

**Winners of Coventry's
International Young
People's Peace Essay
Competition 2023**

YoungPeoplesPeaceEssay.org



UNA COVENTRY

Organised by United Nations Association Coventry Branch

Winners of Young People's Peace Essay Competition 2023

Published by
United Nations Association Coventry Branch

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Foreword

The International Young People's Peace Essay Competition 2023 attracted over 30 entries from 15 different countries.

There were three categories of authors, depending on their age on 31 October 2023: authors aged

- 15-17
- 18-21
- 22-24

The judges, who came from universities in England and India, from Coventry Lord Mayor's Committee for Peace and Reconciliation and from Bangladesh Civil Services, felt the essays raised important questions and provided inspirational ideas for future actions. They were grateful that young people have shared their ideas about how to promote peace in a world that is especially troubled by war at the present time.

We hope that by sharing their thoughts and ideas we can inspire other young people to follow their advice and so help to achieve peaceful futures for themselves, their communities and for our shared world.

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

The competition is run by the United Nations Association Coventry Branch (UNACov.uk). Find out more about the competition at <https://youngpeoplespeaceessay.org>



15-17 Age Group Winners

1st Prize in 15-17 age group

How does Peace promote the protection of Human Rights?

by Arnav Madan from England

Peace and Human rights are inextricably linked, sharing a symbiotic relationship, the pillars of human rights and peace are interwoven as are a bee and its chosen flower.

Peace not only allows for human rights to exist but to flourish integrally due to peace allowing for free speech and activism. Where peace is sustained, everyday people can delve into the problems regarding human rights which they are facing, once again one leads to another. This has been proven time and time again in History famously the Civil rights movement of 1950 where peaceful protests such as the march on Washington demanding for jobs and freedom in 1963 were integral in leading to increased awareness of human rights and notable legislative changes of its own, for example the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and The Civil rights act. Here Peace led to the enforcement and development of human rights, and the amelioration of human rights allowed for Peace to exist. However, this is not only seen in our history but in our contemporary world as well one of which being the Hong Kong Protests of 2019 where the pro-democracy protests led to millions of peaceful protesters to campaign for simple rights, liberties and change against autonomy. These peaceful

demonstrations led to the extradition bill to be removed and had a huge impact on local elections once again showing how where there is peace, human rights prosper.

However, the blossoming of advocacy is not the only way which peace actively protects human rights it allows for active social and economic development paving the path for improved living standards, healthcare, education, and improved access to support. Particularly focusing on education and healthcare, where there is peace, they prosper. The lack of peace leading to a lack of education, healthcare and basic social rights is exemplified again in our history for example in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 leading to targeting of healthcare and education institutions causing the death of many teachers and doctors causing there to have been a huge chasm in the Rwandan Society undermining basic human rights, this is once again exemplified through the Sierra Leone Civil War of 1991 where child soldiers were used by rebel groups again blocking children from reaching education, simultaneously healthcare institutions were destroyed and basic rights once again vanished, due to the lack of peace. Peace not only protects basic services but also protects vulnerable groups, where there is a lack of peace many of these groups are often targeted and heavily impacted. Once again seen in our history with the Darfur Conflict of Sudan where there is a prominent discrimination of ethnic groups such as the Fur and the Zaghawa, the lack of peace

has led to sexual violence and a denial of basic human rights.

Peace and Human Rights come hand in hand, one cannot survive without the other, they are integral to any society and are the roots to the most beautiful flowers.

2nd Prize in 15-17 age group

Peace Across Waters

by Kashi Dubariya from United Kingdom

Peace can be defined as a state in which there is no war, conflict or harm between or caused by others. A peaceful future is one that is highly sought after, it's highly philosophised and can be described as an impossible feat. However, among this cloud of uncertainty and pessimism, often conveyed in the media, there is always a means to achieve a world that is tranquil/unplagued by conflict. It is just a matter of determination, courage and passion. Peace within oneself, between people and nations are all interrelated.

Inner peace can be seen by young people as the first step to achieving peace between people and nations. Tensions between people often arise due to a defence mechanism known as projecting, which can cause unwanted/unintended conflict between people. This along with insecurities magnified by social media, and people being given different particularistic values from a young age, can lead to people having many distinct norms/values from one another. This may lead to people turning to certain nationalistic or even hateful movements against individual countries or even as small-scale as bullying to feel closer together and feel comfort via 'herding' together.

Finding confidence in one's own appearance, interests and strengths can lead to lesser feelings of social exclusion, hence reducing aggression between people. Once inner peace and peace between people has been achieved, there is prospect for peace between nations because people will not feel the need to spite each other and will be compassionate with those around them with understanding and patience that they build when trying to achieve inner peace, for it is not a simple feat. Young people are also increasingly valuing the power and merit of education as it builds social solidarity. Education gives critical thinking skills to be able to detach prior discord between nations, as well as realise the causes of it in the first place, from the people of those nations.

