

2014 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 151

No. of entries: 13,635 (Children's category: 4,406 / Youth category: 9,229)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *My Role as a Citizen of the Earth*
Kirill Mayanskiy (Age 13, Belarus)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *A Global Standard for All Humanity*
Rina Takahashi (Age 17, Japan)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *The 5 Fingers - A lesson in harmony*
Kehkashan Basu
(Age 14, United Arab Emirates)
- *My role as a Citizen of Earth – Itadakimasu*
Nanae Yamada (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Change Yourself to Change the World*
Anjali Sarker (Age 23, Bangladesh)
- *Freedom through Music*
Dai Zhang (Age 23, U.S.A.)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- Aaron Michel J. Hernandez
(Age 9, Philippines)
- Chisaki Yamaguchi (Age 14, Japan)
- Emy Thomas (Age 14 India)
- Dontsova Arina (Age 14, Pakistan)
- Wakaba Tsurunaga (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (5 entrants)

- Tae Keun Kim
(Age 17, Korea<Living in U.S.A.>)
- Emily Narbey (Age 18, New Zealand)
- Ana Elizabeth Espinosa Mómox
(Age 19, Mexico)
- Umar Al Faruq (Age 20, Indonesia)
- Mana Yamaguchi (Age 21, Japan)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Tetsuto Ryu
(Age 7, Japan & Korea <Living in Japan>)
- Omshiyamsankar Jeevanantham
(Age 8, Sri Lanka)
- Takuma Tan
(Age 8, Japan <Living in Ghana>)

Youth category (25 entrants)

- Dianys Camila Cardozo Ortiz
(Age 15, Colombia)
- Viktoriya Shvager (Age 15, Ukraine)
- Yoshinao Asanuma (Age 15, Japan)
- Keertana Subramani
(Age 16, United Arab Emirates)

- Hussain Farish Ismail (Age 9, Maldives)
- Nanami Meyer
(Age 9, Switzerland <Living in Germany>)
- Pema Tashi (Age 9, Bhutan)
- Annie Zacilha Martínez González
(Age 10, Mexico)
- Amey Maheshwari (Age 11, India)
- Prerana Pai (Age 11, India
<Living in United Arab Emirates>)
- Arpharwan Wattanananta (Age 12, Thailand)
- Markella Aggeli (Age 12, Greece)
- Yasmin Lin
(Age 12, USA <Living in Taiwan of China>)
- Akira Ito (Age 13, Japan)
- Asaki Naito (Age 13, Japan)
- Jostein T. Enal (Age 13, Philippines)
- Ranran Sekimoto (Age 13, Japan)
- Reina Matsuda (Age 13, Japan)
- Asahi Doi (Age 14, Japan)
- Hanna Binti Norizan (Age 14, Malaysia)
- Ifeanyi Okeke (Age 14, Nigeria)
- Nana Okano (Age 14, Japan)
- Neori Yasumaru (Age 14, Japan)
- Petr Biryukov (Age 14, Belarus)
- Yana Arhipenko (Age 14, Belarus)
- Aoi Tanaka (Age 15, Japan)
- Yuuka Tsuchida (Age 16, Japan)
- Aaron Urzúa (Age 17, Chile)
- Ene Angela Abba (Age 17, Nigeria)
- Fernando Javier Rodriguez Guzman
(Age 17, Mexico)
- Ngawang Gyeltshen (Age 17, Bhutan)
- Win Ipatas (Age 17, Papua New Guinea)
- Yaame Iseki (Age 17, Japan)
- Nick Chung Kah Kin (Age 18, Malaysia)
- Denis Ignas (Age 19, Tanzania)
- Isabel Cristina Escaño Daez
(Age 20, Philippines)
- Niyungeko Floriane
(Age 20, Burundi <Living in Rwanda>)
- Ryan Gibbons (Age 20, Ireland)
- Cara Marie Fernandes (Age 21, India)
- Andrew Leon Hanna (Age 22, U.S.A.)
- Lynnet Onyango (Age 22, Kenya)
- Ngoc-Anh Cao
(Age 23, Vietnam <Living in U.S.A.>)
- Blazhka Krasteva Dimitorva
(Age 24, Bulgaria)
- Wallace Chwala (Age 24, Kenya)
- Kiwani Dolean (Age 25, Italy)
- Sebashitsi Olga (Age 25, Rwanda)
- Susana Rodríguez Cruces (Age 25, Mexico)

Best School Award (1 school)

- Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School (Japan)

School Incentive Award (34 schools)

- Atomi Gakuen Junior High School, Tokyo
(Japan)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday
School, Illinois (U.S.A.)
- Escuela Preparatoria Regional de Tequila,
Módulo Magdalena, Universidad de
Guadalajara (Mexico)
- Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
(México)
- Escuela Preparatoria No. 8, Universidad de
Guadalajara (Mexico)
- Fuji Sacred Heart, Shizuoka (Japan)

- Ghana Japanese Children's School, Accra (Ghana)
- Ibaraki Prefectural Koga Secondary School (Japan)
- Ikubunkan Global High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Japanese School of Toledo, Ohio (U.S.A.)
- Japaniche Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)
- Kokushikan Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)
- Mie Prefectural Ueno Senior High School (Japan)
- Okazaki Junior High School affiliated to Aichi University of Education (Japan)
- P.E.C.H.S. Girls' School (Pakistan)
- Sanno Junior High School of Akita City, Akita (Japan)
- Senzoku Gakuen High School, Kanagawa (Japan)
- Sugiyama Jogakuen University Affiliated Primary School, Aichi (Japan)
- University of Tsukuba Senior High School at Sakado, Saitama (Japan)
- Hokkaido Obihiro Sanjo High School (Japan)
- Ichikawa Junior High School, Chiba (Japan)
- Inagi The Fourth Junior High School of Inagi City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee (U.S.A.)
- Kinki University Wakayama Junior High School (Japan)
- Kokugojuku KURU, Tokyo (Japan)
- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
- North View Secondary School (Singapore)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Saint Mary's International School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Sanonihondaigaku Secondary School, Tochigi (Japan)
- Showa Women's University Junior-Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Wakayama Prefectural Kushimoto-koza High School Koza Campus (Japan)
- Waseda Shibuya Senior High School (Singapore)

My Role as a Citizen of the Earth

(Original)

Kirill Mayanskiy

(Age 13, Belarus)

Gymnasium No.6 Grodno, Grodno

Practically all the planets of our Solar system have noble names of powerful gods - Mars, Venus, Jupiter. And although our modestly named Earth is insignificant in size, it has one advantage which needs no emphasizing. It is our life. Our planet has been working for a long time creating the things that are common to us. It has been working at the creation of seas and oceans, lakes, rivers and a man - Homo sapiens. People are unique, clever and talented. What for has the nature awarded us mental abilities, feelings, thinking? I don't think it was done in order to destroy rare species of flora and fauna and pollute the environment surrounding us! The sun and the sky is for all of us and it does not matter where you live - in Belarus, in France, in Japan or in Africa. But all people will die, if the arctic ozone hole appears. When I start thinking about these issues, my consciousness is not limited only to my country. I am scared to watch war, grief in the eyes of children, mothers and fathers that is shown on TV. I instantly think who will help them, stare at the TV screen, visualize the streets where children shout and people are killed. I am part and part in everything that happens on our planet.



