

JOISS Gala Speech: The Power of Youth in Co-Creating Education for Lasting Peace

Kennedy Barasa – Saturday, January 24th, 2026

Fairmont Hotel, Georgia Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Opening: A New Vision for Peace

Good evening, distinguished guests, colleagues, and friends.

What if I told you the future of peace does not rest in the hands of distant world leaders, but in the hearts and minds of young people learning in classrooms and libraries around the world? Tonight, as we gather for this JOISS Gala, we do more than celebrate education—we embrace a revolutionary truth: youth are not simply tomorrow’s leaders. They are today’s co-creators of lasting peace.

The Power and Responsibility of Co-Creation

Our theme, “The Power of Youth in Co-Creating Education for Lasting Peace,” calls us to action. Peace is not a policy handed down from above, but a purpose cultivated from within. It starts in the heart, grows in the classroom, and flourishes when we empower students—when we see their courage, creativity, and compassion as sparks that ignite transformation.

JOISS is a global scholarly community dedicated to amplifying youth voices, academic work, and leadership. Through our platform, young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds can share their stories, publish their research, and lead conversations that shape the future of education and peacebuilding.

Timeless Lessons from Purposeful Leadership

In my book, *FOR THIS REASON: The Quest for Purposeful Leadership*, I explore what it means to lead with purpose and service. Throughout history, we see the power of young leaders who became teachers and co-creators of knowledge:

Moses offered laws and teachings that formed the moral foundation for his people, guiding them through uncertainty and conflict.

David led with courage and vision, inspiring unity and hope in the face of adversity.

Paul dedicated his life to sharing wisdom, writing letters that have enlightened and uplifted generations.

What united these leaders was not their age or status, but their willingness to teach, serve, and empower others—especially the vulnerable. Their examples remind us that purposeful leadership is rooted in stewardship, service, and the pursuit of the common good. These ancient principles remain vital today: faith and hope sustain us, while responsible stewardship and compassion create the conditions for peace.

Co-Creation in Action: Living Stories

At JOISS, we see youth following in these footsteps—not only as learners, but as teachers and collaborators:

Young scholars document the impact of education in conflict-affected regions, sharing peace modules and classroom innovations grounded in their own experiences.

Students research and lead peer mediation programs, breaking cycles of violence and fostering understanding in their schools.

Emerging leaders develop digital platforms and forums—often first presented through JOISS—that connect students across borders and encourage global dialogue.

These contributions are not just academic exercises; they are living blueprints for peace in action, multiplying hope and understanding throughout communities and the world.

Call to Action: Join the Movement

Tonight, I urge each of you to become co-creators with our youth.

Education is not simply a path to knowledge—it is the engine of purposeful leadership and the catalyst for enduring peace.

To ignite lasting change, let us:

Support student-led research and peace initiatives that turn vision into action.

Mentor young scholars and peacebuilders, nurturing their courage and wisdom.

Create spaces where youth voices don't just echo—they shape real decisions.

Invest in educational technologies that bridge divides and connect young minds across the globe.

Empower educators to foster environments where students lead with empathy, integrity, and creativity.

Let's champion holistic learning—blending technical skill, emotional intelligence, and a strong moral compass. Let's cultivate self-reflection, adaptability, and innovation. Above all, let us nurture faith and hope in our youth—not as abstract ideals, but as enduring strengths that guide them to transform our world.

When we co-create with youth, we do more than change education—we unleash generations of purposeful leaders who will transform our world.

Closing: Building Peace Together

The real question is not whether young people are ready to co-create education for lasting peace.

The question is: Are we ready to co-create it with them?

The future of peace is not waiting for us to build it.

It is waiting for us to build it—together.

Let us celebrate, connect, and recommit to the transformative power of education, research, and purposeful leadership.

Thank you.

Kennedy Barasa

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