only give marginalized people a space to be heard, it would give policy makers and corporate leaders the opportunity to explore how their actions really do influence the lives of people they might not otherwise have the opportunity to hear from. The current lack of communication between those on the edges and those in the 'center' of our system harms everyone; finding ways for them to listen to one another – not only to yell or complain but to actually talk and listen – would be a gift to everyone's humanity. Doing it on the air, with a public audience, is an opportunity for stronger accountability, and will help people be more informed about what is going on.   It is also a way to ensure that these conversations remain in the public sphere without being dominated by politics or corporate interests.   The financing of these shows could come from both the national governments and an international body to help ensure that they would remain independent from the mood swings of national politics.

These weekly shows could take place in every country, hosted by skilled facilitators who have a passion for radio as a tool for reaching everyone from Senators and corporate leaders to peasants and internally displaced people.

All national conversations would be streamed online. Using a common website, each country and show could have its own accompanying online forums to provide the opportunity to articulate, bring to the fore and find commonality on concerns for the state of individuals, communities and their habitats. Such global reflection would show how all parties might be called to respond to these concerns.   While online forums are important, attention should not be diverted from the role of radio shows itself, as most people in the global South do not have unlimited access to the Internet in a way that would encourage participation in online forums.

The producers of these shows would have their own online forum where they could be in regular communication with their 'colleagues' in other parts of the world to learn from their experiences.

I do not suggest that this will on its own be enough to prevent or resolve violent conflict. But the conversations that would be nurtured would contribute to the healing of the separations that are at the source of so many conflicts.

200 Emails

(Original in Japanese)

Momone Ozawa

(Age 9, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)

Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee

I have a Korean friend. At first, she didn't like me very much because she knew that Japan had been at war with Korea a long time ago. But I played with her everyday so she came to realize that not all Japanese people were bad. That made me really happy. But this year, she will go back to Korea. We have become really good friends so I will miss her a lot.

I think that if I get to know someone well, I will understand that person better, and that person will understand me better too. Just as my Korean friend learned that I was not a bad person, I think we can learn to understand people in different countries. So if we used the internet to exchange email with people in other countries, I think we could learn and understand lots of different things.

What would happen if I sent email to people in countries throughout the world? How could I do that? How many people are there in the world? I began by thinking about how many countries there were in the world. At first I thought there were about 150 countries. Then I wondered how I could check and find out. I thought I could find out on my computer so I looked at the internet. According to my computer, there are about 200 countries. I was surprised there were so many countries.

Then I wondered what would happen if I sent email to someone in each of those 200 countries. It would be interesting to see what kind of replies I would get. If I did this I would learn a lot about those 200 countries, and the people in those countries would learn a lot about Japan.

What would happen if not just me, but people throughout the world did this? Maybe we would all become friends. Maybe the day will come when people around the world will exchange email with people in different countries. It would be really wonderful if everyone could make

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200 friends. People around the world would learn, accept and understand things about other countries. Then, instead of looking at a country as just a country, we can relate to a personal friend there, and perhaps come to like the people of that country too, just like my Korean friend did.

My Korean friend and I might not have become friends because of the war in the past. That is why I think wars are bad. I don't have the power to stop war all by myself. But why don't we all start by sending email to someone in a country we know nothing about. As the number of email increases, perhaps everyone in the world will get to know one another. Even if our efforts are small in the beginning, they will grow and grow, and maybe they will be able to prevent wars. I hope that day will come. I want to use the internet like this to build a peaceful world.

Peace Begins with Love

(Original)

Wendyll Ermac Mejia
(Age 12, The Philippines)
Tipanoy Elementary School, Iligan City

When there's no war in the world, there is peace. Peace is very important because it helps countries to progress. There is planting and harvesting, buying and selling during peace time.

Even if we have different languages, we help each other in times of peace. During natural disasters, like earthquakes, tidal waves and landslides, families share their food, clothes, and blankets, eating and cooking utensils with the victims. In the Bible, in the book of Matthew chapter 22 verse 39 it says "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." When families and nations share their resources with neighbors, struck by disaster, that is an example of loving one's neighbor. The people hit by calamities feel happy to receive what their kind neighbors give them. Isn't that love? Then joy and peace fill their hearts.

When there is war people will panic. They will evacuate to other places. There will be little food and small space for shelter in the school buildings, where they will be housed. When the Abusayaf are fighting against the Philippine government, many people are killed. Families have to evacuate. I don't like to have war in our country or in any part of the world.

What can I suggest to the media to help build a culture of peace? My humble suggestion is for media to have programs about love and peace in their daily schedule. One program can show how the different religions of the world teach their members about love and peace.

I am a Christian. I love to read and listen to stories about Jesus Christ. He performed miracles. He fed five thousand people who were hungry with five loaves of bread and two fishes. Jesus blessed and prayed for the food. Then he gave them to the hungry people. Jesus also healed the sick, the blind, and the lame. He also loved little children. If media could show stories about

Jesus, children of other religions will understand what Christians believe in and why they behave as such.