As a result of ecological disasters and environmental holocausts great areas of the earth's territory became contaminated with radioactive particles. Accidents at Radiation Plants present the greatest danger.

Hiroshima nuclear attack in 1945 caused a humanitarian catastrophe as well as an ecological disaster. According to the surveys conducted by the analysts the death rate had exceeded 98 000 people by 1980. It continues to levy its terrible tribute in the form of cancer tumors and an

increased radiation level, depopulating our planet. It is terrible to watch the Chronicle of the Events.

But we have not stopped here. The Three Mile Island accident occurred in 1979 due to the mechanical failures which were compounded by the initial failure of plant operators to recognize the situation.

In addition to all those problems, the fall-out of tons of radioactive dust that followed the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in April, 1986, made 18 per cent of the Belarusian territory unsuitable for habitation and agricultural activity. Further there was a catastrophic failure at the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant in 2011.

A person has knowledge and technology to enjoy a high and safe standard of living. But our politicians do not understand the fact that every person is a part of the single whole - the planet Earth. Having destroyed all around, people will disappear similarly to the dinosaurs that disappeared about 65 million years ago.

Unfortunately, due to the alternation of generations, terrible pages of history are erased from people's memory. We do not manage to experience the harmful effects of the ecological catastrophe that take millions of human lives.

I am totally against the Nuclear Weapon Tests which can turn our green planet into an uninhabited desert. People have created too many weapons for endless killing and destruction.

But I want to believe that we are able to realize that the humankind is on the razor's edge of the ecological catastrophe. We have a chance to learn how to live in symbiosis with our "green house".

It is impossible to forget that only human beings are capable of reason and it means that each of us must be filled with the sense of responsibility and concern for everything that surrounds us. If you want to change the world you should change your thinking, your concept of it. I was born on the planet Earth. It means that I am its citizen. I am proud of the achievements of people that benefit our planet and all living creatures.

I am ready to touch another person's pain with the help of my heart, I am ready to help people and I am interested in the problems and their causes. If each person creates something good we will be able to cure our Earth. We must do it, irrespective of age.

A Global Standard for All Humanity (Original in Japanese)

Rina Takahashi

(Age 17, Japan)

Toyo Eiwa High School, Tokyo

Today, the world we live in is filled with problems of a global scale—competition for resources, religious confrontation, regional disparities, and so on. The outcome of these conflicts is often war. Speaking honestly, it seems to me that parties competing for resources could just divide them evenly, and I don't really understand why people get into disputes over religion. However, I think this way because I live in the peaceful nation of Japan, and I believe that the different ways of thinking that prevail in different countries form the key to determining the future state of the world.



Take the example of religion. The world's three biggest religions are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, and there is also Judaism, Hinduism, and numerous other religions. Yet, even within the same country, conflicts break out over religious differences, and in the worst cases people are persecuted for their religious beliefs. I think the cause of this is the attitude that one's own religion is superior, and that the whole world should believe in one's own faith.

What about in Japan? For as long as I have lived in Japan, I have not encountered any domestic religious conflicts. The majority of Japanese are probably Buddhist, but there are also many people who believe in Christianity, there are people who follow the traditional Shinto faith, and there are many people who don't believe in any particular faith. Even if there were Muslims or Jewish people living near us, we wouldn't mind or see them any differently. Perhaps if Japan's peaceful views on religion could spread to the world, people all over the world would start to think about religion in a calm, levelheaded way. I think one of Japan's strong points is that we don't reject what is unfamiliar to us, but rather, we accept it and adopt it. Japan should do more to export this flexible way of thinking to the rest of the world.

It is only reasonable that each country has its own unique way of thinking. If we blend these various ways of thinking together, we will create something that is common to the whole world, and by finding the common points of different religions (such as origins of words and representations of God), we will no longer think that other religions with which we have no connection are inferior to our own. A world where we understand each other's differences, and where all of us bear in mind that we have things in common and that everything is connected at its origin, is the kind of world I think humanity should be working to develop.

So, what can I do to help achieve this aim? I think what I can do is to become a 'world citizen'. What is a 'world citizen'? Is it someone who speaks many languages? Is it someone who knows what is going on in every corner of the world? Is it someone who actually works for international cooperation? My image of a world citizen is different. I think a world citizen is someone who can view everything on an equal basis. To view everything on an equal basis means that we do not make remarks based on our preconceptions, prejudices, extreme views, or what we have learned from a particular news source, but rather that we look at many statistics and speak from an impartial standpoint. To do this, we need to be able to throw out the biases of our own religion and ethnicity, and view each country's news media objectively.

These days, I am listening to radio stations from all over the world using a smartphone application. I feel at times that I am becoming aware of realities that are ignored in Japan, and that I am fully realizing how complex the world is. But even if our ethnicities and faiths may be different, because we were all born on this earth, there are definitely things that we have in common. Invariably we will reach the limits of our natural resources and technological development, but the development of our ideas can go on forever. As citizens of earth, I believe it is our role to gather information and news from many different points of view, so that we can bring everything together to create a common global standard for all humanity.

The 5 Fingers - A lesson in harmony

(Original)

Kehkashan Basu

(Age 14, United Arab Emirates)

Our planet is a wonderful and vibrant kaleidoscope of species which have evolved over the ages. The process of natural selection has ensured that our biodiversity has continued to flourish while maintaining a balance between the various forces of nature. Sustainability has been at the core of our being since the beginning of time when the three pillars of environment, society and economy thrived in mutual harmony. However, unbridled economic growth, uncontrolled depletion of resources in the name of progress, global conflicts and an exploding human population are combining into a deadly cocktail which is disturbing the natural balance of our planet and pushing us on an accelerated self-destruction path.

Our future is, quite often, what we make it. It is not a matter of chance – it is a matter of our choice. The global population has crossed 7 billion and the strain on natural resources is increasing by the day. Millions die of hunger while one-third of the world's food production rots in warehouses or is lost in transit. The issue here is not, therefore, of resources but of utilization. This resource constraint is entirely man-made and thus the onus lies with us to be more proactive and less self-centered. Our forefathers got it right when they said that "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children". This philosophy should be at the core of our developmental agenda. We cannot be a citizen of Earth if we live only for our own self. We tout ourselves as the "superior" species and its time we demonstrated this in actions and not just words. The animal kingdom is full of examples of community living – an elephant herd sticks together through thick & thin and this has not changed for generations. Yet, for us humans, the reverse seems to be the current trend where progress is measured by the number of our fellow beings we have left behind. This race for self-enhancement must be replaced by one of empathy and social harmony if we are to move towards a sustainable future.

A story my grandmother narrated long ago comes to mind. She was explaining to me that our world is full of different cultures and ethnicity. Seeing the bewildered look on my two year old face, she asked me to show my hand. She spread my fingers palm outwards and said each finger was differently sized but each was equally indispensable. All five fingers together made up a functional hand. The same applied to our planet. The five continents were the five fingers – each of varying size and strength. Individually they were useless even to hold a pencil, but when connected could perform amazing things. So it was with the world we live in – our strength lay in our diversity. Wars and conflicts decimate our fingers leaving us mutated and incomplete. My role as a global citizen would essentially be to imbibe the simple philosophy underlying my grandmother's story about the human hand. Its symbolism of coexistence in harmony must be our mantra for the future. A global citizen is one who lives for others.

