

2015 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

No. of participating countries: 148

No. of entries: 12,960 (Children's category: 4,017 / Youth category: 8,943)

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Contentment holds the key to peace*
Udayan Saha (Age 10, India)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Building Peace Begins from Within*
Narayan Kulkarni (Age 20, U.S.A.)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Unblock Your Hearts for Peace*
Ella Olivares Powell (Age 8, México & U.S.A.
<Living in México>)
- *Understanding Different Ideas, Keeping
Gratitude in Mind*
Kei Hattori (Age 13, Japan)

Youth category (3 entrants)

- *Faith in the Defences of the Heart*
Yuuki Otani (Age 16, Japan)
- *A Gift*
David Hinolan (Age 18, Philippines)
- *Contentment*
Mandlenkosi Edson Thusile
(Age 19, South Africa)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- Divine Gyau Barfour (Age 10, Ghana)
- Kokomi Kadomatsu (Age 12, Japan)
- Ayesha Sahar Mirza (Age 13, Pakistan)
- Kazami Sasaki (Age 14, Japan)
- Maria Laura Dumbrava (Age 14, Romania)

Youth category (4 entrants)

- Nguyen Phuong Dung (Age 16, Vietnam)
- Kiyomi Akahane (Age 17, Japan)
- Hazuki Tomioka (Age 18, Japan)
- Vojna Ngjeqari
(Age 24, Albania <Living in Austria>)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Hili Carmon (Age 5, Israel)
- Mariho Hasuo (Age 10, Japan)
- Aman Shital Haria (Age 11, Kenya)
- Kim Do Yeon (Age 12, Korea)
- Elena Stojkoska (Age 12, Macedonia)
- Iqra Muskan (Age 12, Pakistan)

Youth category (25 entrants)

- Riko Sugimoto (Age 15, Japan)
- Marina Tani (Age 16, Japan)
- Paawani Tewari (Age 16, India)
- Ryoko Abe (Age 16, Japan)
- Alexandra Covor (Age 17, Romania)
- Mendra Roberto (Age 17, Indonesia)

- Leaf Ana Reyes (Age 12, Philippines)
- Prerana Pai (Age 12, India <Living in U.A.E.>)
- Sasicha Chotiprayanakul (Age 12, Thailand)
- Asuka Osugi (Age 13, Japan)
- Pooja Singh (Age 13, India)
- Rin Kanno (Age 13, Japan)
- Tetsuya Yoneyama (Age 13, Japan)
- Emi Sonobe (Age 14, Japan)
- Kaori Kondo (Age 14, Japan)
- Kinzang Jurmi (Age 14, Bhutan)
- Mihaela Žeger (Age 14, Croatia)
- Sakura Ishizaki (Age 14, Japan)
- Souto Yamauchi (Age 14, Japan)
- Timmy Chiang (Age 14, Taiwan of China)
- Vivian Jiang (Age 14, USA)
- Wataru Kawahara (Age 14, Japan)
- Xinyang Yuan (Age 14, China)
- YangYi Chen (Age 14, China)
- Soichiro Ishida (Age 15, Japan)
- Faiza Al Akshani (Age 18, Kuwait)
- Jakob Gomolka (Age 18, Germany)
- Ilya Saveliev (Age 19, Russia)
- Nurul Fajri Aulia (Age 19, Indonesia)
- Emma Crane (Age 20, Australia)
- Gatra Priyandita (Age 20, Indonesia <Living in China>)
- Janne Hottenrott (Age 20, Germany)
- Tetyana Orlyk (Age 20, Ukraine)
- Wendy Rodriguez Diaz (Age 20, México)
- Namgye Phuntshok (Age 21, Bhutan)
- Shabnam Ajabi (Age 22, Afghanistan)
- Kabir Usman (Age 23, Nigeria)
- Paul Vissoh (Age 23, Benin)
- Samir Sero Zime Yerima (Age 23, Senegal)
- Gabriel Angura (Age 24, Uganda)
- Nirermol Singhsachakul (Age 24, Thailand)
- Nziharanira Ntwari Anatole (Age 24, Rwanda)
- Philippa Odergren (Age 24, Sweden)
- María Antonia López Restrepo (Age 25, Colombia)

Best School Award (1 school)

- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)

School Incentive Award (41 schools)

- AICJ Junior and Senior High School, Hiroshima (Japan)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School, Illinois (U.S.A.)
- CONALEP Ing. José Antonio Padilla Segura I, Monterrey (México)
- Escuela Preparatoria No. 8, Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
- Fukushima Prefectural Asakakaisei Senior High School (Japan)
- Hatsushiba Tondabayashi Junior & Senior High School, Osaka (Japan)
- Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (México)
- Colegio de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos del Estado de Mexico plantel Cuautitlan izcalli (México)
- Croatian School Museum, Zagreb (Croatia)
- Fuji Sacred Heart, Shizuoka (Japan)
- Gymnasium 12, Minsk (Belarus)
- Ibaraki Prefectural Koga Secondary School (Japan)

- International School of Milan, Baranzate (Italy)
- Japanese Supplementary School in Middle Tennessee (U.S.A.)
- Johor Bahru Religious National Secondary School (Malaysia)
- Kokugojuku KURU, Tokyo (Japan)
- Kokushikan Junior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Paderewski Private Grammar School, Lublin (Poland)
- Pu Tai Senior High School, Nantou (Taiwan of China)
- Sanonihondaigaku Secondary School, Tochigi (Japan)
- Sigaram Academy of Excellence, Tamil Nadu (India)
- Takada Junior & Senior High School, Mie (Japan)
- Wakayama Prefectural Kushimoto-koza High School Koza Campus (Japan)
- Vlado Tasevski, Skopje (Macedonia)
- Waseda University Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Japanese School of Toledo, Ohio (U.S.A.)
- Japanische Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)
- Kinki University Wakayama Junior High School (Japan)
- Kokugakuin Kugayama Junior High / High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Koyo Junior High School of Sugunami City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Liceo de Santa Librada, Huila (Colombia)
- OOU Lazo Trpovski – Skopje (Macedonia)
- Preparatoria numero. 11 Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
- Roots Millennium Schools, Islamabad (Pakistan)
- Showa Women's University Junior-Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Sugiyama Jogakuen University Affiliated Primary School, Aichi (Japan)
- Tokyo Gakugei University International Secondary School (Japan)
- University of Tsukuba Senior High School at Sakado, Saitama (Japan)
- Waseda Shibuya Senior High School (Singapore)

2015 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Children's Category - 1st Prize]

Contentment holds the key to peace

(Original)

Udayan Saha

(Age 10, India)

Doon International School, Dehradun

Haven't you ever wished that you were living the life of someone else? Haven't you ever wished that you were smarter, born into a richer family, and had opportunities and things that you don't have at the present?



I have.

I have to admit that I have wished for such things in the past. And whenever I have thought like that, my mind has not been at peace. I have felt restless and discontented.

Discontentment leads to greed. When you're dissatisfied with what you have, you begin to yearn for the possessions of others and devise dubious ways of acquiring them. And the first thing such an action does is to shatter the peace in our minds and hearts, because deep inside, a voice is continuously reminding us, "You are wrong! You are at Fault!"

