

2012 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 151

No. of entries: 11,857(Children's category: 4,033 / Youth category: 7,824)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Predictable Future*
Elisey Biryukov (Age 13, Belarus)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Counting the Uncountable*
Anjali Sarker (Age 21, Bangladesh)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Mon héritage*
Lebouvier Achille Yalamoussa
(Age 11, Burkina Faso)
- *Giving Children a Voice in Creating a Peaceful World*
Ogenwot Jerome (Age 12, Uganda)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Creating the Future We Want*
Stella Tu (Age 18, U.S.A.)
- *Hacia la evolución intencional de la humanidad*
Oscar Arley Chacón Fúquene
(Age 24, Colombia)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- Ren Watanabe (Age 8, Japan)
- Rachel Renli Prud'homme van Reine
(Age 11, The Netherlands)
- Melchior Tamisier-Fayard (Age 12, U.S.A.)
- Riku Kinoshita (Age 14, Japan)
- Eriko Onuki (Age 15, Japan)

Youth category (5 entrants)

- Kyoko Takeuchi (Age 17, Japan)
- Anistya Rachmawati (Age 23, Indonesia)
- Shadrack Osei Frimpong (Age 20, Ghana)
- Miyuki Nogi (Age 20, Japan)
- Andhyta Firselly Utami (Age 20, Indonesia)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Hiraya S. Marcos (Age 8, The Philippines)
- Nada Safira (Age 9, Indonesia)
- Eunike Setiadarma (Age 10, Indonesia)
- Maiya Delyth Naya (Age 10, Japan)
- Ayazhan Utegen (Age 11, Kazakhstan)
- Swasamon Jaidee (Age 11, Thailand)

Youth category (25 entrants)

- Shekainah Shamma Liong Santiago
(Age 15, The Philippines)
- Tanya Gupta (Age 15, India)
- Arisa Kanda (Age 16, Japan)
- Akane Kono (Age 16, Japan)
- Tran Huyen Chi (Age 16, Vietnam)

- Oshin Bhuiyan (Age 12, Bangladesh)
- Kylie Patience Buscemi (U.S.A.)
- Saho Yamanaka (Age 12, Japan)
- Yoshinao Asanuma (Age 13, Japan)
- Erika Ushimaru (Age 13, Japan)
- Elaine Joyce T. Ang (Age 13, The Philippines)
- Haruka Kawada (Age 13, Japan)
- Kirtas Aidana (Age 13, Kazakhstan)
- Juhi Saxena (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Palina Karpava (Age 13, Belarus)
- Madeline O'Connor (Age 13, U.S.A.)
- Artem Maryin (Age 14, Ukraine)
- Kana Iwabuchi (Age 14, Japan)
- Maho Kanamaru (Age 14, Japan)
- Emi Kamio (Age 14, Japan)
- Nur Iylia Fathin Binti Ahmad Subki (Age 14, Malaysia)
- Mladena Peeva (Age 14, Austria)
- Laura Marcela Aguirre Martinez (Age 14, Colombia)
- Eri Komatsubara (Age 15, Japan)
- Leyah Christine Dizon (Age 16, The Philippines)
- Jaime Costa Centena (Age 17, Spain)
- Yoshie Isomura (Age 18, Japan)
- Josephine Parol (Age 19, Germany)
- Koto Mineo (Age 19, Japan)
- Yvan Gaetan Guenoue Noubissie (Age 20, Cameroon)
- Norbert Gastardo Germano (Age 20, The Philippines)
- Paola Cruz (Age 20, Dominican Republic)
- Robby Soeyanto (Age 20, Indonesia)
- Kevin George Barrios (Age 21, The Philippines)
- Sharma Sanchit (Age 21, India)
- Joshua Ochieng' Wera (Age 21, Kenya)
- Denisa Samková (Age 21, Slovakia)
- Cristina-Elena Pestrea (Age 22, Romania)
- Ayodeji Oluwole Ojo (Age 23, Nigeria)
- Veranika Buracheuskaya (Age 23, Belarus)
- Rafael Timoteo Corro Perez (Age 23, Mexico)
- Taiwo Orogbangba (Age 24, Nigeria)
- Lilian Omafodezi (Age 24, Nigeria & Germany)
- Manas Panda (Age 25, India)

Recognition for Effort

Children's category (25 entrants)

Not applicable

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- Clare Wu (Age 16, New Zealand)
- Charley Ren (Age 16, U.S.A.)
- Muhammad Haziq Absyir Muhammad Fauzi (Age 16, Malaysia)
- Nozomi Aida (Age 17, Japan)
- Saaya Kitajima (Age 17, Japan)
- Nijesh Upreti (Age 17, Nepal)
- Jesús Andrés Villasana Álvarez (Age 18, Mexico)
- Adriana Borja Enriquez (Age 21, Ecuador)

Best School Award (1 school)

- Ichikawa Junior & Senior High School, Chiba (Japan)

School Incentive Award (26 schools)

- Atomi Gakuen Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- City Montessori School, Lucknow (India)
- Ikubunkan Senior High School & Ikubunkan Global High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Japanese School of Toledo (U.S.A.)
- Japaniche Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)
- Kashihara Municipal Unebi Junior High School, Nara (Japan)
- Kokugojuku KURU, Tokyo (Japan)
- Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)
- Miyagi Prefectural Hakuou Senior High School (Japan)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Port of Sacramento Japanese School, California (U.S.A.)
- Shigakusya, Tokyo (Japan)
- Sugiyama Jogakuen University Affiliated Primary School, Aichi (Japan)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School (U.S.A.)
- Fuji Sacred Heart Junior High School, Shizuoka (Japan)
- Japanese Language School of Cleveland (U.S.A.)
- Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee (U.S.A.)
- Kamikawa Junior High School of Kamikawa Town, Hyogo (Japan)
- Kinki University Wakayama Junior High School (Japan)
- Kokushikan Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
- Numazuhigashi Senior High School of Shizuoka Prefecture (Japan)
- Osaka Communication Arts (Japan)
- Saint Mary's International School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Showa Women's University Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School (Japan)

Predictable Future (Original)

Elisey Biryukov
(Age 13, Belarus)
Gymnasium 1, Minsk

I have never really thought about the future until two months ago an announcement was made at our school about one girl. She was seriously ill. She had cancer. A very aggressive form of it. The doctors in our country did everything they could for her. Still she was dying. Her only hope was the treatment that she could get in Germany. She needed minimum of 50 thousand Euros to be able to go and soon. The price of the human life. It's a lot of money here. So her parents started raising funds wherever they could and eventually came to our school. Nowadays we have almost got used to such stories because after the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station accident the rate of cancer among children in Belarus has increased 13 times. This power station is situated almost at the border of our Republic and right after the accident the wind was blowing north and carrying radioactive clouds in our direction So there are articles in newspapers, announcements on TV, Internet about kids dying of cancer who need urgent help.



But this girl was special. I understood it when I saw her picture. She was bald after chemotherapy, very pale, hollow-eyed and SMILING. She had such a radiant smile! This impressed me greatly. And not only me. I saw that most of my classmates brought money for her the next day. How courageous must she be to be able to smile in that situation! Then for a moment I tried to imagine myself in her place. How scary must it be to know that your life might end in a day, a week, a month But she seemed not to be afraid. Then suddenly I got an insight – I will also die, all people die. The only difference was that she knew it could happen soon. Death became real to her but for me it used to be unreal, like a phantom. I became aware of part of my future, the part that is common for all of us.

That day when I was doing my Math homework I imagined that our lives on the Earth aren't half-lines, they are intercepts, as they have the beginning and the end. Some of us have longer intercepts, others shorter. Anyway time is too limited to spend it on trifles, to waste it. When surfing the Net I came across a book "Death: The Final Stage of Growth" by Doctor Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. It gives a lot of examples of what changes people undergo when they learn that they will die soon. They experience a great leap in their spiritual development and find themselves much happier than they used to be before when they were enjoying the boons of life thinking that they would live forever. I believe it is true for me as well. Not because I am going to die soon, on the contrary I hope to live long. But that girl and her attitude made me appreciate and treasure what I have. Now to have simply a long life is not enough for me, I wish to have "the fullness of days" as it is called in the Bible. Now I try to manage my days putting important things first – developing good relations with people around me, spending time with them, showing care, listening to them. It is SO hard. Nevertheless I believe that if I manage to build my days around these priorities, I won't consider my life wasted when the predictable future (death) comes.