In order to turn back the clock on our current state of self-destruction, the definition of progress needs to be reassessed and it needs to begin in schools. Children must not to be egged to outperform others, rather the focus should be on self-development. Economic constraints are forcing societies to disintegrate as human migration has taken on astronomical proportions. This breakdown of the social fabric is causing a delinkage from our roots which needs to be rectified without delay. In order to value others, we must first understand our own true value. Only then can we overcome our insecurity and learn to think about others.

As a global citizen I need to see myself in others – only then can I truly fulfil my role as a responsible resident of this planet. Let us all learn from Khalil Gibran who said:

"When I stood a clear mirror before you,
you gazed into me and saw your image.

Then you said, "I love you."
But in truth you loved yourself in me."

My role as a Citizen of Earth - Itadakimasu

(Original)

Nanae Yamada

(Age 14, Japan)

Gunma Kokusai Academy

"Itadakimasu,"— Japanese people say this every time before they eat as one of their customs. "Itadaku" in "Itadakimasu" is a modest and respectful way to say "get" or "take" in Japanese. "Itadakimasu" comes from the meaning of "I will take your life for my life". This was what my grandmother taught me when I was little. People live their lives by getting blessings from nature. In other words, we take away the lives of animals and plants in order to live. Therefore, "Itadakimasu" is to show gratitude to the sacrificed lives and the great nature that sustains humans. I think my role as a citizen of earth is to keep the original meaning of "Itadakimasu" closely to my heart.

In Science class, I learned about the food chain. For example, grass is eaten by grasshoppers, grasshoppers eaten by mice, mice eaten by snakes, snakes eaten by hawks, and when a hawk is dead, it will be decomposed by fungi and become the nutrients for grass. Every living thing keeps on living while taking away other lives. Animals kill other animals for food. However, they won't over kill other animals. All living things take away other lives only to sustain their own for survival.

Nonetheless, there is one exception. This statement is not true for one particular group of living things. The exception is us, humans. 4,000,000,000t of food are produced each year. 30~50% of them, which means 1,200,000,000~2,000,000,000t of food are disposed. In other words, we throw away an abundance of sacrificed lives. If we were to waste them, we shouldn't have ended their lives in the first place. In Japan, about 1,200,000 cows were shipped in 2013, which means that the same number of cows were killed to be our food. Based on the fact that 30~50% of the food is disposed, the lives of 360,000~600,000 cows are wasted each year. Humans take away other lives, and then dump the excess nonchalantly.

Starvation is one of the serious problems we have. There are 40,000~50,000 people dying each day because of starvation, but it is not because there is not enough food in the world. In fact, the grains produced in a year can cover twice the amount of food for people in the whole world. The reason why some people are starved to death is not because there is not enough food, but because some people waste them. It is strange that people waste food whereas others have not enough. While one country is wasting a bunch of food, another country is suffering from food shortage.

When we interpret food as lives, wasting food is equal to taking away lives with no reason. These days, we can conveniently get food when we go to a store. We don't have to kill a life by ourselves, unlike the ancestors. Convenience has made us indifferent to the value of life. People forget that their lives are sustained by the sacrifices of other lives. Human population on the earth keeps increasing. Sooner or later, world-wide food shortage will happen depending on the explosive increase in population. It will be too late when many more are starved to death. Humans must stop wasting lives. We have to remember the moral of "I will take your life for my life" when we eat. This is the reason why I think my role as a citizen of earth is to live by showing respect and gratitude to the numerous lives on earth, being aware that I am living upon many sacrifices of lives. This can be a very small thing. But what if all 7 billion people on earth did the same? I am sure that the world will be a better place for every citizen of Earth. When all people knew how to treasure other lives, be it animals or plants or humans, there wouldn't be wars anymore. There wouldn't be discrimination anymore. There wouldn't be environmental destruction anymore. Most certainly, people don't have to die because of hunger. I hope, and I believe that this small thought of gratitude will change human attitude towards planet Earth one day.

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Change Yourself to Change the World

(Original)

Anjali Sarker
(Age 23, Bangladesh)

It was a hot summer afternoon in Dhaka. Hundreds of students were sitting in a school auditorium- attending a workshop titled “Earthquake: Things we need to know”. At the end the instructor asked, “Whose responsibility is it to implement what we have learnt today?” Everyone said in chorus, “Our responsibility”.

The instructor smiled and nodded in disagreement. “Not OUR- say it is MY responsibility,” he told us. “Do you know why people throw banana skins on the streets? They believe it’s the government’s duty to keep the streets clean. But do they make their own home dirty? Never! When we think it’s a shared responsibility, everyone waits for others to start. But if you believe it’s YOUR own responsibility, only then things will change.”

The students were surprised at the simplicity and gravity of his advice. I was surprised too. After that day 12 years have passed but I didn’t forget what I learnt- that it’s MY responsibility to take actions within my capacity and fix the problems around me. As a responsible citizen, I have to fulfill my duty first before pointing finger to others. If everyone waits for others to come forward and solve a problem, then nothing will be solved, ever! On the other hand, if someone takes the first step with courage, others will follow intuitively.

Since childhood my parents used to warn me how unsafe the streets and public places are for girls. When I grew up, I realized that not only in public space, women face harassment and violence even at home. Surprisingly most incidents of violence and harassment happen in front of others, may it be a crowd on the street or family members inside a house. The bystanders are often large in number and have enough power to save the victim; but they don't get involved. This makes the victim even weaker and gives the attacker enough confidence to do whatever he wants and ultimately get away with it.

As I learnt it's MY responsibility to take the first step, I started a small initiative to make my city a better and safer place. Through an online platform I encourage citizens to react responsibly if they see someone being harassed. Once they take a responsible step, like stopping the harasser or calling the police, they pin their stories on a map and share that on social media. Rather than advising all women not to go out or blaming all men for harassing girls, I take a positive approach by transforming bystanders into active, responsible citizens. Here, the core concept is redefining masculinity and promoting that real men react, not merely stand when they can help. The platform also gives women scope to express solidarity and fight for their rights.

Unfortunately, many people think youth should only study. Very often elders don't understand why I am doing this since it is not my job. They think government will take care of the citizens, policymakers will make laws, and police will make sure laws are implemented. Why am I getting involved? But my question is why youth will remain isolated from the reality? Why do people think youth do not have the power to bring change? It's easy to ignore the huge youth population across the world and lock them within classrooms and exam halls. But that's the biggest waste of human potential.

Every young person has enough potential to make a difference and contribute to his part of the bigger solution. When I was a teenage girl, I used to be extra cautious while walking on a crowded or a deserted street- both were equally dangerous. I knew no one would help if anyone tries to harass me. But I choose not to accept things as they are and now I am contributing to solve the problem at least partially, as much as I can. Many people want to change the world- but we often forget to change ourselves. I believe changing the world starts from changing one's own behavior. As a citizen of earth, my role is to change myself first, then help others to do so. If everyone changes himself, the world will change. Start with one, start with yourself.

Freedom through Music

(Original)

Dai Zhang
(Age 23, U.S.A.)

As a pianist, I am frequently amazed by the many life lessons music has taught me. Due to ongoing shoulder pain, I recently took a musician-focused class on the Alexander Technique (AT), a method on reducing unnecessary levels of physical and mental tension in daily activities. Here, I learned the principle of “end-gaining,” a tendency people have to keep their minds and actions focused on a goal, at the expense of overlooking the unhealthy process by which the goal is achieved. I learned how high performance expectations can cause musicians to ignore unnatural practicing habits, creating physical injuries that jeopardize long-term performance careers. I then realized that end-gaining is the root behind many societal problems.