I live in a part of India which, in the summer of 2013, witnessed a never-before-happened catastrophe when a lake in the high Himalayas burst due to several days of incessant rains. As the mountain of swirling waters gushed down, they swept away anything and everything that stood in their way—vehicles, homes, shops and even bridges.

After the killing waters receded and normalcy returned, I realized that our little town was not the same as it was before. It was a collage of broken homes, battered lives and shattered structures.

Thankfully our house was unharmed and everyone in our locality was safe.

This incident has made me see life in a new light and realize the real value of things which I had till then taken for granted. I understood how important it is to value the present and be at peace with what we have instead of pining for newer and better things. To quote Fredrick Keonig, "We tend to forget that happiness and peace do not come as a result of getting something we don't have but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have."

Today when I sweep my house, a chore which I earlier hated to do, I feel grateful to God to let me have what I have and the chance to take care of it. What once seemed boring is now a boon.

Contentment holds the real key to peace, and to cultivate contentment, we need to connect to our inner voice and listen to what it has to say.

Whether one meditates, prays, or listens to the songs of nature, we need to allow ourselves some time to hear what is in our hearts—listen to our inner voice, the voice of our soul. Connecting with my inner voice makes me better equipped to deal with the world outside cheerfully and in a calm manner.

My inner voice tells me many things. It guides me through the twists and turns of life. It is like a reliable compass that makes its presence felt the very moment I am able to switch off the noisy, distracting, chaotic, sounds around me. Connecting to my inner voice is akin to taking a dip in an ocean of positivity and peace.

Of course, I have to admit that not all the time I am positivity and peace personified. As is expected of a child of my age, I have a full and often chaotic life crammed with various activities and chores. But, with a few conscious adjustments, I have discovered how to stay connected to my inner self and revel in contentment and peace.

After the 2013 catastrophe, I know things can change anytime, but as of today I am totally at peace with myself and everything around me.

Every day, as I wake up and watch the sun inch up above the horizon, my inner voice reminds me, "Living life is the biggest project you will ever undertake and it is worthwhile to live it

properly. There is no end to craving and only contentment alone can lead you to happiness and peace. "

2015 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Youth Category – 1st Prize]

Building Peace Begins from Within (Original)

Narayan Kulkarni
(Age 20, U.S.A.)
University of Florida

On September 11, 2001, two planes hijacked by al-Qaeda terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center, killing nearly 3,000 individuals and injuring over 6,000 more. That day, also called 9/11, left a stain in the hearts and minds of many Americans. It would impact much of my life, but I would use the opportunity to develop peace from within.



I had recently moved to Florida, transferring to a new elementary school. After 9/11, it was as if I had changed overnight from a new student to a loathed enemy. My peers called me names like "terrorist" and "bin Laden's son," excluded me from group games at recess, and avoided me during lunch and breaks. This practice continued years later, making me feel helpless and isolated. These feelings grew stronger as I was the only Indian and Hindu student at my school, with no relatable peers.

Throughout middle and high school, I turned to religion and academics as ways to avoid the unpleasant memories of elementary school. Unexpectedly, through this approach, I uncovered many tools to confront my past. Learning about karma within Hinduism, I gained awareness of life's interconnectedness by understanding that good or bad actions would positively or negatively affect everyone. Mother Teresa's work illustrated to me the power of compassion and use of one's talents to selflessly serve the world. Through reading about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I discovered how his vision for racial equality and nonviolent activism led to legal reform in the U.S. Lastly, by practicing Sun salutations each morning, I realized that awareness of one's body and breath leads to physical wellness and mental peace.

My college experience contrasted sharply with that of elementary school. I quickly found a community with those of similar backgrounds—not only of peers whose parents immigrated to the U.S., but also those who had similarly been ostracized after 9/11. Talking to these peers, I noticed that, although we had different identities, we shared one common connection: we had no avenue to voice our stories and struggles. Inspired by that insight, I coordinated a community-wide event that empowered my peers to share their stories as panelists, and brought together community leaders to remember the impacts of 9/11 in a candlelight vigil. It was the first time in the city's history that a student organized a community event about 9/11 which allowed minorities of many different backgrounds to vocalize their seldom heard stories. The experience not only developed peace in my mind and heart, but allowed me to understand how it was built from within.

Actively listening to my peers' stories, I became mindful, as in my yoga practice, of their words and thoughts. Relating them to my own experience, I recognized our intertwined destinies, as I did when learning about karma. I imagined, as Dr. King did, a better world, and, like Mother Teresa, I took the initiative to make a change. But ultimately, it started with becoming mindful and using my knowledge to benefit others.

This has significant implications for our world. I believe that many world issues originate from an individuals' lack of mental and emotional peace. So, the individual, irrespective of background, must uncover the solution. By using tools such as inquiry and meditation, an individual will develop mindfulness. Being mindful, if individuals are exposed with experiences with those of different backgrounds, they recognize shared struggles, develop empathy, respect their differences, and realize the interconnectedness in the world. Feeling their common humanity, these individuals will reflect on their experiences, define their unique story, and responsibly use their knowledge with others for a good purpose. Everyone in this world has experienced a unique internal struggle, but the earlier that one discovers and utilizes the tools to overcome it, the easier it will be to create a peaceful world.

Having overcome my own struggle, I am now the president of one of my university's largest student organizations. My story motivates me to help others develop internal peace through cultivating mindfulness, interconnection, compassion, and reflection. I have learned that building peace is a process which begins from within, and that it is our responsibility to develop it first in ourselves and then in others.

Unblock Your Hearts for Peace

(Original)

Ella Olivares Powell

(Age 8, México & U.S.A. <Living in México>)

Did you realize that everything in the world is connected? Unfortunately, most people don't think of themselves as connected to everything. Right now on this planet, there are a lot of people with anger and fear in their hearts. They believe they are alone. They don't feel connected. They think they need to keep their hearts protected. They buy more stuff and try to control other people to feel connected. But what people really need to do is to remove what is blocking their pure hearts.

When we unblock our hearts, we build peace and love. We begin to believe in ourselves. When we are connected to our hearts we know that everyone is equal. When we feel connected, we realize we are a part of the earth. A person with a pure heart takes care of the earth and protects her from harm. If we respect each other and the planet, and remember we are all connected, there will be peace in the entire world!

You see, the heart and mind are equals. They work together. Our mind gives us our thoughts and ideas, but the heart makes the mind feel comfortable and loving. Anger and fear cause these block on the heart. Everybody should try to relax and breathe and ask, why am I scared or angry? You can try to write out your feelings like I do, or tell a close friend or family member what you are feeling. You can meditate or just play outside to feel connected again. I had my first yoga class when I was only three years old! Do whatever is right for you to unblock your heart. When you wake up the next day you will feel a golden heart as pure as the sun!

When we see people treating each other badly, or someone treats us badly, that can add more layers to the heart. When my family moved to Chile from Mexico for a year, I went to a new school and they treated me differently. That didn't make me feel good, but even though it hurt, I knew I had to keep believing in myself. It doesn't matter what other people say, the color of your skin, or if you are a boy or girl. You should remember, I am powerful and I am great! You

can even run for president! I speak English and Spanish and have an American mom and a Latin American dad. We love to travel to new places. I want the world to be a peaceful place where everyone can travel and learn about different cultures and countries.