What a paradox – I decided to improve my life when I started thinking about death! How wise the Romans were when they said: "Memento more". This expression shows that we shouldn't take our life as a rough book thinking that one day in far away future we'll be able to rewrite it. No, we only have a fair copy. What is done is done. And what is not done might never be done. The chance to behave correctly we have today, not in the future. Death is a great motivator of life. Not the fear of death that terrorists try to impose on people and this way make them do what they want. No, I mean the recognition of it that motivates us to be good now and here, thus leading us to better future.

Counting the Uncountable (Original)

Anjali Sarker
(Age 21, Bangladesh)
University of Dhaka

When I was born, my complexion was quite dark and that made my parents worried. In Bangladesh, everyone prefers girls having fair skin color. Relatives and neighbors used to tell that my father would need to pay a large dowry in my marriage. I grew up hearing such comments. I felt sad, worried, and even ashamed. From a very young age I was desperate to make up for my not-so-beautiful look through my works. I studied hard; I tried singing, dancing, painting, and what not. I tried frantically to be the best, so that no one can look down on me because I lack beauty.



Eventually, all those hard works started to pay off. Successes rushed in my life, one after another. When I was 18, I got admitted into the most prestigious business school in my country, which made me even more desperate for achievements. However, things started to change gradually. Earlier my world was very small; school, home, family and a few friends. In university, I met hundreds of people, who were hankering after achievements, jobs, money and social status. I talked with many of my school alumni whose lives were full of pride, status and prestige. I observed their so-called "successful" lives. Surprisingly, successes could not make them happy. Deep inside, they were depressed. They cursed their bosses, felt dissatisfied with work and could not spend quality time with their families.

I was confused. What do we really expect from life? What should we do today to build our future tomorrow? I observed carefully and sensed a lack of positivity in the air. Dissatisfaction, intolerance, and cynicism were whimsically growing everywhere. I felt something was wrong. Statistics says our country is progressing, but what is about our people? Are we happier than before? Or, are we happy at all?

I talked with more people and tried to discover the exceptional things, events and people around me who are different from the crowd. I looked for people who were living happily, working hard to fulfill their dreams, helping others and contributing to the society. Gradually I realized what kind of future I want.

Nowadays, we are driven by material pleasure in life. Money, property, salary, luxury - these things matter most to us. We often forget the value of little things; small gifts that have made our lives truly blessed. Things like health, relationships and family, that we consider as given and never consciously think about, are the most important things in our life. We need to think beyond numbers and objects, care about numerous intangible gifts that are surrounding us. Our values, thoughts, dreams and beloved ones are taking our lives forward, not the food we eat or the money we spend.

I was a typical business student, waiting to work in giant multinational corporations, earn a fat paycheck at the end of month and live a luxurious life. But when I realized what really matter in life, I choose not to follow the crowd and design my own destiny. I decided to be a social entrepreneur and established a startup that provides rural poor with safe sanitation.

When I learned to acknowledge the small blessings in life, I understood that to achieve true success, we should cooperate, not compete. So I started motivating my classmates and juniors. I shared my thoughts with my teachers. At first everyone considered my wish to work for the poor a short term fantasy. They advised, forbade and even ridiculed me. But I followed my heart. As I set my priorities right and gave importance to the small things that matter, nothing could discourage me. The idea of following one's heart is not new, but I have learnt through my experience why so many people fail to do that. We often forget to acknowledge value of the most precious things and crave for the not-so-valued ones. Small things matter, but we often ignore those.

Now I am 21 years old. My heart is full of passion, my eyes sparkle with confidence. No more confusion, no more inferiority complexes, no worries for not being a beauty queen. I am ready to do something for my country and the world through what I love- social business. Every social business aligns people, planet and profit simultaneously. I love to work in my social business, but I love even more to help other entrepreneurs to establish their own ones! That's how happiness is created in a community and spreads itself. I inspire young girls to come out

of their cocoons and see the world, as I am doing now. I am a free bird and now I am encouraging other birds to break their cages!

Future is nowhere, but in our own hands. Enough running after petty material things; let's start counting the uncountable!

Mon héritage (Original)

Lebouvier Achille Yalamoussa
(Age 11, Burkina Faso)
St Exupéry de Ouagadougou

J'ai 11 ans, et j'ai de la chance.

Je suis africain. Je suis né dans le nord de la Côte d'Ivoire dans un petit village au joli nom musical de Kokoton. Je suis un garçon qui a de la chance car j'ai été adopté bébé à l'orphelinat de Khorogo.

J'ai de la chance et je suis très heureux, parce que j'ai 4 parents. Mes parents de vie, Bakary et Yéo, qui m'ont mis au monde et mes parents adoptifs que j'appelle mes parents d'amour. Papa et Maman, Serge et Annie qui m'élèvent. Je suis très aimé, j'ai aussi un petit frère adopté comme moi Hamza et une petite soeur aussi adoptée, Moïe, d'ailleurs dans sa langue du Congo son nom veut dire Soleil et elle le porte très bien car elle aussi belle qu'un vrai soleil.

Maman m'a souvent raconté mon histoire, j'ai perdu ma mère biologique deux mois après être né, elle était très jeune et avait juste 14 ans, presque mon âge. Mon père Bakary lui avait 19 ans, c'est un sculpteur d'Art traditionnel et je suis l'enfant de l'amour parce que mes parents de vie s'aimaient. Je suis né le 19 octobre 2000, et je suis sénoufo, mais je me sens de partout dans le monde parce que dans ma famille d'amour nous sommes tous différents. Moi je suis noir africain, Mon papa est blanc européen, ma mère est noire antillaise, mon frère est métis de l'Afrique et de l'Europe, et ma petite soeur est caramel de l'Afrique aussi.

Je me sens tout cela à la fois, parce que à la maison nous partageons toutes nos différences. Je suis Ivoirien quand je dévore du Foutou de bananes plantains accompagné de sauce graine, quand je suis en Normandie avec mes grands parents, je me sens normand, surtout quand Mamie nous prépare de la poule à la crème, quand je déguste des accras de poissons et que maman nous chante des berceuses antillaises, je me sens martiniquais, et je suis aussi du

Congo comme mon frère et ma petite soeur et métis parce que pour moi le monde n'est ni blanc ni noir mais métis. Nous sommes tous dans le monde différents, et de partout parce que nous communiquons tous à travers le monde ensemble, surtout grâce à internet. Nous nous rencontrons tous à travers le monde, et nous nous mélangeons.

Mais ce que j'aimerais surtout dire aujourd'hui, c'est que je voudrais que d'autres enfants comme moi, puissent être adoptés pour grandir dans l'amour de parents de vie même s'ils sont différents. C'est l'amour qui compte, et j'ai la chance d'être aimé de mes parents, grand parents, oncles et tantes, frère et soeur.

Voilà ma famille, c'est un monde entier, même de quelques personnes. Africains, Antillais, européens, et même de l'Asie d'un autre grand père, Ils essaient tous, je le sais de nous faire grandir dans l'amour, et le respect de nos différences et de ce que nous sommes.

Quand je pense à mes parents, et à toute ma famille, même celle de vie Que je ne connais pas encore, j'ai parfois l'impression d'avoir pu avec mon frère et ma soeur, réunir toutes ses personnes autour de nous, et j'avoue que j'en suis très fier.

Pour moi la vie, c'est d'être avec tout le monde sans se sentir différent, Je souhaiterais qu'il en soit ainsi pour tous les enfants du monde, et que ceux qui n'ont plus de famille de vie puissent être adoptés par des parents d'Amour. Je n'ai jamais caché mon histoire aux autres, car je veux la partager, c'est un atout pour moi et une grande fierté d'avoir plusieurs familles qui forment une grande famille Internationale. Voilà comment je veux continuer à grandir pour moi, pour mon frère Hamza, pour ma petite soeur Moïe et pour d'autres enfants dans le monde.

J'ai un secret à dire: être adopté est un acte d'amour, et parfois être abandonné aussi parce que mon père de vie n'aurait pas pu me garder, j'aurais pu mourir car il était trop pauvre pour me garder.

Avec ma mère nous avons un jeu ensemble, elle me dit dans le creux de l'oreille, Achille, j'ai un secret pour toi, je m'approche et elle me souffle «Je t'aime». C'est vrai, ma mère Annie ne m'a pas porté dans son ventre, mais elle est, restera pour toujours ma maman d'amour.