As young people, taking this knowledge into our future of becoming leaders can lead to better peace-making decisions. For example, the conflict between India and Pakistan remains ongoing over land disputes and this can be solved by a generation of perceptive, patient and progressive young people who have been able to learn the catastrophes that war brings by studying the two prior world wars and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Valuing each other as equals and not as having better/worse capabilities will enable a plethora of positive outcomes, including better pay for workers, as well as better rights for marginalised groups. Hence, more positive media/news is shown and consequently better mental

health for people across various ethnicities, genders etc., creating peace for different protected characteristics.

Overall, peace is a goal that young people aim for continuously. Holding grudges over historical battles only leads to more bloodshed and a continuous cycle of detest. This must be broken and can be done in ways that preserve the integrity of humanity being named after humans.

3rd Prize in 15-17 age group

Empowering Youth: Strategies for Fostering International Peace

by Armash from Sri Lanka

In a world where conflicts often dominate headlines and divisions persist, the role of young people in promoting international peace is more crucial than ever. Their fresh perspectives, dynamic energy, and innovative approaches provide a beacon of hope for a more harmonious global community. This essay delves into the multifaceted ways in which young individuals can contribute significantly to the cause of international peace.

Education and awareness form the bedrock upon which young people can build their efforts for peace. By gaining insights into various cultures, histories, and global issues, they can unravel the complexities that often underlie conflicts.

Digital communication and social media platforms offer young people unprecedented avenues for connecting with peers around the world. Leveraging these platforms, they can initiate online campaigns, share informative content, and spark conversations that transcend geographical boundaries. The power of social media lies in its ability to

amplify voices, unite like-minded individuals, and galvanize collective action in pursuit of peace.

Equally impactful are international exchange programs, conferences, and summits. These gatherings serve as melting pots of diverse perspectives, enabling young people to interact with peers from various backgrounds. Collaborative problem-solving, cultural exchange, and the formation of cross-border friendships are natural outcomes of such interactions. By tapping into this global network, young individuals can sow the seeds of peace that flourish through cooperation.

Advocacy stands out as a direct route for young people to influence policies and decisions that impact international relations. Joining or establishing organizations focused on peace, conflict resolution, and human rights allows them to channel their passion into tangible actions. Whether through public awareness campaigns, petitions, or lobbying efforts, young advocates wield the power to sway public opinion and catalyze positive change.

Artistic expression, too, possesses the capacity to transcend language barriers and connect hearts. Young artists can employ their creative talents to highlight shared human experiences, underscore common values, and challenge misconceptions. Art exhibitions, musical performances, and cultural festivals can serve as bridges that facilitate understanding and unity among diverse communities.

For those inclined to hands-on involvement, volunteering in conflict-affected regions or participating in humanitarian missions offers a powerful means of contributing to peace. By providing direct support to affected communities, participating in reconciliation programs, and engaging in post-conflict reconstruction, young individuals can tangibly aid in healing wounds and rebuilding societies.

In conclusion, the potential of young people to foster international peace is immense. Through education, digital platforms, cross-cultural interactions, advocacy, artistic expression, and direct engagement, they can be powerful agents of positive change. As they take up the mantle of peace-building, they sow the seeds of a future where cooperation triumphs over conflict, and global unity reigns supreme. With determination, creativity, and collective effort, young people can pave the way for a more peaceful and harmonious world.

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18-21 Age Group Winners

1st Prize in 18-21 age group

HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE BE LEADERS FOR PEACE

by Abdul-Ganiyy Abdul-Wasiu Olanrewaju from Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In a world marked by ongoing conflicts and global challenges, the imperative for peace has never been more pressing. In this essay, we delve into the essential question of how young people can emerge as leaders for peace in the 21st century. With their innovative perspectives, boundless energy, and a deep-seated commitment to positive change, the youth of today have the potential to shape a future where peace, understanding, and cooperation prevail. This exploration will highlight the various ways in which young individuals can actively contribute to fostering peace within their communities and on a broader scale, paving the way for a more harmonious world.

Here are some possible ways to nurture leaders for peace :

1. Help them develop their self-awareness: One effective way to groom young leaders for peace is by nurturing their self-awareness. Self-awareness is the foundation of effective leadership for peace. Encouraging them to reflect on their values, strengths, and weaknesses allows them to gain a

deeper understanding of themselves. For example, through programs like mindfulness meditation or self-assessment exercises, young individuals can cultivate the emotional intelligence necessary to handle conflicts peacefully and lead by example. You can organize workshops or activities that encourage introspection and self-discovery. For instance, group discussions on personal values and their role in conflict resolution can prompt young individuals to reflect on their own beliefs. Sharing stories of leaders who exemplify self-awareness, like Mahatma Gandhi, who practiced nonviolent resistance, can inspire them.