When I connect with nature I feel so alive and full of peace! I even hug trees! People pollute the earth, but why? We live by a beautiful creek, but some neighbors were polluting it. We reported what they were doing and I did my best not to let that sadness interfere with my pure heart. That's what we all have to do. It is difficult to see how people who are not connected to their hearts treat the earth. But we can be patient and do our best to teach them new ways. My family works in the solar business. I hear about clean energy and helping people who live in remote places. I would like to see the whole world connected with clean energy!

It can seem like things are going pretty badly on earth with glaciers melting, pollution, and wars. The world as we know it could disappear and we humans might not be here anymore. It would be a very lonely planet. You should ask yourself; do you want the world to be better or worse? I want the world to be better and peace starts in each of our hearts. We don't need a lot of new stuff. What we need is love. What we need is to feel connected. What does it do for you when you are angry? You are only hurting, YOU! So let's unblock our hearts, connect to each other, connect the earth, and live in peace!

Understanding Different Ideas, Keeping Gratitude in Mind

(Original in Japanese)

Kei Hattori

(Age 13, Japan)

Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano

I think I have a pretty calm personality, but I sometimes fight with my younger brother. Whenever this happens, my mind is not calm. And sometimes, I look back on it and regret what I have done or feel even angrier.

One day when this happened, I went to the temple for tea practice, and I learned two sayings from my teacher: Within nothing, there is unlimited supply, and The middle of the circle is hollow. These sayings left me with the impression that I am but a very small human being, and I have kept them in my mind ever since.

Within nothing, there is unlimited supply are the words of Sotouba, a poet and Zen monk during the Song dynasty in China. It means that there is nothing that can exist independently, unconnected to anything else. Everything is interconnected and is able to exist only through mutual support. The middle of the circle is hollow means that it is good to always keep empty space in your mind. This is what I learned from my teacher.

For example, the school lunch that we eat every day contains rice and vegetables grown through the hard work of many farmers, which are then cooked by other people. Thanks to the work of all these people, we can enjoy a delicious lunch. Every day, we eat many different things, some of which come from foreign countries. The black tea I often drink is one example. When I think about this, I realize that I am able to stay healthy every day by eating things made with hard work and care by people all over the world. When I think about it even more, I see that I am living interconnected with and supported by people around the world.

But what if a certain food item?for example, a head of cabbage?becomes infested by insects? People who dislike insects might not want to eat the cabbage, even if they wash it clean. On

the other hand, people who don't dislike insects might think that if the cabbage has insects on it, it is safe to eat. I think this is an example of the saying The middle of the circle is hollow. From the insects' standpoint, the cabbage is food for them, and that is why they are there. But from people's point of view, having insects on the cabbage becomes either a good thing or a bad thing. There is no problem if they see it as a good thing, but it's unfortunate if they see it as a bad thing.

This kind of thing often happens inside my own mind. If it's a rainy day and I have to walk to school, I don't like it because I will get wet. But if I'm at home, I think about how the trees and plants will get lots of water. If I'm doing homework that I like, I enjoy it even if I have a lot to do, but if it's homework I don't like, I feel annoyed that I have so much of it.

I think that this difference in perspective or mood also leads to fights between my brother and me. Perhaps it is because my brother and I feel comfortable enough with each other to say what we want to say, but on days I am feeling irritable, I lash out at him for something he says casually, and it turns into a fight. If my mood were calmer, I'm sure I would laugh it off. Hearing the advice of my teacher at the temple made me reflect deeply. I thought about whether I had done the same thing with my friends or with others. At the same time, I was a little surprised to realize that my practice time at the temple is always very enjoyable and calm.

Every day, all kinds of feelings come up in my mind, so it is difficult to keep empty space in my mind. At the same time, I think it is essential to have my own firm ideas about things. What is important is to understand that the people around me and others have different ways of thinking, and to always be mindful that my own thoughts are not too self-centered, and that my assertions are not too forceful. It is also important to remember to feel gratitude for the fact that I am never living all on my own, but am always supported by people around me and all around the world. By remembering this, I can make daily efforts to be of service to others, and to always have a positive attitude and peace in my mind. As a result, I think that my surroundings will also be enveloped in a peaceful atmosphere. In order to hold onto this feeling, I would like to continue learning from my teacher, reading many books, and having different experiences, so that I can learn a great many things and become a broad-minded person.

2015 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 2nd Prize]

Faith in the Defences of the Heart

(Original in Japanese)

Yuuki Otani

(Age 16, Japan)

Kaisei Gakuin High School, Hokkaido

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. When I first encountered these words, they made me think.

What would those defences be made of?

A little while before I encountered these words, when I was in junior high school, I was involved in fundraising activities for building schools in Cambodia. I was shocked to learn about that country's brutal history and how people had lost their lives because they were unable to read, write, and do math, and I felt compelled to help do something about it. I felt that this was what I should be doing right now. Through my volunteer activities, I developed a desire to go to Cambodia. I wanted to find out if the image I had of the country was correct.

After I entered high school, I was blessed with an opportunity to go on a study tour to Cambodia. Under the clear sky with the large sun shining down, I sang with local children and danced yosakoi with them. I remember my nervousness at meeting them, and the smiles that filled their faces. They continued to wave their hands until I could hardly be seen. Every day truly felt like a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

At the same time, I also met people who had lost limbs because of landmines, and children who could not live with their parents due to extreme poverty. At the Genocide Museum, our guide spoke from his own experience. With tears in his eyes, he told us firmly and pointedly, "I am unlucky to have been born a Cambodian." The harsh reality became deeply embedded in my heart. All of this suffering—the landmine injuries, the poverty that kept children from living with their parents, and the feeling that it was bad luck to have been born in the country—stemmed from the civil war that had taken place there 30 years earlier. The guide's

tearful eyes have never left my mind. They had suffered so much, yet had done nothing wrong.

As those thoughts were going around in my head, I encountered the words: Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed. The words resonated with me, and that is what made me think, "What would those defenses be made of?"

Then, I happened to recall another incident. While I was engaged in my activities for Cambodia, I met a certain Japanese man. In university, he had written a thesis on the topic "What is happiness?" and he had talked to people all over the world. At one point, he was in Cambodia and visited a mountain of trash that was next to a slum. He asked a six year old girl, "When do you feel happy?" But immediately after asking the question, he was overcome with a feeling of guilt. Smoke was coming from the mountain of trash, the air was hot and oppressive, and there was a stench that stung the eyes. Used needles were scattered at the girl's feet, and her feet were bleeding. He supposed that in those circumstances, there was no way the girl could feel happiness. He quickly canceled his inquiry, but the interpreter had already started asking the question to the girl. The man felt so badly that he could not look at the girl, but with a smile on her face the girl said to him, "I am happy now." He could not believe his ears. Where could she find happiness in this kind of life? Proudly, she continued, "Right now, I'm looking for food for my mother and her new baby. I'm happy to have my mother and the baby. I'm happy because I can do something for them."

