



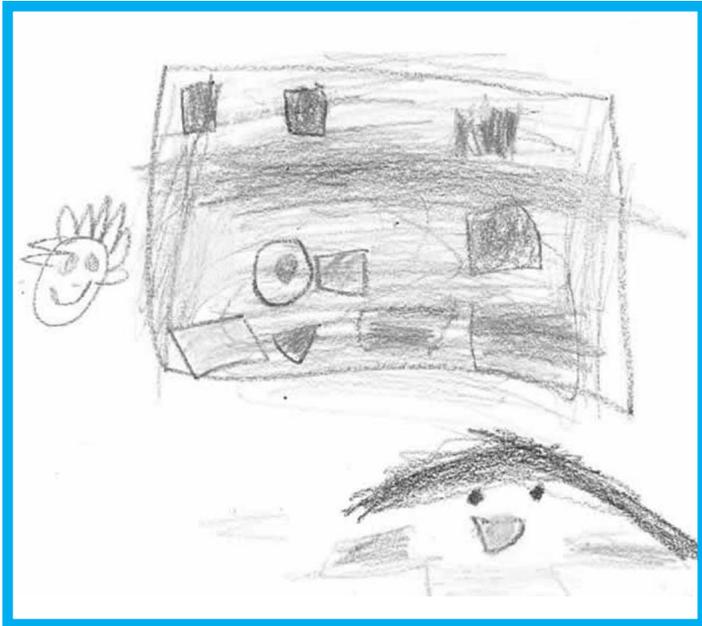
## Kids Philosophy Slam

We are pleased to continue our partnership with the Kids Philosophy Slam by printing the winning entries at each level for the 2008 competition. The topic for 2008 for most students was "Is global warming the greatest challenge facing humankind?" The kindergarten students answered the question "What can you do to make the world a better place?"

All of the participants deserve congratulations and recognition, including the winning students and The Park School in Baltimore, Maryland, which was named the Most Philosophical School in America, for the efforts of its student body. Congratulations to one and all; we look forward to hearing more from these young philosophers.

### 2008—Most Philosophical Kindergartener in America:

Vivianna Guerra, Illinois.



**What can you do to make the world a better place?**

To make our world a better place I could have picnics with others that are hungry.



### 2008—First Grade First Place

Katharine Ashley, Minnesota



I think that global warming is a huge problem because the food will dry out. Pollution does that. That's why I made a machine that keeps a lot of pollution away.

### 2008—Second Grade First Place

Ysabel De León, Minnesota

No, because I think war is the most important challenge to humankind. War is an important thing to STOP because men and women are dying and being killed. Mothers and children are going to their family member's funerals. Why do people want to have war? I always ask myself this often. Do the men and women who fight from Minnesota die often? YES! My neighbor is a soldier and once last year he got shot! He is okay now though. We need to solve problems in the world peacefully and not fight in a war. I feel sad about war, I really do.



## 2008—Third Grade First Place

Nimai C. Agarwal, Maryland

Global warming is a symptom of disconnect from our divine nature. Since we are not connected to our divine nature, we think that everything in this world is for our enjoyment. Like Mahatma Gandhi once said, "There is enough for every man's needs, but not enough for one man's greed." When we are not satisfied with what we have, we think by getting more, we will be happy but instead of being happy, we want more.

Every year I go to a rural village in India. It's so simple there, with hardly any material opulence, but still I love it because of its spiritual atmosphere. The freshness of the air, the sound of the birds chirping mixed with sacred chants, the taste of fresh water and the brilliance of the sky fills me up with wonder and happiness. I feel as if I don't need TV, computer games, etc, but when I am home, I feel as if I can't live without them. Just like if you take a fish out of water and give it an opulent bed, nice food and drinks it will not be happy, but when you put it back into the water, it will be perfectly satisfied.

In the same way, since we are spiritual beings, all these material objects can never make us happy, instead they make us hanker for more. As Saint Francis of Assisi showed in his life, he gave up all his wealth and lived as a hermit, serving the creation of god. He was always happy and peaceful.

We have this great spiritual hankering but we try to fill it up with material objects. We are never satisfied, so we keep on consuming and exploiting nature. Before cars were invented people either walked on foot or used horse drawn carriages. Then people thought that horse stool caused too much pollution and that it took too much time to get from one place to another. In due course of time people invented cars. We thought that our problems have ended, but cars only caused more pollution than horse carriages. When we try to solve material problems with material solutions, it causes more problems than before.

