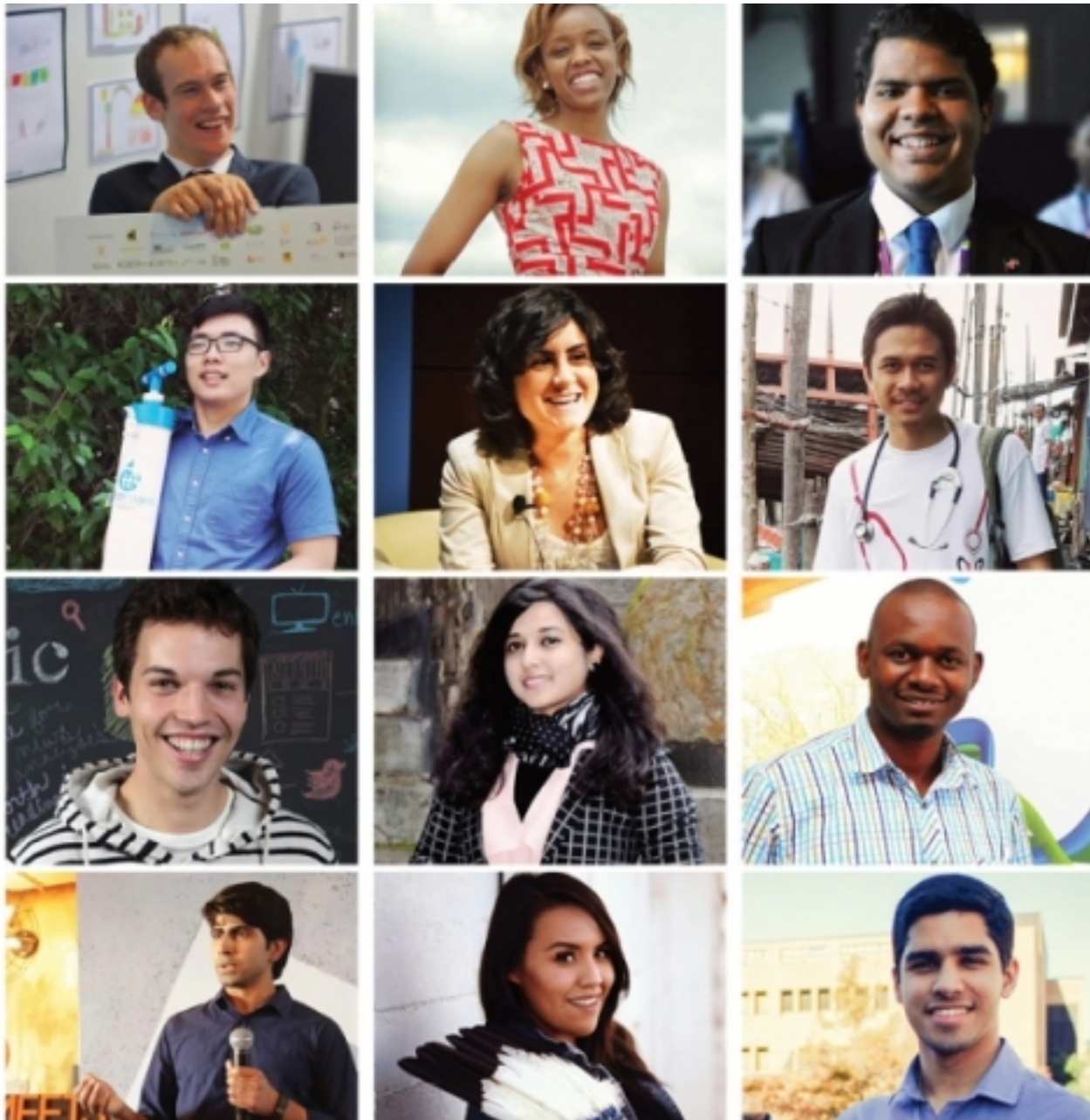


3 September 2020

Why We Care - 3 September 2020



Young people around the world are taking bold action to help the world achieve sustainability, equality and social justice.

Will EOC become an abbreviation as familiar as AD or BC? That was the very somber thought that crept to mind as I read “Three Days Till EOC”, a remarkable and chilling novella by twelve-year-old Oklahoma school student Abhimanyu Sukhdial. The term stands for “end of civilization” and it’s difficult to expand upon the book’s theme without giving too much away; in a sense the quote from Goethe that prefaces the work says it all; “Choose well. Your choice is brief and yet endless.”

But to give at least a sense of what it’s about, allow the quote of a few lines. Shimmering in its background is the world of 2100 where “water, the thing that matters to all life, is wiping out life itself. The ice sheets have melted, the Earth has passed its last cataclysmic tipping point, and now there are only three days till EOC.” And the Earthlings live “in a cluster of shiny new buildings scattered on the highest point in the city, known as “The Lighthouse.” Here they enjoyed the four most precious possessions on the planet: clean water, fresh food, video games (for taking their mind off EOC) and each other.”

Those last three words stopped engaged thought, as if with a wrench. A simple phrase simply put and yet so utterly beautiful in this time when our enjoyment of each other threatens to be so fleeting, so transient. As a grandfather tells his granddaughter later in the book, “helping others through small, selfless actions is the way you can immediately start making a difference – whether it be consoling a child who’s crying, opening a door for an old lady, or helping a classmate struggling with a math problem.”

That grandparental advice brought to mind the work of Kulubo Nyamahlorpu Koquoi, a senior student of the African Methodist Episcopal University in Liberia, about whom I also read this week, one of the 38 recipients for the 2020 COVID-19 Student Action Fund, awarded by Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) University in the United States. Her winning project, *Keeping Women Safe Against COVID-19 and SGBV* will train women and girls in rural Montserrado and Margibi Counties in Liberia by on preventive measures of COVID-19 and on addressing sexual gender-based violence (SGBV).

Kulubo plans to invest her prize money of US\$2,000 to provide training materials for beneficiaries in the rural communities where the pandemic has amplified instances of rape and SGBV. For us in UNAI, this is a particular moment of pride as she was among the Millennium Fellows identified in 2018 by the Millennium Campus Network and the United Nations Academic Impact for her contribution to helping achieve the Sustainable Development.

“Both the pandemic and the climate crisis, “Antonio Guterres said last week, “have raised fundamental questions about how to ensure the health and well-being of the world’s people and about how nations must cooperate to advance the common good. Young people, in particular, are looking to all of us to uphold intergenerational solidarity and take bold steps towards sustainability, equality and social justice.” In Abhimanyu and Kulubo, we have two instances looking to all of us, even as we look up to them.

Ramu Damodaran
Chief, United Nations Academic Impact

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