

2019 GRAND PRIZE WINNER – SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL

PERSPECTIVE

In today's highly polarized political climate, it often seems like the world is only held together by a few threads; threads that are stretched so tight, they could snap at a moment's notice. Creak. The threads groan as bit by bit the world slowly tears itself apart.

Close your eyes and hold out your hand. Feel the tension vibrating through the air, the howl of sirens, and the gentle beating of your heart. Bum Bum. Bum Bum. Bum Bum. Beat after beat, your heart pushes blood through your veins, keeping you alive. Your heart, however, is not just another organ; the heart is the epitome of who you are as a person. Nestled deep inside its walls, rest your dreams, beliefs, and morals, the very thing that makes you you.

With your outstretched hand, reach out and take the hand of another. Flesh. Bone. Blood. It's undeniably human. Beating heart. Dreams. Passions. Open your eyes. What do you see? The person looking back at you may appear completely different. They may have a different ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political party, religion, social status, disability (or lack thereof), and they may even be a different age, but when you stare into their eyes, you don't see any of that. Instead, it's like looking into a mirror, except the mirror doesn't reflect who you are, but who you could have been. Everything we're so persistent to fight over, whether it be race or religion, is completely arbitrary. We had no say over what religion our parents raised us in. If we were raised in another country, who'd say we wouldn't adhere to a different faith? Instead of fighting over something so random (important, but still arbitrary), try understanding those around you. You don't have to like something or someone to examine things from their perspective.

Just try, because if we can't look beyond our prejudices, then how can we ever build a strong community? A community is centralized around trust and understanding; it's not about the differences, but the similarities that can glue those differences together. I'm not asking that you change your beliefs. I am asking that you open your heart. Examine the world from another perspective and maybe, just maybe, life will become a bit more clear.

The world may be divisive, but one thing is certain. Beneath the melting pot of culture, religion, and beliefs, we are one in the same. We are human, and being human means that we will bicker and lash out. We'll judge others before getting to know them. We'll hate. We'll love. At the end of the day, however, we must put that beside us. Close your eyes. Reach out a hand. Together, we will march side by side into the future.

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