Je souhaite à tous les enfants comme moi de pouvoir vivre et grandir dans la paix et dans l'amour d'une famille, même si elle n'est pas celle dans laquelle ils sont nés et de toujours transmettre cet héritage pour rendre le monde plus beau.

My Heritage

(English translation)

I am 11 years old and I am lucky.

I am African. I was born in the northern part of Cote d'Ivoire in a little village with the beautiful name of Kokoton. I am a boy who is lucky, because I was adopted while I was a baby at the orphanage of Khorogo.

I am lucky and I am very happy, because I have 4 parents—my birth parents, Bakary and Yéo, who gave birth to me, and my adoptive parents, whom I call my parents of love. This Dad and Mum, Serge and Annie, are raising me. I am loved, and I have also a little brother who is adopted like me, named Hamza, and a little sister called Moie. In her Congolese language, her name means "Sun," and her name fits her very well, because she is so pretty like the real sun.

Mum has often told me my life story, that I lost my biological mother two months after I was born. She was very young, only 14 years old—almost as young as I am now. My father Bakary was 19. He was a sculptor in traditional fine art, and I am a child of love, because my birth parents truly were in love with each other. I was born on 19 October 2000, and I am from the Sénoufo tribe/clan, but I feel that I belong to the entire world, because in my family of love we all have different backgrounds. I am a black African, my father is a white European, my mother is black from the West Indies, my brother is métis (half white/half black) from Africa and Europe, and my little sister is caramel coloured, also from Africa.

I feel myself being all this at once, because at home we share all our differences. I am from Ivory Coast when I eat some foutou made of bananas with sauce graine. When I am in Normandy with my grandparents, I feel that I am a Normand, especially when grandma is cooking some chicken with cream. And I feel that I am a citizen of Martinique when I enjoy eating some delicious fish specialities of the region and my mum sings some West Indies songs

for me. And I am also from the Congo, like my brother and my little sister. And I feel like a métis because to me, the world is neither white nor black, but mixed. We are all different in the world and we belong everywhere, because we can all communicate with each other across the world, especially thanks to the internet. We all meet from across the world, and we mix with each other.

But what I want to convey today is that I hope that other children like me will be adopted in order to grow up in an environment of love, even if the parents are not their biological ones. Love is all that counts, and I am lucky to be loved by my parents, my grandparents, my uncles and aunts, and my sister and brother.

This is my family, an entire world, even though it is only a small number of individuals. We are Africans, West Indians, Europeans, and another grandfather is even from Asia. They all try, I know, to raise us in an atmosphere of love, while respecting our differences and who we are.

When I am thinking of my parents, and of my entire family—even my biological family—I sometimes have the impression that together with my brother and sister, we were the reason for bringing all these people together, and I must confess that I am very proud of this.

To me, life consists of being together with everybody without the feeling of being different, and I wish that every child on the planet could feel this way, and that all those children who do not have their family anymore could be adopted by loving parents. I have never kept my story a secret from anyone, because I want to share it. My story is an asset for me and I am very proud of having many families, which all form a great big international family. This is how I want to continue growing up, and I wish the same for my brother Hamza and my little sister Moie, and for many other children in the world.

I have a secret to tell: being adopted is an act of love, and sometimes being abandoned is, too, because my birth father was not in a position to keep me. I could have died because he was too poor to keep me.

My mother and I have a game that we play together. She tells me in my ear: "Achille, I have a secret for you." So I come next to her and she whispers in my ear: "I love you." It is true, my mother Annie did not carry me in her womb, but she is and will always be my mother whom I love.

I wish that all children like me could live and grow up in a family in love and in peace, even if the family is not the one they were born into, and that they could always be proud of and spread their heritage in order to make the world more beautiful.

Giving Children a Voice in Creating a Peaceful World

(Original)

Ogenrwot Jerome

(Age 12, Uganda)

Lira Central Primary School, Lira

My name is Ogenrwot Jerome, a pupil of Lira Central Primary School in Lira, Uganda. I'm 12 years old and in primary six. As today's dream is tomorrow's reality, I want to make a difference in the world and I am just focused on making it a reality. By giving my best, unleashing my potentials for excellence and doing my best in school I believe I can make it. The most important thing is giving my best because if I give my best in everything and to everyone, I can as well achieve the best for myself. My dream is to create a peaceful and prosperous future for my country and the whole world. This I gain from my personal life experience earlier in 2002 when I was just about 2 years old.

My mum and I were involved in a motor accident caused by the Lord's Resistance Army rebels led by Joseph Kony. We were travelling in a mini cargo vehicle. Two hours into the journey we entered an ambush laid by the rebels who started firing bullets. I and my mum were on the front seat. The driver lost control and the vehicle overturned twice and I broke through the wind screen and fell outside. This is unbelievable but true! A bullet shot my mum on her left arm. The passenger besides us died on the spot. After the firing had stopped me, my mum and other casualties who were also in critical condition were rushed to the hospital.

I stayed in a comma for almost 2 weeks before being transferred to the national referral hospital. There I was given serious treatment but even the doctors who were working on me could hardly believe that I would survive because when an x-ray was taken it showed that my skull had fractured. By the grace of God I was rescued from the claws of death but for the next one year I was still close to the hospital so that the doctors could monitor my recovery. I did enough physiotherapy and I learnt to walk again- thanks to my physiotherapists; Freidis and Espaland from Norway.

At the moment I have both right leg and arm paralyzed but I can walk, write using left and do many other things on my own. I'm glad that my mum also recovered well. I started my nursery education with four years but I'm grateful because much as the incident damaged the skull, my brain was not much affected that has kept me wise and academically sound. My whole story was told to me when I was 10 years old.

My story shows how totally innocent people especially children are affected by war and political instability in a country. I do not want other children to go through my experience. I want to achieve this by giving children a voice in matters concerning peace and unity. In future when I grow up I would like to be a radio and television presenter so that I can open up peace talk shows. Through this I could invite not only children but some leaders if possible the president himself to discuss with them the best ways of creating peace and unity for people and for ensuring political stability. I would even open a children's program where the children broadcast, share ideas and educate people just like I'm currently doing in a radio station in my home area. There are very many children out there who have the character to speak and educate people but they just lack someone to bring them up and develop their talents- I want to be that someone. I don't mind of what I can get for myself but the most important thing is what I can give the world.

Fellow children, minutes are worth more than money so spend them wisely and believe in your dreams. Focus on achieving your goals and believe with God everything is possible. Whenever you are doing anything and you face a challenge just look forward to overcoming the challenge but not giving up or quitting the fight; remember "winners never quit and quitters never win." Believe that whatever good anybody else can do; you can as well do it- only you can do it better.

As my conclusion I dearly wish to appreciate the organizers of this competition for their willingness to reach out to young people and for considering us as crucial for the shaping of the future of the world.

Creating the Future We Want (Original)

Stella Tu
(Age 18, U.S.A.)

In the future I envisage, every child would play an instrument. This may sound trivial: a peace accord has never been composed in the form of a musical score, and never have world leaders come together for a jam session. Yet upon further consideration, one realizes that music provides the key to a brighter future. Playing music teaches values and skills that are critical to tackling the socioeconomic and geopolitical crises that future generations currently face.

Playing music teaches an appreciation for the nonmaterial. Music can neither be bought nor sold and does not know the limits and boundaries of possession. For me, learning how to play Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 was much more rewarding than a Coach handbag I coveted for months. In a broader context, our global culture is largely based on consumerism. Currently, many of our problems come from overconsumption. Cars that run on fossil fuel, cheap goods produced in countries with lower environmental standards, and large houses that are constantly air-conditioned contribute to environmental degradation that seriously threatens life on this planet. In the future, people will have to give up some of their consumerist desires in order to reduce these dangerous emissions to sustain the planet. Learning to play music is a small but critical step towards this goal.

Playing music also teaches sacrifice and delayed gratification of personal satisfaction. Mastering a complicated rhythmic section on the cello can take months, and acquiring the skills and artistry of music making is a lifelong rather than a yearlong endeavor. There is no quick or easy acquisition of musical talent and skills. As we look around the world, many global problems can be attributed to impatient national desires and immediate satisfaction. For example, both the global debt crisis and the current crippling budget deficits represent a lack of restraint and forethought. I hope for a future in which governments are willing to make the sacrifices now in order to benefit the next generation rather than pushing responsibility onto the future. This a lesson that most musicians learn early on.