I know a little about Muslims. They also believe in a God whom they call Allah and his prophet Mohammad. Their religion is Islam. When they pray, they bend their knees and bow to their God, Allah. Their Bible is called QURAN. They also believe in one God, and worship on Friday's in a mosque.

I have no knowledge about other religions, but if media will present programs about great religions of the world showing families in worship and community life, children will be familiar with culture of other children of the world. They would understand why they live that way. This will lead to friendship and international peace.

A program on true stories about children who study hard and who have good life and bright future later on could be made into films by the movie industry.

A program about Job Training would help people in the world to have work so that they can feed their children and give them a good education. Happy children are peace loving. They help in the household chores so there is peace and love in the family.

So by watching good programs in the T.V. and in the media children worldwide will learn to be happy and love peace.

Peace begins with me.

A First Step Toward Peace

(Original in Japanese)

Yurika Sakamoto

(Age 13, Japan)

Akada Junior High School, Higashi-Osaka

I think the act of "knowing" is very important. This is true in all situations. Consider global environmental issues arising from global warming, for example. These issues have arisen because we humans produce large quantities of greenhouse gases, but many people don't realize that they are part of the cause. However, if they could learn the real cause through the media, they could gradually try to make amends by starting with the things around them, and one day, the currently rising global temperature might just go down again.

I don't think many people know what is going on in the world today. I don't know that much myself. So I must find out what is going on where at this point in time, and what I can do to help. But I don't have enough information.

According to my observation, television programs these days deal crudely with food and try to get a laugh from mundane things. Seeing this makes me think "Couldn't they make better use of the time?" Consider the speed-eating and eating competitions popular of late, for example. They both involve a lot of food. Contestants eat up their platefuls of food, devouring them as if they were wild animals and spilling food sloppily from their mouths.

Food is readily available in Japan and easy to come by, but the same cannot be said of all countries. Right now, at this very moment, hundreds and thousands of children are dying of starvation worldwide. What would people in these poor countries think if they saw such a spectacle? If it were me, I wouldn't be able to accept the reality before my eyes.

In Japan, many people have become so affluent they have lost sight of the world around them. Most children tend to hate studying, and although there are places where children are unable to study even if they want to, there are people at my school that tear their textbooks or throw

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them in the dust bin. Also, it makes me really sad to see stepped-on tomato and other food squashed beyond recognition on the classroom floor after lunch. But there is nothing unusual about that. Most of these things, I believe, are influenced by the television we watch so much of.

Rather than providing difficult explanations, television programs should devise ways of attracting everyone's interest. Conveying things in a way that is easy to understand and touches people's hearts is both the role and the responsibility of the media. I would like them to give us the facts without hiding anything, good or bad. Everyone favors something that advantages them over something that disadvantages them. But if we can get beyond that and address things earnestly, things that we have been unable to see before will become visible, and we should be able to move forward. That is why media should convey what is happening in the world right now clearly, and show us everything we can possibly do.

However, no matter how hard they try to inform us, unless we are open to "learning and knowing," we will be unable to acquire enough knowledge. So perhaps they should approach the public by emphasizing the benefits to be gained by engaging in a particular kind of activity.

In this age of the Internet, a call urging people to take action may reach all corners of the world at once. If people throughout the world knew what they needed to do now and concentrated their efforts on it, things would rapidly progress in the right direction. What we must not forget under any circumstances is the will to learn the truth. Simply taking an interest can be a first step toward peace.

2007 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

Information Expands My World

(Original in Japanese)

Kazuki Soejima

(Age 13, Japan <Living in Malaysia>)

The Japanese School of Kuala Lumpur

With the Internet, magazines, newspapers and other media, there is an abundance of information available today, and living in the center of it all makes instant access to information on the other side of the world within our reach. But have you ever thought what it would be like if we did not have these information? I used to live in India where I had little information and was even unable to watch NHK. I would like to write about that experience.

In India, I was able to meet people from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jordan and Iraq—people you would rarely meet in Japan. Everyone's face and skin color were different, but we all liked the games and movies that were popular at the time. I really liked those boys with sparkling white teeth, who were delighted to take home the games that I lent them and Japanese comics they couldn't possibly read, and who gave me candies that were excessively sweet. We became friends through what little information we shared. Also, I became very interested in their home countries, which I would have dismissed before saying, "Where is that? I have no idea." I began to watch news about these countries thinking, "My friend A lives in that country now," or "That's my second homeland, India, where I used to live," or "I've been to that country B." Whenever I found an article about one of these countries, even if it were a tiny article in the corner of a newspaper, I would run and show it to my family and cut it out.

It was the same with Japan. I began to pay more attention to Japan now that I was living away. I became fascinated by temples, Japanese history, Japanese confectionary, the Shakuhachi and other Japanese things, just like a foreigner who loves Japan. My father, who named me, laughed saying, "'Kazu' in Kazuki means 'Japan', so it is your destiny." So I got very excited about news from Japan as well. Looking at trends and ads for new products in the much anticipated magazines and comics that arrived late, I was determined to buy them all when I

got back to Japan. Information from Japan was all the more important because it was so limited. Each piece of news affected me. I would get happy thinking, "Wow, so that's what Japan is like now," or "Relations between India and Pakistan have improved. That's good." At other times, I would get worried thinking, "Not another suicide bomb! I hope my friend B is okay."