A polluted environment is a symptom of our polluted consciousness. We try to find happiness in material objects, but material happiness does not make us happy. It is like a mirage. We keep on chasing after it but we never reach it. In the process we exploit and use nature. That causes pollution, and pollution causes problems like global warming etc. So global warming is just a symptom of disconnect from our divine nature.

## 2008—Sixth Grade First Place

While I do think global warming is a significant problem, I do not think it is the greatest challenge facing humankind. I believe that the greatest challenge facing humankind can be found rather in the root cause behind global warming continuing for as long as it has. My belief is that the greatest challenges facing mankind are some of the human race's basic, underlying bad habits or tendencies. There are at least four major human behaviors to discuss.

The first of these four is greed. Greed affects global warming in two ways. The first is the excessive use of oil, a fossil fuel that has limitations. Mankind has not been able to respect the limitations of oil and decreases the dependence on oil. The second of the two ways greed affects world problems is that greed causes wars. Wars require time and money. When war is occurring, the leaders of the world and the United Nations are focused on stopping war. This does not allow for much time to solve other important world problems.

The second of these four bad habits is the world being overly competitive. Competition does not always focus on problem solving, instead it focuses on winning and coming out on top. Some countries boast about their limited use of fossil fuel. It may be true that one country alone has a better record than that of others, however it is still a global problem. All countries are part of this planet, so there needs to be a shared goal to fix problems when they are on a global level.

The next human behavior that contributes to our world wide problems is the attitude of indifference to ideas other than our own. One country may think that their solution is superior so they will stop listening to other ideas proposed by other countries. When we behave with indifference we do not show concern to how our actions and decisions may cause more problems for other countries.

Finally, there is a pattern for the human race to generate many goals and solutions, but yet we fall short of taking the required action. Action demands hard work and a decision to be content with a simpler life style. We must hold ourselves accountable for setting our ideas into action.

I have chosen this answer to the question because I believe that if we stop global warming without addressing and minimizing the role of some of the basic bad human behaviors underlying world problems, global warming will just be replaced with other devastating world wide issues. I will feel sad and disgusted if we fail to make the right choices for our planet.

## 2008—Fourth Grade First Place

Hunter Shapiro Throckmorton, California

I am dying.

My blue ice caps are melting away like ice cubes on concrete.

My water is rising as if it were a stalking tsunami.

There is nowhere for my polar bears to rest.

The skin of my continents is cracking  
like feet that have gone too far.

Soon when you look at my coasts, you will find bodies,  
floating in the sea with broken cities.

Would you help me?

## 2008—Fifth Grade First Place

Laura Christenson, Minnesota

I think that ignorance is the greatest challenge facing human kind.

Ignorance means the absence of knowledge and understanding. And without understanding, problems can't be understood and addressed. Ignorance is one of the problems behind global warming. It is because people didn't know and didn't want to know that global warming got so out of hand.

People may choose to not educate themselves and remain ignorant because they don't want to deal with the problem. They may think that a problem is too hard or overwhelming to fix. But people can't care if they don't know. And no problem has ever been solved by ignorance. More information is generally better. It gives you better understanding of the problem and how to fix it.

If people share information they can work together to solve a common problem. Coordinated individuals can make a difference. If a group of coordinated individuals decided that they were going to use less trash then there would be less trash in the world.

But if just one person decided that they were going to use less trash, then there would be less trash in the world. Most big changes start with one caring individual. Ignorance is one of the foundations of many things one of which is global warming. People can't fix what they don't know about.

Hayden Lane, Ohio



## 2008—Seventh Grade First Place

Karra Puccia, New York

Global warming is the greatest challenge facing humankind. It has occurred naturally throughout history of the Earth, but it was not until recently that human interference began. Today human intervention continues to affect global warming. There are many predictions about the future effects of global warming on Earth. Throughout history, global warming has escalated to become the greatest challenge facing humankind.

In 1827 Jean-Baptiste Fourier theorized a process where solar energy was captured by the Earth's atmosphere, increasing the Earth's temperature. The ice ages and interglacial periods were results of this greenhouse effect. Up until the 1920s, the vague theories about global warming did not explain the catastrophic climate changes in history, until Milutin Milankovitch discovered that the Earth's position in comparison to the sun could account for dramatic climate changes. However, by the late 18th century, humans began to burn larger amounts of coal, oil, and natural gases, releasing more carbon dioxide and water vapor into the atmosphere, and giving humans the potential to modify natural processes.