Playing music teaches appreciation of subjectivity. Each piece of music represents an infinite number of possibilities and variations. Through sharing the story of the music, a musician explores the multiple interpretations and perspectives of the piece. Similarly, each individual person has a unique perspective about the world we share. Throughout history, humans have failed to respect the veracity and worth of those viewpoints that they perceive as different from their own. At the turn of the 21st century, the global community suffers from conflicting ideologies that have resulted in unnecessary bloodshed. If people could view the divergent perspectives of others as beautiful interpretations of a musical piece, there would be much more respect for one another in the world.

Playing music teaches harmony and cooperation. Through music, a musician has the opportunity to meet other people and communicate not through words, but through notes. When I traveled to the Czech Republic for a chamber music camp, I discovered everyone was from different countries. Yet although our spoken languages differed, we shared the mutual language of music. Music is about harmony, notes, and chords, which compose a sum that is greater than its parts. In the future, we will need to create a global community in order to tackle today's most challenging issues such as gender inequality, widespread poverty, and the threat of pandemic disease. We will need a language that can bring us together. Music shows us that this is possible.

In order to make this dream a possibility, I will continue the work I have started with the Starlight Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization that I founded with accumulated prize money in order to support artistic expression among young people. Through the Starlight Foundation, I have encouraged youth art and writing. The Starlight Foundation has already sponsored art and writing competitions and exhibitions, and in the future, I hope to incorporate music as well. I would next like to tackle the project of collecting used instruments and distributing them to children in communities that lack sufficient funds to provide that opportunity to their youth. The Starlight Foundation emphasizes the notion that having money is far less important than realizing its impact on others. If others have the opportunity to play music and internalize its many lessons, the global society will benefit greatly and the future will be much more filled with possibility.

Hacia la evolución intencional de la humanidad

(Original)

Oscar Arley Chacón Fúquene

(Age 24, Colombia)

Soy de Susa, un pequeño municipio en los Andes de Colombia donde vivimos de la agricultura y la ganadería. Mi país es tristemente célebre a nivel mundial: narcotráfico, violencia, pobreza y corrupción parecen males intrínsecos de un destino ineludible. Todos los colombianos nacemos en ese ambiente hostil.

En el campo la problemática se agudiza dadas las brechas existentes respecto a la ciudad, por eso, casi nadie de mi generación veía su futuro en el campo, por el contrario decidieron irse a la ciudad a trabajar o a estudiar para en el futuro emplearse en el gobierno o una gran empresa. Confieso que yo pensaba igual, nos importaba ganar dinero y nunca reflexionamos sobre los problemas del pueblo ni mucho menos en la responsabilidad que teníamos como jóvenes en su solución.

Mi padre, que es un dirigente campesino, me convenció de estudiar Administración Agropecuaria, carrera elegida inicialmente por la falta de cupos en otras licenciaturas. Sin embargo, con el tiempo fue despertando en mí la curiosidad por conocer más el sector rural y sobretodo de acercarme a los campesinos. No fue fácil, pues lo que aprendía en la Universidad difería mucho de las tradiciones locales. Llegué con mi computador tratando de aplicar mis puntos de vista y conocimientos técnicos por sobre la sabiduría popular. Después aprendí a escuchar y valorar estas costumbres que componen el patrimonio más importante de mi pueblo. Compartí con ellos y entendí su manera de pensar y actuar. En las tardes de cosecha interrumpidas sólo por el canto de los pájaros o el silbido del viento en medio de bosques y cultivos entendí lo que parecía absurdo a los ojos de los economistas ¿por qué siguen cultivando si no es rentable económicamente?, lo hacen porque es parte de sí mismos, los campesinos tenemos el cuerpo hecho de maíz parido por la madre tierra.

Me apropié de su paciencia, de la forma como preparan el suelo, lo siembran, lo cuidan y esperan la cosecha que siempre es considerada una bendición sin importar los precios de venta. Su organización comunitaria y el liderazgo ejercido siempre por la persona más servicial, que vale por su seriedad y servicio y no por la ropa que usa.

Este acercamiento me llevó a retomar elementos propios de la cultura campesina asistiendo a clase de la universidad luciendo ruana, sombrero y alpargates. Hace 4 años trabajo con ellos y hoy hemos sido elegidos entre 12 municipios de toda Colombia para implementar una estrategia japonesa de desarrollo local llamada OVOP "one village, one product" con el apoyo técnico de la Agencia de Cooperación Internacional del Japón JICA. Soy exbecario JICA y líder de esta iniciativa que además fue mi tesis de grado.

Cuando veo nuestros avances para que los campesinos recuperemos la confianza en nosotros mismos, concluyo que el potencial humano es ilimitado.

Imagino la evolución como una escalera infinita por la que ascendemos todos los seres buscando la perfección. Los humanos también vivimos en constante cambio y si hemos sido favorecidos con la racionalidad, esa capacidad nos da la opción de decidir hacia donde queremos evolucionar como especie. Mientras en la naturaleza los seres cambian por la prevalencia del más fuerte en un ambiente competitivo, los seres humanos podemos tener conciencia de especie, mirando a nuestros semejantes como compañeros y no como adversarios; es decir buscando un proyecto de vida colectivo más que individual.

Creo que la próxima transformación evolutiva que podemos tener es la de la HERMANDAD. Y lo maravilloso es que a diferencia de las adaptaciones de los seres vivos, suscitadas por factores externos, este cambio lo realizaríamos de manera premeditada, es decir una EVOLUCIÓN INTENCIONAL.

Superando nacionalismos y afanes de acumulación, los humanos podemos llevar existencias más austeras con humildad y encontrando el sentido de la vida en la vocación de servicio, es decir en el bienestar de los demás.

Para esta EVOLUCION INTENCIONAL es necesario interactuar más entre nosotros, en el caso mío nunca hubiese crecido profesionalmente de no haber escuchado a los campesinos de mi pueblo, que terminaron enseñándome más de lo que yo a ellos. Por eso sueño con un mundo

en el que valoremos el trabajo del otro intercambiando roles, donde el gerente pueda ser jardinero y el corredor de bolsa piloto de avión, la cocinera ser cantante y el científico campesino.

Viviendo la realidad del otro no sólo a nivel personal sino internacional los problemas dejarán de ser de cada país, y se conviertan en retos de la especie.

Como joven camino hacía esa dirección y creo que el mundo que yo quiero para mis hijos es uno en el que hallamos evolucionemos en la dirección de la paz, la justicia y la sustentabilidad. Donde sean innecesarios los muros entre los pueblos y se derogue la clasificación de países desarrollados o en vía de desarrollo.

Towards the Intentional Evolution of Mankind (English translation)

I am from Susa, a small town in the Colombian Andes where the economy rests on agriculture and animal breeding. My country is sadly famous worldwide: drug smuggling, violence, poverty and corruption seem to be part of an inescapable fate. Every one of us Colombians are born in that hostile environment.

The problem grows deeper in the field, given its gaps and differences with the city. That is why almost no one in my generation saw their future in the field; on the contrary, they decided to go to the city and work or study in order to find employment with the government or some big enterprise in the future. I admit that I use to think the same way; we cared about making money and never considered the town's problems, not to mention our responsibility as young men to work on a solution.

My father, who is a rural leader, convinced me to study Agricultural Management, which I chose initially for the lack of openings in other majors. However, in time, I grew more curious for the rural sector and I wanted to get closer to the farmers. It was not easy, since what I learned in college was very different from the local ways. I came with my computer, trying to impose my point of view and technical knowledge over the popular wisdom; then I learned to listen and value these methods that are part of my town's most valuable heritage. I shared with them and understood the way they think and act. On those harvest evenings, interrupted

only by the birds' songs or the whistle of the wind amidst the forests and crops, I understood what seemed absurd to the eyes of economists: Why do they keep farming if it's not profitable? They do it because it's who they are. We farmers have a body made of corn, calved by Mother Earth.

I adopted their patience, the way they prepare the soil, plant the seed, look after it and wait for the harvest, which is always considered a blessing, no matter what the selling prices are. Their communitary organization and leadership is always exercised by the most helpful person, who is worthy of this responsibility because of his seriousness and service, and not the clothes he wears.

This approach led me to readopt elements of the rural culture, and I started wearing 'ruana', 'sombrero' and 'alpargates' to college. I have been working with them for 4 years now, and today we have been chosen among the 12 towns from all over Colombia to implement a Japanese local development strategy called OVOP ('One village, one product') with technical support from the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). I had received a scholarship from the JICA before and I'm the leader of this initiative, which was also my grade thesis.

