



awarding compassion

the jizo peace center asks teenagers to consider compassion

The Jizo Bodhisattva, or embodiment of the enlightened Buddha, is a manifestation of the quality of compassion. Licensed clinical social worker Ruth Ratna Handy administers the nonprofit Jizo Peace Center in Pine Mountain, California, dedicated to increasing peace on the planet, particularly through promoting awareness of and acts of compassion.

Since 2005, the Jizo Peace Center sponsors the annual WZM Award for Compassion. High school seniors write essays about their experiences demonstrating love, kindness and compassion. In collaboration with high school guidance counselors and teachers, Handy and the Peace Center select students to receive recognition and a monetary award.

Awardees are chosen in the spring, at the end of the academic year. To sponsor an award, or nominate a high school student, visit www.jizopeacecenter.com. (661) 242 - 6956.

This year, the Peace Center awarded four scholarships of \$300 each. Following is one of the winning essays.

beyond my armenian world

finding compassion for others through community

by sossi latchinian
graduating senior at pasadena high school

An individual will change due to an external force. However, is that external force influential enough for that change to be embedded in the person's being?

I ATTENDED AN ARMENIAN SCHOOL for 13 years where Armenians were the only emphasis, how we came about and the struggles we went through. Not one of the topics discussed had consisted of peo-

ple outside of Armenia. Being Armenian was all I knew, but the external influence that affected me enough to change my direction was when I joined In His Shoes, a nonprofit organization that supports those who suffer all over the world.

Change is essential in life and learning. During my days at the Armenian school, no other culture existed other than my people; no other culture went through what my people went through. I was exceedingly proud of my background. My main

goal every year was to learn something new about being Armenian. I was not aware of the rest of the world beyond my own. If the subject did not have anything to do with the Armenians, neither my classmates nor I would pay attention. Just like any other Armenian school, my school's main goal was to emphasize on the Armenian Genocide and it was our job to spread the teachings of our culture to others. This overwhelming pride was not something I was born with, it was instilled in me throughout the years.