

Good evening ladies and gentlemen of the knowledgeable, more experienced, older generation. Do you want to live in a society where we all treat each other with respect and live in a place with peace, harmony and tranquillity? If so, I implore you to listen to me. Only an idiot wouldn't want this type of society!

Unfortunately, I am aware of the fact that a percentage of the older generation think that the new generation are obnoxiously selfish. John Brown (a retired teacher) said: "The younger generation are recalcitrant and selfish; they have no respect for anyone else." However, Easton LaChapelle – a 17-year-old American boy – proves this is not true. At just 14, Easton made his first, robotic hand using LEGO and fishing wire. He was inspired by a 7-year-old girl who had a prosthetic hand; it only opened and closed but still cost £52,000! He created a functional prosthetic limb that cost under £650. Currently, he is working at NASA, on their Robonaut team. What an inspiration! I ask you now, does this sound selfish?

Furthermore, as Martin Luther King once said: "I have a dream..." so I dream that there will be equality amongst generations. I have a vision of a perfect society. There are myriad young people who will disprove some of the older generation's opinions. Some of you believe us to be lazy; you think we stay inside all day and think we are always stuck on our electronics; you sully the younger generation with false information. Emma Watson (a young woman from England and a popular, well-known actor) is the opposite of the definition of lazy. She works tirelessly for her career but not only that, she is a UN ambassador for women. Emma is a feminist activist who launched the HeForShe campaign promoting gender equality. She started this when she was young. I ask you again, does this sound lazy?

Finally, the older generation's opinion of us is that we're not ambitious, we have no future and will have no success in our future; you besmirch us with these dreadful, offensive accusations. The younger generation are devoted and ambitious to achieve their dreams; we have the highest aspirations! Boyan Slat, who is a 19-year-old boy from the Netherlands, will change the older generation's minds. At 16 he went diving in Greece and was shocked by the amount of plastic in the sea: he said there was more plastic than fish! So he began designing a solution. At 19 – three years later – he successfully designed and tested an environmentally friendly, efficient and effective way to remove plastic from the sea. Boyan's compassion for this is motivational; he had a dream and he worked hard to make it happen. This is dedication! I ask you, does this sound like we have no ambition?

In conclusion, I believe we can break the vicious cycle of disrespect and mistrust between all generations. It is insulting to suggest that we don't have the same drive and determination as your generation; how is our generation different? Trust me, young people are diligent and they will be the ones making a difference in our world – which is also your world! I hope you now know that we are hard-working, ambitious and kind-hearted. I hope you realise we are the future. I hope I have changed your mind...

***Ellie Johnston 8V***

Hello Ladies and gentlemen of our beloved, older generation. This morning I am here to tell you how incredible, inspirational and amazing today's young people are. I understand that – unbelievably – some of you here may dislike the younger generation. However, I am here to change that opinion and show you how fabulous youngsters today really are. Although some of you may be under the misconceived impression that teenagers and kids of today are boring, selfish or lack ambition, I can assure you that this is most definitely not the case.

Let me begin with the example of David Boone. David (an American) is an erudite young man with resilience and courage, who definitely had ambition and who was not going to stop until he had achieved his aim. At fourteen David was homeless and living on the streets of Cleveland, after gang members had torched his home. David Boone did not let this cataclysmic event halt his ambition; he began to study at night and eventually managed to make it to Harvard University: the most prestigious academic institution in America. Incredibly, David became one of the university's most successful students and he has now graduated with a degree in computer sciences. Could you have done this? Did David lack ambition? Is this not an awe-inspiring story of ambition overcoming hardship? The world is full of ambitious teenagers and young people; we are the future of the world.

Some of you may have heard it said – may even have said it yourself – that teenagers and young people today are boring. Mary Johnson (83) said, "Kids these days just aren't very unique; they all follow the herd." This is, in fact, far from the truth. Let me share with you the story of another young person: Malala Yousafzai. This amazing young woman was an intelligent, academic young girl who wanted to do well in school and progress to University in her native country: Pakistan. Tragically, when Malala was only eleven, her village was taken over by the Taliban and women were not allowed to go to school. Malala was faced with the prospect of giving up her much-prized hope of education. However, Malala did not give up and began campaigning for equality in education. Shockingly, Malala was shot in the head by a gunman from the Taliban because she had advocated women's rights. She was seriously injured and fought for her life. Fearing further reprisals from the Taliban, her family was forced to take her out of Pakistan. Subsequently, she moved to the UK where she is currently a student at Oxford University. Malala's speeches are some of the most moving and inspirational anywhere in the world. This latter-day Martin Luther King figure is both fascinating and captivating; anyone who has heard her speak cannot fail to be moved by her passion and belief. Could you have done this? Is Malala boring? Is this not an awe-inspiring story of a fascinating young woman overcoming hardship? The world is full of fascinating young people; we are the future of the world.

Some of those belonging to my grandmother's generation might possibly think of young people today as being self-centred. Eleanor Rylands (73) claimed that young people were, "Selfish, heartless and materialistic!" Really? I have a third young person to draw your attention to: Abbie Weeks (18). Abbie, a native of Colorado USA, most certainly is not selfish. Abbie is an astonishing, dedicated and resilient young lady with a dream as big as the community she has served. Abbie created a non-profit, solar energy system, which provides power to countless under-privileged towns and villages throughout America. Thousands of people are the grateful recipients of Abbie's wonderful contribution to society. Moreover, she is constantly campaigning on other environmental issues; she recently persuaded her own school to switch to renewable lunch trays in the cafeteria! Could you have done this? Is Abbie selfish? Is this not an awe-inspiring story of a selfless young woman overcoming hardship? The world is full of selfless young people; we are the future of the world.

In conclusion, I wish to say that these young people are just the tip of an inspirational iceberg. It takes kids like David, Malala and Abbie (plus many more) to make the world what it is today and can be tomorrow. Without us – the youth – life would be not nearly as interesting and the future not nearly as promising. Finally, to bring my speech to an end I would ask of you one final thing: find it in your hearts to like, respect and cherish the younger generation. We are the future of the world.

*Finlay Bowden 8G*