When I see the progress we have achieved in returning self-confidence to the farmers, I know that the human potential has no limit.

I imagine evolution as an infinite stairway where all living creatures climb towards perfection. Humans also live in constant change, and if we have been favored with rationality, it gives us the ability to choose how we want to evolve as species. While other creatures of nature change by the prevalence of the strongest in a competitive environment, human beings have consciousness and can look at their pairs as partners and not only as rivals, they can look for a more collective life project instead of just fighting for themselves.

I think that the next evolutionary transformation that we can go through is BROTHERHOOD. And the wonderful thing is: unlike the other living beings' adaptations, which are caused by external factors, this change would be premeditated, which means an INTENTIONAL EVOLUTION.

If we overcome the nationalisms and accumulation desires, we humans can exist in a more austere and humble way, finding the sense of life in a vocation of service, which means the well-being of others.

In order to achieve this INTENTIONAL EVOLUTION, it is necessary to interact more with other humans. Personally, I would have never grown professionally if I hadn't listened to the farmers in my town; they ended up teaching me more things than I ever did to them. That is why I dream of a world where we value each other's work and exchange roles, where a manager can be a gardener and the stock broker can fly an airplane, a cook can be a singer and the scientist can be a farmer.

If we live each other's reality, not only at a personal level, but internationally, all the problems will stop being just for one country to solve, and become challenges for the entire species.

As a young man, I walk on that direction and I believe that the world I want for my children is one where we evolve in the direction of peace, justice and sustainability; where it is not necessary to build walls around cities, and no need to divide the countries between developed and underdeveloped.

The Future I Hope For

(Original in Japanese)

Ren Watanabe

(Age 8, Japan)

Kamiasa Elementary School, Imabari, Ehime

The future that I hope for is a future with no war, where everyone can spend their days with a beautiful smile.

My own daily life is very peaceful and happy. Every day, I eat meals, study at school, and have fun with my friends, and I don't think much about it. Especially in Japan, we have everything we need for living.

I learned that in countries that are at war, every day people are frightened of bombs falling on them. They can't get enough to eat, they can't get medical treatment, and they often go hungry.

I have never experienced war. I have only learned a little about war from reading a book. I learned that war takes away everything, it resolves nothing, and it destroys lives and breaks families apart. Nothing good comes of war. It only leaves wounds of sadness and hatred in people's hearts. Homes are destroyed, towns are left in chaos, and plants cannot grow in the devastated land for a whole generation. Children who lost their mothers and fathers are forced to live on their own.

It is very sad that even though we are all human beings and were born on the same earth, our lives are so different depending on where we live. When I read that book, I felt that I would like to create a brighter future for people who have suffered from war.

Why do wars take place? When I thought about my house, my school, and my town being destroyed, and my family being separated, I felt like crying. Just thinking about it is terrible, and so, in the future, I want to do away with the tragedy of war.

Rather than arguing and fighting with each other, I would like to see everyone cooperate and create something together.

When all the students at my school sing a song together, it is a wonderful feeling. I am in grade 2, and when I sing with the sixth graders, their gentle voices combine with mine, making a beautiful harmony.

If just one school can create such a moving harmony, imagine how powerful it would be if all the people of the world sang the same song together. I feel excited just thinking about it! And if just a song can make me feel so happy, I think that by having children and adults share more ideas, we can do much more than I could imagine.

Right now, I cannot stop wars. What I can do right now is to study more and think about how to create a more livable world for everyone. What kinds of words can I offer to children who have lost their parents in a war? How can we grow plants and flowers on land where bombs have fallen? What can we do for people suffering from an infectious disease due to their injury? There is a lot to study and think about. I believe that we absolutely can have a future without war. I want people to realize as soon as possible that hurting each other will not bring us happiness. The joy of flowers blooming, the joy of eating delicious food, and a future where everyone in the world is smiling every day—this is the future I hope for.

Creating the Future I Want (Original)

Rachel Renli Prud'homme van Reine
(Age 11, The Netherlands)
Daltonschool Rijnsweerd, Utrecht

Dear Fellow Citizens of Our Earth,

What future do you want for yourself and for the world?

I know the future I want. Learning from the birds that share our townhouse backyard, I want a future of freedom and happiness. Free like the birds, free to come and free to go, free from hunger and free from thirst, free to play and free to learn, free to laugh and free to cry, free from war and free from traffic jam and most of all free to be myself. The birds have not only shown me the future I would love to have, they taught me ways to make it come true. They taught me:

SHARING: In the winter, all trees and shrubs in our backyard had no leaves. The ground was frozen, the birds worked very hard to search for food. There was not much food but there were plenty of hazelnuts under our hazelnut shrub. The Flemish jays tried, the blackbirds tried but they cannot crack the hazelnuts. Woodpecker had a brilliant idea, it took the nut to the plum tree and lodged it between the stem and a strong branch. There, woodpecker was able to peck that nut as if it was a tree. It pecked through the hard shell and pecked its way to the tasty kernel. As it pecked, bits of the kernel fell over, blackbirds, sparrows and blue tits gathered under the plum tree and enjoyed the fallen bits. Woodpecker did not mind sharing, when one nut went empty, it went to get a new one. Our nut tree had produced plenty to share. Thanks to woodpecker's wisdom and generosity, the birds can still enjoy a hearty meal of hazelnuts in the cold winter.

CARING: Robin redbreast visited to announce the spring and blackbirds gathered dried twigs and leaves to build their nests on our neighbour's giant yew trees. From late spring through

summer blackbird families made our backyard their day time home. Papa and mama blackbird visited daily with their chicks. All day long they fed, taught and protected their chicks. The chicks were taught to fly and to differentiate between food and pebbles. Prowling cats saw the birds as interesting toys. Preying Flemish jays and black billed magpies saw the chicks and smaller birds as tasty food. Papa and mama blackbird stand readily on guard against these dangers. At the first sight of enemies, they will sound their siren. At the sound of siren, the chicks hurried to take shelter and the small birds flew away. Papa and mama blackbird had no fear, even cats many times their size were not spared if they dare to prey on the chicks.

NOT TO BE GREEDY: In all seasons, the pigeons had very big appetite and cannot stop eating. In the winter, they ate up all the food we put out for the birds to share. In the spring, it pecks on our cherry blossoms. In the summer and autumn, they gobbled up the berries on our berry shrubs. They grew very heavy and sometimes break the branches of our shrub on which they stand. They too were frequently hit and rundown on the street because they were very heavy and cannot takeoff efficiently. In their takeoff they cannot fly fast enough and or high enough to avoid the moving cars.

TO BE THRIFTY/ UNWASTEFUL: In autumn, our apple tree was full with red and delicious apples. The crows came to visit. Unlike the starling, the crows do not peck on every apple. They chose the best and position themselves strategically to have the apple hang as long as possible on the tree. When they had eaten enough, they flew away and returned to feed on the same apple when they were hungry. The crows are thrifty and will not peck on a new apple unless its previous choice is hollowed or had fallen.

BE HAPPY: The sparrows and blue tits enjoy themselves in all seasons. They entertained us with their chirpy tunes. The song thrushes lovely melodies were music from heaven. All the birds that share our backyard are free and happy. Rain or shine, cold or warm they always have something to sing about and enjoy themselves.

The future I want for myself is one modeled by these birds, a future of freedom and happiness. I hope you too will share this future with me. May peace for you and for me prevail on earth.

Beyond the Power of Money

(Original)

Melchior Tamisier-Fayard

(Age 12, U.S.A.)

To make a long story short: the economy is destroying humanity. Now, by destroying, I don't mean bombs and grenades, etc. I am talking about our sense of humanity. This world is based on money. If someone doesn't have money, they are put on the streets or cannot achieve much. And to whom do we owe this all? Money. I don't have a simple and easy solution but I would like to plant some seeds for reflection, hoping that some will grow.

Right now as I type people in Greece have developed their own type of currency and a barter system. Why this? Because they could not depend on their own economy and thus they developed their own unit of exchange. In fact, they ended up developing a new economic system that was more transparent and did not rely on banks or other intermediaries. I also like the fact that people help each other and decided to find creative ways of living when life is difficult and there is no money. Of course, one can say that if every country was starting a new system like the Greeks, we might end up with similar problems as today. Also money has been developed because trading systems were not sufficient. So what should we do? I can't say. I can only point out today's economy and its weaknesses. And one is how unfair it is. Now, you all say this is childish! The world is unfair! Yet, even being unfair, the world can still give chances but with today's economy, there are no chances! There is only the brutal truth of how money has become our life source. It is equal to water and food, if not even more important. Think how humans now depend on pieces of metal, scraps of paper and swipes of plastic cards in ATMs. Where will this get us? Nowhere I say!

