

Fund for the Future of our Children



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For updates on our continued efforts,
please visit our Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest
website at www.futureofchildren.net/essaycontest/

Fund for the Future of our Children

Children of Abraham
PEACE ESSAY CONTEST

Awards Ceremony



Artwork by Piotr Mlodozieniec, Warsaw, Poland
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Co-sponsored by
Georgetown University's
Office of Campus Ministry

Sunday, April 22, 2007
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Gonda Theater
Davis Center
Georgetown University

Special Thanks!

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Father Timothy S. Godfrey, S.J., *Director, Office of
Campus Ministry, Georgetown University*

Lansing Freeman, *Teacher, Montgomery Blair High
School, Silver Spring, MD*

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Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University*

Rabbi Harold S. White, *Senior Jewish Chaplain,
Georgetown University*

Welcome. . .

On behalf of the Fund for the Future of our Children (FFC) and the cosponsors of this program, I would like to welcome you and to thank you for joining us at the Awards Ceremony of the second annual *Children of Abraham Peace Essay Contest*. Your presence here today is a testament to the importance of creating interfaith dialogue and understanding in our world community.

We would like to extend a special welcome to Maureen Bunyan, along with our gratitude for accepting the invitation to be with us today to share in this celebration of peace.

This project would not have been realized without the support of our patrons, Mrs. Josephine F. Ammerman and Mr. Andrew R. Ammerman, the distinguished members of our Advisory Committee, Kick-Off Workshop Leaders and Panelists, and our On-line Mentors and Judges whose gift of time and knowledge has been invaluable to us.

It is with great pride and pleasure that we feature our fifteen young essayists, all of whom submitted wonderfully creative and scholarly essays. In the second year of this contest, our focus has shifted from discovering the roots of peace found within each of the Abrahamic faith traditions, to the leaders and propagators of this message of peace. Students were asked to research the lives of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and to discern how each of these great leaders modeled leadership for peace. Then essayists were required to examine how leadership characteristics displayed by these Prophets of peace could be implemented in modern day areas of conflict to promote peaceful coexistence. Essayists truly rose to the challenge.

We are also proud to present our first Teacher of the Year Peace Advocacy Award to Lansing Freeman, of Montgomery Blair High School, for his remarkable leadership and commitment to this program and his students.

Peace be upon you, Shalom, and Asalam alaikum.

Avideh Shashaani, Ph.D.
President, Fund for the Future of our Children

Celebration & Awards Ceremony

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

OPENING

“Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There is a Season),”
performed by *Lena Seikaly (vocalist) and Nathan Lincoln-DeCusatis (pianist)*

Reverend Timothy Godfrey, S.J., Director, Office of Campus Ministry, Georgetown University

Avideh Shashaani, President, Fund for the Future of our Children

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Maureen Bunyan, ABC 7 News Anchor

INTRODUCTIONS

Andrew Ammerman, Board of Regents, Georgetown University

Reverend Raymond B. Kemp, Resident Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University

Reverend Elizabeth Orens, Senior Chaplain, National Cathedral School

STUDENT PRESENTATION

Priya Agarwal-Harding, Mandeep Singh Bedi, Dalia Deak, Gleb Drobkov, Alicia Fuhrman, Kenneth Fung, Sharif Ismail Kronemer, Mona M. Meky, Melissa Mergner, Isel Otero-Vera, Valli Sanmugalingam, Youmna Sherif, Benjamin Shih, Melanie Snail, Lauren Sumida

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS BY MAUREEN BUNYAN

PRESENTATION OF THE TEACHER’S AWARD FOR PEACE ADVOCACY to Lansing Freeman

CANDLE LIGHT CEREMONY

"Over My Head," Traditional African American spiritual,
performed by *Lena Seikaly*

RECEPTION

Special Thanks!