As AT instructor Hilary King states, “From a global perspective, is the temporary end of gaining more wealth by cutting down rainforests, whilst ruining the environment…[worth] putting the [long-term] lives of people and…animals at risk?” Poverty is not just about generational economic poverty. It includes the emotional poverty children feel when their parents are too career-driven to go to soccer games and cheer them on to scoring that first life-changing goal. Advertisements scream society’s need to do and have more instantaneously in little time. Through all this, we overlook the stress, anxiety, health problems, and “lost time” that is produced when we ungratefully ignore the small and innate blessings we were designed to appreciate. Think about how many conflicts could be avoided if we took the time to understand the people around us, instead of simply making assumptions. Consider how much more effective charity organizations would be if they took the time to listen to the receivers themselves first instead of ministering to the poor with preconceived ideas of how to “fix things,” only to be disappointed when they fail to produce long-lasting, quantifiable results.

So what is the future forward for humanity? The answer was again presented very simply in AT class, in what my instructor, Jennifer Roig-Francoli, terms “Freedom Directions.” When

musicians realize through self-awareness that they have habits—unhelpful thoughts, feelings, and actions—when they play, they have two choices. They have the freedom to continue the habit, or to stop, inhibiting the habit. Similarly, as humans, we are free to keep following our society's fast-paced, destructive patterns, or we can choose to reverse old habits, producing new habits that may take more time but produce better everlasting results. For business leaders, this means shifting from a task and number oriented outlook in the workplace to one where positive relationships between employees are also valued. This means taking the time to encourage a homeless man while he tells his story instead of simply giving him a handout. For NGO workers working in foreign countries, this means being open-minded to the fact that the culture they are from is not the more superior one, and taking the time to look for resources already in the native culture that could enable them to overcome poverty.

These realizations give me a new freedom as I inspire to start an organization with musicians in the local area where low-income youth can receive quality, low-cost music lessons. I am also blessed to be carrying out this dream by partnering with City Gospel Mission (CGM), an NGO that "aims to break the cycle of poverty and despair one life at a time through developing effective relationships." Through the homeless shelter, addiction recovery programs, youth tutoring/ballet/sports programs, etc. that CGM has already started, I have been modeled on how to equip others with the spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and other resources needed to overcome poverty. Initially this summer, I was plagued by anxiety. I felt guilty that pain had delayed my vision from starting last summer, and I was overwhelmed about various logistical details. Then I realize that I had already been blessed with the financial resources to start teaching a few students and, the joy of a healthier body to pour into my first few students. I know that my role is not simply to be a piano teacher, but to use music as a relational avenue to teach them life lessons so they can feel the freedom to achieve their dreams and inspire others.

2014 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Children's Category – 3rd Prize]

I Am A Citizen Of Earth

(Original)

Aaron Michel J. Hernandez

(Age 9, Philippines)

De La Salle Santiago Zobel School Muntinlupa City

This citizen of the earth is BUT nine years old. On the first day of classes my teacher encouraged me to join this essay-writing contest. I checked the website and got curious, and then I started to think hard what my role is as a "Citizen of Earth". Tough one for a nine year old, this question is. IF only I were a little older.

But maybe thinking of what to write in this essay is not so hard at all.

Maybe, one of my roles as a citizen of this earth is to watch the news and figure out what is happening throughout the world.

I should not be racist and always respect other people's culture.

Sometimes, the world spreads rumors about other countries that are not true. Since I am a citizen of this earth, I should not believe and spread them because doing so is very disrespectful.

Even as a child, I can always contribute in helping clean up the environment and segregating waste because, little by little, the world becomes cleaner.

I should make sure that people in my land do not bully foreigners because of their different language, skin color, etc.

I must always try to help foreign children understand our language and help them find directions if they are lost.

I should not make fun of other people because they look different.

I am a citizen of this earth. I will do my best to bring peace to the world. I will try to clean up this world, our world.

This essay asks what does it mean to be a Citizen of Earth?

I am a citizen of this earth. But no, wait; there is no this or that earth. There is only one Earth.

So, I am a Citizen of Earth.

A Citizen of Earth is someone who puts the world first. A Citizen of Earth is someone who thinks that all nationalities and all countries are equal.

To be a Citizen of Earth you should not think that your country is the only part of the world to take care of. We should always keep track of what is happening in the world.

You may think that because people you find strange are different they are weird, but what they actually are is unique. EVERYONE is unique in his or her own special way.

You must always believe that the world needs everyone to help cleanse the world of poverty, pollution, and destruction.

I am just a child. But I will do my best to be a good Citizen Of Earth. I will, little by little, try to cleanse the world from all that threaten to harm it.

I am Aaron Michel J. Hernandez. I am nine years old. No ifs and buts. I am a Citizen of Earth.

尊重と助け合い

(原文)

山口 千早紀 (14 歳)

静岡県

不二聖心女子学院中学校

私たち人間は、地球という一つの世界に生まれました。このように生まれてきたからには、果たさなくてはならない「こと」があります。地球はいつでも多くの人々に支えられて動いていると思います。しかし一方で、多くの人につぶされているようでもあります。私はよく、この地球(ほし)に生まれてきたことへの誇りと喜びを持つためにも、有意義な生活に憧れます。なので、ここで私が考える有意義な生活において果たさなければならない「こと」を述べたいと思います。

それは「お互いがお互いのことを尊重して、助け合う」ということです。地球は多くの人間、動物、生き物などが共存しています。誰でも誰かとの関わりがなくては生きていくことは出来ません。関わっていくうちに、協力しなくてははいけなくなります。協力の必要性—これはよく言われることですが、私は、実は「協力すること」は難しいことと思います。なぜなら、協力するためには、お互いに競争心を捨てる必要があるからです。特に人間は、自分の存在や力を確かめるために自分を誰かと比較して、その結果に喜怒哀楽の感情を持ってしまいます。そういうことによって、人に負けることが許せなくなり、紛争や戦争が起きてしまうのだと思います。このような争いをなくすには、競争心をなくし、心を空っぽにして考える必要があります。もともと人間はそれぞれ個性があり、性格や特徴は違います。その違いを比べたり競ったりする対象として見ることをやめ、素直に認めるのです。そして相手のことを尊重して、話を聞くことが大切です。

さて、このように競争心をなくせばいいのですが、競争心を捨てることはなかなかできることではありません。ではどうしたらいいのか。私はこの競争心を外に向けるのではなく、まずは内に向けたらいいのではと思います。例えば、日本が世界に誇れる文化、技術はなんでしょう。まずは自国が世界に負けない、と思えることをそれぞれが深く知なのです。自分の国の誇れることについてよく知ったら、そこではじめて他の国との情報交換です。住んでいる国は異なっている、地球にいることは同じです。自分の国の文化に真に誇りを持っている人は、相手の国が誇れるものを大切にできます。そこには競争はありません。違う文化を持っている人の文化の話を聞いて、自分の文化についても伝える、こういったことで世界が一体化していくように思います。その国の文化や現状を理解することで、戦争や貧困に苦しむ人々もなくなります。

