

**ROSEVILLE**  
**REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

Date: February 22, 2009  
Item No.: 5 . a

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Department Approval

City Manager Approval

*W. J. Mahonen*

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Item Description:      Human Rights Essay Contest Winners

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1    **BACKGROUND**

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3    Each year the Roseville Human Rights Commission holds an essay contest for sixth, seventh and  
4 eighth grade students within the Roseville Area School's boundaries. This year more than 320  
5 students from RAMS, Parkview School, St. Rose of Lima and St. John the Evangelist entered the  
6 contest. Commissioners conducted an anonymous review of the essays. Names of the students  
7 were not known until after the winners were selected.

8    This year students chose a current news event in which they believed there was a human rights  
9 violation. Students were asked if there was anything being done to bring justice to the situation  
10 and what they could do about it?

11    Commission Chair David Singleton will speak on behalf of the Commission and recognize the  
12 following students and teachers:

13	First place	Kenzie Lutz	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Ueland
14	Second	Margaret Lee	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Bibeau
15	Third	Kelsey Porter	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Ueland

16  
17    Honorable Mentions (in alphabetical order)

18	HM	Sonya Flaten	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Lauinger
19	HM	Emmy Inwards	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Ueland
20	HM	Sydney Olson	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	RAMS	Mr. Bibeau

21  
22    The first, second and third place winners will be invited to read their essays. Each honorable  
23 mention will receive a certificate.

24    **COUNCIL ACTION**

25    No City Council action necessary.

26  
**Prepared by:**      Carolyn Curti, Communications Specialist  
**Attachments:**    A: Winning Essays

Human rights are a very important and serious matter. Watching the news on television I hear about human rights violations that are happening all around me and all around the world. I hear stories about women and children who are being raped and killed in Africa and about people being tortured in Iraq and Afghanistan. Murders, rapes, child abuse, and hate crimes are occurring right here in the Twin Cities as well. I compared these stories to my life growing up in a middle class Caucasian family in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. I struggled with identifying what human rights issues I personally have experienced. After reading through the information on human rights, and taking some time to think deeply about them, I began to understand how I personally have been influenced by human rights. I came to the conclusion that there are three ways in which my family has been positively influenced by human rights.

The first way my family has been influenced was when my grandparents decided to adopt a child into their family. Almost 30 years ago my grandparents adopted a severely handicapped baby named Emmy. My Aunt Emmy was born with many health issues and my grandparents were told that she would not live to see her second birthday. My grandparents could have looked at Emmy and only have seen a child with a disability. Instead, they looked at Emmy as a human being who deserved a home, love, and care. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says in Article Three that you have the right to life, liberty, and personal security. The Human Rights documents are a standard of how humans should treat other humans and I believe the decision my grandparents made to raise a daughter with disabilities has demonstrated these ideals. Although Emmy is unable to talk, walk, stand, or do anything for herself, she was still allowed to go to school. This follows Article Twenty-Six that states that all humans have a right to an education. Also, Emmy has been protected by Article Two of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by not being discriminated against. She was not looked at as too severely

disabled to receive proper medical care. Today Emmy is still alive and experiencing life to her fullest. As a matter of fact, Emmy's life actually helped create the motivation for my grandmother to pursue special funding that enabled a day program to start that helps to educate many disabled students like her. My grandparents have loved Emmy not because what she can do, but because she is a human being. They have shown with their actions that Emmy does not have to earn or do anything to deserve human rights. Emmy is not considered less of a human being because of her disabilities. She is not undeserving of human rights and has human rights just as you and I have them. Emmy has influenced my life because I have had experience with disabled children. I feel confident in approaching and interacting with children who are like Emmy and do not view them as being less important than me. I am thinking about becoming a nurse or teacher someday and Emmy's story has taught me that everyone's value is equal and it does not mean that you are less important if you look different or have mental or physical handicaps.