ESSAY JUDGES

Karima Diane Alavi, *Director, Dar al Islam Teachers’ Institutes*
Andrew R. Ammerman, *CEO, Ammerman Investment Partnerships*

Imam Yahya Hendi, *Muslim Chaplin, Georgetown University*
Reverend Raymond B. Kemp, *Resident Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University*

Josetta (“Jo”) Owen, *Teacher, Volunteer, and Activist*

Jorge Romero, *Attorney, K&L Gates, LLP*

ON-LINE MENTORS

Rabbi A. Nathan Abramowitz, *Faculty, Theology Department, Georgetown University*

Nouredine Ale-Ali, Ph.D., *Author and Islamic Scholar*

John Deken, *High School Teacher, Columbia Missouri*

David Gage, Ph.D., *Founder, BMC Associates*

Michael Goldman, *Jewish Chaplain, Georgetown University Law and Medical Centers*

Nancy Petschek-Kohn, *Director, Juvenile Anti-Bias Education Program*

Molly Linehan, *High School Campus Minister, Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School*

Fr. William McFadden, S.J., *Faculty, Theology Department, Georgetown University*

Zachary McIntyre, *High School Teacher, Guymon, Oklahoma*

Sabree Muhammad, *High School Teacher, Bronx, New York*

June Murray-Crawford, *High School Teacher, Hudson, Massachusetts*

Sulayman S. Nyang, Ph.D., *Professor of African Studies, Howard University*

Mohammad Shafi, Ph.D., *CEO, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dar al Islam*

FFC's First Annual Teacher's Award For

Peace Advocacy

is presented to



Lansing Freeman

DC native Lansing Freeman has been teaching at Montgomery Blair HS for seven years. Currently teaching Advanced Placement National, State, and Local Government, Lansing has also taught on the Middle East, US History, and Peace Studies. At Blair he is also the faculty sponsor of the Model UN chapter and the Young Democrats.

He earned a bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Delaware and received a Master's in the Art of Teaching degree from Johns Hopkins University.

Prior to teaching, Lansing worked for sports marketing and management firms IMG and RHB, representing athletes and their marketing interests.

Outside of school, Lansing runs the Hoya tennis camp at Georgetown University, works in Athletic Communications for American University, and is a member of the Press Relations team for pro soccer team DC United.



Maureen Bunyan
ABC 7 News

Maureen Bunyan is a veteran television news broadcaster and a news anchor for ABC 7. Ms. Bunyan anchors the 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. weeknight newscasts.

Before joining ABC 7, Ms. Bunyan operated her own communications consulting business for three years. The firm provided public relations, public affairs and media relations services for businesses and non-profit organizations. She also served as Chief Correspondent for "Religion & Ethics Newsweekly," a PBS news magazine based in Washington, DC.

From 1973 to 1995, Ms. Bunyan was a lead news anchor of W*USA-9, the CBS affiliate in Washington, DC. She also reported on major local, national and international stories, traveling to Central and South America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. For five years she hosted the award-winning, weekly news magazine programs, "22:26 with Maureen Bunyan" and "Studio Nine."

In recognition of her significant contributions to broadcasting for over 30 years, Ms. Bunyan has been inducted into the “Hall of Fame” of the Washington Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, “The Silver Circle” of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) and the Broadcast Pioneers Club of Washington. She has been awarded seven local EMMYs, and the “Ted Yates Award,” given by NATAS to Washington, DC news broadcasters who are leaders in the profession. She was named “Journalist of the Year” by the National Association of Black Journalists. She received the annual “Immigrant Achievement Award” from the American Immigration Law Foundation in 2002.

Named a “Washingtonian of the Year” in 1992, Ms. Bunyan has an extensive record of service to the community. She is a founder and board member of the International Women’s Media Foundation, which serves women in the media in 100 countries. She is a founder of the National Association of Black Journalists. She also serves on the National Advisory Board of the Casey Journalism Center on Children & Families, the Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital Women’s Advisory Board, the Advisory Committee of Women in Film & Video and is a board member of Women of Washington.

Ms. Bunyan attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Columbia University School of Journalism and holds a Master’s Degree from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

She was born in Aruba and grew up in Southeastern Wisconsin. She is of Guyanese descent.

