

ROSEVILLE
REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: February 28, 2011
Item No.: 5.a

Department Approval

City Manager Approval
W. J. Mahoney

Item Description: Human Rights Essay Contest Winners

1 **BACKGROUND**

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3 Each year the Roseville Human Rights Commission holds an essay contest for sixth, seventh and
4 eighth grade students within the Roseville Area School's boundaries. This nearly 200 students
5 from RAMS and Parkview School entered the contest. Commissioners conducted an anonymous
6 review of the essays. Names of the students were not known until after the winners were
7 selected.

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9 This year students were asked to discuss the following:

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11 How do Human Rights apply to you and your peers in your school and community?
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13 Commission Chair David Singleton will speak on behalf of the Commission and recognize the
14 following students and teachers:

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16 First place Sophia Miliotis 8th Grade RAMS Mr. Lee Thao
17 Second Aleksandar Guzina 8th Grade Parkview Mr. Lucas Ebert
18 Third Noah Livingston 8th Grade RAMS Mr. Jeff Bibeau

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20 Honorable Mentions (in alphabetical order)

21 HM Christian Favazza 8th Grade Parkview Mr. Lucas Ebert
22 HM Tim Schnell 8th Grade RAMS Mr. Jeff Bibeau
23 HM Isabela Silverio 7th Grade RAMS Ms. Kerry Gamble

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25 The first, second and third place winners will be invited to read their essays. Each honorable
26 mention will receive a certificate.

27 **COUNCIL ACTION**

28 No City Council action necessary.

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Prepared by: Carolyn Curti, Communications Specialist
Attachments: A: Winning Essays

Human Rights Essay

It's 6:35am. Again. Time to get up and head to school. On some days I would rather stay in the warmth of my bed. Then, I remember how fortunate I am to be in a school, getting an education. So I wipe the sleep from my eyes and get dressed. As I pull on my nice sweater, I think of the children who wake up to another day of hurt. They're afraid of school because they get teased and face discrimination. Some children don't eat a breakfast or even have the opportunity to wear nice sweaters. I believe that everyone deserves an education, sufficient shelter and food, and freedom from discrimination.

To me, going to school means preparing for life. Everything you learn, may it be in elementary, middle or high school is used in your future life. People become doctors, teachers, even construction workers, all because they learned the basics: Multiplication, how to spell, the parts of an atom, and so forth. However, in many other countries, people don't get to choose a career because they never went to a school or obtained more than a grammar school education. This issue isn't noticed or attended to nearly as much as it should be in the world. In fact, according to the Central Intelligence Agency World Fact book, approximately 785 million adults across the globe are illiterate. Two thirds of them are women. Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that every person has the right to an education. If this were heeded, more of the world would have the ability to read or write. This Human Right is often taken for granted by those that do have access to a free public education.

Article 2 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains another right often taken for granted: The freedom from discrimination. Peering across the room at this instant, I see a number of students from different racial backgrounds and ethnicities. "Aamira", a Muslim student wearing a hijab, is sharing a laugh with "Toua", a Hmong student. While walking down the hallways of my middle school, I see classmates in wheelchairs, people of different mental abilities, and those who struggle with obesity. In addition to my own middle school, schools across the nation are equally diverse. There is no doubt that many varieties of discrimination take place at one time or another in my school district and elsewhere. When my sister was in elementary school, a boy was bullied because of his weight, and he transferred to a different school. Another example of discrimination widely reported in the news lately, is cyber bullying of teenagers that express their sexual orientation. Tragically, some of them have committed suicide. Article 2 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicates that "Everyone can claim the following rights, despite a different sex, skin color, speaking a different language, thinking different things..." School is for learning purposes, to change and grow. To be discriminated against would make the everyday pressures a student already feels seem unbearable. Home is the only sanctuary, providing safety, warmth, and food; but for some, a home is yet again another impossible dream.

Going home after school relieves my stress. It is the one place where I can unwind and prepare for school again. Finishing homework, eating dinner, showering and going to sleep; it's all part of my routine. For dinner tonight I had

leftovers. Yuck. But compare my meal to that of a homeless child. What does he eat for dinner? Where does he go after school, if he attends school at all? Again referencing The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25: The Right to Adequate Living Standards, states "You have the right to have whatever you need so that you and your family: Do not fall ill; go hungry; have clothes and a house..." Yet there are still many homeless people in our world. I have running water and heat. I have an education. Finally, I am free from any obvious form of discrimination.

Though I am granted those three rights, most others in our world are not. I ponder this as I lay my head down on my pillow. If everyone were entitled to an education, there would be more educated people everywhere, who could continue to make the world a better place. If everyone had a shelter and food, many more humans wouldn't be starving and homeless. Discrimination would be a part of history if The Universal Declaration of Human Rights were more than just a list on paper, and everyone lived by them.

