3rd Place Junior Essay

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***A Little Love***

“If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.” This is a very common saying, but unfortunately since not everyone takes this rule to heart, we still have hateful speech today. In order to stop hateful speech we need to act. As a society we cannot afford to ignore what is going on around us. We cannot put blinders on; we have to stand up for what is right. A difference of opinion should not make it okay for people to lash out at each other.

 Hate, if left unchecked, creeps into our being. We need to continually guard our hearts. Just like a sea full of water will not sink a boat unless water gets in, a whole world of hatred cannot “sink” a person unless they let some in. Whether to show love or hate is a choice. We all need to choose to love each other, to show kindness and compassion. It does not always take a grand gesture to make a big impact.

 Ken E. Nwadike, Jr. is someone who understands that even a small act of kindness can change hearts. He is a peace activist, inspirational speaker, and video journalist who founded the Free hugs Project in response to the bombing at the Boston Marathon. He has attended many major protests and given hugs to people on both sides of the issue in attempt to create peace and love. He even went as far as to give out hugs to the police officers that were working during the events. Many protestors were angry at him for giving hugs to people from the opposing sides. In response he said, “It’s about staying neutral.” He was not supporting the cause of either side, instead all he wanted was for there to be more love present than there was hate. He has also created the popular #MakeAmericaLoveAgain hashtag based off of President Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan. Due to his acts of kindness, Mr. Nwadike has received several awards including the Most Admired Public Leader Award in San Diego, California, the Simeon Booker Award of Courage in Ohio, and the Citizen Achievement Award in Charlotte, North Carolina. While his actions have been met with both ire and praise from onlookers, his work has greatly impacted others and caused them to think about their actions.

 In following Mr. Nwadike’s example we can all share in the responsibility of fostering love and peace. Instead of laughing at a rude joke, going along with inconsiderate behavior, or watching others bring someone down, we need to stop being a silent bystander and help those who may be afraid to speak up. We need to put our own fear aside and realize one person can make a difference. Enlisting the help of others around us will multiply the effect. It has been proven, by Mr. Nwadike and many others, that small acts of kindness can truly go a long way.

 Ken E. Nwadike, Jr.’s courage and strength have helped prevent many people from being victimized by hate speech through his efforts to spread peace and love to everyone around him regardless of the situation they may be in. He is helping an issue that plagues our modern world. It is amazing how something as simple as a hug can have such a deep impact on the recipient. If more people were to follow Mr. Nwadike’s example of expressing love instead of hate, it would be a gigantic step in helping to solve our world’s issues.