

2025-2026 Lions International Peace Essay Grand Prize Winner

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“Together We Are One: The Truth Beyond Appearances”

Most people learn about the world through light and color. They see borders, differences in skin tone, the lines that separate the "us" from the "other." I also see light, but it reaches me softly, without the sharpness that creates filters and categories. I was born with low vision, and that taught me that Peace does not begin with sight, but with the voluntary blindness of judgment.

The theme "Together We Are One" requires us to look inward. The world's disharmony, wars, exclusion, are not accidents. They are the result of a miscalculation of visuals. Society is taught to value what is large, tall, beautiful, or equal to what is in the mirror. And everything that does not fit this image is, very often, rejected, feared, or silenced. For me, people are revealed by something more intimate. They are the vibration of their step on the sidewalk, the change in breath before a question, the quality of the silence they share. The color of your skin is a blur, but the color of your soul revealed by how you treat the vulnerable or how you use your words is perfectly clear. My experience shows that the only thing that truly separates people is the distance between mind and heart.

In this universe, we are all made of the same cosmic material. The atom that makes up my hand is the same that forms the mountain and the same that resides in the heart of someone who lives on the other side of the planet. We are the — composition, but we dress ourselves in different packaging. When we cling to the packaging—the visible and superficial—we break the unity.

Being “Together We Are One” does not mean we have to agree on everything or erase our identities. On the contrary. True unity is an act of radical acceptance. It means I value your difference because it complements my imperfect view of the world. It means your joy is, in some way, my joy, and your pain is a crack in the foundation of my own security. If we could, for a moment, collectively close our eyes, we would not see who has more or less, who is strong or weak, who is from here or there. We would feel only the shared urgency to

live, to love, and to protect our only home. We would feel the invisible thread that does not need light to be perceived.

Peace is not a distant destination, but the revelation of our unity. It is the moment when humanity finally recognizes the truth beyond appearances: we are more than the sum of our visible parts. We are one Unique body, pulsating together in the dark, eager for light, but already connected by our deepest essence. And this is the truth I have learned to see, without the need of my eyes.