2. Position yourself for honest conversations about their character: Building character and ethics is crucial for peace leaders. Open and honest conversations about character are essential for young leaders. By engaging in dialogues that address ethics, integrity, and the importance of empathy, you can help them understand the impact of their actions on others. For instance, discussing real-life scenarios where ethical decisions were pivotal can be a powerful way to impart valuable lessons in peacemaking. Engage in regular dialogues that explore ethical dilemmas and moral decision-making. Share stories of individuals who faced ethical challenges, such as Nelson Mandela's commitment to forgiveness and reconciliation after years of imprisonment. Encourage young leaders

to journal their thoughts on these topics to foster critical thinking.

3. Expose them to big people in big places: Young leaders can benefit immensely from exposure to experienced individuals in leadership roles. Arrange mentorship opportunities or visits to organizations working towards peace and conflict resolution. Arrange visits to international organizations like the United Nations or invite guest speakers who have worked in peacebuilding and diplomacy. By connecting with seasoned leaders, young people can gain valuable insights, guidance, and inspiration to pursue peace initiatives effectively. Allow young leaders to interact with these experts, ask questions, and learn about the global efforts for peace. These interactions can inspire them to pursue careers or initiatives in the field of peace and conflict resolution.
4. Speak life into their giftedness: Recognizing and affirming the unique talents and skills of young individuals can ignite their passion for peace leadership. Identify the unique talents and interests of young individuals and connect these to peace building. Encouraging them to explore and develop their talents, whether it's in art, diplomacy, or community organizing, empowers them to make a meaningful impact. For instance, if a young person displays artistic talent, supporting

them in creating peace-themed artwork can promote peace awareness in a creative way. If someone is skilled in communication, encourage them to start a peace-oriented podcast or blog. If they excel in leadership roles, guide them to organize community peace events or lead peace clubs at school. This approach helps them leverage their strengths for peace initiatives.

5. Provide stretch experiences: To develop leadership skills, young people should be given opportunities to step out of their comfort zones. Assign them responsibilities that challenge their problem-solving, communication, and decision-making abilities. Assign tasks that require leadership and teamwork, such as organizing a peace-themed event or leading a peer mediation program. These experiences could include organizing community events, facilitating workshops on conflict resolution, or leading group discussions on peace-related issues, and also these hands-on experiences allow young leaders to develop practical skills and gain confidence in their ability to handle complex situations, all while promoting peace in their immediate surroundings.
6. Push them to read: Readers are leaders: Encouraging a love for reading can expand young leaders' horizons. By providing them with books, articles, and resources related to peace, diplomacy, and the experiences of prominent peace leaders,

you can stimulate their intellectual growth. Establish a reading club focused on peace literature and biographies of notable peace leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. or Malala Yousafzai. Encourage discussions to explore how these individuals navigated challenges and promoted peace. Provide access to academic journals and research on peace studies, helping young leaders deepen their understanding of the field. Reading can help them acquire knowledge and insights that will be valuable in their leadership journey.

7. Challenge them to dream with audacity: Fostering visionary thinking is essential for young leaders. Challenge them to envision a world without conflict and to set audacious goals for peace initiatives. Encourage them to formulate action plans and collaborate with like-minded peers to turn their dreams into tangible projects, such as organizing peace summits or initiating conflict resolution programs in their communities. Organize brainstorming sessions where young leaders envision their ideal world and discuss ambitious peace projects. Encourage them to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for their initiatives. Provide guidance and resources to help them take the first steps toward turning their dreams into reality, such as creating a peace action plan.

By employing these strategies, we can empower young individuals to become compassionate, empathetic, self-aware, and effective leaders for peace, instilling in them the values and skills needed to contribute meaningfully to a more peaceful world.

2nd Prize in 18-21 age group

The Journey to World Peace: What History Teaches Young People about Peace

by Alawode, Oluwafeyikemi Marvellous from Nigeria

To understand the past, properly navigate the present, and create better plans for the future, the study of history is very important. According to Albert Einstein, "insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results[1]". In order not to repeat mistakes that have been made in the past, young people must learn from history. This also applies to the pursuit of world peace. From the First World War to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian war, there are many 'simple' lessons that young people can learn on conflict resolution and the attainment of peace.

One of the lessons to be learnt from history is that there is no true peace without dialogue. Achieving peace is great, but the nature of the peace achieved is more important. With negative peace, there is a strained relationship and silent hostility, despite the end of the conflict. As a result, the peace is only temporary. However, with true peace comes long-lasting friendly relations. Military strategies, force, power play, armistices, and so on can never lead to true, long-lasting peace, but effective dialogue can.

