

Globalisation: The World's Problems Are Australia's Problems

Like great men and women who have paved a pathway of humanity, the founders of our society and the keepers of its rights, I believe. Martin Luther King had a dream, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in the fight against apartheid and Mother Theresa worked to eliminate poverty and suffering. I look to these revolutionaries and see a pattern; these leaders dared to believe in a better society, a world of improved human rights. They believed they could accomplish the unachievable.

While casually browsing the internet last year, I stumbled upon something both alarming and disgusting. I am not completely foreign to world issues – nor was I then – but it's easy to become blasé: people are starving in Africa, Iraqi civilians are killed in a war over oil, and women are stoned for their 'defiance' in Saudi Arabia. So, what's new? It is too easy, in our 'land of plenty' to switch off the television and make it all disappear. What I discovered were situations involving thousands of children living across the world, different only to me through circumstance alone.

Slavery is still very much a reality in modern society, with almost fifty percent of the world's cocoa being manufactured as a result of slave labour on the Ivory Coast. Initially sickened, I vowed not to eat chocolate, but the call of my tastebuds, beckoning my friends Nestle, Cadbury and Lindt, was far too strong and my resolutions did not last. My quest for knowledge did, however.

My heart opened to Ashok, eight years old, working a twenty-one hour day, making carpets in a sweatshop in India. I was repulsed by the story of nine year-old Catalina

Formatted: Left: 2.86 cm, Right: 2.9 cm, Top: 2.22 cm, Bottom: 2.22 cm

Formatted: Font: Bold

Formatted: Line spacing: 1.5 lines

Deleted: I believe. I believe not in folk tales and myths but in a utopia – not the achievement of one but the constant strive for the unattainable.

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Deleted: ¶

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 10 pt

Suarez, held captive for eighteen years in a life of sexual slavery, drugs and beatings. I fought the urge to throw up on reading Drissa's statement, "When people eat chocolate, they are eating my flesh". I shuddered at the stories of countless other unnamed children, kidnapped and returned without organs, unnamed children forced to fight against their own governments – not several, but hundreds of thousands.

Formatted: Font: (Default)
Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default)
Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default)
Dotum, 11 pt

I could not brush this all aside as just another lot of horror stories, soon to be forgotten, buried beneath the barrage of celebrity gossip, reality television shows and my own problems which now seemed so self-indulgent and insignificant. But what to do? At seventeen, very few people are likely to follow me and take arms against this child abuse.

It was Edmund Burke, however, eighteenth century politician and writer, who said, "All that is needed for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing". I realised the only power I had to change the situation was through my freedom of speech – also taken for granted. I entered into public speaking competitions and spoke about this same issue. I had the opportunity to address hundreds of different people in different positions. I was able to educate them and open their eyes up to the same issues of which I had been so ignorant. I found that, like me, they had had 'some sort of general idea' about what was happening but had brushed it all aside, and that now, like me, believed all this be wrong.

My observations of Australia are these: though we claim to live in a multicultural society, Aboriginal living conditions are still severely lacking; though we have the right to vote, we pay more attention to the *Big Brother* voting than we do the political future of our country;

Formatted: Font: (Default)
Dotum, 10 pt

though we proudly proclaim Australia's multicultural status, the Cronulla riots involved some 5000 people gathering in anti-Middle Eastern protest.

Compared to many countries, Australia's human rights are beyond their sightlines, beyond possibility, beyond hope. We are lucky. The Suffragettes fought for over a hundred years for the right to vote. Even now women fight for equal workplace opportunities. Aborigines fought to keep their children and their lives during the Stolen Generation and struggle even now to regain them. Do we take all this for granted? I believe so.

The thing I find astounding in contemporary Australian society is the level of apathy. The majority of the population is complacent; happy to sit back and simply let these social injustices occur. Australian, Indian, Afghani, Israeli, Sudanese, Canadian, Yugoslavian – in our ever expanding society brought ever closer by globalisation, we are not so different.

The world's issues have become Australia's issues

These people and their plights are no longer on the other side of the world They are in our homes, on our televisions They are on our kitchen tables, on the front pages of our newspapers. They are in our cars as we drive home at night, on the radios. Distance is no longer an excuse – nor is being 'just one person'.

I said before that I believe – and I do. I believe, like the great visionaries of our time and before, that we can hope and strive for something more. I believe that attaining equal

Formatted: Font: (Default)
Dotum, 10 pt

human rights among Australian citizens is not enough as the inequality will still exist, brought to us by the media. I believe in a utopia – not attaining one as such, because that is not possible, but constantly working to achieve something better, working towards the unattainable. I believe in the power of one person speaking out.

Contrary to popular belief, 'just one person' can make a difference. One person cannot put an end to world hunger – nor can one person eradicate child exploitation. One person can spread the word and educate others. One person can make a contribution. One person can save one life. One million people can save one million lives. How can we live comfortably when we know within ourselves what lies beyond the waters that surround Australia? Globalisation links the world and lays these horrors before our eyes. We simply cannot look away.

The isolation of our land Down Under is no longer a good enough excuse - nor is being 'just one person'.

I believe in more.

Formatted: Justified, Line spacing: 1.5 lines

Formatted: Line spacing: 1.5 lines

Deleted: ¶
"All that is needed for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." ¶
-Edmund Burke¶

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt, Font color: Auto

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt, Font color: Auto

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 11 pt

Formatted: Font: (Default) Dotum, 10 pt