

Honorable Mention Entry by Isaiah Belli

Peace

When we are trapped in this struggle filled world, peace means to me what life means to you. It is fragile, it is necessary, it has levels of satisfaction. Peace has been for me elusive, consuming and attractive. Meaning contentment, meaning no matter where I am or what is happening I will be in control of my emotions and my reactions. Peace means that through the noise of life, the struggles and wars, I am satisfied and content. The knowledge that in this country we are free. We are safe from governmental tyranny and that we have potential to be complete without oppression.

Hearts worn,
Injustice branded,
Broken,
Tired, used,
Now rest.
Injustice divides peace,
Unless peace never was
There, peace
Dwells forever
Within hearts
Suffering injustice.
~remember~
Injustice suffering
Hearts, within
Forever dwells
Peace, there
Was never peace unless
Peace divides injustice.
Rest now,
Used, tired,
Broken,
Branded injustice,
Worn hearts.

Peace, Nature, Harmony
Harmony in nature,
peace comes forth,
absence of nature,
the empty us.
leave broken
hearts alone
in nature,
find peace.

~Understand~
Peace, find
nature in
alone, hearts
broken leave
us empty, the
nature of absence
forth comes, peace,
nature in harmony,
Harmony, Nature, Peace.

In this world of strife and agony, peace is the only solution for a healthy life and mind. Peace is born in the heart, its everything, the question is, will you use it?

Honorable Mention Entry by Maza Brady

A Venezuelan Peace Story

“We will only accept technical evidence at this hearing. No stories will be recognized”

At that moment, José Carucí knew their case was sunk. The people of Anzotegui, Venezuela had come to this hearing with stories but no real technical evidence. His whole involvement in this matter started three months ago when his ecology group informed him of these people’s plight. José had been against it at the beginning saying, “There is not much we can do and the village is too far away.” The rest of the ecology group challenged him saying: “They asked for our help so we must do what we can.”

He agreed to go with them and see what they could do. The drive took about 3 hours. In that distance the climate changed from low lying deserts to a lush cloud forest, high in the Andes. The trip had also taken the group from an urban center to the poorer countryside. The people of this village lived by their crops on small coffee, potato and corn plots. Once the ecology group arrived, all they could do was make a map of the mountain with a GPS, but even the map was worthless because they did not know the exact location of the mine.

A man from an international company had arrived with a permit to build a silicon mine on the mountain. The people told the hearing they did not trust him. During the rainy season, the fine silicon sand could wash down into their town as had happened before with another mine. Moreover, they relied on the water supply from the springs on the mountain to irrigate their crops. By hollowing out the mountain, the mine would disrupt the natural springs.

As the hearing progressed, José listened to these stories again because no one could stop a Venezuelan from fighting injustice. These concerns, however, were not going to help them here. As José sat there, growing more distraught, he could tell the rest of the people had the same feeling. The lady next to him began to pray her rosary, silently thumbing each bead.

Just then, an opportunity appeared. The only woman on the committee called him up, even though he had not yet spoken a word. As he walked up he saw that in front of her was a map of the mountain. She asked him: “Can you tell me what these symbols mean?”

He looked at the map; there were the coordinates of the mine! He recalled that there was a law against operating a mine within 200 meters of a spring of water. José entered the points in his GPS and calculated the distance to a spring. His heart started pounding.

José raised his hand to be recognized, testifying, “Our group has knowledge of a spring 170 meters from the location of the mine.”

The jaws of the chairman dropped. The group was obviously not supposed to know such information. Now that one inconsistency was revealed, the townsfolk demanded to review the rest of the mine application. As it happened, the miner did have a legal permit for a silicon mine, but not for this mountain. His permit was for a different mountain, 5 kilometers away.

The fight for peace is difficult once a war has begun. To strive for peace we must stop the causes of war such as unjust exploitation of people whether nearby or in another country. For these Venezuelan townspeople, finding peace was being able to trust that the conflict could be resolved through a civil process and with communal support.