The Oxford Dictionary defines dialogue as "taking part in a conversation or discussion to resolve a problem"[2]. Simply put, in the context of peace, dialogue means discussions by opposing parties on how to resolve a conflict. It was through the dialogues had in the Potsdam and Yalta conferences[3], and the Paris Treaties that lasting peace was achieved after the deadliest International war (World War II).[4]

The Russo-Georgian War of 2008, the Nigerian civil war, and the high tension due to Iran's nuclear program are some examples of dialogue-resolved conflicts[5].

Dialogue and negotiations give leaders, and people in general, an opportunity to address grievances, resolve disputes, and work towards a mutual agreement on how to avert prospective conflicts.

However, mere dialogue is not what is required, but an efficacious one. This is evident as, in the past, dialogue has been used to resolve the Russo-Ukrainian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, yet they are at war now. So what is effective dialogue, and how can it be achieved for long-lasting peace?

For effective dialogue to be achieved, it is important to not just hear the other side, but truly listen to them. This is an important lesson that young people must learn. During dialogue are you really listening to the other party? Active listening helps us see issues from the perspective of others, understand their feelings, and what influences

their decisions. Most importantly, through active listening, we can empathize with others. When there is empathy on both sides, conflict resolution will be a breeze.

Another important aspect of effective dialogue is how our thoughts are framed and communicated. In Proverbs chapter fifteen verse one (Proverbs 15:1), the Bible says that "a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." During dialogue, it is very important to speak kindly, not harshly. The result of this would be a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and even a friendly relationship afterwards. It is easy to speak kindly during conflict when there is empathy, and empathy is achieved when active listening is practised.

Another important lesson that young people must learn is that there is no true peace without compromise. In the words of Malala Yousafzai, "in true dialogue, both sides are willing to change." [6] Equity may sometimes need to take preeminence over equality. They do not always complement each other. As stated by Mahatma Gandhi "an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind" [7]. Many times, retaliation and a battle for the "right side" and equality heightens conflict. When both parties are earnestly seeking to make compromises for each other, peace is inevitable. This must be practised by governments, state actors, young people, and everyone in society for true and long-lasting peace.

As long as human beings co-exist in any setting, dispute is inevitable. As a result, young people should strive to gain

soft skills that are important for effective dialogue, and peaceful resolutions. Some of these skills include active listening, effective communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, compassion, perspective-taking, and so on.

With these skills, peace would not just be the absence of war, but the presence of harmony, camaraderie, and friendly relations. To make this easy and accessible to all, young people and parents should clamour for governments to include these skills as compulsory courses in the curriculum of schools.

Finally, young people should cultivate an interest in learning their local history and world history. When studying about the past, they will be able to learn from it. Young persons and parents should also clamour for the inclusion of history studies in the curriculum of schools.

Armed with this knowledge and skills, young people would become emotionally intelligent, fine leaders who would act for peace at local and international levels.

In conclusion, there are so many lessons that young people must learn from the past, so that negative history will not be repeated. At the end of every war, conferences are held for the warring parties to dialogue. Rather than wait until after hostility festers and results in destructive conflict, we must learn to seek peaceful resolution from the early stages of any dispute. The importance of dialogue to effective conflict resolution cannot be overemphasized. For this to be attained, compromise, active listening, empathy,

perspective-taking, effective communication, compassion, and other soft skills must be prioritised and learnt by not just young people, but all persons and governments. Finally, the critical study and analysis of history should also be prioritised. These may seem like simple lessons, however, if they were practised in the past many wars would have been avoided, and numerous lives and properties, saved.

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[2] <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

[3] <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/guide-yalta-potsdam-facts-when-date-why-what-happened-churchill-stalin-roosevelt/>

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3rd Prize in 18-21 age group

PEACE (Protect Environment Alongside Community Education) by youth

by UwonKunda Mireille from Rwanda

There is no universal definition for peace, but according to the definition given by the Institution of Economics and Peace(IEP),they defined two types of peace which are: positive peace which is defined as attitudes, institutions and structures that lead to peaceful societies; it leads to mutual co-operation and help society move away from violence; while Negative peace or actual peace is defined as absence of violence and absence of fear of violence.

Nowadays the world is obsessed with focusing on factors and events that undermine negative peace and how to prevent them due to the rising of wars and other types of violence. To cope with how to engage with positive peace in our society can solve more problems and prevent more types of violence to occur. Youth can be one of the tools to avoid violences and crimes through contributing in educating the community about conflict resolution and environmental education in the course of peace education.