“The Prophets Who Lived to Achieve Peace”

Essay Abstract: The Prophets Muhammad, Moses and Jesus taught their followers the way to coexist with others. By teaching the lessons of Islam, Judaism and Christianity, and living nonviolent and tolerant lives, the Prophets modeled leadership for the world. Their teachings of love and acceptance can be applied to the current conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia that is in fact based on religion.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: I felt that this project is a vital step in working to improve inter-religion and inter-race relations. I learned an incredible amount of information about the history and values of the different monotheistic religions, which I was previously unaware of.



Lauren Sumida is a junior in the Communication Arts Program at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Md. She is an engineer in her school television studio, Blair Network Communications, and tutors children in English and math after school. She has played cello for 12 years.

“Leadership for Peace: The Prophets’ Teaching and Their Application Today”

Essay Abstract: My essay is an examination of the teachings of peace that the Prophets Muhammad, Moses, and Jesus spread throughout their lives and an analysis of how their exemplification of leadership for peace can be applied to the area of conflict in Israel/ Palestine.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: I would say that this project is very important to the understanding of the boundaries and obstacles between the Abrahamic faiths and how the peaceful principles of the Prophets can be applied to solving areas of conflict today. This project encourages students to seriously consider conflicts of local, national, and/ or international importance, promotes understanding of the Abrahamic faiths and how their principles can be applied to peaceful resolutions. While working on this project I have learned much more about the Abrahamic faiths and the peaceful principles they share. As I do not practice any of the Abrahamic faiths, this project opened my eyes to the important role religious values play in establishing and maintaining peace. Researching for this project deeply affected and augmented my understanding of different religions and international relations.

**“Peace and Extraordinary Leadership:
The Role of Compassion, Selflessness and Mercy”**

Essay Abstract: This essay discusses the roles that Moses, Jesus and Muhammed played in the promotion of peace. Characterizing each of these leaders based on their actions, this essay explores the particular actions and traits that made them exceptional leaders. It concludes with the influence figures such as these could have on the Zimbabwean conflict.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: Interfaith programs, in essence, play a vital role in our growing communities. Not only do they provide participants with information about various religions, but they also allow for the interaction between people of diverse religious affiliations. This, in turn, breeds a more tolerant, knowledgeable community.



Benjamin Shih is a sophomore at Montgomery Blair High School, and lives in Rockville, Maryland, with his father, mother, sister, and dog. His favorite activities include videogames, swimming, piano, and Frisbee. He speaks English, Spanish, and Chinese.

“Prophet Initiative”

Essay Abstract: “Prophet Initiative” is about how Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad successfully modeled leadership for peace. The essay tells about what these three prophets did throughout their lives and why they were leaders. It also speaks about how they used their lives and teachings to lead their people. Next, the essay discusses the similarities and differences between their methods of leadership. The essay also talks about the history of Saddam Hussein. It talks about how a modern-day replica of Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad could have prevented the turmoil in Iraq.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This project drastically increased my knowledge about religion. It was important because universal peace will only be achieved by universal understanding.



Melanie Snail is a 10th grader attending Montgomery Blair High School, in the Communication Arts Program. She has been involved with a mentoring program for elementary school students, as well as numerous other extra-curricular activities such as piano, photography, and guitar. She is also an avid swimmer, who swims six days a week for her school and a club. Melanie Snail is fluent in French and is currently studying Spanish.

What the Judges have to say about our Awardees:

“As adult judges, we would be wise to listen to the words of your hearts and must, ourselves, implement many of your suggestions. It is for you to expand these visions into the future or there may be no future.”

–Andrew R. Ammerman, CEO, Ammerman Investment Partnerships

“I want to thank you for the opportunity to learn so much from these fifteen deep and provocative thinkers. Congratulations to them, to you and to their teachers and families.”

–Reverend Raymond B. Kemp, Resident Senior Fellow, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University

“The writing displayed a considerable amount of time, effort and personal thought. How I wish I could meet with these talented and spiritual young adults, in order to talk more about the work on their papers. They seem to be an extraordinary group of young people.”

