



Physicians for Social Responsibility  
10 Dumfries Court  
Sacramento, California 95831  
www.sacpsr.org • info@sacpsr.org  
916-955-6333

2020 High School Scholarship Essay Contest Second Place Winner  
and Recipient of \$2,500 Award

Sarah Allen  
El Dorado High School, Placerville

*I Am Going To Make It*

The concept of “peace” is difficult to define. It can, of course, be described as the mere absence of war, of anger, of hatred, of energy, of opposition. However, this begs the question: is peace in and of itself an absence of energy? The simple answer, in my opinion, is no. Peace is anything but stagnant. It is far from passive. Peace is a conscious and unyielding concept, one that fuels the human desire for resolution and for growth.

Peace is widely accepted as a lack of war. However, as Rigoberta Menchu Tum puts it, peace is anything but. Peace is not the absence of fighting, it is the presence of compassion. Peace is anything but a “lacking.” It is a “having” of respect, of acceptance, of love. To add to the Nobel Prize winner’s wise words, “As long as there is poverty, racism, discrimination, [sexism, misogyny, pay inequality, homophobia, violence, negligence, ignorance, islamophobia, transphobia, hatred,] and exclusion, we’ll be hard-pressed to achieve a world of peace.” To those who look only at the surface value of these words, peace again seems to be tied to an absence: a lack of these atrocities in society as we know it.

But we know better. We know that peace is not the nonexistence of these horrors, but rather the presence of their opposites. It is a replacement of poverty with abundance, of racism with equality, of misogyny with feminism, of homophobia with acceptance, of ignorance with knowledge, of hatred with compassion. Only the presence of all of these factors that will bring us to a world of peace.

These problems which Menchu Tum defines are not ones that can be solved with a single word. They cannot be solved by a simple government mandate and then be shoved aside to be dealt with at another time, another day, another court case. If we know anything about human history, we know that we must, as a society, teach replacement behaviors for each of these norms. We must instruct our citizens in the ways of acceptance. We must raise our boys to know their worth: equal to that of our girls. We must redefine the word love to ourselves, our children, and our elders, into a word that transcends the limits of gender. We must uphold and honor each other’s culture, heritage, and religion because together, we are a more expressive, beautiful, diverse, and healthy society.

We know, just as Rigoberta Menchu Tum knew, that peace is simply a temporary pause on war. It is an ultimate goal. The ideal describes a world full of love, compassion, truth, acceptance, and uniqueness. We are “hard-pressed” to achieve this world. We are “hard-pressed” to reach our goals. But we get closer to them each day with every kind word, action, and thought, with every lesson to the next generation, and with every active stance which asserts, “I am not going to wait around for a more compassionate world; I am going to make it.”