Therefore, I have a favor to ask of the people who disseminate news and gather information. I would like them to recognize that there are people waiting for even the most insignificant of news, and I would like them to act responsibly by conveying only the facts. This is because inaccurate information could even cause a war.

Some time ago, I saw in the news that the Dead Sea in Jordan was disappearing. I was shocked and wrote an email to my friend in Jordan. His reply, which took some time to come, said, "Is that so? I didn't know? You should come and visit soon or the Dead Sea will be gone." I was surprised that he didn't know the Dead Sea was disappearing, but I was quite delighted by his words, "You should come soon." I immediately replied, "Shukran (thank you). I won't bother bringing my swimming tube!"

2007 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

A Feast of Peace

(Original)

Elmad Ochieng
(Age 14, Kenya)
Jokevilla Academy, Kisii

... Go, go, gol!   Ale, Ale, Ale...

I sung and swayed with the rest of the world. Occupying a favorite seat besides my dad my eyes fixed on our family's television set. I was a young boy yet to date the memories of 1998, FIFA World Cup are still with me.

The world renowned musician Ricky Martin was on stage with the official song of the event "La Copa de la vida" - The cup of life – which gained instant popularity among legions soccer fans around the world.

Tu Y yo!   Ale, Ale, Ale, Ale,

Go, go, Gol! Ale, Ale, Ale···

Shouts and Chants rent the air, tears flowed freely, and Passion was at fever pitch. The season of frenzy, dust, sweat and blood – Soccer-mania – was with us again. Every participating national Team came forth in their best colors; Fans were decked out in nationalistic themed attires and decorations.   For a month, the world courtesy of the media and Information and Communication Technologies was treated to an array of soccer delights- climaxed with a final showdown between France and Brazil.

The success of 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, doubtless to say rested on Media and Information and Communication Technologies. Television and Radio channels world over beamed with news of the event. Internet sites were a buzz with the latest occurrence as pertaining to the event. Commercial entities outdid each other in fronting their products to

take advantage of the wide viewer base. The fluidity of information made the event alive and interactive.

Media and Information and Communication Technologies are used to link people far and wide. The instruments involved include, Telephone, Telegraphic, Radio, Television, Internet, Magazines and Newspapers. (Print and electronic media). The relayed information may be in form of News, Advertisement, and Entertainment or Awareness Creation. These technologies have played a fundamental role in escalating: Commerce, Education, Science, Culture and Lifestyle.

On the negative side, media has been used to promote Corruption, Maladministration, Nepotism, Regionalism, Radicalism and many other vices which to date plagues our society. Still fresh in our minds is the 1994 tribal conflict in Rwanda and Burundi in which a Rwandese named Felican Kabuga who owned a radio station used the same to fuel violence between Hutus and Tutsis. The war affected the combatants and non-combatants within 100 days approximately 2 million lives were shattered. As such the importance of media and ICT in just governance cannot be over-emphasized.

In the future the media and ICT should be used to counter vice and nurture a culture of peace. In order to achieve this objective there is need to reassess the use of these two powerful universal means of expression – music and Theatre arts (Movies). These can be effective weapons - for good or for bad - in manipulating minds of listeners and audience to do things they otherwise would not. This is because they touch the inner places of the soul and thus affect human Emotions, Intellect and Will which are the basis of Human Conscious or Unconscious Decisions.

Also Music should be used to rally people for social and humanitarian causes as in the case of Ethiopian in 1984 when a terrible famine struck the country. Unfortunately the country's government did not want to disclose to the international community the state of affair. However, a Kenyan photographer named Mohamed Amin sneaked in and captured pathetic scenes of people starving death and relayed it worldwide through the media. As a result a group of musicians like Michael Jackson, Lionel Ritchie and many others came together to produce the song, "We Are the World " to create awareness and solicit for donations, in that manner saving a whole generation from perishing.

To effectively inculcate peace I would organize a World Peace Music Fest held once every 5 years where Music Celebrities from all over the World would be invited to perform simultaneously within specific Cities in their Continents and broadcast live on Television, Radio and Internet channels worldwide. To crown the events would be an award sponsored by UNESCO for Musicians campaigning for peace through their songs as Voted for by fans through the internet and a selected wide based panel of jurist.

This would be a charity show whose proceeds would be used to supply Humanitarian aid to conflict zones.

…*Go, go, go! For peace, peace, peace*…

Mit Lächeln zum Frieden!