The beauty in the girl's heart made me speechless. If the state of that girl's mind could be called 'defences of peace,' then those defences were built of gratitude and action for the benefit of others. When I thought about it, it struck a chord in my heart.

In that case, I thought, I would work for the benefit of the children in Cambodia. In school, I appealed for contributions to send them goods and materials. I put up a poster in the school with my message. I felt uneasy about it, but when I got to school the next day, that feeling went away. In the morning, an older student came to my classroom and delivered stationery supplies. A friend of mine brought her cherished toys that were filled with memories. Another classmate carried a bag overflowing with notebooks all the way from his house, which was far away. I was overwhelmed by their warmth and generosity.

Of course, the amount that I can do is very little. But I believe that if I am faithful to the defences of peace within my heart, that feeling will be passed on to someone around me. For this reason, I want to be a person who takes initiative to act for the benefit of others.

2015 International Essay Contest for Young People
[Youth Category – 2nd Prize]

A Gift
(Original)

David Hinolan
(Age 18, Philippines)
Colegio de San Agustin-Bacolod

When you build houses and infrastructures, you save nations. But when you build harmony and peace, you save generations to come.

I was one of those many people, hopeless about the wonderful magic peace could able to bring in this world. Everyday when I went to school, down on streets laid dirty beggars stretching wide-open hands for food to uphold them from death's arrival. All I saw was chaos worsen by wars happening day and night, and by the influence of disunity lurking to destroy homes across the globe. And during supper, I would nonchalantly watch news of people killed in wars—I became numb thinking that these events normally happen. So why should I care?

I lived my life safely at a city, away from the deathly grips of war-tanks there on the Middle East and Africa where most of the wars break-out. I would even consider myself fortunate to be born in the Philippines. I can freely run along the green grasses and hallways of our school; or sleep tightly on my soft bed as the beautiful descend of moonlight passes by my glass window. And when the dawn arrives with the first morning light to wake me up, the touch of my cheeks against my pillow shows life—a tangible proof of serenity. Yet, as each day that I ventured on my routine, there's emptiness inside that bothered me so much.

There were confusions at the very young age. I kept digging for answers—trying to quench this quest for peace. It continued for so long and my life felt like an actual battlefield, only that I was dealing with two dangerous unseen forces which kept me broken.

Until one day, in the midsummer, we had our ecological camp, a local project of Green-Alert. The first sight that welcomed me and my classmates were the trees so tall that seemingly touched the clouds; their high branches swayed and their evergreen leaves rustled each time

the winds sailed through the atmosphere. We had several humanitarian and ecological talks. But what struck me the most was the video concerning the lives of people on Africa—it opened a lot of closed thoughts I had failed to see in the past.

That night, while viewing the video of African families sharing resources in the middle of scarcity and trying to pursue peace at times that the lugubriousness of wars surrounds them—epiphanies rained over like meteor-shower penetrating in the depths of my consciousness. Selflessness is genuine peace, I thought. Even though I'm far away from wars, it doesn't really mean that I'm at peace. For the greatest war happening on earth is in our minds—unknown voices and guilt—the guilt that everyday when I go to school, I don't even bother to help those beggars who just wanted to reach tomorrow. And over the years, as I dwelled in apathy, emptiness started consuming me—giving me conflicts and confusions.

It was a beautiful and silent night as I happen to realize the true essence of peace—to find it within and share it to others. I guess peace is not freely running on green grasses knowing that children on war-zones run but from bullets that are pending to ravage them. Nor on the touch against your soft pillows as some people die on streets due to rough pavements and freezing temperature; neither on your wealth—because money can't restore broken families. Peace is sharing blessings with those who are in need and feeling your heart flutter in happiness each time people project smiles through the little kind acts you're doing.

Building peace in our hearts and minds is to care. Our world is like a big human, and every country is like the small body parts that should act in unity. How can we sleep at night knowing that other people suffer from hunger? Peace is to trust God and being able to stand in the darkest hour of your life.

After all, unraveling peace within is talent. But when you use that to change the world, it becomes a gift.

Contentment (Original)

Mandlenkosi Edson Thusile
(Age 19, South Africa)

Kensington Secondary School, Johannesburg

Each and every one of us is a significant member of the global community and a valuable asset of the human family; hence the state of our inner being has a great impact on the functioning and the sustainability of our respective communities. Our inner worlds, undoubtedly contribute to the nurturing and or, deprivation of peace in our families, communities and the world at large.

Often quoted, 'we can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace in our inner world' 'Dalai Lama XV1. Truly, it all begins within ourselves.

The activity of our minds weaves stories into beliefs that shapes our reactions, sets our priorities, and drives our communication to each other and our actions in our communities. Should each one of us build peace in our inner beings, wars, poverty, xenophobia, violence and all seemingly endless conflicts would undoubtedly cease.

The state of contentment requires little but much of an individual's effort. By simply thinking well of others, accepting who we are and what we have, working hard in good faith towards achieving our personal goals, forgiving our wrongdoers, appreciating the mere fact that we are all imperfect beings, celebrating our diversity while embracing our differences. Accepting our similarities, striving for harmonious coexistence, working together for the human family, we build peace in our hearts by allowing ourselves to be content about who we are while building peace in our minds by thinking well about others.

What a feeling! The beautiful feeling that can only be precisely articulated by the heart. The feeling of establishing peace in the heart and in the mind is beautiful beyond words. It might sound and look impossible, but should every member of the human family can have a vision

upon the positive affirmation of inner peace for the betterment of our global community, then we can undoubtedly achieve inner peace for the benefit of the outer world.

Emanating from a profoundly disadvantaged background, my Mother has always been my father and my mother at the same time. Many times, people made me feel empty by not having a father-figure in my breeding and to some extent, I felt the pain of his abandonment, I swore at him every day for voluntarily leaving us. Forsaking my mother to suffer with my siblings and I. There was never a day I foresaw my self-forgiving my father .I had countless questions to ask him. 'Did my disability drive you to leave us?' "did my Mother wrong you? 'If so," can't you resolve whatever problem you have with her and come back home?" I could not find him for questions. He perhaps did not want anything to do with a disabled child.

In all the constant reminders about my clubb feet, my Mother obviated me from participating in sports events at school because of my disability, therefore, I couldn't play soccer with normal kids. This cut me deep. It seemed like I have nothing to offer in the world.

As in all other days prepared for school early in the morning on my birthday, 2014. My sister came to me, grabbed me and kissed me and she started telling me how much she loves me. My heart melted. It was on that day that my sister's words persuaded me to view myself with a different perspective .I began attending student counselling at school and gradually built peace in my heart and in my mind by firstly accepting myself. My clubb feet. My disability. And my absent father. Step-by-step, every day, I learned how to solve my inner conflicts and became more loving to others and myself.

When I built peace in my heart, I eliminated all the negative emotions I had and the peace that I built in my mind drove my positive emotions and my perspective about life, shifted from negativity to positivity. Early December last year, 2014, I volunteered to render services as a motivational speaker at a nearby home for the disabled teaching them about the importance of contentment. With the peace built in my heart and mind, I landed at the state of contentment.

It all begins and ends with an individual's inner world.