–Josetta Owen, Teacher, Volunteer, and Activist

“The essays were full of ideas worth pursuing for life.”

-Jorge Romero, Attorney, K&L Gates, LLP

About the Awardees

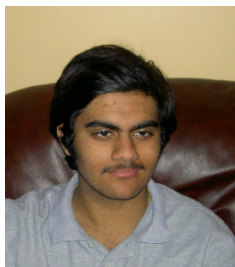


Priya Agarwal-Harding is 16 years old and in her junior year at Glenelg Country High School. Priya is passionately interested in international development especially related to cross-cultural communication. Priya is currently (2007) working as an intern at the Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health (JHPIEGO) and has also worked as an intern (2006) with the International Youth Foundation of Baltimore. She continues to work with PRAYAS, a non-governmental organization supporting neglected, trafficked and abused children in India and has raised funds for this cause. Priya has lived in various countries: Ghana, India, and the UK accompanying her parents in their UN careers. Priya is a member of the National Honor Society and founder and president of the Future Business Leaders in America (FBLA) in her school. She has a passion for writing, literature and history. Priya is a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award-2005. Her main hobbies include classical Indian dance, *Bharat Natyam*, modern dance, and traveling.

“A Noble Path to Noble Peace”

Essay Abstract: Moses, Jesus and Muhammad as leaders of peace, each demonstrated: (i) personal commitment to truth; (ii) perseverance in the face of adversity and suffering; (iii) selflessness and humility; (iv) teaching a spirituality of compassion for others; and (v) the ability to forge a coherent community under the Abrahamic conception of God. Adaptation to new contexts such as recent changes recognized by Nobel Peace Prize criteria, leaders of Abrahamic religions must now demonstrate that peaceful solutions to problems like the Israel-Palestine conflict lie not in parochial interests, but in respecting our common humanity in an increasingly globalized, interconnected and interdependent world.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This project was important to me because it helped me to learn more about leaders of the Abrahamic religions, and apply their teachings to the problems of today. If only we could all focus on their commonality, and respect our common humanity in an increasingly globalized, interconnected and interdependent world, rather than focusing on our differences, the world would be a better, more peaceful place.



Mandeep Singh Bedi is currently a sophomore at Montgomery Blair HS. Although he was born in Maryland, his parents are from India, and so religiously he is a Sikh. His hobbies include ping-pong, listening to Indian music, backgammon, walking his dog, doing easy algebra, playing videogames, and reading. His dog is a German shepherd named Raja, which means "King" in Hindi, and is definitely Mandeep's most favorite thing in the world.

Gospel/Show Choir. Isel dreams of becoming a good lawyer, of working in the United Nations, and of visiting all seven continents.

“Peace Essay”

Essay Abstract: In my essay I used examples of Moses, Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad modeling for peaceful coexistence to find a solution for the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This project helped reiterate the significance of following the importance of peace through the Abrahamic prophets and their teachings. It also planted a seed of faith in peace in the minds of the coming generation. The leaders of tomorrow need to build on a strong foundation of inter-faith peace, and this contest lays the groundwork for that foundation.



Valli Sanmugalingam was born and raised in the Washington D.C. area. She is currently in 11th grade at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda, MD. Valli has participated in various cross-cultural/human rights programs throughout the years, including Children's International Summer Villages and Amnesty International. Her interests include dance, history, and languages, and she hopes to study international law.

“Leading for Love”

Essay Abstract: The prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad all exemplified Leadership through peace by showing tolerance, love, and compassion to their fellow man. Today, in a world ridden with stereotypes based on race, the teachings of these prophets may be recognized and used to bring equality and tolerance to society.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: The importance of this project is not just to educate youth on other religions, but to make them see the similarities and great qualities of these other faiths. Only through knowledge and understanding will peace and tolerance occur. I have learned much about the Abrahamic faiths, and how many faiths teach the same thing. Faith should not be a barrier, but a bridge across cultures.