(Original)

Margarita Mischinova

(Age 17, Bulgaria)

"Goethe" Gymnasium, Burgas

Alles passierte sehr schnell. In einem Moment fuhrte Maria mit ihrem Rad, in nächstem war sie auf dem Boden mit gebrochenem Bein.Nachdem sie die Diagnose des Artzes gehören hatte, war sie total mutlos. Einen Monat im Bett am Ende des Schuljahres. Ihre Freunde und Mitschüler mussten lernen. Sehr selten konnte jemand bei ihr sein. Nach zwei Tage in Einsamkeit bekam sie von ihrem Vater einen alten Laptop und das Schönste war, dass sie auch das Internet benutzten konnte. Ohne die Freunde aber war es sehr langweilig. Maria hörte Musik, versuchte Filme zu gucken, aber das war nicht interessant. Und plötzlich an dem regnerischen Nachmittag, hörte sie die Nachrichten. Die Wörter "Kriege", "Tod", "Krankheit" fielen ihr auf. Sie erinnerte sich an ihre Oma, die ihr vom zweiten Weltkrieg irgendwann vorher erzählt hatte. Maria dachte nach. „Das darf nie mehr passieren!"-hatte die alte Frau gesagt.

In diesem Moment kam der Gedanke, der geniale Gedanke: "Kann ich etwas verändern und etwas tun, damit es keine Kriege mehr gibt?". Keine Verzweiflung, keine Unglaube, nur Denken.

„Damit es keine Kriegen mehr gibt, müssen die Menschen von etwas vereinigt sein. Eine gute Idee. Sie müssen einander helfen, Freunde haben, glücklich sein." Zufällig starrte sie durch das Fenster und sah ein fröhliches Kind. Sein Lächeln war engelhaft. "Lächeln! Das wird der Beginn sein!!!" Aber wie konnte das Mädchen mit dem gebrochenen Bein Lächeln verbreiten?Sie sah sich mutlos um. Der Laptop lag in der Nähe. Die einzige Hoffnung - das Internet. Es vereint die Menschheit jetzt. Die Botschaft "Lächeln!" wird alle Menschen erreichen, wenn es im Internet zu sehen ist. Aber wird es genug sein?

Maria sah, dass ein Freund online war. Sie erzählte ihm ihre Idee und bat ihn, ihre Botschaft zu all seinen Freunden zu senden. Er versprach und fügte hinzu: „Meine Freunde und ich malen

Graffiti. Wenn wir viele glückliche Menschen auf die Wände malen, lächeln die Leute". Einigen interessierten sich für die Idee. Eine Freundin meinte sogar, dass sie T-shirts machen könnte, auf dem das Lächeln stünde. Nach einer Stunde Gespräch mit Bekannten und Unbekannten, die Cousine von Maria, Beti, kam online. Sie war eine Journalistin und das Thema „Frieden" interessierte sie. Sie fragte Maria "Warum nutzt ihr nicht die Medien?". Maria hatte dieses Wort vielmals gehört, aber was bedeutet "Medien" wusste sie nicht genau. „Die Medien existieren um die Menschen zu informieren. Sie können auch die Meinung der Gesellschaft verändern. Das Internet, die Zeitungen, die Zeitschriften, das Fernsehen, das Radio, sogar die Filmen und die Musik sind Medien.". Maria warbegeistert. Beti versprach ein Projekt zu machen, das "Mit Lächeln zum Frieden" heiße, und es ihrem Chef zeigen. Sie meinte, dass die Idee so gut war, dass sie allen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften vereinigen kann. Es war um Mitternacht, als ein Programmierer stellte vor, eine E-mail mit der Botschaft auf vielen Sprachen zu senden. Dieses E-mail wird durch die Welt zirkulieren und die Menschen zum Lächeln bringen. Die Idee mit den Sprachen interessierte die Philologen, einige Studenten. Sie versprachen das Wort „Lächeln" auf alle mögliche   Sprachen zu finden. Der Enthusiasmus überraschte Maria. Aber es war so spät, dass sie schlafen musste. Das war die erste Nacht nach dem Unfall, als sie mit einem Lächeln einschlief.

Der nächste Tag war sehr angestrengd. Das erste Gespräch war mit dem Freund ihrer Cousine.Er beschäftigte sich mit Werbungen und meinte, dass viele Erzeuger einverstanden sein würden, ein Lächeln auf die Verpackungen ihrer Waren als kleinesEtiket zu drucken.Betis Vater war Direktor in einer sehr wichtigen TV-Sendung. Maria bekam einen Brief von ihm, in dem er erzählte, er sei begeistert von der Idee und er habe einige Vorstellungen. Zuerst müssten alle Moderatoren lächeln und die Reporteren müssen auch gute Nachrichten zeigen. Er überlegte auch eine große Kampagne "Mit Lächeln zum Frieden". Marias Hofnungen wurden immer größer. „Meine Oma ist nicht mehr auf der Welt, aber wenn sie mich sehen könnte, würde sie froh" glaubte Maria.

Die E-mail von den Philologen kam erst am nächsten Morgen:

Lächeln!
Smile!
ابتسامة , تبسم
Mousc'hoarzh!
Усмивка!
微笑 (wēixiào)
Úsměv!
Smil! c.
Glimlach!
Rideto!
Hymy!
Sourire!
Glimlag!
χαμόγελο
Pukavy!
חיוך (khiyúkh)
Mosoly!
Senyum!
Surriso!
Sorriso!