Surely may peace prevail on earth!

Building Peace One Friend at a Time (Original)

Divine Gyau Barfour
(Age 10, Ghana)

Global Village Christian Academy International School (GLOVICA), Kumasi – A/R

Building peace in our hearts and minds is like building a house. When you are building a house you build it step by step and brick by brick. You cannot just build peace all at once. But you have to first think about it in your mind. Next, you build peace in your heart. Then you go back to building it again in your mind. After this mixing of mind to heart to mind; next, you test what you have built in your mind and heart with one friend at a time.

We think about peace in our minds. "What is peace?" we ask our self. *Peace usually means being quiet or not in bad relations with someone.* Then we should ask, "How do I keep quiet, that is, not argue or quarrel with someone?" and "How do I stay in good relations with that same person?" Our friends show us what I call our "Peace Temperature". Are we cool or are we hot? To be cool means to be full of peace. To be hot means to be full of anger and violence. To be in the middle means we have to work harder at being cool and at peace. Our goal is to be at least 85-90% peaceful; because no one is perfect.

Next, we need to build peace in our heart. Building is a verb, a doing word or an action word. Peace is built in our hearts by practicing how to be peaceful. When my friend gets angry with me and starts insulting me, I should not shout and insult him back. That is very hard because he, too, insults me too much; and I want to punch him. No one said building peace in our heart is easy. I have to forgive my friend. I have to tell him that he is hurting me; and that he should stop. If he can not stop, I have to ask myself, "Is this person really my friend?" *A friend is somebody who loves you even when you do not agree about things.*

Building peace in our hearts and minds means to love, forgive and help each other. When a friend is in need, share with him or her. If your friend sins against you, you should forgive him or her and take hatred out of your heart and mind. That is why we must go back to the mind

again. After practicing peace, we must go back again to thinking about if what we did matched with what peace is: "Was I quiet and cool?" "Did I try to keep a good relationship with my friend?" And even though I am writing about building peace one friend at a time, we should also try to build peace with strangers, because strangers can become friends.

So, we build peace in our minds first by thinking about what peace means. Then we try "doing" peace from the heart by forgiving, loving and helping others. Then we go back to thinking in our minds: "Did I do what was peaceful; or did I argue or start a fight; or am I hating somebody in my heart?" After we mix this all around, we can fix our mistakes by saying, "I'm sorry" or "Forgive me" or even "I forgive you."

A proverb goes like this: *Show me your friend, and I will tell you who you are.* A friend is like our mirror. We look at ourselves by the way we talk to and relate to each other. Bad friends turn us into hateful people. Good friends help us to build peace.

My friend Jeff and I are good friends. We help each other with school work. We eat together; and if one of us needs money, we give it. This brings hope and shows love. That is what peace is all about. If we can do this to one friend and that friend does the same to another friend and to another friend, then peace will be built quickly among all people in the classroom, in the community, in the nation, between nations, then around the whole world. So build peace... one friend at a time.

正義の心を持って

(原文)

門松 心美 (12歳)

静岡県

不二聖心女子学院中学校

「私には夢がある。それは、いつの日かジョージア州の赤土の丘の上で、かつての奴隷の子孫とかつての奴隷主の子孫が、ともに兄弟愛のテーブルに着くことができることである。(中略) いつの日か私の幼い四人の子どもたちが、彼らの肌の色によってではなく、人格の深さによって評価される国に住めるようになることである。」

これはキング牧師の言葉だ。社会に存在していた人種隔離制度と戦い、正しい考えを貫いた人だ。キング牧師は自分自身が人種差別に苦しみながらも、いつかアメリカ国民皆がお互いを認め合う日がやって来るといふ夢を捨てず、あきらめなかった。

私は五年生の時、「伝記」の授業でキング牧師を知ったが、このキング牧師の言葉は今でも私の心の中に響いている。

私はよく母と平和について語り合う。

「本当の幸せってどういうことだろうね。」

家族と一緒においしいご飯が食べられる。温かい家で暮らすことができる。友達と笑い合える。言葉・行動の自由。まだまだたくさんある。

戦争を体験した祖父がいつも言うのは、

「心美や真希は本当に幸せだなあ。」

私の祖父は、五歳の時に戦争を体験し、お父さんを日本兵として戦場に送り出し、母・兄弟とともに防空壕に逃げこみながら、家族を守るという経験をしている。日本軍が負けた時は信じられず、道端で仲間と肩を組んで「もしも日本が負けたなら電信柱に花が咲く」と歌い続けていたそうだ。私たちには想像もつかない、恐怖や苦しみがあったのを感じる。そんな祖父は日常生活の中で「ありがとう」という言葉をよく口にする。食事の後の「ごちそうさま」は誰よりも大きな声だ。あたりまえにすごしてきた一つ一つが平和に包まれた本当に幸せな生活なんだと思い返した。この安心して生活できる環境に感謝して、一生懸命に生きていくこと、情報の発達した社会でたくさんのかたを勉強し、たくさんのかたを学ぶこと、そして家族や友達を思いやり、助け合っていくことがとても大切な事なのではないかと考える。

私はいつか国境なき医師団に入るという夢を持っている。お医者さんとして、世界のどこかで苦しんでいる子供たちを助けたい。戦争の恐ろしさにおびえている子どもたちに夢を持たせてあげたい。今、自分が力をつけて、世の中の人々みんなが幸せになれるように活動したいと思う、そして、他人をうらやむのではなく、それぞれの良さを引き出して、平等に助け合っていけるように心がけていきたい。

「平和を心に築く」とは、「真の平和とは単に緊張がないだけではなく、正義が存在することである」とキング牧師が言ったように、世の中で争いが起こった時、それは間違っているとはっきり言うことのできる、正義の心を一人一人が持つこと、今現代の生活が私たちが幸せであるということを見つめ直して、自分にまず何ができるかを考えることなのではないだろうかと思う。

私は、これから一人でも多く、争いによって傷つく人、命を落とす人が減り、一人でも多く、世界の平和を願う人が増えていけばよいと思う。

Building Blocks

(Original)

Ayesha Sahar Mirza
(Age 13, Pakistan)

'We always dreaded going through that alley, but it was the only way home. Smoking keenly, that day a gaggle of street boys was loitering about in there. No place to call home where domestic violence and jailed fathers was a common theme, the lessons learnt were: misuse of power is sweet and revenge the ultimate refuge.

As we passed by, they shouted obscenities at us. Upon hearing his father's name- the head of town's police- Amir, injured, swore back. With harsh barks of laughter the boys closed upon us, the acrid reek of their cigarettes pressing hard upon us. They checked our clothes for money. Finding few paisas and an asthmatic pump, which they blithely tossed into the gutter, they were disappointed.

On our protesting they started beating us, jeering at our helplessness. After a final punch in Amir's stomach the boys satisfied but simultaneously scared of getting caught, scarpere away.

Severely bruised, my leg twisted painfully, I watched with horror as Amir, being critically asthmatic, struggled to breathe. No one around, the strangled cries for help by a twelve year old me, were in vain. Tears merged with blood, scalding hot on my cheek, and I could do nothing but watch my only friend's eyes desperately locking upon mine. I felt rather than saw his life seep away from him, taking away with it a huge part of me too.

