

**Winners of International  
Young People's Peace Essay  
Competition 2020**

**YoungPeoplesPeaceEssay.org**



**UNA COVENTRY**

Organised by United Nations Association Coventry Branch

# Winners of Young People's Peace Essay Competition 2020

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by Penny Press  
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sales@pennypress.co.uk

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## Foreword

In November 2020 the United Nations Association Coventry Branch (UNACov) ran the world's first Young People's Peace Essay Competition.

It was organised at short notice but nevertheless managed to attract entries from around the world.

Young people aged up to 25 submitted their essays of up to 500 words on the subject: The Role of Young People in Building Peace.

There were two categories of authors, depending on their age on 31 October 2020

- Authors aged 16 or less
- Authors aged 17-25

The judges, who came from the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations or Coventry Law School, both part of Coventry University, were very impressed with the quality of the entries and thought the Peace Essay was a valuable activity which should be continued.

Each winner received a certificate and a cash prize donated by Coventry Peace Festival.

In 2021 we will be running the competition again and aim to attract even more entries. To find out how to enter and watch a video of the 2020 winners talking about their essays visit <https://youngpeoplespeaceessay.org>



## **Under 17 Category Winners**

## **1st Prize in Under 17 Category and Winner of Judges Special Commendation**

### *Peace Essay*

By Malaika Hussain of Eden Girl's School, Coventry

We all know what peace is: something we all aspire towards but haven't achieved just yet. Whether you are Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or of any religion we all have one thing in common and that is that our faith teaches us to strive toward peace with all humanity. Imagine if everyone slept on a full stomach, if we were all treated fairly, equally and felt at ease. No discrimination, racism, poverty or crime. The world would be perfect, picture perfect. Let's all stop imagining and do something! Our first step would be to believe that we can achieve world peace. We can do this.

We need to start by understanding and realising that a bit of compassion, gentleness and self-perseverance is all we need to re-establish a sense of humanity and resolve all conflict in our lives concerning peace and harmony. As a famous saying by Lao tzu goes "If you want to establish peace in the world, there also must be peace among and in the nations... If one wishes for peace in the cities, then there also must exist peace between neighbours. And all this begins with the peace of mind". We all need to adapt a mindset that manifests a helpful attitude, which spreads happiness and harmony. Together, we should all become role models for our future generation and teach them ways to resolve conflict without engaging in violence.

Humans love categorising. It has come to the extent that we are labelling people according to their religion, colour, gender and race. We cannot possibly achieve world peace if we don't accept each other's differences. Everyone has their own outlook about peace and personally I don't believe there is peace anywhere on this Earth. In my opinion, it's just a clever way to display outward friendship whilst developing brutal tendencies within. For example, Pakistan and India are said to be at 'peace' since the Kargil war in 1999, however the reality is that peace isn't in sight! I genuinely believe that peace is not just about breaking off wars, it is about realising that every person on this Earth is nothing but equal.

"There's no way to peace -- peace is the way"- Gandhi. Peace is a term that makes us at ease and think about beautiful, elegant doves. When we think about what living it peace would be like we imagine absolute paradise and sublimity. But it still remains a dream. If we cannot keep peace within our own lives and ourselves how are we expecting peace at such a grand level? We argue with our loved ones and burst out in anger within seconds. We desire revenge from people around us after trivial and minor issues. We must all learn that our first step is to stay at peace with ourselves, family, and neighbours. This is the way of peace: to overcome evil with good, untruthfulness with honesty and hatred with love. May peace fill our hearts, our homes, and our world.

## 2nd Prize in Under 17 Category

### *Peace*

By Arina Abu Bakir of Eden Girl's School, Coventry

Peace; freedom from disturbance. It is something we all working for, yet we can't achieve it. Every day brings new challenges which we must face. These challenges cannot be battled by one single person. It needs a society: attentive, sympathetic, just, mature, and united.

It is the year 2020, the 21st century, and we are having problems which happened centuries ago. In 1945, there was the holocaust, a mass murder of millions of Jews by the Germans. 75 years later, Uyghur Muslims are being kept in concentration camps and are being tortured, killed, stripped of their own skin and religion. Yet, the world and media are so quiet. No attention has been given to this event and it is still occurring as we take every gulp of polluted air. It is happening all over again right in front of our eyes; a war because of differences, tearing nations apart.

In 1865, slavery supposedly came to an end. However, it's 2020 and I am still questioning whether that is factual. We still have black slaves across the world and black lives are still at risk. The Black Lives Matter movement told me a lot. People can come together and unite to fight the daily battles many are going through. Black, innocent lives are being stolen by the people who are supposed to keep us safe.



Same-sex marriages are illegal in many countries around the world: can't people just love who they want to love? Isn't the world being stripped of human emotion? Abortions have become prohibited in many countries. Completely wrong in my opinion. Our body, our choice. So much is happening, however so little is being done to help fight these things.

The Declaration of Human Rights clearly states: we are all born free and equal, do not discriminate, no torture, no slavery, the right to marriage and family, freedom of expression, and most importantly no one can take away our human rights.

