

ONCE  
**UPON A TIME**

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WE ARE ALWAYS A FOREIGNER TO SOMEONE ELSE

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# ONCE UPON A TIME

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## SUMMARY

G.E.A.



WE ARE ALWAYS A

FOREIGNER TO SOMEONE ELSE



THE CHANGING FACE OF

HUMAN RIGHTS



SHARING CUSTOMS AND

TRADITIONS



GAME:

HAPPY ENDING



**G.E.A.**  
**(Generation of essential activism)**

What is active citizenship? Many people think that Citizenship is only a subject taught in schools, as an academic subject similar to politics or sociology, but probably it's more than this.

The European Union promotes "active citizenship" with the aim to encourage people to participate to the European life and to join activities such as foreign exchanges, European Volunteer Service and inspire young people in working with elected leaders to create positive changes. The European Union is not the only place in the world where active citizenship might emerge. A global citizen may be able to understand that our actions have an impact in his own country and around the world. Visiting a new country means creating a personal lifestyle and being proud of personal choices. It is vital and crucial to understand the need to be adaptive and the desire to embrace more than what we are used to know.

As Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "To travel is to live" and we agree that a person who enjoy journey and exchange projects is a person who is not scared about learning in a different way and is curious about discovering others and multicultural lifestyles, in order to be a model of an active citizen. People used to work together are respectful and learn to cooperate with everyone and they are available to consider all the particularities of all the people around them.

But a person does not need to travel by force to be an active citizen. Volunteering is the simplest way to be involved in our society, and it's possible to join it near home. If we say that a global citizen is someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices, we can add that being a volunteer means being careful and kind about causes that are different and include more than a topic.

A global citizen understands how much important is to create a powerful net of collaboration, that start from his own country. Preparing food for homeless people, helping hospital patients or just hugging stray animals, but also adopting and promoting changes in behavior that help protect the earth's environment, contributing to world-wide humanitarian relief efforts and organizing events that celebrate the diversity in world music and art, culture and spiritual traditions. Volunteering want us to create better conditions of living but considers our personal point of view, because it made by us for us and nobody better than ourselves can understand what we are good at doing to improve the community.

Active citizenship is creating a new generation of young interested people, able to be involved in the cultural and political life not only in their own countries.

Since World War II, efforts have been undertaken to develop global policies and institutional structures that can support these enduring values. Nowadays, our eyes have been opened and our consciousness raised. We cannot stop growing and developing a world with more awareness .

## **“WE ARE ALWAYS A FOREIGNER TO SOMEONE ELSE”**

Since we were kids, we have been listening to stories about immigration, without realize it. It's not weird that almost all fairytales begin with the sentence “Far far away”.

Human beings are build to move and history taught it: all the coutries, including the most isolated islands, were forced to deal with new gentries and often these meetings created new mixture of races, languages, opinions and religions. Of course, reality is not so good and human nature is a little cruel. People have fought against each other, in order to gain the supremacy or the superiority of an ethnical group or a religion.

According to these reasons, nowadays, It is difficult to leave your own country and to look for a better life somewhere. Discrimination is like a hungry lion, travellers are tasty sheeps in small heards and ordinary stories from all over the world can confirm this metaphore. A Romenian girl who went to Italy on holiday with her parents told about a negative experience: some guys, who have understood their Romanian nationality, started to scream and blamed on them because they arrived from The Country of Thielves.

Another girl coming from Bulgaria, has been injured from Scottish people. Some Romenian, Bulgarian and Polish people were working in a factory. The director was a Bulgarian-born man but Scottish citizen; the driver ask him, with sarcastic gesture, “Are you the only white here? ”. An Italian guy living in London started to talk with an English girl who thought he was Spanish. When he figured out that he was Italian, she begun to complain claiming due to the high percentage of italians living there.

Unfortunately, world is made also by stereotypes, but it does not mean that we have to stop our dreams and to desire to be different. Living abroad is possible and people can learn to live together. They can soar to beautiful results, such as peace and better lives for everyone. We cannot forget our culture: we are ourselves because our heritage, culture and traditions are unique as well and no one has the right to consider someone inferior. We will always be weird to foreign people, because we are all different and sometimes it is difficult to undestand and accept a very different mentality, that does not include our history and traditions, but we can also defende our culture by explaining why we do something in a particular way or the reasons why we are who we are.

Living aborad is difficult, it's impossibile to hide, but it's not impossible to live. We have only to accept ourselves and we have to learn to forgive what we don't like about our culture, in order to be ready to protect it rather than to be proud and closed. At the same time, we need to learn to be as open-minded to understand as we would like to be listening by the others and that we are not always victims, but warriors that believe in peace.

As Tahar Ben Huller, a Moroccan writer, wrote in his essays about racism, “We are always a foreign to someone else”, but it has not only a negative meaning. Our contribute to other culture can be important and it's always unique. For example, Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, wrote a funny thing about facial detail: “Cleopatra's nose, had it been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed.”This sentence is not as innocent as it could seem, because it hides a very deep meaning. It can confirm us that every connotation, active or passive, can change the world. If a nose has conquered two of the most important men in Rome and protect Egypt, an ancient and secular country, try to think how much our virtues, such us cleverness, creativity, hard-working and curiosity can change our world.

