

“Alliance of Civilizations”

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Alliance of Civilizations

“The more we are together, the happier we will be”. This song I learned in Kindergarten resonates what I think the underlying theme of the United Nations’ *Alliance of Civilizations* is. By the very definition, an alliance is an agreement between two or more parties made in order to advance common goals and to secure common interests. But even with common goals and common interests, people from different cultural backgrounds still find it hard to come together. So what is missing? I believe a common path. We must use education and communication to develop and implement a common plan in order to facilitate an alliance that will be successful in bringing nations and people of different cultural backgrounds together.

My parents always tell me that education is the key to my future. I think it is the key to all of our future. Education brings knowledge and understanding. If we are correctly educated about each other’s culture, history and beliefs, I believe it would help us to begin to know each other, which in turn will bring about an understanding of each other. I joined the Turkish Club in my school, and it has opened my eyes to things I never knew about the Turkish culture. I am learning about the people, their culture, religion, and food. Most importantly, Turkish people no longer seem “foreign” to me. I am realizing that we do have common interests and goals, and we all look towards the future with hope. These types of programs are not offered in public schools. The government should make multi-cultural programs part of the school curriculum as early as Kindergarten for public schools, since most children attend public schools in the US. This would educate children at a young age about cultural appreciation, respect and tolerance, so the negative things they see on TV would not be the only things they learn about other countries.

All of the education in the world cannot help us if we do not communicate with each other. My mother once told me that even though she learned French in school, she still cannot effectively carry on a conversation with a French-speaking person because she never really communicated with anyone who spoke French. Therefore, we should use what we’ve learned to begin to communicate with each other regularly which can bring about more understanding and tolerance of each other. It can also facilitate dialogue and we may even find that we have a lot in common. It is the next step to facilitate peace between the nations. Communication can help us interact better with each other. Better interaction can make it easier for us to advance our common goals and interests. It also makes it easier for each nation to come to the table with a more open mind and willingness to coordinate policies and strategies that can facilitate the reaching of our common goals and interests. Therefore, better communication equal better results. One way to facilitate communication is to have more cultural exchange programs available where some of the public education funds can be used to send students to other countries. The United Nations can also have an initiative where each country can contribute to a cultural exchange program fund, where selected students can visit different countries. This would help to eradicate negative media exposure and to see positive aspects of that country. If actual travel is not possible, we can use the internet to visit other schools and families internationally, using webcams and videoconferencing. Schools and families can come together from different countries, and enter a virtual classroom regularly as part of the cultural experience.

Implementation is using what you know to develop a plan and putting it into action. We can learn from both the education we acquired and the communication with each other, the tools to develop a common path to achieve a common goal. I believe having a common path is very important in achieving and advancing common goals and interests. For example, if everyone in a classroom is doing a particular subject, but some have a different book, it can be difficult to follow in class. It just makes things easier and more productive for all if everyone was on the same page. Getting on a common path is like getting on the same page. We should develop plans that would ensure that we are all on the same page, even if we play different roles. A common plan for world peace should involve governments not creating new weapons, but using those resources to facilitate education and communication among countries. The media, which plays a major role in the way people from different countries see each other, should not only air the negative aspects of a country, but also show the positive aspects and their active role to implement change. Of course, if many of us dig deep into our history, we would find that we have more in common with people who seem foreign to us. So, we should be open to all other cultures, and respect each other's culture, religion, and beliefs, even if we do not always agree.

If knowledge is the key and children are our future, then I would start with the schools. If unity and peace is our ultimate goal for the world and its future, then education, communication, and implementing a common plan to achieve a common goal would seem like a logical progression. We can then truly form an alliance because we will all be on the same page. Education, communication, and actively participating in programs and initiatives that will bring about respect, understanding and tolerance, would in turn reduce polarization among conflicting nations. Also, realizing that change starts within ourselves, how we treat each other determines how people treat us is also important. I took my first step by joining the Turkish club in order to learn something about another culture, and then I share what I learn with family and friends.