Amir's death left me scarred for a large part of my teenage. I was told that life goes on, let bygones be bygones. But grief seemed like my bleak future- the ultimate unrequited love. My survivor's guilt gave me an unconscious debilitating sense of "death for a death" and I dwelled more on why he died, why I lived, how I missed him.

Gradually, I realized that my thoughts and feelings were limiting me. My life was a gift and instead of focusing on the loss of a life, I should rather celebrate life with all the more enthusiasm and respect.

I saw a world where birds sang at dawn, where flowers bloomed, where each day without fail the sun would rise to greet us and then go back to wherever it goes, assuring its presence everyday and the next. I lived in a world of daily miracles. Miracles which may have been centuries old, but have never ceased to entertain the smile of a child. In such a rich universe my grief seemed petty; I sought comfort in the Creator of these miracles- God.

I forgave the boys who once made my life hell, for my sake- to purge out all unpleasant emotions which makes- me- the carrier feel unhealthy.

My patience, acceptance and the shift of my focus on healthier thoughts brought me peace and taught qualities of resilience and fortitude that otherwise I would never have learned.'

And with that my Grandfather finished recalling his confrontation with life at its fullest. Now nearing his 94th birthday, he is the emblem of peace in our home. Always glad to be either the generous adviser or the confidante of the tender trials and delights of the young people growing up about him, he is a man with an atmosphere of repose about him which soothes whoever is in his vicinity. He isn't doing a thing that I could see, except sitting there and holding our very family together.

This story taught me that building peace in our hearts and minds is an active multi-stepped process, where certain limiting beliefs should be replaced with healthier ones, bringing one closer to the Creator and His Creation. This power to change is inherent in human nature, and is indeed a strength that we should strive to develop instead of getting enamored by false illusions of strength such as social rankings and financial status.

My grandfather is cumbered by the cares of the world but has learned and taught us too, to find within oneself the cement and the building blocks to lay the foundations of peace in our hearts and minds.

'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.' -Martin Luther King, Jr.

世界を知ること

(原文)

佐々木 風美 (14歳)

宮城県

宮城県仙台二華中学校

「こういう時だから、やらなくてはいけないんだと思う」。思わず呟いた私を、母は驚いたように見つめていた。

それは昨年、毎年実施されていたある日中韓の子ども交流事業が中止になったという記事を、新聞で見つけた時だった。3か国から集まった300人の子ども達が、寝食をともにしながら文化交流をするというもので、私も5年前に参加したものだ。

その時は、言葉は通じなくても、何もかもが新鮮で楽しかった。時間を惜しんで語り合い、笑い合った仲間は、今でも私の大切な宝ものだ。その時に交わした、「20歳になり、大人になったら再会しよう」という約束は、私の心の支えでさえある。

だから、中止になるということに、やり切れなさがこみあげて来たのだ。

一方で母は、報道で知る様々な事情から、今の情勢では中止もしかたない事だと思ったらしい。当然とさえ思ったようだ。だから私の言葉を聞いて、驚いたのだろう。

母の思いは、私にも理解はできる。でも、私の経験から、異なった民族、国どうしが平和に暮らしていくという大切なことを考える、せつかくの機会を300人の子ども達が失ってしまったように思え、残念でたまらなかった。

私は、人の心の中に平和を築くことは、決して難しいことではないと思う。多くの人々は、戦争はしたくない。平和に暮らしたい。それでも争いが、この世界から絶えることはない。そのはじまりは、私は人々が考えることをやめてしまった時だと思うのだ。人は誰も、苦しみや怒りを抱えている。それがあつ時、他への攻撃へと形を変え、正義や信念という名のもとで走り出してしまった時、平和が保たれなくなってしまうのではないか。

私の大切な本に、「フェリックスとゼルダ」という、ホロコーストについて書かれたものがある。そこに書かれているのは、日々の苦しみから、考えることをやめ、不安や不満をユダヤ人に向けた、ごく普通の人々の狂気の姿だった。

今、ニュースを見ている、誰もが、正しいと信じたことで戦っている。生きる為、宗教の為、自由の為。多分、一人一人は正しい。でも正しさは、決して一つではないのだと思う。自分達の正しさと、立場や文化の異なる人々の正しさは、違って当たり前だ。

だとしたら、私たちにできるのは、考え続けることのはずだ。誰かが正義を声高に発した時、「本当にそうだろうか」と立ち止まる時間。誰かの理不尽なふるまいに傷つけられた時、「なぜ」と考えられる自分。大きな圧力や声に、決して波長を合わせずに心を見つめる自分があることだ。それができるのは、しがらみも責任もなく、未熟といわれる私達若い世代なのだと思う。

私が経験したように、好奇心につき動かされ、自由に国境を越え、言語を超えて、お互いに自分の夢を語りあえる若さが、世界が平和に暮らすための大切な材料となる。

人の心に平和を築くこと。それは、考え続ける強さと、用心深さを持つことだ。そのために私たちは世界を知る、ということから始めよう。その一歩が仲間を広げ、やがて希望につながると私は思う。

It Starts with Me

(Original)

Maria Laura Dumbrava

(Age 14, Romania)

"Mircea cel Batran" National College of Constanta

"Who am I?" That is the question that every day I try to find an answer to. What shapes me as a human being are my thoughts and my actions while I interact with the others: children, adults, animals and nature. I have always felt a bond between us all and I found my strength and inspiration in God, family, friends and teachers. I think we are who we choose to be and that is why it is important to know all the alternatives when we take decisions.

The first page of my diary is an open-ended collection of promises I have made to myself: never to compromise my honesty, always listen before judging, be positive and find solutions, never be afraid of making mistakes as we can learn constructive lessons from them, set goals and take steps to reach them, appreciate and respect the others, defend the truth and speak up for those who are absent, love and help my family, my friends and my peers, not just take but also offer. So far, I may say that this is how I relate to the world and I strive to turn my beliefs into deeds.

The first time I reacted was when a boy from my class, Todirică, came to school with a bad haircut and some of boys started picking on him, throwing his cap to the ground. I went over to them and suggested we all played "paper planes". We started negotiating the teams and that was the moment when I realized I had the power to change things. I made the boys see Todirică as a partner, as our colleague. Another thing that I have become aware of is that play unites us and it is a good way of overcoming conflicts.

Three years ago I got involved in recycling paper and collecting used oil in my neighborhood. It was my way of dealing with pollution. In addition to this, I and my friends have fun spending our time outdoors in a constructive way: we go to the beach at weekends and play, run, laugh while collecting the garbage we come across during our walk along the shore. What I love

most is that, when we start picking up empty bottles and plastic bags, there are people on the beach who come to help us.

Last year in spring I went to a meeting with kids of our age who got into trouble and faced the consequences. They used ethnobotanics and were expelled from school. We gathered to talk about our future and focused on the steps each of us had to take to choose the best alternative from that point on. The purpose was to communicate, learn from the shared experiences and take responsibility for our actions.