Think of the Native Americans and other populations who lived close to nature. They knew the balance of life and death. They hunt, weaved, or crafted just enough for them to live and be happy. You did not have to work in an office all week long, dreaming of holidays, always too short. You did not have to try to get more money to buy more of this or that, accumulating "stuff"! Some philosophers, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, have developed similar thoughts.

Rousseau was very critical of society and money. He argued that money has corrupted humanity in creating inequality. He opposed this state of corruption with what he called the "natural state". When Rousseau talked about the natural state he referred to something similar to my Native Americans example: a period where people lived from fruit gathering and hunting, and even doing a little bit of farming, getting what they needed and no more.

I can imagine you nodding and thinking, "What a young utopist! Does he want to go back to the Cave men? Would he want to live with no electricity, no iPod, and no computer to surf the Internet?" I can imagine you but you are wrong as this is not what I am saying: the future I am dreaming of is not a world where we would all be hunting and picking up fruits from the trees, although I personally like the countryside. The world I am thinking of is a transparent and fairer world.

Why couldn't we live in a fairer and more transparent world? Let's go back to the example of Greece and how Greeks decided to react by developing a barter system. Let's also think of Rousseau's analysis showing the negative role of money. Money introduced inequalities by allowing some people to produce extra things they did not need, in order to get more money. Then banks came in and people started leaving their money in the banks giving power to the bankers and the economists. The people of Greece felt that they had no power and that they were like puppets in the hands of bankers and economists. Instead of being angry, they decided to design their own life where the result of their work was transparent and allowed them to have access to the things they needed – food, babysitting, classes, etc. They showed us a way, maybe not the best one, probably not the only one, to start thinking differently and make things more transparent. This is what I would like the future to look like: a world where people feel they have their word to say and where money is not the ruler.

Creating the Future We Want

(Original in Japanese)

Riku Kinoshita

(Age 14, Japan)

Ichikawa Junior High School, Chiba

We don't know the future. We don't know what will happen in one hour, tomorrow, or next year. Even if you have something planned, you don't know if you will be able to carry it out. You might be involved in some kind of disaster, or on the other hand, you might have some sudden great success. For better or worse, the future stretches out with infinite possibilities. Without a doubt, all of us would like to create a 'good future.' Then, how do we go about creating this 'good future'?

When I hear the phrase 'good future,' the words 'peace' and 'environment' come to mind. But I feel that the most important word for creating a good future—the future we want—is 'happiness.'

Naturally, each person has a different definition of happiness. For some people, happiness might mean economic wealth, while for others, it might mean a high standard of public safety. But for poor and disadvantaged people, it seems like happiness might simply mean being able to go on living at a basic level.

In that case, however, the future will likely be no different from the present. At present, we can say that the world is filled with conflict, poverty, hunger, discrimination, and environmental destruction. Under these conditions, even if some people are happy, others may not be happy.

To realize 'the future we want,' we need to create a society where all of the world's seven billion people can think, "I am happy"—a society where we can work together to make a brighter future for everyone on earth, even for those who have given up hope for their society and environment. To make this a reality, each and every person needs to be aware of their 'right to the pursuit of happiness,' which our predecessors worked hard to obtain. There are

still countries where people are not even allowed to be aware of that right. The people in those countries need to work together with their neighboring countries to gain that right for themselves. However, there should be no bloodshed. Through dialogue, the people of the world can come to accept one another. To accept others is to recognize our own weaknesses. As all people become aware of their weaknesses, we will be able to abolish nuclear weapons, end discrimination, and resolve environmental and economic problems. Then, I think we will begin to see the future we want.

There are many languages spoken in the world. But all people can sing "La, la, la" with a certain tune. My idea is to have all seven billion people sing "La, la, la," and make recordings and compile them together, then present them to the whole world. Even in places where the infrastructure is poor, people would come out, build what is needed, and gather together to sing in chorus and record it. Then, we could make a 'seven billion person chorus.'

When people sing, they feel some emotion, and they put it into their song. Even the meaningless phrase "La, la, la," when it is sung, can carry hopeful feelings of happiness and joy, or it can carry hopeless feelings of sadness, anger, and hatred. The meaning changes depending on the person. Therefore, the 'seven billion person chorus' might sound rather chaotic.

When we sing our happiness to each other that happiness is amplified, and when we share our sadness, it is diminished. Therefore, within that chaotic song, we will amplify the happiness seven billion times, and diminish the sadness to one seven billionth, and we will accept all of these feelings. This is the purpose of this plan. This plan cannot be realized if the world cannot communicate. Therefore, when this plan is realized, we can say that the peaceful future we wish for has been realized.

For as long as we human beings are living, sadness will not disappear. But everyone can still feel happiness. I am sure we can create a happy society and a happy future, where we can share our songs and our feelings. In order to fulfill this dream, we need to constantly think of and seek happiness for all people on earth. Let us all work together to make this dream a reality.

Creating the Future We Want (Original in Japanese)

Eriko Onuki

(Age 15, Japan)

Ichikawa Junior High School, Chiba

In our present world, many countries are at odds with one another. As human beings living on earth, we are like pilots of the Earth. We are responsible for the lives of a great many animals. And yet, we do nothing but wage war and produce tools to hurt each other. Originally, the earth is supposed to be our first priority.

With this in mind, I would like to see a world that is all one country—a world where we can go anywhere without a passport. We would be able to communicate with each other, there would be no war, and peace and public order would prevail. Because we would all be one country, there would be no need to think about gains and losses. We could use resources effectively, and it would be possible to operate industries in the most suitable environments, without being restricted by national boundaries. This would help to solve environmental problems, and would also help to prevent resources from being depleted. It would also be unnecessary to build up the military in case of disputes with other countries. This energy could be put to more constructive uses that would benefit the earth as a whole.

However, we could not create such an ideal country instantly. One important reason for this is our 'mental walls'-our discriminatory views of people from other countries. People's way of thinking cannot be changed so easily, not even by force of law.

I believe that education is essential for breaking down our mental walls. Discriminatory views are naturally passed down from parents to children, through their speech and their attitude. Children should be educated at a very young age, before discriminatory views take shape. One possible method is to make classrooms representative of the world's peoples. In a classroom of forty students, eight would be Chinese, seven Indian, two American, one Indonesian, and 0.8 Japanese. The ethnicities of teachers would also be distributed similarly. Then, students

would gain a global sense of ethics and values, as well as the knowledge needed for good management of the earth. In this kind of classroom, children would never learn to feel awkward toward people of other nationalities, and they would not develop discriminatory views. They would grow up as global human beings, able to easily accept the cultures of other countries.

Adults, too, would need a transformation in consciousness to become 'citizens of Earth.' I think the reason why most people today think only of their own country is that there are too many people who do not realize that the Earth is one of a kind, and that human beings have to coexist with all the other living things on earth. It is not so easy to change the minds of adults, but even still, I think that all people should learn the knowledge they need to become 'citizens of Earth.' If all human beings learn about the present state of Earth and what they need to do as its citizens, perhaps a transformation in consciousness can be achieved. In time, the day will come when people naturally put the interests of the planet before anything else.

In Japan's Warring States period, many small states fought with each other in a struggle to control territory. But today, Japan is united, and there is no one who thinks of themselves as a person from Musashi or Shimousa. While retaining the unique cultures of our different regions, we all identify as Japanese people.

The world today is much like Japan in its Warring States period, with countries at odds over their own interests. The time has come for the whole world to unite, and for us to embrace a shared identity as citizens of Earth. And just as different regions of Japan still retain their local color, becoming citizens of Earth does not mean that we have to lose our various cultures. Even while maintaining our own customs and cultures, I believe that the people of the world can be united in consciousness.

The Earth is but one tiny planet in the universe. How foolish it is for us to fight with each other on this tiny planet!

If we look back on human history, our awareness of 'the world' has expanded from the village to the universe. Similarly, our sense of belonging should not extend only from our family to our country, but should expand to include the whole world. Perhaps we will enter an era when we naturally think of the Earth in relation to the rest of the universe. We are the crew of the single

ship called Earth, and this is why it is absolutely vital that we work together as one body, with a shared consciousness as 'citizens of Earth.' This, I feel, will lead to the future we want.