Peace education refers to educating people about peace. The main goal of this education is to create are violent, watching vio conditions for peace in the society where

citizens can freely share concerns, be productive, have creative use of their time, enjoy human rights and manage conflicts without direct violence. Youth as the educators should not only concentrate on just stopping violence to create a positive classroom learning environment but also establishing within student's minds a commitment to peace principles. Values like responsibility, respect, honesty, caring and fairness should be adopted by children at lower ages so as to help them to create a civilized and peaceful society as they grow up.

Peace education should not only be taught in school systems although it is known that it can improve the school climate, reduce bullying and violence in schools, and improve the student's performance. Peace education could also be taught in religions since some of the biggest prophets ever existed in different religions had messages that promote peace in the community. For example: JESUS Christ urged people to be charitable and to turn the other cheek toward enemies. Mohammed's most messages involved overcoming forces of hatred which when directed outwards cause so much suffering and violence. MOSES whose ten commandments include "thou shalt not kill". BUDDHA who taught that all human beings are brothers and LAO Tse whose Taoism promotes the harmony of opposites. All these wise words should be taught endlessly in our community to influence and drive them towards a peaceful life.

In addition to, Conflict resolution as another form of peace education should be enforced by the youth solving their conflicts or teaching the society how to resolve the conflict among them. The Patti & Lantieri resolving creativity approach which is RCCP(Resolving Conflict Creativity program) was one of the successful projects which were made to use by students in their schools while they were being taught social and emotional skills in the classrooms. Youths can also help people around the world to use this approach while teaching their students. Even though some children grow up living in miserable conditions like living in homes that are violent, watching violent videos and playing violent video games which can result into higher rates of aggressive and violent behaviours which causes conflicts in schools, they should be taught how to cope with their anger so that fighting should not be considered as a quick alternative to solve their conflicts; this could help them when they grow up. For example violent videos games and violent videos from televisions and social media should be restricted to children rather introducing friendly videos which teach how to cope with anger and manage conflicts with the intentions to make friendship in a peaceful way.

Not only children should be taught how to manage conflicts but also other people with different range of ages should also be considered while teaching how Gender inequality lead to gender violences where if one type of gender is undermined it could lead to its violation, for

example in some countries women are being undermined, the LGBTQ+ community are not being given their rights in the societies in some countries like Uganda and other Islamic states due to their beliefs and stereotypes which provoke some gender to have some of their rights. Youth should help in promoting multicultural understanding aimed at reducing stereotypes & hostilities between groups to avoid ethnic, religion and racial hatred.

Moreover, Environment education could also be considered as a roadmap to reach a peaceful destination to the future of our society. Although the world is facing some environmental crisis such as global warming, species extinction and adverse effects of polluting. These are the main causes of conflicts resulted from shortage of water, food and shelter due to mass migration of people from places where there presence of weather events like flood disasters. The rising of scarce resources after migrating leads to the poverty which easily transforms into family conflicts that will easily lead to riots and crime acts and definitely this sequence of actions will end in civil war. As the African continent is still dominant in these struggles, the government should not only address on ensuring how the tensions caused by climate policies are minimized but also to reduce conflicts that may arise due to climate changes impacts.

To sum up, the world needs the forces of youths in order to heal and recover from scars caused by wars, human rights violation and climate change crisis. And this could be

possible due to the efforts made in teaching the community about peace education aiming to reduce conflicts caused by human behaviours and climate change effects, youth should teach the community how to cope with all those difficulties in order to build a better environment for the upcoming generations.

22-24 Age Group Winners

1st Prize in 22-24 age group

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THREAT TO GLOBAL PEACE: THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

by Chiahanam Nwobodo from Nigeria

Climate change. Conversation about it is all over the internet, and newsfeeds on Facebook sometimes come with tags linking to articles related to the concept. The media repeatedly engages in discussions about it, with analysts presenting their facts and figures. Yet, it seems we are not doing enough to match the many talks. Climate change is an alteration in the environmental integrity of the ecosystem, causing weather changes across continents of the globe with clear results. In Africa, the Sahara desert is expanding, Lake Chad is shrinking at a very rapid pace, and large numbers of people are bracing for the catastrophic consequences.

Nigeria, where I come from, is in a region where the reduction of Lake Chad is having direct and indirect impacts on the citizens. Northern Nigeria—with states that have close links with the Lake Chad basin—is struggling with repeated episodes of drought and vegetation loss, which has forced Fulani herdsmen to push down south. The increased migration is putting more

pressure on the already strained south. Consequently, the news of farmer-herder clashes has almost become the new normal in the country. Villages have been burned down and occupants forced into displacement because of these clashes, which on many occasions claim a significant number of lives.

Climate change is a threat to peace. It is creating new tensions and fueling existing ones. The shrinking freshwater resources, scarcity of arable land for farming, and vegetation loss are a recipe for serious contention within societies. The situation is bound to get worse if a united effort is not made against climate change.

