



Forging and Fostering Peace  
**ASEAN Institute for  
Peace and Reconciliation**

# **YOUTH PEACE ESSAY**

**ASEAN-IPR**



## **Agents of Peace in an Almost Ever-Online World**

---

by Jemima Reside

# AGENTS OF PEACE IN AN ALMOST EVER-ONLINE WORLD

BY JEMIMA RESIDE

With the pandemic bringing about a heavily online-reliant culture, there is a growing need to use the internet and the virtual world as a platform for disseminating, creating, and maintaining a place of peace. In the broadest sense, peace in today's digital age is essential because young people in today's society are practically constantly online. Issues that are crucial and must be addressed and talked about can now be discussed in the online realm. In a more specific context, in the case of Southeast Asian (SEA) countries, I believe there should be programs that push for the online connectivity of youth members in SEA countries. There can also be more experiences or exchanges that allow each member of the SEA countries to connect more with each other, especially now that many communities have become more present in online communities and on the Internet. When there is connectivity, there can be a sense of community even in online spaces, and this is what we can build as youth to foster peace, starting by connecting with each other on the Internet, building support by giving a platform for each Southeast Asia country to identify and resolve hostile threats and issues that they face in their country, and even resolving conflicts between two different cultures by respectfully listening and extending empathy to other people's accounts of what is happening in their own backyard. Through this, I believe the youth can truly become members and agents of peace, not just in their own country, but throughout the collective Southeast Asian countries.

In line with this, we must not turn a blind eye on the issues that our fellow Southeast Asians face. In fostering peace, it is not enough to simply give encouraging words without knowing what is happening within other countries. Whether it is a political, economic, environmental, or any other issue, I believe that for the youth to fully take on the role of peacemakers, we must be aware of these issues and have empathy and a kind heart to help our fellow SEA citizens go through the trials that they experience. This does not necessarily mean we need to do grand things – although it would be great to do the latter – but we can show this empathy even through little acts of support and kindness. Respectfully communicating with one another, having the initiative to learn about other Southeast Asian cultures and the state of their countrymen, extending our sympathies, and supporting the righteous beliefs of those who are oppressed in other Southeast Asian countries even through online means are just some of the



things that we ought to do if we wish to extend peace during this time and age. It's a fortunate thing that we live in today's modern society, where people can interact with each other even when they are physically distant from each other. That is why we must use these technological advancements and the Internet for the good of our countries.

Compared to the past, it is now relatively easy to disseminate information and data to other countries and to encourage them to support our endeavours, whether it be seeking support in passing laws that would help the marginalized, improving international relations, further supporting appreciation of other cultures, lessening hostile attacks or threats towards minority groups and even the whole country, or ensuring the safety of victims of injustice. As we, the youth, are constantly updated with current technology, it is our duty to maximize every opportunity to utilize the Internet as a medium for peace. I know how difficult and daunting it is to spread kindness, comfort, and peace through virtual, non-physical means; we may even think that, as youth, we cannot convey all these things properly online. But, I firmly believe that online communities have great power and potential to be platforms for us to spread an atmosphere of peace. Consider the concept of "cancelling" celebrities. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), cancelling means to stop giving support to a celebrity or famous person, and this usually happens on social media and different platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and the like. Other people would look at this idea and focus on the negative aspects of it, but in my case, what I see is that the Internet, with the assistance of social media and a group of people with a collective goal, can have such an immense impact on society. On a more serious note, I can liken the impact of the cancelling phenomenon to the effect of virtual rallies or online protests that happened during this pandemic, when injustice proliferated in our immediate communities. Such virtual events, despite the fact that they lack the physical presence of people, are very impactful. I can say this because I saw it happen in my home country, specifically regarding the calls for academic ease during the height of the pandemic. Hence, this is why it is very important for us, the youth, to utilize our technologies in this day and age to fight for peace, justice, democracy, and the rights of everyone in non-violent ways. We are the ones who make up the majority of online communities. To be specific, Generation Z is described as the first completely digital generation and is the most active generation online (Wise, 2022). We have the knowledge and digital literacy to navigate through modern technologies, thus making us the most viable candidates to become agents of peace in this ever-online age.

As youth, we must continually remind ourselves that we are capable of many things, and we should not limit ourselves. This means going beyond so-called



limits in terms of our roles as leaders and peacemakers of the countries we are in and also of the greater community to which we belong. We must remember that we, the youth, are the ones who can change and spearhead efforts to change the world into a place where peace persists and is not begged for. What we start as youth will be the ones that the future generations will continue. I firmly believe that the role we are meant to play as youth is to become agents of peace who utilize the Internet for the betterment of all people and citizens of SEA.

## References

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *'getting canceled' and 'cancel culture': What it means.* Merriam-Webster. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/cancel-culture-words-were-watching#:~:text=Uproxx%2C%2018%20Jan.-,2019,or%20promoting%20a%20writer's%20works.>
- Wise, J. (2022, November 9). *Gen Z Social Media Usage Statistics 2022: The latest trends, Facts & Data.* EarthWeb. Retrieved from <https://earthweb.com/gen-z-social-media-usage-statistics/>

*This Essay was acknowledged as one of the Honourable Mentions in the ASEAN Institute for Peace & Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) Youth Peace Essay Competition, in commemorating the ASEAN-IPR's 10th Anniversary.*

*This Essay is published electronically by the ASEAN-IPR.*

*The ASEAN-IPR accepts no responsibility for facts presented and views expressed in this essay. Responsibility rests exclusively with the individual author or authors.*

*Copyright is held by the ASEAN-IPR. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without permission.*