Making Society A Home: My Activities in Support of the Homeless

(Original in Japanese)

Kyoko Takeuchi

(Age 17, Japan)

Shôkei Gakuin High School, Miyagi

The society that we live in faces all kinds of different issues. By stopping to examine those problems that we usually overlook, I think we can better see the true nature of our society. If we ignore these issues, it seems, we cannot talk about 'the future we want.'

Since I was very young, I have been involved with a group that distributes food to homeless people. We provide hot meals to people living on the streets, with the wish that it will help to give them hope in their lives. One by one, we ask them, "How are you doing?" and we convey to them the message: "You are not alone."

In Sendai City, where I live, there are estimated to be about 120 homeless people. Every day, they face dangers like freezing to death, dying without anyone knowing, and being assaulted by youth. They became homeless in various ways—by losing their job due to the economic recession, or by damaging their health under harsh working conditions. With no one close to them to give them help, they eventually could no longer pay their rent and had no choice but to live on the street. Due to their economic situation, they often hold multiple debts, and in many cases, out of despair, they fall into a dependence on alcohol or drugs. What they all have in common is that they have lost the people and places that supported them—in other words, they literally are 'without a home.'

However, it was not easy to share with my peers the issues around homelessness in our society. I realized that the indifference and the prejudicial views toward homeless people—that they are 'dirty' or 'scary,' they 'like living that way,' they 'have nothing to do with me,' and so on—are more deep-seated than I imagined. In addition, I heard many people argue that homeless people are responsible for their situation—that they didn't work hard enough, or

they couldn't adapt to society. Day after day, I anguished over how to get people to face this problem of modern society.

During that time, the Great Tohoku Earthquake of March 11 took place. We experienced a violent trembling like nothing we had ever felt before, and instantly we were cut off from food and utilities. The homeless support group that I work with immediately began distributing food to people in the region. Since my school was closed, I also joined in this work. The aftershocks continued, the volunteers were themselves all affected by the earthquake, and there were limited amounts of food and fuel. Despite this, we went to the areas around our office, to city parks, and to evacuation centers in areas struck by the tsunami, and over the course of one month we were able to provide four thousand people with some ten thousand meals. During that time, many of the volunteers were homeless people who up until then had been the ones taking assistance. Despite concerns, supplies and materials kept coming to us from both inside and outside the country, so we never had a shortage of anything.

Through my experience after the earthquake, I learned that even amidst harsh conditions, supporting and encouraging each other gives people hope to go on living. The wall between assisting and being assisted was broken down, and we were all members of the same society, sharing the same vulnerability and scarcity. The society I had envisioned, where we all live together, became reality for a brief time.

I felt that by sharing my experience with many people, I would help to eliminate the prejudice and indifference toward homelessness, and to get people to engage with others and work together to build a better society. Whenever I have the opportunity, I give presentations at my school, or at joint seminars or exchange meetings with other schools, and I hope to continue to do so in the future.

Homelessness is something that is never far removed from us. This is because the issue of homelessness is nothing more than a problem with the way people relate to each other in modern society. To solve the problem of homelessness, we need to be the ones to create a society that is a 'home.' Together, let us clear the way for a future society where everyone can live with peace of mind, where everyone can start over again and again, where no one is disregarded or ignored, and where each of us can live our life the way we wish.

Great Expectation for the Educated Generation

(Original)

Anistya Rachmawati
(Age 23, Indonesia)

What are we without education? Could we feel what we feel now without it? Education plays a crucial role for us to get to live in this modern era now. We just can learn that with the power of knowledge, a country used to be left behind can be a very powerful country, but by ignoring it, that country can only wait for its decline. To see such cases, we just can learn from the past, e.g. the rise and the fall of Romans and Moslem civilization. With education, they created great countries with formidable civilization. People from all over the world could only awe their elevated society and only wished that someday they would be like them. But once they neglected education, destruction was ahead of them. Therefore, seize the advantages it brings for the society welfare, so that we can create and develop many inventions for the better future of human race as Bacon says "Knowledge is Power."

As I am a teacher, the thing called education really concerns me, especially when I notice that to get this is not that simple in my country. Education seems like a luxurious thing. One should have large amount of money to be able to get the standard education and for those who do not, they could only just get it as much money as they have. Could you imagine for the penniless students, they study under the broken roof and in very small and dirty rooms, or even in the tunnel, sometimes each class is only separated by a blackboard you can hear what other people in the next class say? Even worse many children have to give up school at early ages since their parents cannot afford the tuition. As the effect, they prefer to find money on their own and end up as beggars. How do you expect them to dream high if their dreams are even limited by their economy?

I wish that I could be an Education Minister, which I believe is one of the ways to realize my dreams. I really want our country budget is allocated more on education so the people all over the country can have affordable school tuition with complete facilities they require, and even provide the fully funded scholarship for the best students which will increase the competition

atmosphere among students. I really want all people to get the best education equally regardless of their family background at least until they are graduated from a university. For I believe that it is the country that will be the consumer of the educated people and not the parents, paying the tuition, since they can contribute more to develop their country.

However, as the country has helped them, they also have to help the country by contributing more to the society. I want all graduates of every university have to conduct a social service at least for two years before they are seeking for a job. While some countries oblige their people to do conscription to defend the country, I will do the same through education. The country will pay for their living expense, but they have to teach students in the particular area, i.e. where the people still live under poverty line and are illiterate, and have to help the local government to develop the area. For this kind of service, they will learn at least two things. First, since they will teach and manage students, it will become an experience for them in managing people. Second, since they will see and feel directly the live of poor people, they will embrace the poor instead of neglecting or manipulating them. Thus, it can reduce the corruption tendency for the subsequent generation and can increase their awareness in developing the country through the people.

Moreover, if the graduates are able to help the local government to develop the city by sharing knowledge and creating something useful, the people will feel the benefit and it can make them realize how great it is to have education and be able to develop their own city. Besides, it can help them to reach their future and have a high dream because they will see the model from the graduates. People will never notice that a job is very appealing and promising until they see the model.

Those are my dreams for the future. Actually it is not something that I can contribute for the whole world, but it is something that I want my country to have since without my country being better, I just cannot see where my world will lead me as my world starts and spins here. As I really want someday my country will be one of the respected, influential, and powerful countries in the world, and I believe we can start from the basic thing which is education.

A "Sane" Africa—My Dream (Original)

Shadrack Osei Frimpong
(Age 20, Ghana <Living in U.S.A.>)
University of Pennsylvania

"His vital organs have stopped functioning, but for now, he's sedated. Why was he drinking that much?" demanded the physician. As he spoke, I noticed the color draining from my mother's face. This was terrible news about her only living brother.

On the other side of the hospital through the louver blades and across the consulting room, I could see Uncle William. There he lay in an upright hospital bed, positioned just the way he slept on the swing back home. It was his second week in a coma, a coma that probably scored a seven on the Glasgow Coma Scale. My heart was broken. Where was the virile Uncle Willie who went fishing with me and would catch crabs for me every day on his return from the farm? I couldn't hold my tears back when the doctor told us that since my poor family couldn't afford the surgery, we would have to watch helplessly as his health worsens each passing day. My uncle's drinking habit had cost him valuable months of treatment against a life threatening brain disease. Unfortunately, he lost the battle and died at sunset on December 23, 2000. Although his loss was heartbreaking, I feel his presence every time I advise people about the risks of excessive drinking and its dire neurological effects. This is the lesson of care for human health that I try to practice today.

In my volunteer work at Matthew Walker Clinic over the past three months, I was excited to learn that the clinic provided free quality medical services to many of the economically-disadvantaged of Nashville. Sadly, I have had to accept the reality that there is no such health center in Ghana to meet the medical needs of similar underserved health populations. Just like my deceased uncle, thousands of lives are lost every year through brain disease cases. While the effort of the Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation (KBNF) to establish a neuroscience center in Ghana is laudable, the center cannot singly meet the neurological needs of over thirty million people. With only four neurosurgeons and two neurologists in the

country, how quickly can thousands of patients be attended to? Even if rural settlers can afford treatment, how easily can they access the center? My heart has been aching for answers to these questions and I have since resolved to help in eliminating financial barriers to healthcare in Ghana and Africa as a whole.