Human activities appear to be at the root of ongoing global warming. Industrialisation has forced us to develop heavy pieces of machinery, a lot of which depend on fossil fuels as a source of energy. Young people, as stakeholders and the leaders of the future, will have to make enough commitments to change the narrative and tilt the balance in favour of our environment, which is currently ravaged by rising levels of greenhouse gases. According to the World Economic Forum (2021), our atmosphere has about 50% more carbon dioxide than it did before the industrial era.

What roles can young people play? What efforts must the leaders of the future make?

The United Nations reports that the world has 1.2 billion people who are aged 15 to 24. It further opines that the

number is expected to increase by 7% by 2030. Imagine the voices of 1.2 billion people and the influence they can have on the rest of the world. Representing 16% of the global population is enough reason why youths cannot be ignored. To revolutionise our world to suit the demands of a sustainable future, a passionate effort is necessary— young people have all that it takes to fill the gap! We must choose to be a part of climate action and commit our strength to the struggle for a green transition.

To begin with, young people should stand at the forefront of the conversation on climate change. We cannot appear to be disinterested in a topic that will affect the future we are going to be part of. Young people must actively key into climate change talks and public discussions. World leaders must be made to understand how their policies affect us and our concerns about their steps towards a green economy. We can also leverage the power of social media to get our message across to a wide audience and establish our demands in the most peaceful way possible.

While clamouring for accountability from policymakers, young people should also demand their local environments, such as the schools, places of worship, and immediate community, become more sustainable. We can start by advocating for the use of LED lights, a reduction in the use of plastics, building with green roofs, and a gradual transition to a renewable energy source such as solar panels for electricity generation.

Furthermore, young people can champion an industrial revolution with our talents and skills—which are many! We have so many youths who are now tech-inclined with expertise in diverse programming languages. We should not sit idly by and think that our machines and automobiles will suddenly become carbon-emission-free. Let us use what we have to make what we desire to see. The campaign towards zero carbon is already underway with the emergence of electric engines. But more can be done, as science and technology have shown that there is a means to a sustainable alternative. We just have to find the means, and we can! Young people must begin to make low-carbon-centred career choices.

Beyond the technological approaches to counterbalance carbon emissions, supporting and practising tree planting will draw a good amount of carbon out of our atmosphere. Climate action will not be fully sustainable if tree planting is not factored into the equation. Every young person should develop the culture of regular tree-planting and encourage peers to imbibe the idea.

In conclusion, climate change creates routes for conflict. Global warming is causing serious alterations to climates across the world, leading to a scarcity of basic needs such as food and water and a consequent struggle for the little remaining. If this situation is allowed to continue unabated, global peace will suffer a serious threat, and we could have more emergencies to struggle with. Young people must use the power of their population and the

agility of their strength and mental proficiency to drive the world from a dependence on fossil fuels to low-carbon emission sources. The future is ours, and we must be part of its creation.

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2nd Prize in 22-24 age group

Muslim-Christian Youth Coexistence on Peace and Reconciliation in the Contemporary Era

by Muhammad Ghifari from Indonesia

Introduction

In this contemporary era, Antonia Marie De Meo (2023: iv), the Director of United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in Freedom from Fear Magazine with the theme Extremism No Victory in Violence explains that in 2023 radicalization and extreme movements will appear with various patterns, forms, trends, and new vulnerable points for attacks, terrorism, and acts of violence that are starting to adapt to world changes. The most crucial issue is the relationship between terrorism and well-organized transnational crime, showing a symbiotic mutualism or mutual benefit.

In this context, Islam is still accused of being a religion that is synonymous with radical movements, extremism, and terrorism. Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban are examples of real organizations that act as radical movements and terrorism in the name of Islam. But in fact, the majority of Muslims in the world are not like them and even voice

Islam as a religion full of compassion, peace, and moderation (P. Chimidi, 2017: 4). On the other hand, Kristen also experienced the same case. This message of the Christian god, which brings love and justice is often tainted by a small number of its followers with radical actions. For example, the case of the shooting of Muslim communities in New Zealand by terrorists in the name of Christ live on social media in 2019 which killed around 42 Muslims in their place of worship. [1]

Therefore, the two largest religions in the world have the same challenges to negate or fight radicalism and terrorism movements. Particularly, among the followers of the religions themselves, both Islam and Christianity, and generally for people in the world. The problem from my perspective is how can Islam and Christianity be promoted for world peace? Who is responsible for such things? So, what steps and strategies should be taken? To answer these questions, I see Muslim and Christian youth as having a significant role in answering these questions.

But why does it have to be Muslim and Christian youth? In my opinion, there are three reasons, namely: 1).