他に中学生に出来ることは何かと探してみると、友だちや学校の人、親などとの関わりを大切にする
ことだとわかりました。人との交流を広げていくことで、視野が広がり、自分の意思を伝える力、能
力も高くなります。将来、外国と理解を深め、分かち合うときにこの力は必ず必要となります。私は、
話すことが得意ではないのでなかなか思いを伝えられないこともあります。なので、これがまず私の
いちばんの課題です。

最後にもうひとつ、「思いをはせる」こと。人の為に尽くすためには、今まで自分が助けてもらった
出来事を思い出し、相手の気持ちをくみ、その恩返しだと思って行動することが大切だと思います。
そうすることで、困っている人や苦しんでいる人の気持ちに寄り添うことができます。思いをはせ、
人が人を助け、その人が人を助け、というように助けていくと、世界中の人々が「助け」でつながっ
ていきます。そしてまた「私たちは助け合うことでつながっているんだ」と、みんなが思いをはせる
ことができれば、地球はどんどん優しさで包まれていくでしょう。

わたしはまだ中学生で、地球の中ではちっぽけな存在ですが、ここで考えたことを今すぐに実行に移
し、地球のみんながこの地球に生まれたことに誇りを持ってもらいたいです。

Making the better tomorrow today itself

– Vision of a Millennium Baby

(Original)

Emy Thomas

(Age 14, India)

Dubai, which was a land possessing only dreary sands turned into a creator of the next wonders of the world. But despite these wonders people toil, having no time to enjoy life, working hard to achieve a dream lifestyle. This hard work in greater amounts or smaller is present in this world's nook and corner. Why are people toiling in an unknown land? I believe they do it hoping for a better tomorrow.

Five families following five different ideologies and religions live together in the same building without speaking a word to each other. The slightest of misunderstanding could cause the biggest of fights.

Evaluating both the situations, I believe that my role as a citizen of Earth is two-fold - One, for man's physical self or body and the other, for man's mental well-being or nourishment of the soul. The first part of my role is fulfilling the vision of a better tomorrow, today itself, for millions of people and the latter is promoting a feeling of oneness, thriving for unity in diversity for the souls out there. The former and the latter are interconnected because both ensure happiness for the body and the soul and this brings mass satisfaction not only to us, human beings, but also to the ever silent forever listening Mother Nature.

Firstly, let me elaborate what I mean by "a better tomorrow today itself". Why do people migrate? It is in search for a better opportunity, possibly because the places they hail from lack what they dream of achieving or in extreme conditions (that may be in a thousand) they lack basic amenities such as electricity, water and are in knee-deep problems due to disease and back-breaking poverty unable to send their off-springs to school. A better tomorrow for the people in the lowest rungs of the economy of the earth means eradication of poverty,

providing electrified houses with water supply, access to health care facilities and availability of education.

Let us move upwards in the economic rungs- the middle class hopes for an earth free of unemployment and under-employment with lower living costs. The wealthiest and the most powerful on the earth hope for a happy life and a healthy physique.

There is one more entity the earth has- Mother Nature. She hopes that the next generation of both birds and beasts has a rich supply of natural resources. The better tomorrow encompasses all four entities' aspirations and my role is to contribute as much as I can to provide a better tomorrow, the dream for a century later in my life span itself.

Secondly, my role as a citizen of the earth is, to promote unity in diversity. I wish to make people look beyond the narrow walls of religion, race, colour, language, caste and economic disparity. Even identical twins are not alike but that doesn't become a reason to hate each other. We all are one despite being a European, an American, an Asian, an African or an Australian. The time when this golden truth is grasped by millions who engage themselves in hatred and meaningless wars, the time when we realize we can't change anyone but ourselves, the time when everyone sees the other's qualities, that day earth will be a family-a really happy family. My role is to make earth a model family.

The next big question is how is this huge mission possible? I whole-heartedly believe in two concepts. "You can't change anyone but yourself" and "If you have a noble aim, the whole world will help in its realization". The two concepts look conflicting but these two concepts only mean making your life an example of your ideals so that the whole world will conspire in favour of your example. Your mind will be prone to doubts such as the scalability of this vision. We, the children and the youth, are the torch-bearers of this change-a change to realize the above mission and aspirations of all divisions of the earth and our Mother Nature. I believe, we- the millennium babies- will see this mission becoming a reality before the sun sets over this century.

My Role as a Citizen of Earth

(Original)

Dontsova Arina
(Age 14, Kazakhstan)

Have you ever asked this question: what is our role in this World? As a citizen of Earth. Everybody has his own understanding of this role and everyone has his own answer to this question. It depends on their religion, culture, environment, political views and education. Thinking about it, I decided to compare my understanding of the problem with other people's points of view. So I interviewed several peers and their answers were quite expected. One said that his role is his future profession. Another said that he was nobody and eventually we all would die. Others answered they were just people and that was their role. A part of respondents couldn't reply because they have never thought about it. All opinions are right as we all look at life differently. I suspect that not every adult person can say that they have reflected on this topic. However, it's worth thinking about this question for we're all people and we make a contribution to the life of the planet. All of us are important for Earth.

For me it's difficult to understand the phrase « A citizen of Earth», especially now when people conquered Earth. At our planet there is hardly a place where man has never set foot. People conquered space and I think that it won't be long until people have control of time.

Many famous people said different things about it, but I think all remember Neil Armstrong's words, that he said on the surface of the Moon «That's one small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind».

Everyone sees Earth and their role in different ways. Thus, I asked people of different ages who live in various parts of the world: my friends and strangers, pupils and students a simple question: «What is your role as a citizen of Earth». Having done so, I noticed that all of the respondents can be divided into three groups:

1. People who haven't decided on their life position yet. They haven't understood what way they should choose. They can't answer the question. Usually people between 18 and 21 belong to this group. At this age a person gets burdened because of their responsibility to make decisions.
2. People between 15 and 17 are more optimistic. Thinking about the issue, they see an opportunity to change the World to the best, do something valuable and important to help avoid global problems.
3. People of 22 years and older, finally, reach the understanding that all of us are important for Earth and it doesn't depend on their profession, age, social position, skin color or religion. Having clear picture of themselves and their opportunities, they come to a conclusion that the World can be changed if they are changed. Our goal is to try and not lose a chance to live and enjoy what we have.

In my opinion, Earth is firstly - life and action. Everything around us is dynamic. Even our Earth doesn't stop, but continuously goes around its axis. If we try to define action then people's action is development. Unfortunately, it stopped a long time ago. You will notice that I contradict myself here. May be. Consider the following: we discover new chemical elements, we create robots and are able to buy land on the Moon. However, it is just a by-product of work that makes us different from our ancestors. You are saying a citizen of the World. In Russian the same word is used for World and peace. I can be a citizen of World, but I can't be a citizen of peace because it doesn't exist. Our planet is full of wars for power and money. At our Earth children starve and die of illnesses that are no longer incurable. People do good things because it's popular. We waste milliards for the Space but haven't found out what is right under our very nose. Earth shouldn't have borders but our planet is full of them. No one can claim to be a citizen of Earth until we have passports and visas. There is no World. People continue to kill each other. They don't do it with the help of cold arms but with "hot" mortgages and credits. We think only about ourselves and don't notice that natural resources are almost over. And probably the only thing that we can do is to give a chance to the following generations to cope with the issues. If everyone makes a small step towards peace and World without borders and wars – that'll be a giant leap that Neil Armstrong was talking about.