Peace is not just the lack of war. It is the presence of our human rights – we live in a world where we cannot even have that. Albert Einstein once stated, “Peace cannot be kept by force: it can only be achieved by understanding”. Stepping forward, we should all come together and try to understand one another as much as possible and try to remain serene and respectful. We should strive to live in a world where the colour of our skin, our gender, our religion, our race, our sexuality, and our background does not affect the way we live. With every breath we take, we should be able to feel safe and comforted by our surroundings. There is so much we can do -- we possess more power than we think. We can make this place better for the next generation and be in the history books for the change we made: we can alter the future with our words and actions. We could be revolutionary.

Peace is not just a moment. It's an everlasting movement.

### **3rd Prize in Under 17 Category**

## *The Role of Young People in Bringing Peace*

By Amna Hameem Jawfer of Eden Girl's School, Coventry

In society today, there are many animalistic and inhumane traits that we carry. Not only is it uncivilized, but unethical for the generations that follow. Many countries around the world, living in poverty or not, still encounter the same problem – the unjust, corrupt ways of resentment, war and segregation within their very own communities.

As the world population grows, it is more evident we need to preserve the beauty and picturesque surroundings that we take for granted every single day. From clean water flowing through our taps, through the accommodation of a warm home, to the comfort of knowing that we are safe: these may seem like the simplest of necessities. But in a world such as we have today, children are veiled from the true reality of the struggles around the world.

As Maya Angelou says: "Hate has caused a lot of problems in this world, but it has not solved one yet"

With the increasing growth in violence, police brutality, terrorism and wars, it is more important than ever to fight for the people who are powerless to fight for their rights, individual liberty, and basic freedoms.

If we do not stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, the world we live in will become a battleground where the vulnerable will have no refuge, and the powerful will strengthen even more. It is up to the younger generations to fight for their families, their future, their well-being and for others who cannot. We are the ones who decide what fate we will choose; not only for us, but for the people around us who are struggling to find their voice and for the future generations to come.

Nowadays, children are stuck to technology, glued to their screens. It is not only unhealthy for them, but for the people around them. Who is going to fight for rights within the community? Who will finally realize that in this world there are many problems that need to be solved? As the younger generation, it is our duty to preserve the world and make it a better place, not only for us as humans but for the beautiful environment around us.

We are the future of our parents, a legacy that will follow. But for how long until the whole world is at war? How long until we won't have clean water flowing through our taps? When we won't have the accommodation of a warm home? When will we lose the sense of comfort in being safe?

If not now, then when will we fight for what is right in this world? We're the next generation and we need to show the world that World Peace can be achieved. If we carry on living our lives like this, nothing will change the way we think, speak, or act. If we want to achieve world peace, we have to start together.

“World Peace must develop from inner peace. Peace isn't the mere absence of violence. Peace is, I think, the manifestation of human compassion” - Dalai Lama

## **17-25 Category**

## **1st Prize in 17-25 Category**

### *Peace and Youth*

By Ema Nikolova of North of Macedonia

Nearly half of the world's population is composed of young people whose energy and ambitions could have a destructive nature they are not channelled in the right direction. The youth is often seen as a problem to be solved, and a threat to be contained because of the narrative dominated by groups that are focused on extremism and manipulated by stereotypes. The perception of youth is distorted and they are being led on a path where they have problems understanding their own potential. Young people need to be provided with education that is complemented with opportunities, an education that eliminates stereotypes and promotes equality.

Youth is marginalized by prejudice and discrimination, seen as the problem and not the solution. Without the proper education and resources, with a lack of psychological and psychosocial support, young people could easily be manipulated to commit notorious crimes and be both the perpetrators and victims of violence. People should let the hurtful walls of social exclusion which refer to young people, finally collapse. Governments need to understand that youth is the missing part of the puzzle called peace: young people need to be educated and seen as possible peace builders and peace advocates.

It is often said that education is the foundation of a peaceful society. From a young age, youth should be taught

moral and spiritual values such as communication and esteem for all members of humanity. They should be presented with analytical and practical peace building skills and have opportunities to apply them. They should learn to eliminate political, cultural and socio-economic barriers. Educated adolescents create various workshops where they spread their knowledge about peace building through different activities such as singing, dancing and reading poetry and drama. Their main goal is that people should understand different forms of violence, its causes and consequences, learn how to analyse problems and how to structure solutions.

I live in North of Macedonia, a fragmented country with deeply rotten roots that divide the nation between the different nationalities, religions and culture. With deep concern, as a young adult I can say that we are exposed to many negative influential factors such as propaganda and one-sided media with a nationalistic political rhetoric. I believe that, regardless of what the media and society has to say, we could build bridges between individuals and connect with the power of our voice and thoughts, talk openly about our fears and insecurities. Dalai Lama said "World peace must develop from inner peace." We should own the country and use our voice to make a change.

I believe that peace is like an open book and everyone can contribute to fill in the blank spaces because future peace and prosperity depend on us.

## **2nd Prize in 17-25 Category**

### *The Role of Young People in Building Peace*

By Elsa Tiny Rajan from India

In the words of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, "Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. When there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world."

