

## News from the Multifaith Education Project

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Springtime 2010

**Dear Friend,**

We are so proud of the three winners of the Essay and Art contest sponsored by the Nile Center. They are **Fatima Bawaney of Leaders Prep School** for her artwork; **Noel Bright of The Geneva School** for her artwork; and **Hassanah A. DeReese of LPS** for her essay.

We are also proud of our faithful teacher, **Yasmin Khan**, for her support of the LPS students and so glad she was awarded prize money, too.

We were also pleased to note that our students were the only ones selected who came from private, parochial schools. All others were from public middle or high schools.

We work with middle school students. They are impressionable and still able to be reached with good thinking. They hate injustice and unfairness. Read below what one of our students has to say:

*"...How do you deal with stereotypes? ....It all depends*

*on how you reply, because the only thing people think about is appearances...."*

These words are from an award-winning essay by **Hassanah Abdul-Haqq De'Reese** of the **Leaders Preparatory School**. On March 18th, she won a prize in the Nile Center contest. See below for photos and more information about this contest and our three winners. The essay is presented in its entirety too.

Shalom,salaam and peace to you,

*Louise Sheehy*  
**and the MEP team**

## ESSAY AND ART SUBMISSIONS AND PHOTOS

by Hassanah  
Abdul-Haqq  
De'Reese

Leaders  
Preparatory  
School

### Making Sense of Others

How do you deal with stereotypes? You might hear people say "Oh, he is such a jock." and "All Mexicans are short". It all depends on the way you reply, because the only thing people think about are the appearances of an individual. When you don't look how everyone else wants you to look, then your thought of as the "weird" one. Why is it so hard for people to get the fact that NO ONE is the same; no matter how many times you might try and change. If we simply accept the way someone is, maybe it wouldn't be so hard for people to live their life however they please.

Imagine a girl whose parents died and the aftermath of the incident leaves her in a pit of depression. Her mind is unable to think and her ability to speak wants to fade away. In school she talks to no one, so she is easily categorized as "Emo". The friends she once had, act like they've never met her and the stares aimed her way, are looks of disgust and pity. Sooner or later she has nowhere to run, hide, or release her emotions. The thing is... nobody wants to be seen with the "loner". She hears people whisper, "I heard she ran away from home. She hates her parents and now she has

no where to stay.", "Oh My Gosh, she is such an idiot. I saw her cutting herself in the bathroom, but when she saw me, she ran into one of the stalls. I think she was throwing up.", "I feel so sorry for her." Hearing these words strike her heart with a capacity like no other. Yet, she still tries to block out the whispers that seem to be screaming in her head. If you were to meet a girl similar to her, what would you do?

Another girl walks in the class wearing a scarf that's covering her hair, neck, and ears. Her clothes are loose and her form is hidden, showing no parts of the body besides her hands, face and feet. Rather than the girl before who was immediately ignored, she is automatically called to attention. The difference in dress code shocks them out of their seats. Some look on with curious questions, and others look frightened at what she might do. The teacher introduces her as Ayesha Abdullah, and when time comes for a break period, she is attacked with questions. Two girls ask, "Why are you wearing that?", "Where are you from?", and "What is that thing on your head?". Ayesha replies instantly, "As a Muslim girl this is a part of my belief. I'm from New York, and the scarf covering my head is called a hijab.". The two girls seem satisfied with the answer and accept it easily. Nevertheless when more people come, more questions are verbally forcing themselves onto her. "Do you take a shower with it on?", "Can you wear deodorant?", "Are you bald, or do you have hair?". Some people weren't so satisfied with the answers and continued to look at her with strange expressions. However, Ayesha wasn't bothered much by what they thought of her, anything was better than the way she was treated when she stepped inside an airport. She was always delayed before going on a plane and checked a total of six times. Every time it was just a "check up" or "safety rules". Instead of complaining, she keeps her head down and continues on to her destination. If you were Ayesha what would you do?

