



Eternal Flame Fellowship Speech By Sana

Eternal Flame Ceremony 16th September 2020

I am so pleased to accept the Eternal Flame Fellowship. It is a great honour and responsibility that I am humbled to accept and grateful and to take on.

As a Rockwood Academy student, I have been fortunate to be involved in Echo Eternal since the project started. This was made possible by my teachers who supported and encouraged me along the way. I would like to thank them for this and for their commitment to highlight such important issues that may not always come up in other areas of the curriculum we study.

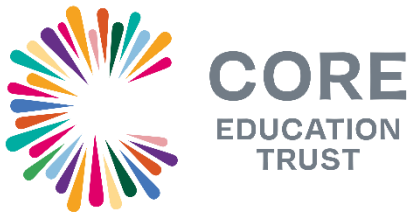
Congratulations to all of you for being inducted as Eternal Flames today, you are at the start of your experience with Echo Eternal and it is a great privilege for you to represent the voices of the Holocaust survivors who inspire all our endeavours.. My experiences with this incredible project started when a group of 9 students from Rockwood Academy were invited by Mr Singh, our history teacher, to make a video inspired by a Holocaust survivor's testimony and this resulted in me gaining a lifetime of experience and friendships that I will never forget and always treasure!

Of course, the major highlight of being part of the Echo Eternal family has been meeting a survivor in person, not only a survivor but a lady with the heart of a lion and a beautiful soul. The lady is Mady Gerrard. She has been truly inspirational, and I have learnt so much from her. She has taught me to never let life get you down and that you should always follow your ambitions and dreams.

I have developed so much over the past few years and the experiences of Echo Eternal, I feel, have helped to shape the person that is standing before you. I am so much more confident and resilient, and that has only been possible through hearing and sharing many of the survivor testimonies.

Echo Eternal is an important project as it allows people of our generation to raise our voices on behalf of those from previous generations who were silenced by genocides. It allows us to retell their stories, their lives and to make memories as well as friendships that we can all take with us forever. Although my time at Rockwood has been limited, Echo Eternal has become a huge part of my secondary school life. It has changed me for the better and I just want to thank everyone at CORE from the bottom of my heart!





At the centre of what we do is the testimony of survivors. We engage deeply in the personal accounts of hatred and violence that led to the loss of family, the loss of education and the loss of the norms of life itself. BUT in times of crisis and unimaginable horror and devastation, we also learn from these survivors that the human spirit is strong. They have faced immense danger and in many cases hunger and starvation, but they have survived. They have come to Britain, they have built families, they have had successful lives.

Our duty and responsibility to the survivors does not end with simply hearing their testimony. Although we should honour the survivors' histories, we should look forward and take the messages they have given us to make a brighter future for all of society, As the Eternal Flame Fellow this year, I call on you to act for the future, to look at the world today and to tackle injustice, prejudice and inequality.

I therefore want to use my speech today to highlight a social injustice of our time. Currently, in over 100 countries, including the UK, Save the Children is helping children stay safe, healthy, and learning. 45% of child deaths in the world today are the result of malnutrition. 129 Million children suffer 'stunting' because of hunger. The displacement of families because of violence, discrimination and hatred often results in life threatening food poverty.

I want to encourage you to harness your collective energy, commitment, and creativity as young people to raise awareness of this issue and to contribute in some way to support the work of organisations like Save the Children. A repeating image that comes to my mind from many of the survivors' accounts is their awful experiences as children; innocent victims of systemic abuse and intolerable cruelty- robbed of the basic human rights of every child, experiencing unimaginable horrors. Too many of them faced extreme conditions in which hunger and starvation were all too common and where hatred and discrimination were the norm. Mady talks powerfully about such experiences. She recalls thinking that if she survived, she will never let another person go hungry if she has food to share.

So, in honour of that pledge from Mady, I am calling on you all to make the issue of child poverty your Echo Eternal charitable focus this year and look forward to hearing about your plans and the outcomes you set when we next meet.

Finally, please always remember how learning from the past helps us shape a better future for everyone, together we must never forget, and we must stand together and be the change.