Planting the Seeds to Open the Shells

“If you judge people, you have no time to love them”-Mother Teresa “True peace is not merely the abstinence of tension, it is the presence of justice”-Martin Luther King Jr. “Blessed is the influence of one true, loving, human soul unto another”-Author Unknown. Having human rights apply to all people has been a goal to mankind since the beginning of civilization. It has never been fully achieved, only partially. Equity and human rights have failed time and again all around the world, and are just now taking root in the luckier nations. Roseville has a strong equity vision that, if put to use correctly, can be the start of a peaceful and harmonious community. With it we can remove racism from our community, get people trust and be more open and compatible with one another, and allow people to express their true selves freely. There is a chance that human rights may prevail magnificently in Roseville, but only if we start acting now.

There are racists, bigots, or at least groups or people who do not like specific groups of people in each community. There is no denying that, but we can actively support and advocate human rights in a community, which Roseville is doing. This will curb the hate that people have for each other. Humans naturally believe what they hear and see. If members of the community see posters or TV ads that depict equality, they will believe and accept it. But not only depictions of equality and acceptance will stop the hate. It may not be enough to change the views of some people. That is why action needs to follow up the belief. If a person sees a

community where people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, and beliefs work and live together in harmony, and where racism is widely disapproved of, they will be deterred from committing acts of racism.

If people learn to accept and treat each other fairly, then they will become more open to one another. This is what I believe my community is trying to achieve. If someone is accepted they will eventually be trusted. People will have no problem socializing with each other, no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they think or believe. Showing equality will break down the barrier of difference that has set so many people apart for so long. People will not view each other as black, white, Christian, Muslim, poor, rich, man or woman. They will view each other as people, as equals, without stripping them of their identity.

If people see that they can be accepted in a community, they will fly their true colors. If they are around people who trust and support them, they will feel at ease and show who they really are. People put their true selves into an indistinguishable shell, worn by all members of a community. This shell is worn around the world by every type of person imaginable. The shell is what separates people from their actual selves and molds them into what others want them to be. One person shows their true identity, and the masses will follow and take off their shells. The people who dictate who people should be-the shell molders, will be overthrown. People will be free and equal together. It is a vision of communities and community members

alike all around the world to see this happen, myself no exception. But this is only a vision. It has yet to be carried out.

Human rights affect me by allowing me to be an equal with my community members. They give others and me around the world so many rights we rarely think about. The right to life, the right to be innocent until proven guilty, the right to believe what I believe and think what I think, the ability to practice my free will in the laws of my nation, which must be equal to all they apply to, to name a few. The rights that are given to all members in my community that cannot be taken away and let us live how we do. In Roseville, in Minnesota, in the US. But only in a nation as powerful as ours and others like it are basic human rights prevalent. Around the world, people are still persecuted for all manner of things. Human rights need to be established elsewhere, and need to be improved in countries that already have them. For example, the utopia mentioned previously still needs to happen. It is a seed that may grow into a strong tree, and then a forest, which will cover the entire world. But only if we plant the first seed.

Human Rights

Human rights are what every single person on earth is born with, regardless of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or age. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a document that describes thirty of these rights. They cannot be taken away by anyone. Just a few of the most prominent rights that affect me, my peers, my school and my community are the right to education, the right to no discrimination, and the right not to be treated cruelly.

In my mind, one of the most important human rights is the right to education. Getting a good education will exponentially affect a person's quality of life forever. College education leads to getting a better job and having a better understanding of the world. According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is entitled to free elementary and fundamental schooling. Some people think of school as a chore, but they should be thankful. There are many children in the world who don't have the opportunity to go to school.

Another important right is the right not to be discriminated against. Roseville Area Schools is a relatively diverse school district. Therefore, it opens the door for potential discrimination. Everyone has looked at someone with a disability, or of a different color, and made assumptions about them; it has always happened, and probably always will. This right of no discrimination affects me and my community directly, because where there is diversity, there is discrimination. I hope someday we can live in a world where this is not the case, and everyone is truly equal. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have a dream..."

Last but not least, article five of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that no one should be the victim of cruel or degrading treatment. One of the most common violations of this right with me and my peers is cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is when someone posts hurtful images or texts online aimed at harming an individual. It can be emotionally crushing and degrading, especially when it is severe. In too many of the most serious cases, this has even driven victims to commit suicide. Based on a survey by iSafe, an internet safety organization for teens, 40% of students have had their passwords hacked by bullies. Though cyber-bullying isn't physical, it is as real as any other form of bullying, and is a definite violation of the right not to be treated cruelly.

These rights belong to everyone, no matter who they are. Unfortunately, human rights are violated every day. My peers, my school, my community and I are affected every day, not only by the rights to education, no cruel treatment, and no discrimination, but by all thirty of the human rights. If human rights were universally accepted, the world would be a place where people could live together in peace.

When Good Rights Go Wrong.