Honorable Mention Entry by Robert Brown

The Moments That Shouldn't Be Missed

It is a frigid winter day as my band begins to practice out in the isolated shed's unapologetic cold, which is just as unforgiving as ever. The tips of my fingers tingle and desperately plead for warmth. Breaths linger in the air as my band mates and I discuss the part of the song we are about to play next. The circumstances may be miserable and dreary but, as the drumsticks click four times and we all begin to play, those thoughts are far from my mind. Instead, I hear the sharp, steady crashes of cymbals to my left. I see the bass guitar's sounds encompass the whole room and shake it from wall to wall. I feel the sound waves of my amp shove their way through the air and hit my back as I play. I revel in all these moments and what they imply: creation, expression, happiness. It is small moments like these in which I find something so beautiful and so radiant: peace.

Peace is something that can be elusive, unapparent, and abstruse. Yet is something that is essential to our lives as individuals, since it brings us happiness. Peace is a moment in time in which the weights of the world melt away, and a warm feeling of internal contentedness follows. There is nothing but that moment, and that moment only. All of its effulgent beauties – the feelings rose, and motives inspired - are as clear as day, as right as rain.

Peace is all around us. On a Sunday afternoon car ride, when the sun peeks out from behind grey clouds and caresses my cheek with its warm rays, I find peace. On a Thursday night concert, when my friends and I pile on top of each other in an attempt to reach the singer's microphone, I find peace. On a Monday morning, when I inhale the dawn's sharp air which stings my lungs, I find peace. Any day, and at any moment, anyone can find peace by simply taking the time to admire and appreciate what is going on around us.

Notice the way dew fervently clasps onto a blade of grass in the early morning, and as the sun's radiant light reflects upon its fluid form and back into your eyes, daringly asks you to look away from its immersing beauty. Hear how the wind furtively blows under an afternoon's cloudless sky, gently rustling the trees' branches, and wholeheartedly whispers. Smell the crisp evening air, after a rain's rushing downpour, and smile.

Smile, and seek solace in your passions; find peace in them. Anyone can use more peace- it is the one thing no one can have too much of, but don't search for it. Do not toil over its absence, nor force its presence. Stop, and use what we have been given. See, feel, smell, taste, and hear. That is all the must be done to find peace, because it is everywhere.

The moments that make peace will always be slipping before our eyes at a rate so fast, some will inevitably be lost. There are some, however, that won't slip in between the cracks. Snag those moments, cherish them. Stop and appreciate

their glorious beauty. Then open your hands, and release that moment; let it go. But whatever happens, don't dwell on its departure, because there is always another beautiful moment that shouldn't be missed.

Honorable Mention Entry by Garrett Close

To me, the meaning of peace in “today’s world” is defined by the lack of it in so many different regards, as well as the sense of it that materializes in the tranquil escapes and through the moments of humanity that are witnessed throughout my daily life. Nonetheless, it is almost undeniable how often the silence of peace is overthrown by the anguish of war, the disregard for crime and poverty, the devastation of environments and all of the other trademarks that minimize peace. Still, it is amazing that “today’s world” is no worse in these regards than it was in history’s yesteryears.

In the light of history’s reality, our world appears weighted heavier towards the side of peace than it is on the side of its opponent. The paradox with peace in “today’s world” is that it can be asked, “What does peace mean to you?” The definition is by no means universal. It can be defined in general terms, but the meaning shifts like the sand in the surf as you move from grain to grain, person to person, moment to moment and event to event. It is unified in a definition, but never in the actions that define it. History has proven this over and over again throughout the course of civilization.

Wars and oppression date back to before the Persian and Greek empires, long before the time of Moses. The Great Roman Empire was one of conquest and yet leading the world in its mass, it imploded under its own weight, divided and destitute. Europe underwent the Dark Ages, which was prolonged for hundreds of years by an environmental disaster of the times, climate change or “the little ice age.” These centuries were also accompanied by a biological disaster that piled bodies up in the streets by hundreds of thousands, “the black plague.” History tells us that somewhere between 46,000 and 51,000 Americans were casualties in the three-day battle at Gettysburg – brothers killing brothers. The loss of life and suffering from the Holocaust under the Nazis is unimaginable, just as the Shiites and Sunnis’ bloody conflicts, which are centered on the same religious belief system, seems as insane as the Church’s inquisitions. In “today’s world,” is there really anything new under the sun?