Psychologically, the young generation's first step is to think about their identity and have great enthusiasm to achieve what they want in order to move towards their maturity;

2). Radical movements in the name of Islam and

Christianity are usually the perpetrators of the younger

generation; 3). The role of peace and reconciliation has to

be established by Youth generations as a counter to radical

movements in the younger generation. On the other hand, as an initial process of forming a character full of the values of tolerance and peace in adulthood.

Quo Vadis?

Now, what is the role of Muslim-Christian youth coexistence in the contemporary era? What strategic role and steps should be implemented, especially in negating radicalism, extremism, and even terrorism, which are important threats in the contemporary era? To answer two questions above, I think there are three steps that must be observed and implemented by Muslim-Christian youth coexistence.

First of all, Affirmation of the Value of Religious Moderation for young Muslim-Christian coexistence. Religious moderation itself, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs Republic of Indonesia defined "As perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors of always taking centered positions, always doing enough, and not being extreme in practicing a religion". This value will form a way of thinking that is full of peace and reconciliation as well as countering radicalism, extremism, and even terrorism in the name of religion. This value of moderation will illuminate or inspire the next steps.

Secondly, Expressing common ground, tolerance, and pluralism in Islamic and Christian religious texts. Here, Muslim youth must voice the values of social pluralism in the Al-Qur'an, especially in Al-Baqarah verse 62; Al-Hajj verse 40; and Al-Hujurat verse 13. Not only Muslim youth,

but Christian youth must also voice these values in Colossians chapter 3 verse 11, Romans chapter 14 verses 2-6, and Luke chapter 9 verses 46-47.

Thirdly, Conferences and Publications. The last step is the role of coexistence through scientific conferences, inter-religious dialogue, and writing in international journals. In this context, Muslim-Christian youth have to part in activities such as the Interfaith Conference at the United Nations, Religion Dialogue, Al-Azhar Conference on Religious Dialogue, and Christian Youth Conferences. Not just following, religious youth must write scientifically in international journals such as *Islam Islam and Muslim-Christian Relations* (Taylor & Francis), and *Islamochristiana* (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies).

Conclusion

The role of Muslim-Christian youth coexistence in explaining peace and reconciliation is very important in order to create a world society full of peace, tolerance, and love for us all. The three steps in the form of affirming the value of religious moderation, calling for tolerance and pluralism values, conferences, and publications played by Muslim-Christian youth should not be underestimated. Therefore, the coexistence of young people based on these five steps will negate movements of radicalism, extremism, and even terrorism intellectually and down to earth as well as public sphere.

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Joint 3rd Prize in 22-24 age group

Young People: A Potent Antidote to Chaos

by Ibe Chijioke Kennedy from Nigeria

As the sun gently kissed the horizon that early morning, a soft breeze carried the carefree laughter of children. People from different ethno-religious backgrounds embraced one another with genuine warmth as they cheered for Hilda Baci, the young Nigerian chef that just broken the Guinness World Record for the longest time in a cooking marathon. The astonishing part was that the dark event that had plagued the city a few weeks ago seemed to have faded from memory; it was the same Lagos state where citizens and electorates were bullied, battered, and killed for not being indigenes or for not aligning with imposed political choices. However, on this day, the love and kindness that overflowed the streets of Lagos and throughout Nigeria washed away those grievances. It was the same long euphoria I witnessed when Tobi Amusan broke the women's 100m World Championship hurdles records in 2022. At that moment, nobody cared about her ethnic background—whether she was Igbo, Hausa, or Yoruba. We all flooded the internet posting, tweeting, and re-tweeting, praising the young athlete for putting Nigeria on the global pedestal.

This is what a peaceful world looks like to me. A world

where people of diverse ethnicities, religions, races, and socio-economic backgrounds can co-exist harmoniously. A world where we can live and let live. But how can we (young people) promote this peace globally? What is the antidote to the world's present chaos?

Whilst there is no one-size-fits-all approach, I believe that young people are a potent antidote to chaos. If Hilda Baci and Tobi Amusan could ignite a peaceful atmosphere in a country like Nigeria—where ethno-religious agitations have led to millions of deaths—simply by utilizing their talents, imagine the type of future we could create if young people work together intentionally to create peace.

The first step towards cultivating a peaceful world is to foster inner peace within ourselves. The Latin legal maxim “Nemo dat quod non habet” alluded that we cannot give what we do not have. Nowhere does this statement ring truer than in the contribution to world peace. For instance, I come from a highly politically marginalized tribe in my country. The consequences of this marginalization took the life of my grandfather and some of my relatives during the civil war of the mid-1900s. Unfortunately, our recently concluded general elections prove that nothing has changed. Despite these ethno-religious crises, I have cultivated friendships with individuals from the Muslim community, engaging in open dialogue, sharing our political views, and even collaborating on long-term projects. Building these relationships was possible because I decided long ago to create inner peace for

myself. To not allow the horrors inflicted upon my people to define my interactions with others. Like Martin Luther King Jr. rightly preached, I resolved not to judge people by their ethno-religious affiliations but by the content of their character. To my surprise, most of my Muslim friends are nothing like the stereotypes portrayed. They were marveled by the kindness I extended towards them; their attitude and perception towards my tribe have also changed. Through the ripple effect of creating peace within myself, I was able to extend peace to my Muslim friends, who then carried it forward to others. This exemplifies the transformative power of cultivating inner peace.