The last person is James, a young African-American boy around the age of seventeen. His favorite sport is basketball and he was listed as MVP 2 years in a row. He's popular among the students and a role model for younger kids. His grades are top in the school, and scholarships are thrown at him left and right. Even though all of this seems perfect, his dream of being an NBA star is impossible to reach. The reason for this is because he is a paraplegic. His parents died when he was 10 years old and now he has no one to really support him in life. Sure, there are people to hang with at school, but no one actually tries to understand how he feels. At first, James thought that not a soul in the school would betray him. However, as he got older, he realized that many of the people he thought were "friends"

wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the tremendous amount of money the government gives him. The things they say behind his back are so horrible he doesn't think he can look at another's face without having to be criticized. He hates when people feel sorry for him. He hates that whenever he walks into a store, people think he's going to steal things. 'Why would you think I'd steal anything? If I get caught it's not like I have a chance of getting away in the first place!' he thinks. Even though it's a massive struggle for James, he keeps his head held high and thinks of the life he must surpass ahead of him. His smile is always conspicuously plastered on his face and he knows nothing can tear it down.

In conclusion of these three stories, it's pretty obvious that they each have a struggle or obstacle they had to overcome from the people around them. Every person goes through at least one experience where they are criticized by another. We are so quick to judge; sometimes we exclude the fact that the other has feelings and emotions just as we do. Understanding others, are important to remember when growing up in life. It teaches us to think about what we say before we mention it or declare it on others. Who are we to judge another?



*Shown here at the Awards ceremony are Louise Sheehy, MEP; Dr. Feryal Younes, HeadMaster of LPS; Hassanah Abdul-Haqq De'Reese, Essay contest winner & Mrs. Yasmin Kahn, Middle School Faculty, LPS.*



*Winning artwork of Fatima Bawany of LPS*



*Fatima Bawany holding her winning artwork*

*Regret we do not have a picture of Noel Bright with her winning art work.*

## Our TRI-SCHOOL GATHERING - A first at The Geneva School

### About the Gathering at the Geneva School

Thanks to headmaster **Mr. Robert Ingram**, The Geneva School hosted us for the first time with open arms and hearts.

The TGS chorus treated us all to a beautiful musical performance. Thanks to **Dr. Michael Beates** of TGS, the students were able to watch a filmed presentation of early Christian art. As always we enjoyed refreshments together. What made this extra special was that Geneva Moms, led by **Mrs. Debbie Medina and Rev. Molly Davis**, provided homemade hot cross buns. **Mrs. Lucy Roberts** taught the students the Easter song about sharing hot cross buns. **Mrs. Kellie Harding** also got a photo of the whole group and we plan to provide copies for all participants at the final meeting.

With this year's theme of **SERVICE**, The Geneva School invited **Mr. Peter O'Driscoll** to speak to the students about his work with the Orlando Children's Church. Mr. O., as he is called, shared his passion for their program from his wheelchair. To learn more about his inspiring project and faith, go to their website [www.orlandochildrenschurch.org](http://www.orlandochildrenschurch.org)

As always it was thrilling to be guests at a different school and to get to know what they are all about.

Emails and cell phone numbers were exchanged before everyone left for their respective schools.

Next gathering will be at **The Leaders Prep School** in April, followed by tree planting in cooperation with the city of Winter Park. Watch this space for reports and photos of that gathering.

## FUNDRAISING - A New Appeal is Launched

Below is a copy of a letter sent out in mid-March to many of our supporters. Please read it and respond if you can.

Dear Friend of the Multifaith Education Project,

On April 19th our students will come together for the last time this year. On that day, they will visit the Muslim school, the Mosque and learn more about Islam. This year we've learned a lot about Judaism and Christianity too. On April 19th we will also plant trees in cooperation with the city of Winter Park. This will symbolize the students' commitment to their environment and will give them an opportunity to speak to what their tradition teaches about being good stewards of the earth.

On that day, each student in the program will be given a group photograph taken when we were at The Geneva School in March. This will help them to commemorate the year we've spent together getting to know and respect one another.

At that time, we'd like to give each student, and faculty member too, a tee shirt that speaks to Peace/Shalom/Salaam - the goal of our project. Your gift to our project will help to make this possible.

We know that we are planting seeds of Hope and new possibilities for peaceful coexistence. With your help we can do even more.

Thank you for partnering with us in this most important work.

Shalom/Salaam/Peace to you always,

Louise Sheehy and the MEP Team

*(The good news is that several people have already responded and sent their donations. Won't you add yours so that we can continue doing what we do?)*

Send checks to  
**THE MULTIFAITH EDUCATION PROJECT**  
**PO BOX 301003**  
**FERN PARK FLORIDA 32730**

*The MEP is a 501C3 organization. All donations are tax deductible.  
All donations will be acknowledged.*

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