The second way I have been influenced by human rights is by watching my aunt and uncle become parents. My Caucasian aunt and uncle have adopted two children who are African-American. My cousins Nina and Bob now have Caucasian parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article Two says you have the freedom from discrimination. My aunt and uncle did not reject Nina and Bob's because of their skin color. My aunt and uncle love them just because of who they are as human beings. It wasn't very long ago when black people experienced segregation and slavery. Fifty years ago most people would not have accepted having different races in the same family. Over the years many people's view has changed on this issue, but I still have witnessed first hand how they as a family are sometimes treated differently than my family. Walking through Rosedale Mall with them is a very eye opening experience. Some people's reactions to their family clearly demonstrates that discrimination is still happening right here in Roseville.

Although I want my cousins to grow up and not experience discrimination as a result of their skin color, I know that in reality we have not arrived and we still have room for improvement. I think of Nina and Bob as my cousins, not as my adopted cousins who are African American. My cousins should not be judged by the color of their skin or whether or not they look like their parents. My cousins have a right to be treated equally as outlined in Article One of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Lastly, I have learned about human rights through being involved with Compassion International. Compassion International is an organization that exists as a child advocacy group that releases children from spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty and enables them to become responsible, fulfilled adults. About six years ago, I was able to choose a child for our family to sponsor. I chose a girl who was about my age from India named Narlapati. In India, women are considered second class citizens. In rural areas, like where Narlapati is from, education for girls is very limited. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article Twenty-Five says that you have the right to adequate living standards. The money we pay each month helps provide food for Narlapati to eat, supplies that she needs for school, and medical attention if needed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states that you have the right to an education and that you have a right to equality. In India as well as some other countries, many girls do not get a proper education because most families cannot afford uniforms, books, and school supplies. When families are able to send a child to school, they usually send a boy since girls are not considered as equals. Girls are expected to stay at home and help with chores. We think it is very important that Narlapati attends school and get an education. We hope that education will open up new opportunities for her and that someday she will be able to make a difference in her country. Someday I may want to go to India and give to people who have nothing. I would like to show people in India that men and women are equal. I would like them to see that their whole country would benefit by women being educated.

I have learned much about human rights by writing this essay. My grandparents' attitude and unconditional love for my severely disabled aunt and my Uncle and Aunt's attitude and unconditional love for my cousins has helped open my eyes to the importance of human rights and the documents that have been created to protect people. I do not want people to discriminate against these very important people in my life. I believe that if we do our part in showing respect to all people, we can make a difference and positively affect human rights. As one of the most powerful nations in the world we must set an example by not discriminating against individuals because of disabilities or because of skin color and we must reach out to nations like India and make a difference one child at a time.

## The Importance of Human Rights

“Hey are you Chinese?”

“Asian people are smart!”

“All the people with black hair go over here.”

“What do you mean you don’t believe Jesus died for our sins?”

Those are only a few of the stereotypical and discriminatory things that I have heard. These things tend to violate people’s human rights and they are usually offensive. Human rights are rights you are born with and they can never be taken away. The three human rights that mean the most to me are articles two, 15, and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They include, Freedom from discrimination, Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change it, and Freedom of Belief and Religion. Those human rights are the most important to me because they fit in the values system my family instilled in me.

Article Two of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the Freedom from Discrimination. This is very meaningful to me because almost all my life, I have been the ethnic minority; at school, sports and such activities. I was born in Korea but I moved to the United States when I was four years old. When I was little I didn’t know anything about discrimination or race and definitely not hate crimes. Many people take discrimination differently. Societal minorities are usually the victims of discrimination, so they take it more seriously and are more aware of the hurt that it causes. Yet, people interpret discrimination differently and that is something people should respect. A familial encounter with racial discrimination is at my dad’s previous job. He worked at a warehouse and there was the warehouse area that was cement and then there was an office area with carpeted floor. The warehouse workers called the office workers “carpet people” and there were no people of color among the “carpet people” and no Caucasian people among the warehouse workers. A few times, my dad applied to work with the “carpet