Peace and harmony are of supreme importance to every citizen of the world, however, at the moment, it's the most threatened. Young people can be the drivers of positive change at the national as well as the global level. Our youth with their immense potential can become young ambassadors of change in their nation. They should work towards promoting peace and countering various evils such as inequality, terrorism, massacres, intolerance, etc.

But, society's prejudice about youth as victims or offenders of violence and rarely as peacemakers discourages them from bringing out their true strengths. Youth should not be alienated, but rather should be allowed to bring about dynamic changes in the world.

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." It has become essential to bridge the gap between cultures to create peace and harmony because disharmony arises from false impressions. Young people should be imparted



with peace education as it significantly lessens the ethnocentric attitude of the people.

At the grass-roots level, young people must step forward to address various problems they face around them, thereby encouraging possible reconciliations. They may join hands with various Non-Governmental Organizations to work towards achieving global peace. Youth in conflict zones can discuss the challenges, and opportunities before them to bring about a change in their present situation. Youth, as well as young students, should discuss various differences and misconceptions that hamper peace in the world.

Peace and harmony are the inborn rights of every individual, and it is our obligation to safeguard it. Countries spend tons of money on wars, but hardly anything for the millions who are thrown out of their birth lands forcefully. The solution is in our hands, only we need to change ourselves and learn to live in peace and harmony. Let's hopefully wait for the day when our future generations will bring peace to this world and teach new lessons of life that we never understood.

### ***REFERENCES***

In the words of A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, "Where there is righteousness in the heart..."

([https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/a\\_p\\_j\\_abdul\\_kalam\\_717808](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/a_p_j_abdul_kalam_717808))

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because..." (<https://www.scu.edu/mcae/architects-of-peace/Teresa/essay.html>)

### **3rd Prize in 17-25 Category**

## *The Seed of the Little Dove*

By Benjamin Ssuuna from Uganda

In a peaceful world lived an initially peaceful community of doves which was hit by a catastrophe. Deforestation made the doves lose their habitat. They started fighting against each other over territories and many died. In a small dove family lived a dove in his youth. "My son," wailed his dying mother, "take this mustard seed and plant it. It will grow into a big tree which will yield seeds. Take them and plant more trees. Soon the remaining generation will have more shelter and fighting will cease."

Youths are the pillars of peace and tranquillity in the world. Research shows that there are over one billion youths in areas where conflict and violence have been prevalent. Over the past decade, the young have been painted as a threat to global security and stability. This has been due to the involvement of some young people in violence and extremist groups. However, research reveals that those are the minority. This illustrates the saying that "when a frog defecates in water, it is said that frogs have defecated in water."

A closer look at the attributes of youths reveals outstanding capabilities which are indispensable in the great cause of peace building. Youths are idealistic, innovative, courageous, more open to change and future oriented.

Many youths around the world are peace champions. These are former combatants and former warriors who pave the way toward peace among their peers by transforming their attitudes through spreading messages of tolerance and being living testimonies of hope in afflicted areas. Young peace builders have a relationship with their societies and extensive knowledge of the local challenges.

In Argentina, Rosario's Youth Centre organises training seminars on identity and human rights especially dealing with Argentina's history of dictatorship and violation of human rights. Youth workers facilitate discussions through which young people identify the main problems in their neighbourhood and design peaceful solutions.

Over the past few decades, Northern Uganda has suffered unrest due to rebel activities operating in the region.

With the project "Building peace through young adult peace champions in Uganda," the Centre for Conflict Resolution addresses root causes of conflicts in Ugandan communities. They give young people skills in peace building while also training them to become entrepreneurs. Many young people in Karamoja, Uganda are abandoning violence and also have means to provide for their families. As youth leaders, they speak out against destructive ways and embrace peace. And with much success: the young peace champions reconcile conflicting parties, support fellow youth and speak out against violence and forced marriage. Another success is the steady decrease in cattle raiding.

As McEnvoy Levy points out "In the longer term, a peace agreement's endurance depends on whether the next generations accept or reject it, how they are socialised during the peace process and their perceptions of what the peace process has achieved. Child and youth dimensions are central to the structural issues of peace building -- such as inequality, poverty and unemployment."

## Peace Award Partners

Do you want young people to encourage think about peace in their communities, countries and the wider world?

It's easy! Just help to publicise the International Peace Award 2021 as widely as possible.

Twitter: @peaceessay #youngpeoplespeaceessay

### ***Download Resources***

We have resources that will help you promote the competition including videos and images suitable for Twitter and an A4

Visit <https://youngpeoplespeaceessay.org/help-promote-the-competition/> to download them.

### ***Donate***

In 2021 year we want to attract more entries by offering larger prizes. You can help by sending a donation, no matter how little, visit

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/young-peoples-peace-essay>

### ***Partner with us***

We are looking for partners who can help us to develop this competition, make suggestions for essay topics and make it a truly global activity. Your help will be acknowledged at the foot of every page.

Please contact [partner@youngpeoplespeaceessay.org](mailto:partner@youngpeoplespeaceessay.org)

Many thanks.