微笑み (ほほえみ, hohoemi), 笑み
(えみ, emi), 笑顔 (えがお, egao)
‥ (miso)
Bişir!
Risus!
Šypsena!
Smil!
Uśmiech!
Sorriso!
Zâmbet!
Улыбка!
Fàite-gàire!, Fiamh-ghàire!
Nasmeh!
Sonrisa!
Leende!
చిరునవ్వు!

ยิ้ม!

Gülüş!
Посмішка!
Cười!

Maria schickte diese E-mail und dachte "Nach so viele Gespräche und Briefe, muss ich nur warten, um die Ergebnisse zu sehen."

***

Nach einem Monat konnte sie mit denKrücken ausgehen. Sie sah frohe Menschen, glückliche Figuren auf den Wänden, Lächeln auf die Warenverpackungen und nicht nur schlechte, sondern auch gute Nachrichten in den Zeitungen. Ihre Cousine war neben ihr und flüsterte in ihr Ohr glücklich: "Du hast die Welt verändert, Maria!".

„Nicht ich, die Medien haben es verwirklicht!" - meinte das Mädchen.

With a Smile Towards Peace!

(English translation)

Everything happened so quickly. One moment Maria was on her bike, the next moment she found herself on the ground with a broken leg. After hearing the diagnosis of the doctor, Maria was totally discouraged. One month in bed by the end of the school term. Her friends and fellow students had to study. Very rarely one could visit her. After 2 days of feeling lonely she got an old laptop from her father and the best was that it had Internet access. But even that was boring without friends. Maria listened to music, tried to watch movies, nothing was really interesting. One rainy afternoon she listened to the news and words such as "war", "death", "disease" struck her. She remembered what her grandma had told her about World War II and thought about it. "This shall never happen again" were the words of her grandma.

In that very moment Maria had an idea "What can I do so that there are no more wars?" She felt no desperation, no unbelief, she just used her thinking.

"Human beings must be united by something if there shall be no more war. This is a good idea. They must help each other, be happy, have friends". She looked through the window and saw a happy child outside. The smile of the child was like the smile of an angel. "Smiling! This will be the beginning".

But how can a girl with a broken leg spread out a smile? She looked around herself. The laptop was there, close to her. Her hope··· the Internet. The Internet unites mankind. The message "Smile" will reach everybody if it can be seen on the Internet. But will that be enough?

Maria saw that one of her friends was online. She told him about her idea and asked him to send her message to all his e-mail friends. He promised it and added "My friends and I make graffiti. If we paint many happy people on the walls, people looking at it will smile too!" Some other friends were interested in the idea. A friend said she could produce a T-shirt, which says "smile". After an hour of talking with friends and others, Maria's cousin Beti, a journalist by profession, came to visit her in the hospital. She was interested in the theme "peace" and asked Maria "why don't you involve the media?"

Maria had often heard the word "media" but did not know very well what it really meant. "Media exist to inform people. They can also change the opinion of a society. The Internet,

newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, films and music are all media". Maria was enthusiastic. Beti promised to make a project out of it named "With a smile towards peace" and she wanted to show it to her boss. She thought the idea was so good that it could unite newspapers and magazines.

At midnight a programmer suggested to do a mailing with the message in various languages. This e-mail would circulate around the world and make people smile. The idea with the languages found the interest of philologists and some students. They promised to find a translation of the word "smile" in all sorts of languages. This enthusiasm surprised Maria. It was late now and she better got some sleep, the first night she fell asleep with a smile.

The next day was exhausting. First a talk with a friend of her cousin. He worked in the PR business and said that many producing companies would agree to print a smile on the packages of their goods like a little label. Beti's father was the managing director of a TV programme. Maria received a letter from him saying how much he liked the project and that he has his own ideas. First of all, all TV speakers would have to smile and journalists would have to show also good news. He thought about a large campaign "With a smile towards peace". Maria's hopes grew, she thought: My grandma does not live any longer, but she would be proud if she could see me now". The philologists' e-mail arrived on the next morning:

Lächeln!
Smile!

تبسم , ابتسامة

Mousc'hoarzh!
Усмивка!
微笑 (wēixiào)
Úsměv!
Smil! c.
Glimlach!
Rideto!
Hymy!
Sourire!
Glimlag!
χαμόγελο
Pukavy!
חיוך (khiyúkh)
Mosoly!
Senyum!
Surriso!
Sorriso!

微笑み (ほほえみ, hohoemi), 笑み
(えみ, emi), 笑顔 (えがお, egao)
・・ (miso)
Bişir!
Risus!
Šypsena!
Smil!
Uśmiech!
Sorriso!
Zâmbet!
Улыбка!
Fàite-gàire!, Fiamh-ghàire!
Nasmeh!
Sonrisa!
Leende!
చిరునవ్వు!