Youmna Sherif is a seventeen-year-old junior at the Islamic Saudi Academy. Youmna is interested primarily in hackysack, writing, and reading. However, she readily participates in other school related activities including the I.S.A. Model United Nations club and the DCMIST team. In the future she hopes to help the global community through aiding in the research and development of medicinal cures for liver disease.

I stated some incidents that the three Prophets encountered while they were trying to spread peace. The incidents served as a model to show us how the three Prophets acted toward violence and how they tried to promote peace among the people of different ethnical background.



Melissa Mergner is a sophomore in the Communication Arts Program at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has written and directed several short documentaries, including “Legacy of Peace” about Japan’s A-bomb victims, and “Woody Guthrie: Voice of the Common Man.” Her films have won awards and have been shown at over 20 film festivals across the U.S. She is currently making a documentary about farm worker labor activist Baldemar Velasquez. She is also a member of Blair’s swim team. She enjoys drawing, sewing and cooking. She hopes to attend art school when she graduates from high school in 2009.

“Peace for Halabeioji”

Essay Abstract: “Peace for Halabeioji” discusses a shared dream by the writer and the writer’s Korean grandfather or halabeioji that the use of force destroy and dominate and the use of the cult of personality to oppress and occupy as practiced in North Korea can be transformed by the lives and teachings of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad so that the two Koreas can move from being enemies to being in peaceful co-existence.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: My inspiration for a peace essay came from personal experience with my own family. I was inspired by my grandfather’s story of how, in the midst of gunshots, he crossed the border from North Korea to South Korea in 1945, in order to get a higher education. He has never returned to his home country and those two nations are still in conflict. Last year I visited South Korea with him and we went to the DMZ, where I saw firsthand the barriers to peace that separate this once united homeland of my grandfather. I believe that leadership – based on the values of love, compassion and justice – is critical to bringing peace to divided countries like North and South Korea.



Isel Otero-Vera was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and has been living in the US for approximately three years. She is a junior at the Water Johnson High School in Bethesda, MD, and enjoys spending time with her family, going out with friends, reading, and watching black and white movies. She is currently serving as the president of the ESOL club, and also participates in the Best Buddies Club, the Badminton Club, the Minority Scholars Program, the National Honors Society, and the Walter Johnson

“Moses, Jesus, Muhammad – Leaders of Peace”

Essay Abstract: This essay describes the lives and teachings of the prophets of the three Abrahamic faiths: Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. It provides background on the lives of each prophet and describes how different events in each one’s life showed the characteristics of leaders of peace. Each description highlights a specific quality of the prophets that teachings could be applied to the problem of drug abuse in India among the youth to create a peaceful solution.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This essay was important as it exposed me to the different ways in which peace can be achieved in the world. Although peace is generally wanted in society, it isn’t until one explores the peace efforts of those in the past that one realizes the leadership and vision of a person who truly wants peace. Through the teachings of the leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths, I have seen examples of what true leadership in peace is.



Dalia Deak is a junior at the Islamic Saudi Academy. She is actively involved in numerous activities at school such as Model United Nations, Community Service Committee, and representing the school in Delegate Amundson’s Young Leaders Group. She is also on the varsity basketball team and enjoys various other sports. Furthermore, she was involved in setting up a program that taught English to young girls in a village overseas while their teachers were on strike. She is interested in learning other languages, travel, and hopes to study medicine in college.

“Teachings of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad”

Essay Abstract: Five basic principles have characterized the three Abrahamic prophets: forgiveness, tolerance, compassion, courage, and justice. These same five principles make up an effective leader and lead nations to peace. Each prophet has modeled these principles throughout his life and has eternalized them through his teachings. In the situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict war has raged on for more than seventy years. The parties to this war are followers of the Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. If the Israelis and Palestinians would embrace the peaceful teachings of their prophets, a peaceful resolve could be reached.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This project helped reiterate the importance of following the importance of peace through the Abrahamic prophets and their teachings. It also planted a seed of faith in peace in the minds of the coming generation. The leaders of tomorrow need to build on a strong foundation of inter-faith peace, and this contest lays the groundwork for that foundation.