people” and he was completely qualified for the jobs he applied for. With that being said, he never got an interview, no chance at a job among the “carpet people.” Some people might think of this like, “Maybe they found someone more qualified,” but as a minority, this is quite obvious that it was an act of discrimination, but as I said earlier, people interpret discrimination differently. Another run-in with discrimination was when I was in third grade. My teacher had us do presentations and I was supposed to go on Thursday but instead of having me go on Thursday, as planned, she had me go on Friday. With all the other Asian kids. It wasn’t a big deal to me at the time because I was only in third grad and I didn’t even notice, but now that I look back on it, it was very disrespectful and kind of odd. Both of those are personal human rights violations. Discrimination isn’t only passed on ethnicity, but on many different individual characteristics; including gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and many more. Hate crimes are very common act of discrimination. A statistic shows that 7,163 reported hate crimes were committed against homosexual people in America, but only 10% of hate crimes are actually reported. This shows that people are thinking, “No one’s going to care...” Discrimination is not being recognized nearly enough by society. Just as we see discrimination going on with ethnicity and sexual orientation, we see it among people with different beliefs and religions.

That brings me to my next human right of importance, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Freedom of Belief and Religion. I, personally, have not been singled out for my beliefs, but I have had people say that what I think is “weird” or “so not true.” There is no way to determine the validity of someone’s beliefs. That’s why you *believe* in them and they are your beliefs. People shouldn’t be treated worse or better because of their beliefs or religion. Though, normally people just assume that people are Christian because we live in a society that is 78.4% Christian and 16% of the remaining 21.6% is not even affiliated with a religion. Most Christians are Protestant, but I’m not considered a Christian in statistics. I am put into the “Other Religions” category. I’m a Unitarian, 0.14% of Americans are, so obviously, I am a minority. Unitarianism is not recognized in polls or surveys; it is under the category of “other.” That makes me, personally feel unrepresented, and I feel that Unitarians are going unnoticed in society. I don’t expect everyone to know every religion in the whole world but it

should be recognized that there are other religions besides Christian, Jewish and Muslim in the United States. Many incidents of hate crime and/or discrimination happen all around. 18% of hate crime is based on religion. That statistic proves that there is a lot of anger and hate towards some people who believe differently than others. It is obviously an aspect on which the society needs to improve on accepting, that not everyone is going to believe exactly the same things. This human right of Freedom of Belief and Religion isn't always respected but Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights is.

Article 15 is a very good right that is very much respected by the United States. It is the Right to a Nationality and the Freedom to Change it. This plays an extremely large part in my family because my father is not an American citizen, he has a green card, and I was born in Korea. This right is not a right that has been violated in my life, but a right that has very positively impacted my life. For example, my grandparents are not in good enough health to live by themselves, so they are going to move to America from Korea. In order to do that, my dad needs to become a citizen. That is a very big deal in our family because being a citizen of your home country is a crucial way to hold onto your heritage. It is not only a time consuming effort, but an emotional struggle; letting go of a way to be connected to your home country is a very hard thing to do. I was born in Korea, so when I turn 18 years old, I have the right to decide if I want to become an American citizen or a Korean citizen. I'm not sure what I will do, but I know in time, I'll figure out what I will do.

These human rights are a clearly a very important to me and always will be. They are human rights that can never be taken away from me because I was born with them. Freedom from discrimination, freedom of beliefs and the right to a nationality and the freedom to change it, those are the rights that are essential to my life.



## *Let Us Work Together*

Human Rights Essay  
November 2, 2009

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do abuse, violence, and disrespect continue to claim their space in this fragile world? There aren't any simple antidotes to messy conflicts. But maybe there are ways to prevent destructive storms of hatred from drowning out the persistent fires of peace, respect, and justice on the Earth.

Is it possible for charitable actions to cause more hurt than harm? Can trying to "help" others be considered disrespectful in some cases? When I was first introduced to these concepts, I had trouble understanding them. Even now, I have barely brushed the surface of these complex and elusive ideas. But I have learned that charity can be complicated, and there are many deep levels to people's thoughts and emotions when someone makes a charitable endeavor.