I have been writing this essay for many weeks. I keep finding new answers. Asking other people this question, I found new truths revealed to me. Approaching different people with this topic I have changed. I discovered a new self. I desire to help, to do something for the planet,

for people and for myself. I managed to stop and look around myself to see life that has been taken for granted. I'm awake now.

There are little steps that you can make such as helping the elderly or not picking up another flower in the nature. But what is really important is to want to make the small steps towards the future, a glorious future.

発言する勇氣と自信

(原文)

鶴永 わかば (14 歳)

神奈川県

洗足学園

2014 年 3 月、私は模擬国連という会議に参加した。それは世界中の生徒が集まり、ある特定の問題について話し合うものだ。

私はアンチグア・バーブーダという国を担当し、北極の保護について議論した。その時の私にはある一つの悩みがあった。それは、担当した国の小ささだ。アンチグア・バーブーダはカリブ海に属する島国だというのはともかく、国の存在すら知らない人がほとんどだった。実際、私も担当するまでは耳にしたこともなかった。

「こんな国が会議中に発言して、皆は動いてくれるのか。」こうした不安を抱えているうちに、私はいつの間にか会議に参加することにためらいを感じていた。

しかし、そんな思い入れは会議が始まってすぐになくなった。皆が席を立てて話し合いを始めた時の事だ。私は輪っかに入り切れず、オロオロしながら外から背伸びをして議論を聞いた。皆は熱心に声を張り上げ、盛んに意見を交わす。四方八方からの声が入り混じり、私の頭を混乱させた。私はまるでここにいない人かのように、ただ端っこにたたずんでいた。

「やっぱり当てにされないんだ。」私は、自分のこの無力さとこんな小さな国と当たってしまった不運を嘆いた。

しかし、こうしてため息を一つついて見た光景は予想外だった。輪の中心に立ち、皆をまとめていた国が何とカタールだったのである。しかも輪の中の人は皆、彼の話をうなづきながら聞いていた。

「えっ。」思わず目を疑った。確かカタールはアジアに属する小さな国で、話し合いの主導権なんて絶対に無い、そう思ったからだ。そこで私はやっと自分の間違いに気づいた。そう、国の強さなんて関係ないのだ。そして、自分に欠けているものは自信と勇氣だった。

カタールはとても堂々としていて、光っているかのようにも見えた。その一方で陰に隠れていた私が、とても情けなく感じられた。

そこで、自分は変わるんだと決心した。例え力が弱そうでも、自信を持って輝いていられるような人になろう。

勇氣をもらった私は少し胸を躍らせながら発言する機会を待った。

そのチャンスはすぐに訪れた。

「温室効果ガスの排出の削減について何か付け足したいことがある人。」そう聞かれた時、私は今だ、
と思い、「はい、自動車の値段を上げるのはどうでしょう。」と言った。やっと発言することができ
た。もちろん皆はそれを聞いてくれた。そして、「なるほど、その事もリストに追加しておこう。」
と意見を受け入れてくれた。すごく嬉しかった。

このようなちょっとした勇気が世界を変えられるのだと私は思う。なので、今回の模擬国連の経験を
活かし、今後の話し合いでは勇気と自信を持って様々な発言をしたい。また、より良い世界のため
は一人一人の意見が大切だという事を友達などの身近な人から伝えて行き、話し合う場を増やして行
きたいと思う。皆も身の回りにある問題について話し合ってみてはどうだろうか。いじめをどう改善
するか。どうすれば勉強のやる気が出るか。そんなことでもいい。これらの話し合いの場から出た結
論が世界を変えられるかもしれない。その結論に自分の意見が入っていたら、うれしく感じられるの
ではないか。

Earth, The Link to All (Original)

Tae Keun Kim
(Age 17, Korea <Living in U.S.A.>)
St. Paul School, Concord, NH

I believe all youths on Earth should analyze and question “legacy”, so-called truths and practices passed down to later generations as given. For the young generation to create a better future, we have to free ourselves from certain prejudices and norms that have been imposed upon us by our predecessors. As an Asian youth, I inherited such undue burdens. Due to past conflicts in the Far East, relationships between the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean people are still strained from issues like territorial disputes and Japanese war crimes during World War II.

As a Korean, I grew up surrounded by anti-Japanese sentiment. I was deeply familiar with unhappy stories of the Japanese occupation as told by my grandparents, such as losing their Korean names and being forbidden to speak Korean during their youth. Korea lost a countless number of her historical treasures to Japan and has been unable to recover them to this day. I couldn’t help but feel a sense of anger toward Japan for the oppression and humiliation it had inflicted on my country and its people.

But one experience completely changed my perspective. I first visited Japan four years ago as a member of an international student volunteer group to clean up washed-up waste on the shores of Shimane. But what shocked me was not just the sheer volume of waste, but its origin. It turned out that most of it had originated from Korea. As a Korean, I had never been told that we were the instigators of any pain to the Japanese. But there I was, standing on the Japanese coast with the undeniable evidence at my feet—mounds of litter that my people had thrown away without knowing or caring where it would end up. This time, Koreans were the invaders, not the Japanese. I felt utterly ashamed, and I knew I had to do something.

The next year, I found myself at the shores of Shimane again, but this time as the leader of the clean-up group. It was then that the reality became clear to me. None of us are free from the web of connections that crosses all international borders. We all share our home called Earth. If we look at any international relationship from a long-term perspective from various angles such as cultural, social, economic, political, and environmental ones, all of us have been both aggressors and victims in some way at some point in time. Although we cannot change our past actions, we can control how we respond to such situations. Many would like to downplay what they did wrong while decrying the injustice others have caused them. But without aggressors acknowledging their mistakes, trying to make amends to the affected parties, and taking steps to ensure that they do not commit the same offenses again, the numerous problems we face today will be perpetuated.

In order to stop such a vicious cycle of destruction and conflicts among us, we all have to learn how to become responsible for our actions. The best way of acquiring such a sense of responsibility is understanding others by engaging them through first-hand encounters and dialogues and speaking openly about both the difficulties we have caused them and our own grievances at their misdeeds. By doing so, we can redefine ourselves not just as citizens of our respective homelands but as citizens of Earth, and can refrain from selfish actions that can victimize our neighbors.

We owe much to our ancestors. They have provided us with valuable lessons. But we, the next generation, should not blindly follow their path but instead redirect our inherited wisdom and knowledge to build a better world with our own hands. I feel fortunate to have been given many chances to experience and understand others, and I hope other young people can also have the same opportunities through the efforts of governments, NGOs and the United Nations. The shame and guilt I felt toward the Japanese on the Shimane seashore still haunts me today, but it also inspires me to work harder to spread compassionate responsibility, the first step forward for young minds to envision a sustainable future for all humanity.

The Power of Love

(Original)

Emily Narbey
(Age 18, New Zealand)

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.” Jimi Hendrix has defined the attitude of a Global Citizen. Our motivation isn’t to be in a position of power where we can control and manipulate as we please; we are passionate about demonstrating compassion, equality, respect and love to all of Earth’s inhabitants, whether we know them or not. If anything we use the privilege of our position of power to educate, empower and encourage others to help those who are in no way privileged. What is the sense of being the only Global Citizen you know?

