

“UNLESS”

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Imagine when you were a little kid. You're at school and the teacher is asking a question to the students. Before the teacher is able to finish his or her question, small hands shoot high up in the air like rockets. They raise their hands as high as they can, and some of them wave their hands side to side for attention. I miss those days. I really do...

I lived in America for about ten years in an environment like that. So I have always thought that raising my hand during class was something normal. I came back 3 years ago. Excited to go to my new school, but at the same time scared. Scared that I wouldn't be able to fit in. I had no problems with making new friends but when classes started, it was totally different from what I expected. When the teacher asked a question to the students, I thought everyone was going to raise their hands, but...it was complete silence. Only the sound of birds chirping outside.

I got used to this situation after a few days so I kept raising my hand. But every time my hand went up in the air, the other students looked at me as if I wasn't normal. Some of them even rolled their eyes thinking, *oh, it's her again*. After a few weeks, I noticed that my hand wasn't going up anymore. When it rarely did, it only went up to my chest, and I couldn't straighten my arms. And when I answered, I always started with, "I'm not sure if I'm right". I was afraid of saying the wrong answer and feeling embarrassed. After a few months since the first day of school, I noticed that I had become like everyone else. When a new returnee came to school, they raised their hands during class to share ideas. And every time they did so, I too sometimes rolled my eyes thinking, *oh, it's her again*. And sadly, by the end of the year, they stopped raising their hands.

But there was a girl. She came back from America and joined the English class that I was in. Like every returnee, she raised her hand and shared well-thought ideas that always amazed me. But what I was more amazed about

was that she never gave up. Even if her classmates rolled their eyes or sighed whenever she spoke, she never stopped raising her hand. I once overheard her talking about how it was difficult for her to raise her hand because her classmates seemed unpleasant whenever she spoke. She was going through a hard time just like every returnee. However, she didn't become like me, nor like the other returnees. She kept sharing her ideas.

Over the last few years I've noticed how the environment that you're in can change how you think, how you act, and your capability of doing things. And I've also noticed that even if it's a single person, he or she can change other people's ideas. The girl who kept raising her hand changed how I thought about my participation during class.

“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” This is an excerpt from The Lorax by Dr. Seuss. Though the story itself focused on the conservation of the environment, I interpret it in a different way. I think it's telling me that if I don't try to change the things that I do, nothing is going to change around me. There's so much information going around in this world that most of us don't know about. Each and every one of you knows something that the person next to you might not know. Sharing our ideas openly may spark an idea in someone, or inspire them to act and make a change in society. I'm sure some of the great inventors like Thomas Edison and Steve Jobs were inspired by thoughts and ideas from those spoken around them. So, I have decided that from now on, I'm going to raise my hand in class. And maybe, just maybe, if I keep sharing my ideas, someone might become brave enough to shares their ideas too.

So I want to take this opportunity to say something to every one of you. Unless someone like you tries to change things, nothing is going to change. It's not.