Some of us don't know what it's like to work hard. Some of us don't have to worry about making enough money just to satisfy our basic needs. My family has friends living in Mexico, and they usually don't have much money to spare—even though they work hard at their jobs six days a week. I used to wish that we could give them a small gift of money, a little sign of our friendship to help them out. But since then, my dad has taught me that, sometimes, it is best not to give money to those who may not be as privileged as you are. He shared a quote with me that is attributed to an Australian Aboriginal woman that says, "If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

For me, these words are filled with profound meaning. When I think about this quote in relation to conversations I've had with my dad, I understand the speaker to mean that sometimes, people who are born into privilege feel the need to give out of our own guilt. We feel that if we

give we are being good people, and it can help us come to peace with the fact that we live in more comfort than many others in the world. This Aboriginal woman says that if you approach someone of lesser privilege in a way that makes you feel like you're "helping" them to appease your own guilt, you might as well leave them alone. But if you understand that everyone's life is complicated, and everyone has their own struggles to face, then you can approach someone with a willingness to engage—not only with their problems, but also one's own.

During the 1980's, there was a terrible civil war in the Latin American country of El Salvador. The government took part in raiding citizen's homes, occasionally killing entire villages of men, women, elders and children. My family's good friends lived in El Salvador during this time. They immigrated to Mexico to escape the violence. Many of their family members had been killed, and they fled their own country to escape death.

In immigrating to another country, there are issues of adjusting to a new culture, striving to be accepted, and trying to adapt to a new lifestyle, among other challenges. Because this family was in danger of being killed, they had to leave their homeland, their possessions, and their way of life as they knew it.

The atrocities committed during the 1980's war violate the 16<sup>th</sup> right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that "The government of your country should protect your family and its members." In this case, the government was doing the opposite, igniting widespread fear and distrust throughout their country. The 3<sup>rd</sup> right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "You have the right to live, and to live in freedom and safety." This right was also grotesquely violated when tens of thousands of citizens were murdered.

Learning about our friends' struggles during the war helped teach me that not everyone in this world is graced with stability and safety in their everyday life. I may not wake up every day

with the fear of being homeless, hurt, or even having family members killed, but there are plenty of people around the world who have experienced hardships that I can't even imagine. The family I know who emigrated from El Salvador wasn't planning on staying in Mexico, but that's where they reside to this day. They have worked very hard, and, over many years, have built a cozy two-story home where they have raised four children.

Human rights are not universally recognized. They should be, but they aren't. Some rights that we take for granted in the US, such as education, are not given to everyone in the world. In many countries, school is considered a great privilege, and educational opportunities are very limited. The 26<sup>th</sup> article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the Right to Education. This is an area of human rights where there is always an opportunity to make a difference.

Article 25 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the right to an adequate living standard. When my church raised money for a program called Heifer International, we were able to donate animals that could improve a family's standard of living. The animals received—geese, chicks, water buffalo, honey bees, rabbits, ducklings, sheep, llamas, heifers—provide food and income for families around the world. When the animals reproduce, they are given to other families in need, becoming a gift that keeps on giving.

In the years to come, I will be thoughtful when making decisions that will affect other people. I will give thanks for blessings in my life. I'll also remember the quote by the Australian Aboriginal woman, and be mindful of my own circumstances and struggles when seeking to engage and help others. I will make an effort to improve situations around me as I deepen my understanding of human rights.

## Human Rights Essay

I can't imagine what our world would be like today without the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Without the protection of these worldwide rights, the global society would be chaotic. Numerous slaves wouldn't ever live in freedom, there would be unjust laws and discrimination against certain people, the world just wouldn't work the way it does now. However, in some parts of the world, and even in the U.S., this is how people still live their daily lives. I think the mission of our global community should be to work for the freedom and happiness of all the people that live near us as well as those that live in these places of chaos.