ยิ้ม!

Gülüş!
Посмішка!
Cười!

After a month, Maria could walk on crutches, she saw happy people, smiling figures on walls, smiles on goods and not only bad but also good news in the newspapers. Her cousin was next to her and said "Maria, you changed the world!" "No", said Maria, "that was not me, the media did it".

Our reality is weaved from the same fabric as our dreams
(Original)

Joanna Pietrzak

(Age 17, Poland)

Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Adama Asnyka w Łodzi

Before I started my essay, I had surveyed two groups of teenagers to find out what information they remembered after listening to news on TV or from the radio. It turned out that LITERALLY 0% of the surveyed students who were fifteen and sixteen had ever heard and taken into their hearts the information concerning peace campaigns and voluntary work!

The mass media are the biggest power in the world, it seems to be "the global king". The role of this "king" should be to spread peace, harmony and brotherhood among all "his" "subjects", namely us. Frederick II of Prussia was very famous for his motto: "I'm the first servant of my country". I believe this should be the message from our "global king" to our "global country".

Firstly, the mass media should respond to the needs of everyone. Once I had a lesson at school about the international conflicts. And I thought: Basques want their own country – why no one hears them? It reminded me of the history of my country. For 123 years Poland wasn't on the map – we wanted to be an independent nation with the rights equal to the other nations. Why hardly any newspapers all over the world spoke for us? Now there are some nations who also want to be heard – they need assistance to be given a chance to speak loudly. Why don't the mass media give them a helping hand?

While the TV floods us with political news, gossip about celebrities, every single minute there die 57 children because of starvation. They have been desperately waiting to say something to us, to cry for help. "The global king" should let them appeal to the public to move the hearts of those who lead a life of abundance. That is why mass media should show it to make people from developed countries help these children.

I am deeply interested in history and I'm positive it plays a very important role in building every person's consciousness. One can shape new history without committing the mistakes of the past only if one knows the past. In the future the media ought to devote much more time and attention to historical problems. Once heard the worlds of a politician who claimed on TV that nowadays we live in a better world, free from the mistakes of the past centuries. So I dare ask: what is the point of the war in Iraq? How do the civilians live there? Why are their civil rights being violated? Both state and independent media should show and explain true history. The moral duty of media is to teach how conflicts may be prevented, how to become humane, compassionate and altruistic.

The most important targets of all sources of information should be the youngest children. They are the future brave activists, who will shape our world in 20-30 years' time with the full respect for human rights and for human dignity. "The child is the father of the man", convinces us an old proverb. The media are expected to speak to them in clear and understandable way. Journalists should be a real moral authority. Whey don't the mass media reach and stimulated the thoughts of these little dwellers of our globe? I am convinced that there should be "Children News", where speakers are children themselves, expressing their own opinions about the global problems. Let's not moderate their ambitions, ideas. Let's enable them to broaden their knowledge to create a better world!

Owing to the knowledge of different languages we can communicate with peers all over the world and exchanging our thoughts. That's why different TV channels should broadcast the educational programs teaching every teenager foreign languages. OSCE endorsed The Year of Knowledge of Foreign Languages (2001). John Paul II initiated The World Youth Day – the day when the teenagers from all over the world meet. "The global king" should be inspired by such ideas, which unite young people.

I think that on the TV there should be more programs showing and explaining foreign habits, traditions, outlooks upon life, ways of thinking. "⋯ The piano keys are black and white⋯ But they sound like a million colors in your mind⋯" – sings Katie Melua in her song. And that's the punch line. People in different countries vary but they need to exchange their experience. All nations together form a wonderful inseparable oneness.

Once Marcus Tullius Cicero shouted out: "The welfare of society is the highest law!" Let's together make our "global king" understand that. Let's take actions!! Maybe I'm a dreamer but

as Władysław Stanisław Reymont – one of the biggest Polish writers wrote in his book: "Our reality is weaved from the same fabric as our dreams". Together we will fulfill our dreams of peace in the worlds.

Anyone for Tea?

(Original in Japanese)

Takuto Sato

(Age 18, Japan <Living in U.S.A.>)

Battle Creek Japanese School, Michigan

With civil war rife among races and religions worldwide, it almost seems that world peace has retreated to a completely different world far away. However, isn't peace simpler than that? Isn't peace the feeling you get when your body relaxes and you enjoy peace of mind, in fact, very much like the feeling you get when enjoying an afternoon cup of tea? If that is the case, perhaps we could realize world peace by providing everyone with tea tables so that people around the world could enjoy teatime together, irrespective of race or religion. Ongoing development of the internet and other communication technologies today has significantly reduced the distance separating people of the world, and it is this that makes establishment of a Global Tea Table (GTT) possible.

