

**2024-2025 Lions International Peace Essay Grand Prize Winner**

**Robert Hunt, Age 11**

**"Beauty is in the judgement of the beholder"**

Many people in this world long for peace for themselves and for others. Sometimes it feels like there will never be peace. Whether that is peace between people within a country or between countries the presence of disharmony is not beautiful.

Shakespeare stated that "beauty is in the judgement of the beholder" and many people use the phrase, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder". What this means, is that the person who is seeing is judging something's worth by their vision. Scientists believe that between 75% and 90% of what we learn is from our vision. This means that we are taught to value things by how we see our family and friends, our teachers, social media and news, and government treating others. Our judgement is clouded by what we have been taught to see and value.

I was born with severe low vision. This means when I meet people, I do not know what they look like. I can not see and cannot judge them by my eyes' perception. I do not know if they are old, if they have fair or dark skin. I do not know if they are big, or tall, nor their hair colour. I do not know if they wear clothes that demonstrate spiritual beliefs, nor necessarily, if they are male or female. I do not know if they are missing any limbs, or in a wheelchair or blind like me. I do not know if they are different or the same as me. Instead, I have learned to value people by listening to them and considering their actions to me and others.

I have never thought being blind was either an advantage or a disadvantage. But I do think, that not being able to judge someone's worth in a blink of an eye is a great advantage. To me, not seeing, is just natural and I hadn't really understood that others don't live in a non-seeing world like I do, until I was nearly 8 or 9 years of age. Of course, I knew they weren't blind like me. But it surprised me, that people were seeing and deciding how alike or different people were to themselves with their vision. Possibly what I am describing seems odd to you. However, it would probably feel odd to you to not use your eyes.

If we believe that everybody is equal in dignity and rights this means we need to learn to stop judging or being afraid of other people, because they look different to us, or we see them as not of the same value. Only when we respect and do not judge people by differences, will there be peace. I strongly believe if we could all close our eyes when we meet people, even if this was figuratively, there might be a chance we could get to know people before we judged them. Then we might just achieve peace without limits.