Today human activities influence global warming more than ever before. Organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund want to act as soon as possible to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions, while most industrial organizations and the federal government think it is too early to act on greenhouse gas emissions. In America, to reduce global warming and meet the conditions of the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty on climate change, the United States would have to reduce its emission levels by seven percent. This could result in a huge economic impact, with fired workers and raised prices for consumers. Some, like the State of California's Air Resources Board, have ordered automobile makers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by thirty percent between 2009 and 2016. In the northeast United States, nine states have formed the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the region's electric power plants.

Global warming is our greatest challenge today and tomorrow. The 2006 Red List of Threatened Species, made by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, included new animals like polar bears and hippopotamuses, which have never made the list. Some species of sharks, plants, and freshwater fish have gone extinct because of a decline in freshwater quality. In the future, the rising temperature could cause the glaciers to melt, thereby raising the ocean level. It has been estimated that Tuvalu, a country of nine small islands, and others like it could be completely submerged by 2100. Global warming could also cause a greater number of violent storms and significant changes in weather patterns.

Throughout history this natural process of global warming has morphed into our greatest challenge. Today, and for the last two hundred years, the possible effects of global warming have become more probable. This issue will continue to be problematic in the future and will never end, proving to be humankind's greatest challenge.

## 2008—Eighth Grade First Place

Gracie Peck, Hawaii

There is a domino effect with major problems on Earth, and the first domino to fall is overpopulation. Overpopulation is where there are too many people and not enough resources to support them. In 1900, there were 1.6 billion people on earth, and in 2000, only 100 years later, the number reversed to 6.1 billion people, says Charles Hirschman. Population growth will continue to grow at this rapid pace, causing major problems for the planet and humankind. In the next thirteen years, there will be another billion people on the planet, according to the web site, "Impacts." Even though global warming is a big challenge for humanity and the world, population growth has reached a crisis.

One of the results of this domino effect is pollution. With more and more people on this planet there are more people driving cars and more demand for industrial goods. Over three million people increase the population in America each year, as reported by "Population Concerns in the United States." All of this activity increases global warming, and is the major factor in the destruction of the environment.

A second result of the domino effect is that overpopulation is using up all of earth's natural resources. Water supplies decrease more quickly because of growing populations great demands, and low water supplies are not enough to take care of the world's needs. Oil supplies are also dwindling. More people demand more cars, heating needs, and manufacturing demands. "Population Concerns in the United States" said that each American requires 400 gallons of oil annually for food production alone. Another resource that is disappearing is the earth's forests. Half of the world's forests are gone, due to development according to "Impacts." There is a greater demand for paper housing and other wood products. With all the trees gone, there is less oxygen and more carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming.

"Nearly half of earth's land has been transformed by humans," stated by "Impacts." Each person on earth leaves a "footprint," which means that each human affects the earth permanently by just living on it. In America, there are 470 million acres of usable farmland, but due to civilization, one million acres are lost annually and for every person added to America, an acre of natural land converts to real estate development or highway, according to "Population Concerns in the United States." With all these people, we will need more devotion, but the earth does not have enough room to support that.

Due to overpopulation, there is less space, fewer natural resources available, and more pollution. Future generation will face many difficulties caused by the ever-growing population. There will no longer be enough land to feed the people, oil supplies will run out and the forests will continue to shrink. If humans become aware now of the effects of overpopulation, perhaps the first domino can be prevented from falling.

## Finalists, 2008 Kids Philosophy Slam, High School

### 2008—National Finalist

Kayla Bruun, Raleigh, North Carolina.



Studies predict that if humans do not significantly alter our lifestyles within the next ten years, changes will occur on our planet that might in fact be irreversible. At the point, the melting of the arctic and the increase in global temperature will have become inevitable. The sea level will rise fifty feet; reshaping coastlines worldwide. Weather patterns will become increasingly unpredictable. For humans to avoid this fate for our planet would undoubtedly require huge amounts of united effort. To pursue this could be humankind's most difficult task, but I don't think it is our greatest challenge, because I don't believe that stopping it is our mission at all.

The process of climate change may be an anomaly in the history of the world, and humans are unique as a species in having achieved a level of evolution from which we can so greatly impact the very planet we live on. However, when compared on a biological level to the cycles of other species within smaller, more distinct habitats, it doesn't seem quite so unnatural at all. In any ecosystem, when any one species' population becomes inflated the equilibrium in its surrounding environment is inevitably disrupted. Humans rule the planet; the entire globe is our habitat. We evolved to the top of the food chain, conquering all but very the