I was appointed to the position of Head Girl at my school in Nelson, New Zealand and I vowed to myself to make the most of such a respected role within my school and community. I established two goals I wanted to develop within my student body. The first being to foster a school full of happy students with enough self-confidence and self-esteem to be who they are or want to be. My other goal was to inspire and cultivate a school full of Global Citizens. I believe these two goals support one another; the joy you feel when you know you’ve made a difference in someone else’s life is priceless. As a role model I have demonstrated what it means to be a Global Citizen. I organised the World Vision 40Hr Famine for my school and presented to them the harsh truth of the life of children in Malawi and emphasised how lucky we are to live in New Zealand. I also took action by going blind for 40 hours to demonstrate the difficulties of being ‘blind’ about issues of such importance. Most recently I took up the fight to help bring back our girls. I co-led our school in a justice march, taking tangible action, to speak out on behalf of the Nigerian girls, our Global Sisters, who have been stripped of their voice. I have learnt about the countless injustices present within our world and I believe I have taught my peers about the contribution we can have in ending these and the responsibility we have to do so.

I am determined to have a career in which global issues and the strengthening of social justice are at the forefront of what I do. I cannot fathom a more important thing to fight for. I believe becoming the Prime Minister of New Zealand or working for the United Nations is the best way for me to fulfil my role as a citizen of Earth. However, it is equally important to recognise the change that every person can contribute, on any scale. Establishing a world where people consider how their actions affect others, as well as themselves, would see a globe brimming full of inter-connected, aware, considerate and compassionate beings.

The concept of Global Patriotism is something I would love to see blossom; a genuine love and concern for the world and all its inhabitants. For it is love that drives me to: purchase Fair Trade products whenever possible, participate in Live Below the Line, speak out and volunteer my time and effort.

My role as a Citizen of Earth is to promote the characteristics, attitudes and values of a Global Citizen to my community and by doing so encouraging more people to adopt this passion for social justice. I am a facilitator for future change. The extraordinary power of love must be acknowledged and utilised. Mother Theresa explained the invaluable nature of compassion when she said: "We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

Yo cambio al mundo (Original)

Ana Elizabeth Espinosa Mómx
(Age 19, México)

Mis papás nunca me dijeron que podía cambiar al mundo. A veces creo que no lo hicieron por los momentos tan decepcionantes que vivimos en la etapa de mi niñez. Otras veces creo que conforme pasan los años, te vas convirtiendo en una mala versión de la persona que alguna vez soñaste ser.

Siempre me pregunté si a mí me pasaría lo mismo que veía en mis padres. Si era mi destino llegar a ese punto en el que no esperas que cualquier cosa que hagas afecte de forma positiva a alguien. Luchaba con la idea de que mi estancia en la tierra sería tan insignificante, después de todo sólo soy una chica común y corriente.

Durante poco menos de seis meses asistí a una clase llamada Formación Humana y Social. Me enojaba un poco el hecho de que la facultad pusiera esta materia dentro del mapa curricular, porque consideraba que no tenía ninguna relación con lo que yo estoy estudiando. Deben imaginarse lo extraño que suena este tipo de materias para estudiantes de Física o Matemáticas.

Pero después de un tiempo, me di cuenta que asistir a esta clase estaba cambiando mi forma de ver la vida. Cada vez que llegaba al salón, el maestro ya estaba ahí listo para empezar su clase, como si se tratara de la más importante del mundo.

Cada vez que nos hablaba de cualquier cosa, me hacía sentir que de pronto, yo pertenecía a algo. Algo mucho más grande de lo que yo podía imaginar. Siempre cuestionándonos qué estábamos haciendo por nuestra sociedad. Qué estábamos haciendo por los demás. Animándonos a ir más allá. Para mí era raro, él disfrutaba tanto de su trabajo y era inmensamente feliz con lo que hacía. Por qué se empeñaba en hacer las cosas rompiendo

paradigmas, por qué seguía ilusionándonos con impactar al mundo. Él no recibiría nada a cambio. Nada de lo que pudiéramos hacer le iba a beneficiar.

Poco después pude entenderlo.

Durante la prepa, me inicié como astrónomo aficionado. Cuando llegué a la universidad, una de las primeras cosas que hice fue buscar un club de astronomía. Este mismo maestro formaba parte de un proyecto en alianza con el taller de óptica de la facultad. Su objetivo: hacer telescopios para las escuelas. Me uní a ellos hace más de medio año y hace un par de meses hicimos un viaje a Oaxaca.

Durante este viaje aprendí muchas cosas. Siempre que “los adultos” hablaban sobre cualquier cosa, yo simplemente los escuchaba y miraba atentamente. Estaba maravillada con cada cosa que decían, maravillada de estar ahí con ellos y hacer algo que transformaba al mundo.

Transformar al mundo, eso era lo que hacíamos en Oaxaca. Cuando me di cuenta de todo el trabajo implicado en un viaje como estos: la gran cantidad de horas por las carreteras, la preparación del material y de los talleres, esforzarse mucho, dormir poco. Ahí, cuando vi a un grupo de niños apuntando un telescopio, con la misma ilusión que yo tuve cuando apunté a mi primer estrella. Ahí, bajo el manto de aquella noche, me di cuenta que todo vale la pena. Me di cuenta qué es cambiar al mundo.

Nuestro rol como ciudadanos del mundo no es buscar la gloria y la fortuna con lo que hacemos. No es levantarse todos los días conformándonos a vivir algo que no queremos, pero que pensamos que no podemos cambiar. Nuestro rol como ciudadanos del mundo es marcar la diferencia. Es ser el maestro que influye a sus alumnos a tener una vida de valor. Es ser parte del grupo de técnicos, profesores, doctores y estudiantes, que viajan horas por el país con la única finalidad de cambiar la forma de ver el Universo de un grupo de estudiantes, por medio de un telescopio. Es ser esa chica común y corriente que entendió que su estancia en la Tierra tiene un significado. La de todos lo tiene.

Mis papás nunca me dijeron que podía cambiar al mundo. No lo hicieron, pero no importa. Ellos sin saberlo, han estado cambiando al mundo toda su vida. Yo, ahora sé que puedo hacerlo.

I change the world

(English translation)

My parents never told me that I could change the world. Sometimes I think that it was because of the disappointing times we lived in my childhood. Other times I think that as the years pass, you turn into a bad version of the person you dreamed of being.

I always wondered if I would become what I saw in my parents. If it was my destiny to get to that point where you do not expect anything you do to impact anyone else in a positive way. I struggled with the idea that my time on Earth would be so insignificant; after all, I am just an ordinary girl.

For almost six months, I attended a class called Human and Social Formation. I was a bit angry at the faculty for including this class in the program, because I thought that it was not related to my field of study. You probably imagine how strange this kind of subjects are for students of physics or mathematics.

But after a while, I realized that this class was changing my view of life. Every time I walked into the classroom, the teacher was already there, ready to start, as if it were the most important class in the world.

Every time he talked to us, I felt that suddenly I belonged. He made me feel that I was part of something much greater than I could imagine. He always asked what we were doing for our society, and for others; he encouraged us to go further. It was weird for me to see that he enjoyed his job so much and he was extremely happy with what he did. I wondered why he insisted on doing these things and breaking paradigms, why he kept encouraging us to change the world. He would get nothing in return; nothing we could do would benefit him.

I understood it soon.