In my life, I've really only had one person open up my eyes to what discrimination against African-American people was really like. Sure, every year we read books on segregation and unfair laws but one day my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Oswald, took us one step further. As I walked into the room, Mrs. Oswald asked, "Who here has blue eyes?" Not sure of where she was going with this, I replied, "I do." Some other kids agreed that they too had blue eyes. Mrs. Oswald made a list in the front of room that included all the people with blue eyes. After class had started, she didn't seem to be paying any attention to the list but that, as the class slowly realized, was not the case. As the morning went on, Mrs. Oswald never once called on any of the blue-eyed people or let them leave the room. I slowly was starting to realize the pain of discrimination that African-Americans have had to go through every day since they arrived in America. At the end of the morning we had a class discussion (that included blue-eyed people) about the discrimination that had occurred in our country (and still continues) and in the class that morning.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states in Human Right Number 2 that all people have Human Rights, no matter their gender, skin color, religion, social status, nor the country they are from, the language they speak, what they think, or

amount of belongings they own. All around the world, Human Right Number 2, along with others, is violated every day. It may not always happen in our part of the world, but it happens, and I think that every person should strive to help others understand the importance of the Declaration of Human Rights and how to abide by them. Another right that was violated during the time of segregation in the U.S. is Human Right Number 3 which says, *You have the right to live, and to live in freedom and safety.* Again, in war zones, violent countries, and under strict governments, this right is stolen from people every day.

That day in fourth grade, I had the opportunity to peek into a tiny portion of African-American people's daily lives as the unwanted and hurt in America. I personally cannot imagine having to live through such hate and hardship. I was forever changed that day and I walked away with a feeling of pity that I'll never forget.

I will also never forget the feeling of being bullied. Bullying is a problem. A big problem, actually. I've been bullied before and chances are, most American kids have at one point in their lives. It's actually a fact that nearly 30% of children are a part of bullying, either the bully or the victim, today. In my life, I've learned that being bullied can be a heart-breaking experience. Being the bully probably isn't much better because the bully's actions usually reflect what they think of themselves.

Being bullied isn't only just plain mean; it goes against the some of the Human Rights. Right Number 1 tells us that all children are born free and should be treated in the same way. Singling an individual out as someone to pick on is definitely not at all fair and wouldn't be respecting this right. Another Human Right that bullying doesn't abide by is right number 3. Again, it says that everyone has the right to live in a free and safe environment. I wouldn't say having to put up with a bully every day is giving you freedom to live happily or feel safe.

Bullying continues to be a problem in the United States and around the world. Although there probably isn't an end in sight, we can all do our best to raise awareness and help give courage to the bullies and the bullied to reach out and get help.

We've all seen them. Sitting on a sidewalk, begging on a corner. Sadly, seeing a homeless person isn't uncommon. These people should be getting more help from the government than well-off citizens; unfortunately, they're not. It's a fact that being in

prison has more advantages from the government than someone roaming the streets. Inmates are provided with free healthcare, nourishing food, and a bed. Our government is neglecting homeless people and I think that we should change that.

*You have the right to have whatever you need so that you and your family: do not fall ill; go hungry; have clothes and a house...* Many people without a place to stay are ill, going hungry, don't have decent clothes, and, obviously, don't have a house. Homeless people are entitled to all these things but few actually have the chance to take advantage of this Right. I think our government needs to change and help these people in their times of need.

Although our government doesn't do much for the homeless people of our country, many organizations do. Some give hot meals to the hungry, others provide shelter and a place to sleep overnight. Some organizations even help people find a job or a house. Working with these people has helped me understand more about their lives, but also mine. I think that helping homeless people, whether it's giving them food or a job, is very important not just to them but also to us. It gives us hope that someday we'll live in a world where everyone has a place to call home.

In this world, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has had a huge impact on how our worldwide community functions. I hope that someday, every right that is listed on this Bill can be followed by each and every human being. This would make our world safe, fair and free from discrimination, bullying, and homelessness for all of us.

# Human Rights

Sydney Olson  
8th Grade  
Roseville Area Middle Scho  
Mr. Jeff Bibeau  
Honorable Mention

Abraham Lincoln once said "Those who deny freedom to others deserve i

themselves." Many people may agree with that statement but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not. Human rights are the rights that are granted to every human being regardless of their personality, race, sex, origin, thoughts, and social group. If everyone followed the simple rule "be kind" there would be no need for these documents. Alas many do not follow that one parameter and we need a written agreement. The rights that personally stand out to me are; Article 2, right to equality; Article 11, Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty; and Article 26, Right to Education. Without human rights the world would be chaotic, and if we decrease the number of violations we can work towards a perfect life.