This is the second year in a row when I tried to do more for our planet. I worked hard and studied a lot and success followed. I created two space settlements where communities were based on respect for life, justice and liberty, and did their best to both sustain themselves out there and help the Earth. My projects were SpaceBurg (2014) and Twins (2015) and were awarded the 1st prize at NASA Ames Space Settlement Contest. I consider that going to space could be a way of putting an end to the wars started for territories and resources. It could boost governments to work together, share new goals and achieve progress and prosperity for the entire mankind.

Little by little, as the words I write engulf the pages of my diary, I get to see the reflection of myself. This is how I build peace in my heart and mind: by doing what I consider to be the right thing which always seems to find echoes in the hearts of the others and form inspirational ripples in the mind of our community and beyond.

I will conclude this essay with Dalai Lama's words: "an atmosphere of peace must first be created within ourselves, then gradually expand to include our families, our communities, and ultimately the whole planet", and, I will add, the whole universe. All it takes is determination, hard work and love.

Make Your Own Fairytale

(Original)

Nguyen Phuong Dung

(Age 16, Vietnam)

Phan Boi Chau High School, Nghe An Province

It was not until the last summer that I myself finally realized the real meaning of “peace” in the most hopeless place. It’s still fresh in my mind that sweltering day, when I had a chance to visit the love-aid house for the war victims in Quang Tri, the area bearing the most horrific burden after the two Vietnam wars. Capturing my attention were an old woman and her son who both had suffered from the herbicide dioxin Agent Orange, the most toxic molecule known to science even until now. To my surprise, their hospitality and optimism touched my heart inside. The mother who was blind and holistically paralytic told me proudly about the past. She mentioned neither how cruelly the enemies did nor how hard her family had to struggle during the war. Instead, she related to us how smart and brave Vietnamese were at that dire time as if she had forgotten about what the enemies had done to herself as well as her family, friends. Despite all the pain torturing her family every single moment both physically and spiritually, what she handed on to her child was not the hate, the longing for taking revenge but the desire to live meaningfully. Under those blind eyes, I could feel such a shining heart filled with hope although her father and husband had died in the war, and her son, the second generation subject to that hideous poison was fighting against the Death every second. And it was at that moment that I realized even the worst cannot destroy the peace in hearts and mind.

In fact, the thing putting Vietnam on the map, ironically, is those heinous wars, or at least that’s what we often hear most. Up to now, Vietnam has had about 5 million victims of the Agent Orange after two severe wars. If all of them had lived in hatred, without forgiveness, how could they have overcome this chain of misery, how could my country have been able to develop? When rushing headlong into the wars, they themselves knew exactly what were waiting for them. But they still moved forward, fought and sacrificed as heroes because of just one simple thing, their soul sparkled with serenity. Now that even the weapon-makers haven’t

yet found the solution to compensate for them apart from money, the only thing relieving their pain is their willingness to forgive, to seek peace in hearts and mind.

I don't know what "peace" means to you, I'm even not sure whether my definition of "peace" is right or not but I hope I can talk everyone into believing in that miraculous word. As a child, my mother often told me lots of fairytales. Though they weren't real, she said people, both children and adult, still wanted to believe in them. At first I didn't understand, but then I realized that fairytale was the only place we could live with peace in our soul. And maybe that's the reason why we all want to turn our life story into fairytale with only bright colors.

As a citizen of a country undergoing two painful wars, I know clearly how hard it was for a nation to overcome those dark days, but I believe it is much tougher for anyone to live with the "war" inside heart and mind. The past is unchangeable, what can change is our attitude to it. If we only look behind, we will just find pain and fear. If we learn from it, we'll find it priceless. If we get over it, we'll find peace, relief in our soul. I'm proud of my country because of not only its indomitability but also its tolerance. As Vietnamese, we are taught to forgive the past, as well as ourselves to be truly peaceful in our hearts and mind, to turn pain into strength and to make our own fairytale without hate and selfishness.

It's about time to ask yourself whether you are ready to make your own fairytale!

思いやる勇氣

(原文)

赤羽根 清美 (17歳)

神奈川県

創価高等学校

2015年の今年、第二次世界大戦の終結から70年の節目を迎えます。私たち高校生をはじめ、今、この世界に生きている人のほとんどは戦争を経験していません。しかし、次世代の世界を作っていくのは、その私たちしかいないのです。

ユネスコ憲章の前文には、「戦争は他人の心の中で生まれるものであるから、人の心の中に平和のとりでを築かなければならない」とあります。戦争は何故起こるのか。私は、自分とは異なった考えや文化を持つ人を特殊だと決めつけて、理解しようとしなから、また、相手より上に立ちたい、土地や物をもっと手に入れたいという心が大きくなりすぎてしまうからだと思います。相手より上に立ち、支配したいという心から生まれる争いは、日本では米の収穫・貯蔵が行われた弥生時代から始まりました。それから今日までのとても長い時間、地球上の人間たちの争いはなくなっていない。なぜ、戦争によって大きな被害が出て、自らの手で争いを終えることができないのか。私が小学生のとき、同じクラスでとても仲の良い友達とケンカをしました。直接ぶつかったわけではなく、別の友達から聞いた話が原因で、1ヵ月間、一言も話さない日々が続きました。私もその友達も早く仲直りをしたいと思っていましたが、お互いに「相手が謝ってくれれば」という気持ちがあり、なかなか自分から謝ることができませんでした。これは、小さなケンカも大国どうしの戦争も同じだと思います。小学生も、国の指導者も同じだと思うのです。「相手が動いてくれれば」という受動的な心が争いを長引かせていると思います。

この地球には70億を超える人々が住んでいます。動物や虫や植物と人間、また人間と人間はつながって、互いに助け合いながら生きています。一人の心が世界中に伝わり、一緒に地球をつくっていると思うので、一人ひとりの心に、相手を思いやる気持ち、尊敬する気持ちを持つことが大切なのではないでしょうか。先日、雨の日に学校へ向かう途中、傘をささずに歩いている後輩を見かけました。私は傘を2本持っていたので、名前も知らない後輩でしたが、勇気を出して声をかけ、傘を貸しました。私は、何とも言えない温かい気持ちになりました。私がしたことは、とても小さなことだったかもしれませんが、小さなことこそが大切だと思います。一人が目の中の一人を、またその人が違う一人のことを思いやって、思いやりが繋がっていけば、争いのない世界に変わっていくと思います。大切な人を支配し、傷つけたいと思う人はいないと私は思うからです。しかし、そのためには、まず

自分から変わっていくことが必要です。相手が謝るのを待っていたり、傘を借りたいと言ってくるのを待っていては、何も変わりません。一歩を踏み出す勇気が必要なのです。

私たち若い人の中には、ユネスコ憲章の存在を知らない人、自分には力が無いと思っている人も多いと思います。しかし、次の世代の平和を担うのは私たちです。一人ひとりが平和の担い手であることを自覚し、勇気と思いやりの心を持って行動していくことが大切ではないでしょうか。

未来の子どもたちと共に

(原文)

富岡 はづき (18歳)