When I was in high school, I became an amateur astronomer. When I went to college, one of the first things I did was looking for an astronomy club. This same teacher was part of a project in partnership with the optics lab of the faculty. Their goal: to make telescopes for schools. I joined them over half a year ago, and we recently took a trip to Oaxaca.

During this trip I learned many things. Whenever the "adults" talked about anything, I just listened and watched them intently. I was amazed at everything they said, thrilled to be there with them and do something that changed the world.

Changing the world, that's what we were doing in Oaxaca. When I started thinking of all the work involved in a trip like this, the long hours on the road, the preparation of material and labs, the effort, the few hours of sleep... then I saw a group of kids looking through a telescope with the same excitement I felt when I pointed at my first star. There, under cover of the night, I realized that it is all worth it. I understood what it is to change the world.

Our role as citizens of the world is not to seek glory and fortune with what we do; it is not to get up every day and settle for something we don't want, but we think we cannot change. Our role as citizens of the world is to make a difference; to be the teacher that influences their students to have a life of value; to be part of a group of technicians, teachers, doctors and students who travel the country with the sole purpose of changing the way that a group of students see the universe through a telescope. My role is to be the ordinary girl who understood that her time on Earth has a meaning, like everyone else's time does.

My parents never told me that I could change the world, but it doesn't matter. They have been changing the world all their lives without knowing. I know now that I can do it too.

Peace Through Humility

(Original)

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"O mankind! Allah created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." (Al-Hujuraat: 13)

The verse above is from The Qur'an; the holy scripture of Islam, and the ultimate Guidance for Muslims. In this verse God tells us that He created mankind and then made us into nations, so not that we hate each other, but to know and respect each other. A simple yet very harmful aspect of human nature is what drives our hatred towards one another, and that is arrogance. Arrogance is fought with humility, and through humility can we get closer to peace than we have ever been.

Humility is not a characteristic taught exclusively in religion, it is a universal virtue: a virtue that wise men and great leaders share and exercise willingly. While humility is often associated with lowering oneself in relation to a deity, it can be easily practiced in everyday life. In a post-modern age, the world has almost entirely left the world of religion to embrace a more 'rational' and 'logical' way of doing things, leaving its values as well. It is as though religious beliefs cannot give birth to universal values that everyone can apply.

When a nation boasts to another of what it can do in relation to what the latter cannot, hatred is born. When two tribes cannot see past ancestral differences, and choose to think themselves better than the other, hatred grows. When a person refuses to retreat from a pointless argument, even though he is right, hatred flourish. From international diplomacy to individual affairs, humility triumphs where hatred cannot. To feed our ego and grow our arrogance is to choose a rocky path without peace in sight.

Where I come from, religious bigots assault those they feel are in the wrong path. Muslim extremists –with their unjustified prejudices— attack Christians, burn churches, tear down Jewish homes; all ‘in the name of God.’ This all originates back to the belief that they are better than their victims, that since they are a believer, non-believers do not have the same basic rights as they do. Arrogance fuels their ignorance, which in turn drives their hatred. They cannot see that their ego has blinded them of the very religion they believe to defend, of the beliefs that it teaches.

This is not what my God had commanded me to do, not what my Prophet (pbuh) had taught me. To be humble is to know one’s limitations, to find out others’ merits rather than their faults, and to forgive others that have wronged you.

As the Prophet (pbuh) once said: we should “...speak a good word or remain silent...” This is an excellent and simple example of what it means to be humble. Being careful of our words protect not only ourselves from hurting others but also others from being hurt by our words. What a spectacle it would be if everyone would speak only good words.

While we cannot entirely eliminate it, the world can do better with its arrogance in chains, and to greet humility with a warm welcome. But bringing peace is not a quick process, as all good things are. We all have to start with ourselves, to look in into our hearts and find our humble selves. Change starts from the individual, as Rumi have said: “yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

Through arrogance we breed ignorance, and from that; hatred. Being humble means that we kill our ego so that we do not give room for ignorance, and let ourselves indulge in the thirst for knowledge of other people. To me, that is my role as a citizen of this Earth.

青い呟き (green murmur)

(原文)

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さて、今からキレイ事を並べよう。

一人の若者が、届かぬ空を見て呟く、底知れぬ海のように青々とした、美しいキレイ事を。

この世界に完全に正しいものなんて存在しない。そうだ、だって私たちは人間だ。

間違って、間違えて、真実を探して、答えを出して、また間違って・・・

それを繰り返して時代というものを作ってきた。

幸せになりたくて。誰かを幸せにしたいくて・・・

そうでしょう？天国でこの世界を見ている先人さんたち。

それがどんなに悲惨な戦争で、何万もの命を無くした時代だったとしても。私は、それを間違いだつたなんて簡単に否定しないよ。

だって、きっとその戦いには何かの意味があった。

そして、何よりその時代を全力で生き抜いた人たちが、自分たちや大切なモノのために戦うことを選んだのなら、それを私なんかが簡単に否定なんてできないよ。

でも、私はね、こう思うんだ。

きっと、人を殺しても幸せにはなれないよ。

笑えないよ、心からは。・・・誰も。

だからね、自分の考えを他人に押し付けるのも、他人の考えを否定するのも、そもそも間違いだと思うんだ。

大切なのは、受け入れること。

世界の、誰かの・・・幸福を考えたのなら、なおさらに。

ちなみに、ここでいう幸福とは、自分だけの欲望を求めることじゃない。それを踏まえたうえで考えよう。

受け入れることは簡単じゃない。

だって、どちらもきっと人を想う優しい気持ちがたくさん詰まっていると思うから。

だから、話せばいいんだ。

自分の意見を認めさせる説得ではなく、相手の意見を否定する罵倒でもなく、一緒に第三の意見を考えるための話し合いを。

それこそ、簡単なことじゃないと思う。それが簡単に出来ていたのなら、何千年もの間、あちらこちらで悲しい出来事なんか起こっていないもの。

そう、それはとても難しいことだ。

でも、忘れてはいないかい？

私たちは、争いばかりに生きてきたわけじゃない。

いろんな研究をして、いろんな発見をして、たくさんのものを生み出して・・・たくさんの幸せの種を作ってきたことを。それも紛れもない、素敵な事実だ。

だから、どんなに第三の意見を見つけ出すことが困難でも、出来ないことじゃないと思うんだ。

人は、今までいろいろなものに挑み、掴んできたものがある。だから、きっとこれは不可能じゃないはずだと思うんだ。

それから。

そうだな・・・私が勝手に未来を望むのなら、子ども達が笑っている世界がいいな。

未来の子ども達の手に、武器はいらない。地位も、権力も、家柄も・・・ただのアクセサリーくらいでいい。

ただ、その手に持てるだけの小さな幸せを大切にできるよう守ればいい。大人の仕事はそれだけ。優しく抱きしめて、今日あった出来事を話しながらご飯を食べる。少しばかり不器用ならば、ただ手を繋いでいるだけでいい。

ただ一緒に幸せな時間を過ごすこと以上に、子ども達は何も望んではいないのだから。優しい愛があれば、その手は優しさと勇気に満ちることが出来るんだ。

その子ども達が、笑顔で自分らしく、優しい人間になろうと必死に生きる。

そう、私たちと同じ一人の人間として。

それ以上に、何を贅沢に望むモノがある？

そう、それでいいんだ。ただ、それだけでいいんだ。

それこそが、幸せであって、平和ではないのだろうか。