The internet is a heaven-sent tool for realizing a tea table at which we could enjoy casual conversation with anyone in the world. People with different cultures and backgrounds from around the world could get together online and enjoy communicating. But the constant threat of fraud and other crimes associated with existing online chat rooms makes it difficult to describe them as havens where one could enjoy a cup of tea. At the GTT, all participants would be required to provide identification, and a committee to handle malicious users would be established in each country to prevent this kind of trouble from occurring. Teatime can only be enjoyable when everyone observes manners, so people who do not behave would have to be penalized by prohibiting their access or taking other suitable action. Strengthening security in this way would enable GTT to offer participants an unprecedented secure haven.

People accessing the GTT site would be invited to a randomly selected "table" where they would join people chatting and enjoy casual conversation. Selecting conversation partners randomly would offer users opportunities to engage on an equal footing in unbiased conversations with people from various different cultures, whilst avoiding troubles frequently

associated with conventional chat rooms that seek close relationships. GTT would be a place for casual conversations consistent with teatime, and would not encourage users to delve too deeply into one another's privacy.

The world that emerges when prejudices are removed is unbelievably vast. I used to play on a soccer team with a Korean boy. In the process of playing soccer together and chatting about our favorite players I forgot all the biases I had had until then. If I did not have the chance to join the same team at the same time as him, I would probably still have biases against Korean people. Most probably, I would have never imagined that connecting with Korean people was possible. By establishing GTT as a place to promote mutual understanding, we can realize a world of understanding without prejudice.

The biggest problem in realizing a GTT is the language barrier. However, if we can overcome this barrier, we can truly realize unprecedented communication. Today, people get information about the world by looking at the news in their native language. But this information has been edited by the media organization and may differ somewhat from information gained directly. At times, these differences plant discrimination and bias in people's hearts, and hinder mutual understand between people of different races. For example, a series of media reports on visits to Yasukuni Shrine was the major cause of the biases against Koreans I mentioned earlier. Luckily for me, because I lived in America and was able to talk to him in English, I was able to rid myself of these stereotypes at an early stage. Removing language barriers in this way is an indispensable condition for realizing mutual understanding of races and religious beliefs. Fortunately, language barriers are getting smaller each day as development of automatic translation technology makes significant progress. Accordingly, we are probably getting closer to realizing a GTT that will promote deep mutual understanding among people of the world.

Eventually the GTT would develop from a text conversation table format to one that could accommodate voice communication and then video chat. This would require considerable development of translation technology, but just as people long ago were unable to imagine towns brightly lit by electric light bulbs, realization of such technology is distinctly possible. If people of the world could sit around after dinner with a teacup in one hand and chat about the day's events with people of different cultures and languages living on the other side of the globe, and if this custom caught on around the world, surely world peace would follow naturally.

Imagine a Game

(Original)

Veerle Vrindts
(Age 20, Belgium)
Maastricht University

Imagine a game, which is never game over.

Imagine a game, which will change your world.

Imagine a game, which will make you see things from another point of view.

Imagine a game⋯

We're all players in a game called 'life'. We have to find ways; encountering obstacles, victories, comedies, tragedies, but most of all⋯ other people like us. I started playing twenty years ago without even noticing my role. Little by little I felt aware of the game, the choices and the directions life can take.

Observing my culture, I witnessed new worlds we're shaping in challenging ways.

I'm born in the eighties. As an eight-year-old, I queued for the release of PlayStation. I was ten when my parents bought a PC and twelve when I stared at the screen of my first GameBoy. The games we kids played in the nineties were innocent. We were little chubby Italian plumbers in our Mushroom Kingdom, jumping around, collecting coins to save a kidnapped princess. Life was simple, good always defeating bad.

Since I grew older, the gameworld showed his darker side. I saw my friends enjoying first-person shooter and real-time-strategygames. After school, they became serial killers in the private sphere of their PC or game-console. My boyfriend shocked me with his race-game Carmageddon, which allowed him to knock down pedestrians. He even received bonuspoints

by doing so. Recent games like ManHunt totally lost the connection with good overcoming bad. You have to be the criminal, killing realistic victims in the cruellest ways.

If flight-simulators teach how to fly, what do violence-simulators teach us? The answer leaves little space for peaceful dreams.

But… there is hope! Together with the growing realism in violent videogames, another generation digital games started to flourish: strategic life-simulationgames! The Sims, released in 2000, encouraged people to enjoy playing in a world very similar to their own environment. They had to take care of a family of 'Sims', make interactive choices for them like buying houses, purchasing furniture, lead them into failures or victories,… in other words: 'play God'.

After this success, the game-industry developed a new world: Second Life! It's a virtual 'copy' of reality with his own economic system and a lot of connections to the real world. Big companies place advertisements in the Second Life world, you can even change your Linden Dollars for real money.

Real-life games copy capitalistic worlds. The most important value is 'becoming rich and successful as quickly as possible'. If I was a gamedeveloper, I would change the aim of the game. Am I naïve when I dream of a peaceful world of equality? Am I wrong when I say videogames can show how to achieve it?

According to the Second Life platform, I would create a copy of the world. Global maps like Google Earth go a long way forming these images. By zooming in on the globe, you can visit places you even never heard about. But 'you' are not just a Western individualist, dreaming of a filled purse. 'You' can also be a child, born in the slumps of Lima or a homeless victim of an Asian tsunami. Fate chooses.