It is this resolution that led me to establish the African Neuroscience Initiative (A.N.I). Together with other African students who are studying in the U.S, A.N.I is currently raising funds on several college campuses to provide assistance (in cash or in kind) to patients at Ghana's major hospitals who are suffering from neurological disorders. In the long term, it is our goal to help in the building of the first neurological research institute in Sub-Saharan Africa through the creation of partnerships with organizations such as KBNF. Additionally, A.N.I seeks to partner with micro-finance organizations in the future, to provide loans with low interest rates to low--income patients. This way, we believe most, if not all, families in Africa will have the means to afford treatment. Governments will then be able to shift focus from poverty reduction to building neuroscience centers to train more minds to meet the pressing need of neurologists and neurosurgeons in their respective countries.

Even as I write this essay, we are using social networks such as Facebook and Twitter to publicize a competition that the Korle-Bu Neuroscience Foundation has entered, in a bid to obtain funding to progress neurosurgery in Africa, specifically in Ghana. If they win, they plan to use telesimulation, connecting two remote NeuroTouch simulators via Skype, such that local medical personnel in Ghana can interactively train with experienced Canadian surgeons. In a country where there is approximately one neurologist for twelve million people, one neurosurgeon for 2.7 million people and a dire lack of equipment and trained personnel, I firmly believe that this initiative will help to enhance the state of neurological care.

Sad as the realization is, the issue of poor neurological care has not been given much attention by many African countries as well as international bodies. It was therefore a great joy for me when in March this year; I was selected by former President Bill Clinton's Global Initiative (CGI) program to share with others, the current state of neuroscience in Sub-Saharan Africa. As an aspiring neurosurgeon, I envision an Africa where neurological care is accessible to all residents and I hope to someday put the smiles back on the faces of critically ill patients, and help them reclaim their former lives. I will always keep my uncle in mind as I help others recover from diseases similar to the one that caused his death.

The Facility I Want to Create

(Original in Japanese)

Miyuki Nogi

(Age 20, Japan)

Sendai University, Miyagi

I have two older brothers who are disabled. The older one has a slight mental disability, and the younger one is both mentally disabled and autistic. In their daily lives, they have often experienced prejudice and discrimination, and sometimes complete rejection. And when I was in elementary school, I was teased about my brothers. Having grown up in these circumstances, I decided to go to university and major in education and self-reliance support for people with disabilities. In the course of my studies, I began to reflect on the current state of facilities for disabled people, and the kind of facility that I would like to see.

In particular, what I have in mind is a facility for people who are mentally disabled and for people who have multiple disabilities. Especially in the latter case, there are very few establishments that accept them. In addition, the various facilities that presently exist for disabled people—job assistance centers to encourage self-reliance, treatment and education centers, group homes where they can live on their own, and daytime care facilities—are all separate entities. I am envisioning a facility that integrates all four of these functions. Whatever kind of disability a person has, the facility would be able to support their efforts toward self-reliance, and also to support their family. Furthermore, in order to end prejudice and discrimination, the facility would allow people with disabilities to be integrated with the local community. This is the kind of facility that I want to create, and it would fulfill the three requirements outlined below.

The first requirement for my facility is that it can help each disabled person deal with their unique situation. Depending on the particular nature of their disability, a person may feel panicked at times, or may require special assistance. Care for such disabilities takes time and effort, and that is why people like my second brother are not accepted at most establishments.

I know it is difficult to offer appropriate support for all kinds of disabilities without turning anyone away. However, it is essential that my facility find a way to do this.

Secondly, my facility would provide a space where more disabled people and non-disabled people can come in contact, in order to increase people's understanding about different kinds of disabilities. Most non-disabled people do not have much interest in people with disabilities. One reason for this, I think, is that we do not learn about disabilities at any stage in our schooling. This is why I want my facility to provide a space where people can interact and learn together. I want to plan casual drop-in events to attract people who otherwise would not be interested in meeting people with disabilities.

Thirdly, my facility would be able to support both disabled people and their families. For people with a severe disability or multiple disabilities, special needs education is often not sufficient to help them become self-reliant. As I mentioned earlier, each disabled person has their own particular characteristics, and these are often linked to hidden talents and abilities. At present, it seems that these unique traits are not being allowed to blossom. And for families, I would like to increase the awareness of social service programs. Up to now, families have not been informed enough about these programs, and thus they do not make use of them even though they are legally entitled to do so. For this reason, I would like to have the government offer programs that are easier to utilize, and I feel that we need to train skilled people who are capable of explaining the programs in a way that is easy to understand. In this way, I want to create a place where people can come to discuss questions and concerns that they cannot discuss with anyone else.

This is still just an abstract idea, and I realize that it will be difficult to see it take shape. But no matter how long it takes, I have my sights set on seeing it through, and I will work hard to make it a reality. In order to attain my goal, after graduating university I am planning to gain practical experience at a special-needs school or a facility for people with disabilities, and work toward becoming a certified social worker. Unless someone achieves what I think is needed—even if it means going against national policies—it will be hard to create happiness and a good future for disabled people. That is why I feel so strongly about building the kind of facility that I envision—one where disabled people and non-disabled people alike can come together and become happy. No matter what kind of disability a person has, they should be able to live together in harmony with non-disabled people who do not discriminate against or reject them, but understand them. They should be able to work toward self-reliance in their

own individual way. I believe that fulfilling these goals will lead to a society in which everyone can live a happy life.

A World Without States

(Original)

Andhyta Firselly Utami

(Age 20, Indonesia)

Universitas Indonesia

In a planet where opinions are openly contested—although not necessarily valued—everyone appears to disagree upon everything: environmentalists refuse the expansion of industry, liberalists oppose regulated markets, and technocrats always opt for continuous progress above other options. Deep inside, these people have an ideal picture about the future they want to live in and, despite the apparent dissimilarities, all of them are united by a commitment to the quest of accomplishing their visions.

I, too, have my own aspiration about how a perfect world should be.

For one thing, power tends to corrupt. The idea of social contract where abundant control is 'voluntarily' given by the society to a group of chosen individuals, therefore, has its intrinsic gravitation towards fraudulence. In many parts of the planet, this nature materializes in the form of strong soldiers killing innocent people for an invisible cause called 'nationalism', terrible misconduct use of budget that actually belongs to poor people, as well as limited freedom of speech over various means, justified merely by the paranoia of government officials. The most powerful ones ironically claim that they strive towards obtaining international peace when the only tools they use are guns and grenades.

The good news is, these conditions are not given; they are rather the products of a concept invented by the emperors and kings of Europe almost four centuries ago. Like any other invention, I believe that 'nationstate' also has its expiration date. Today, this process is further accelerated by globalization and technology, both of which have been escorting the global civil society to be stronger than ever. Just in the last few decades, transnational solidarity and tolerance have proven itself to be so powerful it can change the decisions taken by world leaders. It is therefore possible that in less than a hundred years, states' dominance will be

replaced by a network of restless efforts and voices of the people. When the time comes, we might also overhaul the current system and recreate the foundation of this planet—because human beings deserve a better future, a completely different world from what we have now.

In that world, the only spoken language will be the language of unity. The disappearance of the word 'nationality' will be accompanied by the extinction of 'gender', 'race', 'class', as well as 'ethnicity'. All of them will no longer be printed in dictionaries of any tongue, replaced by vocabularies of equality and justice. As the consequence, the level of misunderstandings between humans will greatly decrease.

In that world, the only visa required will be your birth certificate. Every newborn baby will be a citizen of the world, and one day he/she will settle down in a territory that needs him/her the most, regardless their blood relation. No one will be able to prohibit any individual from travelling and experiencing the journey of their life for one-sided political grounds.

In that world, the only valid money will be in the currency of love. When power is no longer a transactional commodity, it should be distributed equally to the people who need it. 'Empowerment' will become the main jargon of the next generation's civilization, as they realize that leaving behind marginalized groups will equal the beginning of their own devastating loss. The economy will not be run under forced egalitarianism, but rather constructed upon the essential awareness that—at the very least—one shall not become a burden to the others.

In that world, the only prevailing religion will be humanity. Yes, everyone will still hold to their faith in different gods and rituals, but they all perceive one another as one big family. While safeguarding an even richer diversity of beliefs, conscience will speak louder than man-interpreted sacred texts, and mortals will be able to value life more than ever before. Hatred and wars will be kept in museums forever, visited by people only to remind themselves about the horrendous history mankind once had and shall never be repeated.

In that world, there will be no states. There are only I, you, and billions of people who give up the identity that our governments and grandparents once dictated us to have. There will only be a peaceful planet filled with men and women who regard differences as something to be grateful of, and impartial justice as their non-negotiable principle.