

Community Opening of the Legal Year 2017

Speech by Skyline Education Foundation Students

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Somewhere in the world there are people experiencing poverty, wars, injustice, oppression. This is what has become our home.

Waking up daily to feeling isolated, hurt, trapped and discriminated against

We call ourselves a community. We say we are:

Diverse – welcoming of refugees

Accepting – acknowledging difference

Multicultural – eating Asian cuisine

This is the world we have created for ourselves, and now we need to live in it. Or act.

We have forgotten what it means to be apart of a community.

We merely fragments of a puzzle; divided.

Genuine help and involvement is compensated with sympathy.

Rather than being active and participating, we all are driven by pity and fear.

We reject genuine asylum seekers

We judge without understanding

We fail to listen to the indigenous people

Laws that say yes to imprisonment but no to freedom

A distant land of rejoice, golden soil, wealth for toil? Or a land that rejects, points fingers, and critiques their difference. A land that will associate skin colour with crime, and appearance with legislative breaches. A land that will assume ones culture, and stereotype, solely based on how they look.

We continue with our work. Heads down. Arms down. Eyes straight ahead but not around. We walk past people in need. Begging. We throw a coin. We donate money.

So focused on what is in front of our paths, we let money solve matters that need to be heard.

Further and further we drive away from humanity.

Our misunderstanding about each other and the way people are portrayed in the media creates problems.

Our excuses – it can threaten national security or change the Australian way of life

It is so easy to see the faults of others – so much so that name calling has been normalised: immigrants, terrorists, boat people – we have become blinded to our own faults.

We are left with complaints about each other, stop blaming people it only leads to pain and discomfort, let us be a community that takes initiative.

So how do we change this and make our home better?

Lets us all get involved. Every single person can be influential.

Understand that the community has an immense amount of problems that need to be addressed. Be not only seen but heard, don't be afraid to voice your opinions, and help others voice theirs .

Spoken and written words are the most powerful force for humanity. The choose is ours to either use this force constructively with words of hope and encouragement, or destructively using words as a weapon of manipulation. Embrace your words as thoughts corrupt language and language can also corrupt thoughts.

This concept of empathy, an aspect that makes us human, has become so foreign to us, often difficult to outsource and automate. A quality that is hard to come by in individuals but makes all the difference.

It allowed us to progress forward, it helps us understand not only our feelings, emotions, passions and desires but others too.

The capacity to know that every war is both won and lost, that another person's grief is as meaningful as the one you experienced.

Place yourself in someone else shoes, feel with his or her heart, comprehend their actions, beliefs and values as your own.

Seeing with his or her eyes, as only when looking at things that are seen, do we gain any idea of the unseen.

Then the imaginary barrier created between us is easily bypassed.

Empathy is the essential quality of civilisation and is needed to make the world a better place.

I implore you for the rest of the legal year to show empathy for those you encounter and work with. To act with kindness. To at least make effort to understand how another might feel Pay it forward.

As doing good deeds, will in turn inspire positive actions from others.

I mean we are VCE students, so excuse us for getting all sciencey but, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction or do good and good will occur. (KARMA) and thats what we need in the community.

It can make a difference and potentially save someone for those who experience discrimination, inequality and racism.

We have a rare opportunity to contribute to creating a society, a truly remarkable community but we need your help. They say the future is in the hands of the younger generations, however the future has already began.

Before writing this speech, Mary and I came up with an analogy;

“What can a single chopstick do without another? Nothing. But together they have the power to lift.”

As silly as it is, for anything to occur we need to work together, to lift ourselves.

If we work hard enough, we can achieve all, regardless the limitations we were born with or placed upon us.

Working together, helping people is a form of hope and that is worth fighting for.

Use your talents for not only justice, but for community too.