Do you use Facebook, Twitter, My Space, Form Spring or other social media? If you do, have you ever written something bad about someone you did not like? Do you think you have a right to trash, bag on, put down, spread rumors or even imply harm to someone on the internet? How about at school? According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights article #19, which states freedom of expression as a basic human right, you have the right to say anything you want about anyone. However, there is a point when one person's right violates another person's rights. That's when a good right goes wrong.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, article #3 states everyone has the liberty and security of person. If you are putting someone down, making them sad and scared, you are violating their right to feel safe. If a person is afraid to walk down the halls at school because someone will taunt them, that violates their right to freely and safely walk to class. What about Human Rights article #26 the right to an education? If someone is afraid to go to school because people can say anything they want about them, aren't those same people are violating the person's right to an education by exercising their own rights to freedom of expression?

What about when the audience is the World Wide Web? Is the right to freedom of expression still a right when it violates someone else's Human Rights, article #12: the right to privacy? If someone divulges personal information about someone in the form of gossip, slander, personal photos and other private information and makes it public online isn't that violating another person's right to privacy?

Sometimes freedom of expression leads to freely expressing discriminating words against someone such as anti-gay or anti- (fill in the blank) statements, these words can impact others to discriminate and in turn impact their thoughts and actions. Isn't that violating the Human Rights Article # 2: freedom from discrimination?

In conclusion, the right to freedom of expression is a right that is often misused and abused. It is a good and necessary right except when it goes wrong.

Human Rights for the Disabled

Human rights affect me, my peers, my school, and my community. Human rights are very important. What did Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks stand up for? How did women get the right to vote? They stood up for their human rights. I will be talking about disabilities and how people should be treated in relation to their human rights.

A couple of students in my class are disabled and in wheelchairs. They aren't less able in any way, except for their ability to walk, run, or jump. In fact, one person in my class is a good friend of mine who's in a wheelchair.

Our school and district have an equity vision. One of the rights protected by this vision is respecting people regardless of whether they have a disability or not! For example, I have Autism. Kids at school treat me slightly differently. They are a bit more odd towards me. They sometimes speak slower. They sometimes will ask me weird questions. These random questions make me feel odd and make me wonder why they are asking me these questions.

My dad, my brother, and I went to our community center. They have a water slide there, and a little while ago, a manufacturer installed a music and light show display to experience while you're riding down the slide. The music is projected through the entire pool area. As you go up the stairs to the slide launch area, there's a sign that says people with Epilepsy and/or subject to

seizures by flashing lights or loud noises are advised not to ride. My dad and I thought that this sign was absurd because this would exclude some people from going down the slide. We stood up for disabled person's rights by speaking to the Shoreview Human Rights Commission. Even though this slide wasn't a violation of our human rights, kids who have Epilepsy should be able to have the same experience other kids have, but still have a comfortable atmosphere without the light and music show features. We suggested that they should install a lights and a sound off option.

Human rights are very important to me because of the positive impact these rights have had in the world and because people have had to fight for these rights. The reason I chose this topic is because the Roseville Area School District has an excellent equity vision for disabled students' rights. There are many important human rights, but this was the first that came to mind. Since I have Autism and I have friends that have various disabilities throughout the school, I felt I should use that human right. Human rights are important to me, my community, the state, the nation, and this earth.

Name: Isabela Silverio
Honorable Mention
RAMS 7th Grade
Teacher: Ms. Kerry Gamble

Human Rights Essay

Have you ever got treated unfairly because of your race, religion, culture, nationality, money conditions, or any other characteristics that you have? Do you know how it feels? Racism, discrimination, has you ever felt that? Yes, it does hurt. I felt that and I know how bad it can feel, so why people keep doing it? What is wrong to be different? So in this essay I decided to focus in one article, which is Freedom from Discrimination, number two, from CRC (The Convention of Right of a Child).

Freedom from discrimination is important for me because I think nobody should be treated unfairly on any basis, in any conditions, independent of anything. And this affect me a lot because, sometimes people think just because I am an immigrant I should not have the same rights, I shouldn't go to the same school as them, I shouldn't go to the same doctor as them, I shouldn't live in thee same place as them, and my parents shouldn't have the same work as theirs, and why? Just because I have a different nationality.

And just not affect me, affect millions of people, especially immigrants, because some of them don't even know their rights. If you don't know your rights, how are you going to "shout" for them?

Do you know that children of illegal immigrants can't study after high school! Just because they are here (in U.S.A) with out a little paper called VISA, they are not consider citizen, (even if they have been living here since they were babies). So they will not finish their education, and in consequence will not get a good job, not have a good life condition and give one for their family. So how are they supposed to move back to their

home country or give a good way to their lives? What do you expect from a person with no education? And what about their rights?

Our differences should not be a problem, they should be a benefit. Why not get to know new cultures? Before judge, disrespect, or discriminate, think: Would you like to be treated in that way? Is that going to hurt somebody? What are the consequences of my actions? The CRC rights and the humans' rights are valid for anyone, in any conditions, everywhere. And I think we should try to improve. Like Benjamin Disraeli said, "The action does not always bring happiness, but there is no happiness without action." Just try, do your part and for sure you will already be making the difference.