Gleb Drobkov is a junior at St. Albans High school in Washington, DC. He was born in Moscow, Russia but has lived in the USA ever since he was one year old. He loves to ski and run and cherishes every opportunity he gets to travel. He usually spends his summers between living on his dacha in Moscow, visiting his father on Cyprus or staying with a friend in the south of France. Gleb loves meeting new people and especially learning more about the eccentricities of their culture or lifestyle, as well as sharing his own. He studies French, Spanish and Russian in high school. He loves to sing in acapella groups and listens to House techno music.

“Steps to Coexistence in the 21st Century”

Essay Abstract: My essay is about the interpretation of scriptures to propagate peace and love rather than war. I offer a radical process that would resolve religious and political tension in the Middle East through the separation of church and state and increased dialogue among nations.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: This essay contest motivated me to research topics I had debated with people before but I had never known about in depth. Arguing with different religious leaders was an enlightening experience for me and helped me formulate my thoughts from a radical theory to a logical argument. It was definitely time well spent.

Alicia Fuhrman, 17, is a junior at Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Virginia, where she is pursuing the International Baccalaureate diploma. She plays Robinson Varsity Soccer as well as club soccer with a highly ranked team. She has studied violin for 13 years and plays First Violin with the American Youth Philharmonic orchestra. She is heavily involved in volunteer activities, notably coaching basketball and teaching violin. She aspires to attend Yale University and plans to pursue a career in medicine and music.

“Coexistence: A Modern Practical Approach”

Essay Abstract: A modern approach to solve the religious tensions in the United States. Through the study of Mohammed, Jesus, Moses, and their teachings, I have devised a plan of action to be taken. By combining the primary attributes of each religion, and advocating their place in our society, we can better reach the goal of peace amongst all.

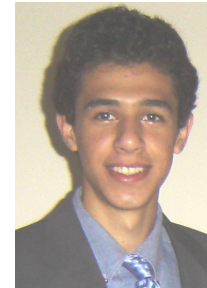
On the value of the Children of Abraham project: I initially entered this project with, to be honest, a skeptical mentality. While of course I had exposure to varying religions, I had very little knowledge of the depth behind them. However, time put into the essay led me to not only to information about the three faiths, but an increased respect for their practices and beliefs. Thus, I

leave this project with much personal satisfaction, a more accepting state of mind, and most importantly, motivation to bring others to the same state.

Kenneth Fung is a sophomore at Robinson Secondary School.

“The Peace Trio”

Essay Abstract: Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad were prophets of peace in their individual ways. Each one of them expressed their desire for peace through their lives and teachings. Moses used his words to bring peace to the nation of Israel, Jesus used his miracles to bring peace to all who were around him, and Muhammad used his actions to bring peace to his fellow followers of Islam. They each lived great lives and were considered as the key figures in each of their religions. They were prophets of peace.



Sharif Kronemer is a junior at Springbrook High School, where he is enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program and runs cross-country and track.

“The Enduring Models”

Essay Abstract: The Enduring Model gives details about Muhammad’s, Moses’ and Jesus’ life and what struggles they faced. The essay explores how they reacted to their struggles, and how they were finally victorious in promoting peace. Their examples to

promote peace are then put into the context of the 21st century. The Enduring Model explores how their models for peace can be used to promote peace in today’s conflicts.

On the value of the Children of Abraham project: In a challenging and divisive time, it challenges us to think about unity and inclusion.



Mona Moustafa Meky was born in Newark, New Jersey on March 1992. She moved with her family from New Jersey to Washington DC when she was five months old. She is a sophomore at the Islamic Saudi Academy, where she is a member of the school’s basketball team. She likes most sports, especially basketball, tennis, and swimming. She has attended many classes in swimming and Tae Kwon Do. She likes to spend her spare time reading books and working out in the gym. She likes to participate in different academic competitions.

“Prophets Moses, Jesus and Muhammad”

Essay Abstract: My essay is about how the three Prophets (Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad) spread peace through their leaderships and through their teachings. I showed the quality of peacemaking for each of the Prophets. I cited examples of how the three prophets spread peace during their time. Also,