Wars and crusades involving the superpowers of their time used to last for decades. Now they are shorter in duration and often enemy nations befriend one another at the conflict’s end. Perhaps what peace is, in “today’s world,” is still evolving. When I consider recent examples from history, like 225,000 dead, wounded and MIA Ally Forces from the battle of Normandy, hasn’t peace evolved into something treasured enough to forego in order to defend it for others? Efforts towards humanitarianism, social improvements and human rights are extending further than ever before. If there is truth in this, then there is truth in peace outweighing its counterparts and growing at the expense of society’s darker side.

I would like to believe that the actions of mankind and peace will continue to evolve on the micro scale. As individuals, we will always have different ideas of what peace is and how it should apply to all of us, so we will never totally achieve uniformity in its enactment. The question will always be able to be asked, "What does peace mean to you?" Peace would mean the most to me if it evolves into everyone respecting others' right to have it. This is a tide that raises all ships no matter how far apart they are. To me – peace is better left undefined.

Honorable Mention Entry by Adam Corona

What is Peace?

A face,
It is what brings out the souls of all
It makes us learn that we are many and we have cultural differences
But we have one exceptional similarity that obliterates all other obstacles
We are beings, beings in a world which we live in to grow, cherish, and most of all, love

If there is a subject that is far greater, do tell
Many people may find a foreign face, an enemy, an evil obstacle
But if we took the time to talk to that face
We would find them to be very similar
It would throw out that idea of an animal and be consumed with the idea of a neighbor

This face, can be a gateway to understanding one another
A way to find their loves, their hates
This is why we have the tools of death that kill from long distance
So you can't see them, a face that has life such as yours

That loves to breathe in a refreshing scent of the air that surrounds you both
That has the will to love someone and the will to be passionate
A being who likes to laugh about shocking events and cry about devastating ones
A person who had a mother that fed them
A father who protected them

Now in a battlefield in which his protector, is clutched in both hands
I ask this question, Why?
Why risk a life and yours for the will of your superior's winning?
At what cost would you take that life that is so much like you,
A person who could possibly be your brother

In this, peace, is what makes you gain the knowledge of that face
Makes you embrace that people,
And in the end, will cause you to embrace yourself.

Honorable Mention Entry by Janelle Hjelmstad

Holding Hands

When first hearing the word peace, a picture of a dreadlocked hippy clad in tie dye bounds into my thoughts. However, peace is much more than a vision of a person. It is what life could be, if everyone put differences aside. Peace is when a young child shares her cookies with her brother, even when they fight constantly. Peace is when you forgive your dad for eating the last piece of your birthday cake. There are many types of peace, but for me, it is finding the peace within. Peace is accepting everyone despite differences and ultimately, not judging or looking for faults in people.

Nowadays, the news is flocked with stories of hate, crime, and war. Media is constantly reminding us that the world is brimming with hate. People have a tendency to judge others because of religion, race, or ethics. If we closed our eyes, no one would be able to tell differences apart. The truth would be discovered that none of it matters in the end. John Lennon's song Imagine states, "Imagine all the people, living life in peace. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one." As the song suggests, peace can bring everyone together. Peace is looking for similarities instead of differences.

Peace is a mindset. It can be distinguished by being positive and attempting to make an encouraging difference. Persistence plays an important role. When a situation becomes difficult, often the easiest option is to accept failure. This does not lead to a tranquil outcome. When a person thinks peacefully, they are normally happy. If everyone was peaceful and happy, there would be no reason to fight, and all could live pleasantly together. Peace is the ability to think kind thoughts towards others and leave hateful comments aside.

Society tries to depict what is socially acceptable. When someone goes outside the normal boundaries, they are often prematurely labeled as "different." It is our duty as people to love everyone. I believe that within everyone is the ability to accept. When we find how to accept others, we have found the peace within ourselves to live amicably with others. When this peace is found, it is discovered that hate does not create friendship, love does. In the words of Bob Merrill's song, "Love makes the world go round." And love goes hand in hand with peace.

Peace is making the effort to make the life happier for a three-year-old girl fighting leukemia. It is reassuring her parents that our community cares for them. It is doing community service in her honor and volunteering, instead of hanging out with friends. Sparrow Club is proof to the world that students can help those in medical and financial need. It is proof that by helping others, you help yourself in more ways. By making a difference in the life of a toddler, I have found peace within my heart.