## THE CHANGING FACE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

“Hey guys I have rights”. Does this question sound arrogant sometimes? Yes, maybe sometimes, but it is not able to change what we must deal with every single day of our life. “Rights”, as a concept, have a deep meaning which human beings are always trying to work out. We are all human beings on each other, aiming at building societies where to live freely and we are sensitive people with differences in terms of culture, religion and language. How can we make sure what’s right for one is wrong for another one? Are we really aware of human rights and their presence in our daily life? Why human rights matter and can belong to every single person? Can human rights be interpreted depending on specific cultures? Are human rights evolving into new ones?

Human rights are not a general concept, it can be differentiated and peculiar. It may depend on how we would define and consider them. In our current societies we are used to many kinds of rights, taking as valid their existence without understanding their nature or interpretation. Human rights are basic to humanity. They apply to all people everywhere. An understanding of human rights is an important part of our individual status as human beings and of our collective status as members of the global community of humankind. In order to understand how human rights affect us in our daily lives and to acknowledge our responsibilities in recognizing the need to balance those rights with the rights of others, we require an understanding of what human rights are becoming nowadays.

One of the greatest achievements of mankind has been to recognize the dignity of the human being internationally through the establishment of international courts and tribunals. Most of all, the Nazism and the Japanese imperialism crimes committed during the WWII have contributed to achieve this important goal. For the first time in the history, human rights have reached a global recognition in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, taking such an universal form affecting every society in the world. If it is true that, as a result of World War II, we were able to globally condemn “war crimes”, “genocides”, “crimes against peace and humanity” and to make rights universal, it seems today that the world is changing and human rights as well. They are going to embrace new heartfelt horizons, moving far beyond the universal recognition and protection of rights as such. The ideas, passions, ideals and ways of approaching life and society are constantly in flux. Have we ever thought about how many differentiated rights do we have? Are they just a conquest? Nowadays, rights might be a potential tool by which people may fight for a more just society and try to stop policies that individuals do not agree and push for security, peace and justice, at the national and international level.

Human rights are also self-reflected and may depend on our own choices. A lot of people are starting to think that they might decide about their life and this strictly regards the problem that many disabled people are experiencing on their own. This may be linked to the dignity affecting each kind of people: To respect someone’s privacy and to listen to someone about how they would like to be treated. Furthermore, the argument is moral and absolute. Deliberately ending a human life might be considered wrong, because life is sacred and the endurance of suffering confers its own dignity. For others, the legalization of doctor-assisted dying is the first step on a slippery slope where the vulnerable are threatened and where premature death becomes a cheap alternative to palliative care.

Change does not mean a silent acceptance, it requires an active participation but not an end in itself. Human rights are changing in response to what we are becoming as human beings. What we need changes, societies evolve, the context in which human rights have found acceptance is developing too. Standing up for human rights is required as it was in the past, keeping in mind the importance of understanding the changes occurring in every country and society: “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights and keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end save victory”(Franklin Delano Roosevelt).

## SHARING CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

*“Culture is an essential part of conflict and conflict resolution. Cultures are like underground rivers that run through our lives and relationships, giving us messages that shape our perceptions, attributions, judgments and ideas of self and the other.”*

If asked what are the greatest challenges the world is facing today, people may be inclined to refer to globalization, the economic crisis, the rapid pace of change that is setting back countries, societies and communities, as well as the rising level of the oceans, all of which remind us of the threats of unsustainable development, the persistence of poverty, the widening inequalities and the lack of future perspectives for the entire social categories, especially youth. All conflicts are and must be a concern of all, since in our globalized world a conflict anywhere can generate conflict everywhere. The approach that people might follow should be based on the principle of “Unity in the diversity” by which it could be possible to reach a final comprehension of our different cultures, histories and traditions in order to get to know each other and ending up to understand that traditional identities should not be reason for conflict rather a way to create unity and integration.

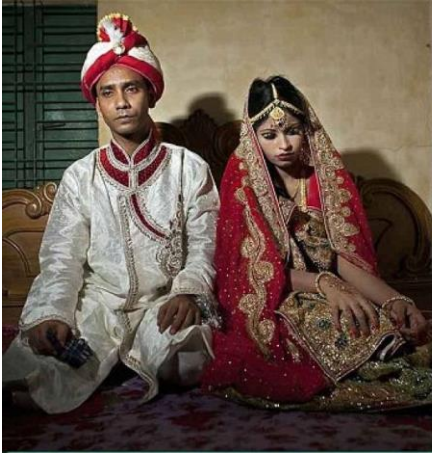
A good start to gaining some understanding of people living in a country is to look at their cherished customs and traditions. They have potential for showing not only what is important to the people living in a specific country, but also how they may create and push for peace. A tradition is a practice that begun many generations ago. It may include holiday celebrations, weddings, methods of selecting a bride and their funeral grieving. All traditions come from national and folkloristic heritages made by history. Customs and traditions should work to create a cultural identity. Amartya Sen tried to clarify this idea: “A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence. A sense of identity can make an important contribution to our relations with others”. Identities should not be a resource of war but an opportunity to share our cultures. Every country want to be attractive to the others in order to get a shining image of itself. Customs and traditions are welcoming because of their nature itself, they work aiming to make people happy and not self-interested. Every single country should try to share their customs in order to understand that, at the end, traditions are the same for each one and they have an unique purpose: to achieve and preserve peace and comprehension.