Another crucial way young people can promote international peace lies in creatively harnessing our skills and talents. The story of Hilda Baci and Tobi Amusan demonstrates that young people possess an innate ingenuity that can be harnessed to build a peaceful future. In my first year in the university, I took a course on “Peace & Conflict.” This course equipped me with valuable insights that, when combined with my strongest skills—writing and public speaking—have become powerful tools for promoting peace. Leveraging online platforms and opportunities, I actively write and speak on the subject of peacebuilding.

As previously mentioned, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to building global peace. However, as young people, we can make a difference. By consciously choosing to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously with others,

regardless of our differences and diversity, as well as intentionally harnessing our talents to propel peace, we contribute our quota towards a peaceful future.

Joint 3rd Prize in 22-24 age group

The Role of Youth in Advocating for Change to End Violence Against Women

by Salma Amanda Latifa from Indonesia

There are many international days that we can celebrate to support and promote peace in the world. One of them is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed every year on November 25th. The day aims to raise awareness among the public about the violence experienced by women worldwide and to encourage efforts to end it. As a young person, I have various experiences that can inspire other young people to support and celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Currently, I am involved in a community in my country that aims to help fellow women develop a growth mindset. In this community, we are not only guided by mentors to acquire general knowledge, but we also receive life skills that are important and useful for our future. As members of the community, my friends and I are often invited to monthly online meetings with different female speakers. Each speaker brings up topics that are beneficial for women, particularly regarding the steps to stop violence against women.

This experience has convinced me that education within the community can raise awareness among young people about how to end violence against women, teach life skills, and promote gender equality. It is important to note that community-based education that integrates social issues such as violence against women allows us as young people to gain a deep understanding of the negative impacts of such violence. Young people can start learning how to identify triggers, signs, and how to intervene. All of this empowers young people to become agents of change within their communities.

Community education provides a platform for young people to learn emotional management, healthy conflict resolution, and effective communication. By acquiring these skills, young people can help create healthy and safe relationships and environments, preventing violence against women within their communities.

Additionally, community education enables young people to learn about the importance of respecting women's rights, eliminating discriminatory practices, and avoiding harmful gender stereotypes. As young people, we can actively participate in extracurricular activities organized by schools or universities, such as discussions or campaigns on gender equality, like the Girl Up community that promotes equality and the elimination of gender disparities.

Another action I have taken to support the eradication of violence against women is being part of event committees

and participating in campaigns by Oky in my country. Oky is the world's first menstrual tracking application for teenage girls, created by teenage girls themselves. Through my involvement in Oky's activities and based on real-life experiences in my surroundings, I have learned that menstruation is still considered a taboo subject by a significant portion of society. This leads to women feeling ashamed, restricting their daily activities, and, in the worst cases, facing social ostracization. This can be referred to as social stigma, which ultimately leads to various forms of punishment, unfair norms, and verbal or physical violence.

Lack of knowledge about menstruation among women, including the menstrual cycle, reproductive health, and women's rights related to menstruation, can give rise to myths, misunderstandings, or false beliefs about menstruation. Many countries still face challenges in accessing affordable and proper menstrual products. Many women cannot afford to buy the necessary sanitary pads or tampons, which can result in serious hygiene and health issues due to economic and social inequalities. This creates an environment that favors violence against women.

Therefore, a holistic approach to young people is necessary to eradicate social stigma, empower women, and ensure fair, affordable, and equal access to menstrual hygiene products. This allows women to feel safe, respected, and in control of their bodies without being subjected to violence or discrimination.

Another engaging activity I have participated in to support the elimination of violence against women is the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. During this campaign, I created a comic that aimed to convey important messages about preventing violence against women using language that is easy to understand and visually appealing. The comic depicted various situations experienced by women and invited the community, especially young people, to join in the efforts to end violence against women. The short comic I created for the campaign was intended to inspire others to actively participate in the endeavor to stop violence against women and create a more equal and safe societal environment for everyone.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that every small activity or step we take to eliminate violence against women can inspire others to create real change and build a world that is safe, just, and equal for all women. As young people, we have the power to raise awareness, educate ourselves and others, challenge harmful norms, and advocate for the rights and well-being of women. By actively participating in communities, engaging in educational initiatives, and supporting campaigns, we can collectively contribute to the eradication of violence against women and the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious society.

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