Discrimination is a horrible thing; no one should be subjected to that treatment. I think that article 2, freedom from discrimination is vital to a peaceful existence. I've been taught to respect others consistently throughout my schooling, but my 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mr. Linehan stood out to me. Always in school teachers are supposed to instill the trait of kindness in students. Mr. Linehan went above and beyond that standard. We voluntarily participated in a learning activity where we got to see what discrimination feels like. He showed us how in a school situation African Americans used to be victimized. This lesson deeply touched me and it showed how badly discrimination can hurt. One example of recent discrimination was last October. In Jordan domestic women migrant workers were not getting paid some or all of their wages, and in some cases for years. On top of those violations many women were also abused and held captive at employer's houses. Today's studies show that to every dollar a man earns a woman only makes 77 cents. At the current rate of women wage increase in 2051 men and women will finally be earning the same amount of money for the same work. There are many others types of

discrimination to some of which are far more harmful. Freedom from discrimination is important because the external scars may heal but the internal wounds may always hurt.

One of the greatest rights to a person is article 11, right to be considered innocent until proven guilty. The person who taught me this lesson best is my father. My dad is a criminal defense lawyer and every day he deals with people who have denied others their human rights. Even though many of these people may seem unworthy of human rights they are still granted all of them. Being considered innocent until proven guilty is denied to many people daily in mild cases. A greater instance in which article 11 was broken is at the Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba. Many of the prisoners there were placed there because of minimal suspicion or just because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time during military situations. A substantial amount of detainees have been considered guilty until proven innocent, and many sit in cells waiting for a trial that may never come. In September 2003, four families of prisoners informed the law that their relatives had been detained with little or no substantial evidence. The prisoners were waiting for 18 months before workers even inquired why they were being held. Not only was Article 11 broken in this instance articles also 9 and 10. The right to be considered innocent until proven guilty is one of the basic building blocks of a fair trial and without it the tower of justice would fall.

My mother taught me to value education as a privilege not a right. I know now that it is a right all though many places do not have quality schools. Article 26, Right to education, states; you have the right to go to school and everyone should go to school. My mom always would help me with my school work and make sure I enjoyed learning. Education represents the roots of a plant; before you can bloom you must have solid roots. No one should be denied schooling because their chances of a successful life are greatly damaged. One example where the right was



denied is in Slovakia last year. The public schools are sending off Romani children to 'special schools' for disabled students where the curriculum is lowered and substandard. The Romani kids are primarily as bright as normal students, but at the schools they are studying curriculum 4 grades lower than average. These kids are denied a proper education because of their race and beliefs. I'm fortunate that Minnesota values education and I'm able to go to schools that teach proper and advanced classes. Without education the whole economy is wounded through the ripple effect. One small drop of water expands affecting everything around it. One uneducated generation expands and causes trouble in the future.

In conclusion all human rights are vital and should be valued equally. If I had to choose the 3 articles most important to me from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights I would pick; Article 2, 11, and 26. I've never personally had an experience with people breaking these rights towards me, but I still feel very passionate about following these rules. Everyday people are discriminated against but this is not necessary. Everyone should be considered innocent until proven guilty. Education is at the center of our sophisticated world; therefore everyone should be allowed a free education. I hope that one day I won't have to write papers about human right violations because I will have nothing to write about.

human rights essay

There is great beauty in this world. There is the feel of soft, milky moonlight on skin, the vibrant hues of a dark sky, and the soft lull of tiny waves creeping up the ocean sand.

But there are great monstrosities in this world. There are the wails of a mother who cradles her bloodstained son in her arms, the hate that glares through scorned eyes, and the hopelessness of the woman who feels her circumstances are unchangeable.

In this world, we have a choice. We have a choice to embrace the beauty of the life around us, and to bring love, faith, and hope to others. We also have the choice to associate ourselves with the pain and hate that roams the world, desiring only to create a world where our life can be most comfortable... My goal through this essay is to break down some of the hate barriers that we commonly see, and show, through three experiences, how I have learned that there is a different way to think and feel than the common selfish mindset.