Peace is holding hands with the person you do not like. Peace is making the additional effort to put that smile on a face. Peace is going the extra steps to make sure someone is okay. Peace is being flexible and understanding that not everything is perfect. Peace is ultimately doing what feels right in your heart. Peace is understanding that life is not fair and living with it. Peace is not giving up; continuously searching for the answer, the cure, the method. To me, peace is finding a place within your heart in which you can smile and make others smile.

Honorable Mention Entry by Julia Rahm

Open the Curtains; Let the Light In

Chapter One: "The opposite of war isn't peace, it's creation." (Johnathan Larson)

This line from the rock-opera, *Rent*, is imprinted in my memory, probably since it suggests a less generalized explanation of peace other than "the absence of violence." Yet if peace isn't the opposite of war, what is it? And how do peace and creation relate? Peace encompasses nonviolence, compassion, understanding, and sympathy, but it begins with a spiritual undertaking. When I say "spiritual," I'm not talking religious dogma, a holy war, or organized religion. What I mean is that for individuals to recognize kinship, they must seek their own inner light, creating themselves anew.

Chapter Two: "Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it." (Jalal ad-Din Rumi)

By desiring for others to understand our personal misfortunes, experiences and perspectives, we fail to realize that the love we want is within us to give away. Within everyone is the capability for compassion, sympathy, and discovery of interconnectedness. Searching inward for this capacity, this "light," as the mystics would say, will manifest itself in the whole if all individuals live by the principle.

Chapter Three: "You can't shake hands with a clenched fist." (Indira Gandhi)

Suppose that you are a garbage-truck driver. You are passionate about your career, but your friends make fun of you all the time, calling you "stinky" for a laugh. This annoys you to no end—you feel like you deserve better treatment. As you continue wishing for your friends' respect, you get increasingly disappointed. Your heart scars over as you convince yourself that no one understands. Thus instead of opening up to empathize with others who long for that same understanding, you slam the door to your compassion, resigning to bitterness, hostility, isolation, and pessimism. What would have happened if you opened the door?

Chapter Four: "He who lives in harmony with himself lives in harmony with the universe." (Marcus Aurelius)

One could surmise that your relationship with your "friends" may not change, even if you healed your wounded heart and selflessly allowed your compassion to extend to others. Yet if you catalyzed this new way of living, it would slowly spread to those you honestly connected with. Enlightenment from within will bring a renewed sense of freedom and peace of mind. Consequently, true universal peace can be achieved through a spiritual awakening akin to the one described. Reaching out to people, opening up, and discovering your uniting

commonalities are simple ways to invite peace into your microcosm. As more people live embracing their inner light, the torch will be passed and the fire will spread.

Chapter Five: “I believe that to meet the challenges of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not just for oneself, one’s own family or nation, but for the benefit of all humankind. Universal responsibility is the key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace.” (Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama)

The peaceful transformation of the world lies in your hands, my hands, and every individual that exists now and in the future. Renewing humanity’s sense of spirituality would increase interconnectedness between the self and the rest of the universe, inspiring curiosity to experience other cultures, lifestyles and perspectives. By peering inward and exploring outward, searching for the beauty of me in you and you in me, the world will create.

We can create peace—just sit down, take a breath, look inside, and open the curtains.

Hana Yoshihata Honorable Mention Entry

The Strength of Dreams

Peace is the stars
The glimmer and gleam
Cloudless the night
And purest the dream.
Peace is the world
So slowly turning
True, there is violence
But also there's learning.
With learning comes acceptance
And acceptance is strong
In a world of acceptance
Peace can belong.
Peace is a wildflower
 That blooms very high
 Making all that desire it
 Reach for the sky.
 The reach is far worth it
 Despite all its height
 And one day we'll see it
 That flower of light.

Peace is a dream
 Ceasing with night
 We must try to grasp it
 With all of our might.

Peace is to fairy tale
 As grown up to child
 We just want to believe
 In this world so wild.
 But the further we go
 The more that it seems
 Peace will never exist
 Outside of

our dreams.
But peace is believing
Never the less
 For it can be with us
 More than we guess.
 One day we'll find it
 One day we'll see
 It's been here all along
 Inside you and me.

If peace be our future
Then beautiful seems
The hope for our children
With the strength of our dreams.