In this game you don't gain money, but happiness credits. Your score will rise if you help somebody or accept help: by saying something nice to a stranger, offering a hand or a listening ear, donating money when you can afford it or receiving it when you need it, by volunteering in one of the development projects, etc. You loose happiness credits because of aggressive or violent behaviour towards other living beings.

Every day difficult tasks are offered. If you succeed, your happiness score raises a lot. But…you can't do the tasks by yourself; you need to cooperate with at least one other player. Some example tasks: baking a giant community-cake, collecting hundred clothes for a charity organisation or even building a house! These tasks are funny, but moreover they will encourage team-working and inspire young people to start their own real-life youth-led projects.

The game will have social connections. Projects mentioned in the game, exist in real life. By participating in the virtual version, you contribute directly to these projects. When you click on the different countries of the world, you can read about the issues this area is confronted with. Intercultural learning will overcome stereotypes. There are possibilities to meet people from around the world. All participants will have their own profile and you can start chatting whenever you want.

The game I dream about will never be 'game over'. When you reach a certain level of happiness, you can choose to be a new digital personality and share your 'happiness'. The peaceful circle of life starts all over again and the achievement of the dream will grow with every generation.

Imagine a game…

The role of media and information and communication technologies in building a peaceful world

(Original)

Tara Yvonne Finglas
(Age 23, Ireland)
Trinity College Dublin

"Let them see how we live," he said. I nodded and held my digital camera close as I tried to capture his shoddy wooden house in a pool of water. I had been in South Africa for over a month, I had played with AIDS orphans and dished out pots of soup to hungry hands. But, the picture of this man's house still stayed in my mind and shocked everyone who saw it; the picture had fulfilled its task.

Journalists come under fire for fabricating and over simplifying events. As one of the four pillars of society and as watch dog of the state, the media is instrumental in getting information to the public. During the 1980s, the media sparked a global response to the famine in Ethiopia. Media reports about bloated babies and starving men and women horrified people, and resulted in action.

This kind of journalism, 'peace journalism,' is the way forward to a peaceful world. Peace journalism is also known as 'journalism with a cause,' and it not only focuses on situations but also examines possible solutions. Journalist John Pilger is notorious for his reports about the arms trade. He examines the arms trade industry and also the anti-arms trade activism that runs parallel.

However, peace journalism needs guidance and instruction. Media training on how to cover conflict, humanitarian disasters and emergencies needs to be given to journalists. This training would be useful to discount stereotypical reporting and misinformation. Media reports need to be catchy and alluring, thus journalists may be tempted to deal with stories superficially instead of getting to the root of the situation.

The new communications technologies of today have given each and every one of us a virtual passport to the rest of the world. Sitting in our comfortable homes we drink tea as pictures of atrocities and human rights abuses fleet across our television screens. Voices of men, women and children reverberate with stories of true heartache and unimaginable courage. We are watching and we are listening.

The world witnessed first hand in 2003 as the war in Iraq erupted. Iraqis living in Iraq started writing blogs as a way of letting the outside world know what was happening. As bomb after bomb fell on Baghdad, Iraqis shared their fears and experiences on their blogs. The blogs were an online diary somewhat similar to the Diary of Anne Frank. Anne Frank wrote about her life in hiding during World War Two, and the Iraqi blogs were very much reminiscent of the same adolescent thoughts of 'when will I see my friends again?' and 'why can't I go out?'

Blogs can be used to encourage a deeper understanding of diverse people. Writing a blog or reading someone else's blog gives an insight into what it is to be that person. Blogs should be encouraged as a way of cultivating intercultural exchange. A couple of words about your daily life can be therapeutic in dealing with unresolved issues. Many conflicts happen because of fear or a lack of knowledge of the unknown; blogs allow an access point to get to know people who we would call strangers today but perhaps friends tomorrow.

The Iraq War also saw the advent of the satellite telephone. Due to the extensive bombing and fighting, much of the communications infrastructure in Iraq was destroyed. Thus, television cameras, radio transmitters and the internet were inadequate. The satellite telephone allowed journalists to report from the front line.

'Give the people food and they will not starve today. But give them the tools to produce food and they will never starve.' There are many talented young people among us who feel that they are unheard and unseen by the media. This can change with the creation of 'Youth News,' a youth news service.

This would take the form of a press packer organisation where UNESCO and The Goi Peace Foundation would set up a 'Youth News' section on their websites for young people to publish articles. Also UNESCO and The Goi Peace Foundation could send young people to cover events for 'Youth News,' and offer young people the chance to produce short video and radio reports. These reports would be five minutes or less in length.

Finally, technology can play an important part in building a better world. E-forums for instance can offer a safe and intermediary place for people to meet and discuss issues. There are many divisions between people around the world, Catholics and Protestants, Black and White, and East and West. Thus, moderated e-forums can specify topics to discuss. People can post their thoughts and engage in discussions even if they would not say hello to each other on the street.