

PSR Sacramento 2016 Scholarship Essay Contest Finalist

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The struggle and dissent between and within nations is often triggered by the fight for scarce resources. According to the United Nations, "deforestation and water scarcity... have repeatedly led to armed conflicts in Africa." Therefore as survival depends on dwindling resources, the law of the land becomes war, while peace is suddenly forsaken. Case in point: it is becoming clear that the conflict in Darfur is founded in more than "ethnic hatreds" and government mistreatment. Creeping desertification and severe droughts have caused growing competition for land and water. The United Nations Environment Program has stated that severe environmental degradation is among the root causes of the conflict. A 354-page study found that deserts have spread southwards by over a 100 kilometers, a "deforestation crisis" has led to a loss of almost 12 percent of Sudan's forest cover, and precipitation has fallen by a third.

While society depicts war as a fight between men and a battle for superiority, another war exists. One waged on nature not man. Until mankind lives harmoniously with nature, we cannot live harmoniously with each other. Protecting the environment prevents the scarcity of resources, alleviating a source of conflict. In the absence of war, there is still no promise that peace will prevail. When wars end, there won't be joy if soldiers have no home to return to. If nations find peace, rejoicing won't be heard if they see their cities under the rising sea, their grasslands turned to deserts, their families stricken by disease, and their environment permanently tainted.

More than a hundred years ago Europe's crimes against humanity originated with a defensible lie. European colonial interests in exploiting ivory and rubber, in the public's eye, was an idealized duty to disseminate western ideals. The public was complicit with the colonists in propagating the exploitation of human rights because the lies they accepted allow the colonists to hide their horrid actions behind meaningless words. Imperialism hurts because it exists and comes to be when someone thinks they know what is best for a whole society. All over the world, people with money and governments with power decides what to do. Poor people are displaced from their own environment, communities and from where they have emotional ties. This is a violation of their rights.

Basic human rights include necessities like food and water and civil liberties like freedom of speech, expression and religion. In the absence of these rights there can never be peace. Many would argue that peaceful solutions in the war between men must be achieved before we concern ourselves with making peace with our environment. However, we must consider the moral erosion and lack of conscience that would allow people to go hungry and to be slaughtered for their beliefs. One person alone doesn't hold the responsibility to oppose hatred. We must rise up as one grand dissenting voice against human rights violations. Once we recognize that we are a global family we can embrace the rights of all people.