

Artist Statement - Itisha Budamagunta

“Racism is a grown-up disease and it is time we stop using kids to spread it”. - Ruby Bridges

I am Itisha, and I am 10 years old. I enjoy reading books, practicing Tae Kwon Do and I want to write books someday. For my art piece, I chose the quote, “Racism is a grown-up disease and it is time we stop using kids to spread it.” by Ruby Bridges.

When I read this quote, I could imagine why Ruby Bridges might have said these words. When kids were being segregated at school, it was a decision made by adults, which affected children. It made children look at the differences in other children, rather than the common things.

It doesn't matter to little kids what their friends look like. When I look at my little brother, I see how well little kids play with all other kids. They want to be with kids who like the same things as them, nothing else is important to them.

That made me think of organizing an after-school club, ‘Children United’, where kids can come together and understand each other better. Instead of looking at each other's' differences, kids could connect over their similarities. We could also find books or activities that help us see how our differences make us so special and unique. If everyone was the same, life would be boring and we would all be like copies of each other. There wouldn't be different types of food, or clothes, or music and many other things. That is why we need different people to make the world interesting.

At school, I hear kids being mean to each other because someone looks different, sounds different or acts different than them. A lot of times kids do not understand the meaning behind the hurtful words that they use. They are simply repeating something they have heard being used. They don't realize that when they make fun of someone, it makes kids think of their own history, traditions, race, family in a bad way. I think if kids knew how their words make other people feel, they would not want to use these words. I hear some classmates talk in a fake accent, which they don't realize is making fun of someone's family. Kids think it is funny or cool to talk a certain way and call people names, because they have heard it from someone.

But many times, when we tell classmates how their words make other people feel, they realize that was not their intention. When kids see that other kids might have the same hobbies or likes as them, even if others look or sound different than them, they might not think much of the differences.

With the ‘Children United’ club, we could share our different stories, and relate to others' experiences to make everyone feel welcome. We could discuss what certain words may mean and why we shouldn't use them, without knowing the hurt they could inflict on others.

My artwork depicts how children can participate in breaking the chain of pain and hurt and create a bond of togetherness. When someone hurts another person's feelings, they may feel like putting that hurt on somebody else who is different from them. That chain will keep continuing, ending up with several broken hearts, including the ones who hurt others. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind”. But, if we all try to understand each other and accept our differences, we could be a stronger and harmonious world.

Together, children could lead the way to overlook differences and spread kindness!