I had an eye-opening experience a year or two ago, one that has affected my life very strongly, and will follow me throughout my entire life. My church youth group departed from the church one night to the Naomi Shelter, a refuge for women and children who need a place to stay. We were going to learn about homelessness and poverty in the twin cities. Our job would be to give the mothers a night off, and play with the kids.

I want to clarify that before this particular night, I was, I'll admit, rather biased towards homeless people, or people with low-income. Though I am ashamed to say it, what came to my mind were dirty, ugly people who smoked and who didn't have a job because they were too lazy to find one. Looking back, my narrow-mindedness is rather sickening... That was one reason why the homeless shelter was chosen for an activity that night. Not only to assist people, but also to realize just what I did as I held the hand of a pint-size, high-voiced little girl while we crossed the street to enter a gym for playtime; that we are all people, and we all have value. As I created a

necklace, played hide and seek, and listened to a silly play, my discrimination slowly washed off my mind, as dirt under a tap might drip from soiled hands. Who was I to judge another human being, just like myself, without having spoken a word to them, without even knowing their name? I discovered a truth that night, a truth that I wish the whole world could see with unveiled eyes, as I do now; the truth that the second article of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights states: That we should be allowed freedom from discrimination. This concise sentence sums up the life lesson I learned through one night of love and fun.

When we think of the word discriminate, though, a likely issue to pop up in our heads is the topic of racism. The discussions and opinions on the matter stretch farther than the Pacific Ocean, and the various hate crimes that have resulted over the centuries regarding the subject could feed a herd of elephants. I've never had a problem with race, because as most children do, I spent a lot of time growing up with my many cousins, and they are not only Caucasian, like me, but also African-American and Korean. (My grandparents adopted five children.) I never noticed any difference between one child and another, because in truth, we none of us are really all that different. I am infinitely grateful for being fortunate enough to have such a family, one where from an early age; I have learned that your skin color is nothing too important... it is like your hair color, a characteristic unique to who we are. It is nice to see other people in the world recognizing this fact, too, and stopping hate because of it. Race is a protected class in every area of protection on the Who's Protected document, and in the informative sheet regarding Minnesota Hate Crime Laws, I was very encouraged to see that hate crimes committed against someone because of their race are qualified for an enhanced penalty. It makes me hopeful that someday I can be someone who will stand up against prejudice, because of the lesson I learned from my family: never treat others unequally for something as frivolous as their skin color. A person, is a person, is a person. Don't let anyone make you think differently.

My last story involves people whose names I cannot name; so I am

going to call this couple John and Alice. John and Alice were missionaries in China for several years. Being a believer in the Christian faith is tightly controlled in this country, though numbers 18, 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) state that you may practice any religion, you should be able to share ideas with people from any country, and that you may organize peaceful meetings if you wish to. China disregards these rights, and when John and Alice, close friends of my family, were caught, they were given 24 hours to get out of the country immediately. They were never given a fair trial, just a harsh threat that made its point. John and Alice came back to the States.

The story in China is less that the government doesn't wish their citizens to be Christians, as much as they don't want foreigners coming into China to spread the Christian faith. Therefore, John and Alice had to keep in secret, though as mentioned earlier, number 19 of the UDHR says you may share ideas with people of different countries, and 20 says peaceful meetings are completely acceptable. This was a revelation to me, and though the restrictions on Christianity were loosened a bit in the 1970's, I still think the laws in China are simply unfair.

There are great monstrosities in this world. There is the shaking hand that tightens around the cold barrel of a gun, the tears which slip down a child's bruised face, and the sound of gunfire like rain, striking men's hearts into a silence so solid, brick walls cower in terror. But there is great beauty in this world. There is the song of the people's hearts who are standing up to injustice, there is the laugh, sweet and flowing like a glass of orange juice in the morning, that issues from tiny lips, and the great joy of love, which protects, encompasses and goes on forever. I will not bow down to the hate. I will not give in to vile thoughts and actions. No, I will use what I have learned against judgment and cruelty... I will be beautiful.