It is clear that no one actor at whatever level can face these challenges alone. There is an urgent need for cooperation and multilateralism and for globally agreed, shared policies that integrate culture into peace-building strategies and programs. Important actions here include the prevention of conflicts through education for peace, intercultural dialogue, the promotion and support of cultural diversity and giving positive messages to our society.

The international day of peace is on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, unofficially known as “World Peace day”. It is dedicated to world peace and especially the absence of war and violence. The most of nationalities used to include in their customs and traditions the idea of peace; for instance, in Bulgaria the so called “Baba Marta” is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. All participants exchange a bracelet which is called “Martenitsa”. It is like a symbol of peace. Martenitsa is made by thread – symbol of health and the red one – representing love. It is a small piece of adornment, made of white and red yarn and usually in the form of two dolls, a male and a female. Martenitsa are worn from Baba Marta Day (March 1) until the wearer first sees a stork, swallow, or blossoming tree (or until late March). The name of the holiday means “Grandma March” in Bulgarian and the holiday and the wearing of Martenitsa are a Bulgarian tradition related to welcoming the spring. “Culture and heritage are not about stones and buildings – they are about identities and belongings. They carry

values from the past that are important for the societies today and tomorrow. [...] We must safeguard the heritage because it is what brings us together as a community; it is what binds us within a shared destiny" (Irina Bokova).

Some of the customs are so much ancient and during their historical background gave and are still giving help, positivism and keeping the spirit high. Customs and traditions make our daily life more interesting and funny, but they are also helping us in difficult political situations, war times and many other critical and crucial moments. Encouraging cultural activities, and people coming from different countries to be open minded and able to share their traditions and promoting creativity in conflict areas or areas affected by disasters will enable the affected communities to reconnect with their identities and regain a sense of normality, enjoying art and beginning to heal the scars of wars. Cultural programs may also help foster appreciation of cultural diversity and appreciation of the "universal element" in all cultures, helping to "humanize" the other and paving the way towards mutual understanding.



**PLAY THE GAME** : The above pictures told about a real story. Try to understand the message of the story and to put the pictures in the correct order.  
Then you will read the complete story to check your choices.


### Happy Ending Game

Once upon a time, a poor and very young Indian girl lived in a sandy town in New Dehli. Her family was really poor and her parents gave up hope for her.

For this reason, they forced her to marry a guy in her same situation. She was so young that she could not understand very well what was happening to her, but when the wedding day arrived, she realized that she could not live that situation anymore. She wanted a better life, she wanted to study and to decide by herself about her future. Her wedding was sad and full of angry. She felt like someone was physically hurting her. Some days later, during a tempest, she decided to escape and to run to nearest train station in order to start a journey across Asia. Her goal was to arrive in Europe, she did not in where country and how to pay her trip, but she wanted it so much that she was not worried about it.

She travelled for almost sixty days and when she got to Berlin, she was tired, she did not know how Europe was made because she did not go often to school and she felt confused and depressed.

There were so many people in the train station that she recognized no one languages. A lot of people said they were refugees, because they were escaping from wars, but the girl did not how to define herself. Was she a refugee? She was not escaping from a war, but from poverty and from a forced marriage.

The beginning was difficult and a little humiliating. She was alone and she could not speak German, but fortunately some volunteers, ready to help refugees, helped her.

She started to study in a school with other guys, some of them in her same situations, others from ordinary families.

She learnt to speak German and how to use a computer. She did not work, because of her studies, and she lived with the money of the volunteers, in a big flat, shared with some roommates.

She could not buy new clothes but the volunteers provided her second hand clothes. For this reason, sometimes she was joked by other classmates.

The year after, someone in her school organized an Indian party and she wore a sari. She met a very nice boy. While they were talking, she understood she has been very lucky to find a way to live better, to study and to meet new people. She had been sad and poor and now she had the possibility to create her new life.

At the end of the month, she kissed the guy and she became a couple. She had found everything: school, friends and... love.

The message of the story is that migrants have different stories to tell. The girl was escaping from a forced marriage and from a sad economic situation that could not give her a future. She has been depressed, sad, scared and full of doubts. Was she doing the right thing? Her story has a happy ending, but some migrant's stories have a terrible ending. Sometimes there aren't volunteers ready to help people that can not defend their rights or that can not speak the language and what is the future of those migrants? The men can decide to come back home and women can be forced to work as prostitutes.

The girl of the story is a message of hope: she lived almost sixty days in different trains, but she did not get her hope. She learnt a lot, she could not study anything in her poor sandy town. She has been helped by people, because there are good people around us. She found love. She has her happy ending. Each of us deserves a happy ending. Migrants, too.