東京都

東京大学教育学部附属中等教育学校

「世界中に友達を沢山つくりなさい。そうすればその友達がいる国はあなたにとって大切な国になる。そしてどんどん大切な国が増えていって、最後には世界中が大切になる。それが平和ってことじゃないかな。」修学旅行先の広島で、被爆二世の方から聞いた言葉だ。平和というものを、各国の代表者の努力の賜だと捉えていた私にとって、好意的な気持ちをつなげてじわじわ広がっていきこうという、この言葉は衝撃だった。それから、その人はこう続けた。「知らなくて当たり前よ。今日をきっかけに、考え始めてくれたらいいの。」あまりの爽やかさに圧倒された。この人の口調には少しも被害者ぶったところがなく、むしろ前向きで、被害者、加害者というイメージは他者からの押しつけだったのだと感じた。そして、自分の無知と、それに気付かなかった自分の厚かましさをとても後悔した。

さて、私は毎朝電車を利用し学校へ通っている。先日、車内を見回してふと、私たちは随分と簡単に、お気に入りの囲まれて過ごすことができるようになったなと思った。イヤホンで音楽を聞いたり、ゲームをしたり、SNSに写真を上げたり、今の社会には、一見すると外とのつながりを強めているようで、実は外界をシャットアウトし自分だけの世界に浸るための道具が溢れている。車内にずらっと並ぶ、周囲に無関心な黒い顔を見て、私がしゃんと前を向き、電車に乗ったのはいつだろうと悲しくなった。それと同時に、小柄な二世の方の、世界に向かって大きく両手を広げたような直裁的な姿勢が目につく、自分の行動が恥ずかしくなった。私のお気に入りの中に、大切な人と本当に共有すべきものが、一体いくつあるだろうか。

日本社会を表す言葉に、「車座社会」というものがある。「車座に坐る」とは、「多くの人々が輪の形になり、内側に向かって座ること」であり、そんな独特の雰囲気は日本社会は持ち合わせているということである。全員が内側を向く形態は、スポーツの試合の作戦会議や、円陣としてよく見られる。この形は集団の心構えを一つにするために非常に有効なのだろう。逆に、車座は仲間以外の者への排他的情熱を高めるための仕組みとも言える。そう考えると、車内で見かけるスマホ族も車座を組んでいるのだと思う。自分と、自分のお気に入りとの非常に小さな車座である。

車座に坐る、ということつまり、仲間とそうでない者との境目をはっきりと区切るということだ。外から仲間の輪の中に誰かが入ろうとすれば、全力で阻む。もちろん、内側を向いて互いに協力し合い、一致団結したからこそ、日本は目覚ましい発展をとげたのであろう。しかし、努力を積み重ねる

その姿は、外側から見れば拒絶的な背中ではなかったはずだ。多分、こうやって日本社会は形成され、また日本と世界とのつながり方も形成された。「イスラム国」のニュースに怯え、領土問題の流れに憤慨する。日本では今、とても平和とは言えない世論が飛びかっている。「平和を追求する論理は難解で分かりづらい。戦争へ向かう論理は明快で分かりやすい。」と新聞で読んだ。私たちは、自分のテリトリーを崩されまいとして、外界を排除することに必死になりすぎていないだろうか。「明快で分かりやすい」論理に飛びつく前に、日本の戦争体験者が忍耐強く伝えてきて下さった声を「難解で分かりづらく」とも、大切にしたい。

私には、将来教師になるという夢がある。教師になったら、自国他国を問わず正しい知識を子どもたちに伝えるという使命がある。広島に行ってから、前よりもずっと、戦争関連のニュースが目に入るようになった。自分の経験から生まれた「加害と被害を越えた人道」という指標を軸に、私自身ももっと学びたい。そして、未来の子どもたちと共に、平和を築ける教師になりたい。これが、私が平和へとつなぐ第一歩だ。

A Sustainable Peaceful Mindset

(Original)

Vojna Ngjeqari

(Age 24, Albania <Living in Austria>)

University of Vienna

I am a student from Albania currently pursuing the Bachelor Degree in Political Science in Vienna, Austria. Before I started the Bachelor, I had to learn the German language as prerequisite to begin with the studies. I couldn't speak German before (not even a single word), so I finished all the language courses till C1 level for one year. After one year survival in Vienna through English, I was a witness of myself in realizing the relevance of speaking the mother language of another country. Apart from that I started to enjoy even capitalistic benefits. Having a good command of German language facilitated the process of Job-finding. I found a job as tennis coach in an Austrian Tennis academy.

Furthermore during my residence in Vienna and the participations in some Model United Nations in Germany, UK, Brussels, Strasburg and volunteering job at the SGAC (organization with a consultative status with ECOSOC) confronted me with students from different nationalities. As a devoted Christian and student of diplomacy I hated racism, and all the participations in non formal education strengthened my desire to fight it even more. Despite all this integrity, there was only one Nation, the Serbian one that I could never stand. The Serbian, due to all massacres done to Kosovo, which used to be part of Albania. I allowed myself the exception of hating only them. Unfortunately I was surrounded everywhere by Serbians, for the simple reason that in Vienna the Former Yugoslavia minority is huge. At the university, at work as tennis coach the half of my student came from Former Yugoslavia (mostly Serbian), at my dormitory even the secretary was Serbian. With this kind of multicultural environmental, multicultural formal and non formal education, multicultural working atmosphere changed my mind 360 degrees and started to understand the world as one unified system (Serbia included), and I took responsibility to view the interests of individual nations with the needs of the planet. In other words I focused on understanding myself in relation to a global community (Serbia included). I hated for hating them, and didn't compromise to compromise exceptions and yes

political, geographical became irrelevant to me and solutions to today's challenges should be seen beyond the narrow vision of national interests. I have a lot of friends now from Serbia and in July 2013 I traveled to Belgrade for the first time.

In 2014 the football national team of Serbia played against Albania football national team. The match was stopped due to racial attack and racist confrontation between players and fans. At the same time, in the stadium where the entrance of Albanian fans were prohibited, the song, "Kill the Albanians" was sung.

As a response, in 2015 I founded and initiated with the support of University of Vienna the Feminist Organization **Balkanminism**.

Balkanminism is a feminist initiative from female Balkan students at the University of Vienna (from Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Turkey, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Rumania) that bridge-over ethnic hate and conflict in the context of feminist organization in troubled regions, in fact between the two most conflicting sides in the Balkans today: Serbia and Kosovo. The organization contributes to regional feminist theory, and fighting racism through solidarity and intersectionality. The philosophy of the organization is to use educated young women to write with an educative pen and a cosmopolitan tongue a great vision of united Balkan, by emphasizing the crucial role of education in knowledge generation regarding regional feminism in Balkan, and women in their effort to act jointly and soldieries in a region where official channels of communication between governments do not exist.

In conclusion, in a common heritage of humanity where the official language is Multilingualism, spoken by a sweet cosmopolitan Tongue, which will bring the human race even closer to a global citizenship constitution. My story is an example of how through educational programs like Model United Nations and other extracurricular activities of formal and informal education initiated by UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD: 2005-2014) introduced me to a wonderful, international network, created opportunity for me to unlock my potential, and above all shaped, redesigned the system of knowledge to be understood in the context of accelerating social changes. Every single effort to break racism stereotypes in a single human thought is a triumph for the society.

There is no political liberation without education liberation.