

Remarks from 2020 Chapel Hill – Carrboro Peacemaking Scholarship Recipients

Hannalee Isaacs –

Now more than ever, many of us, myself included, are realizing the power of community during this time of social distancing. To me, peacemaking involves uniting people and establishing communities which value the diversity of their members. This is why I am and will continue to be an advocate for social justice and equality.

I plan to continue my work towards creating a more equitable society. I am prepared to keep marching in the streets for what I believe in and, when that is not possible, sit in on a zoom call and let my voice be heard. In college, I will connect with my campus' community of activists. I plan on studying the social sciences with a concentration on civic engagement and community involvement. I crave a deeper understanding of both human habit and government law. Having a big picture perspective on social studies while also being able to hone in on specific topics will prepare me to best address issues in our society. Studying politics, law and journalism will enable me to accomplish meaningful social change. I hope to become further exposed to these topics during college and ultimately graduate with a more complete vision of what I am interested in pursuing, with the cognitive thinking and leadership skills to reach my goals and create lasting change.

Over the past several weeks, I have spent a lot of time thinking about what are "essential" needs in our society. Receiving this scholarship has helped me to realize that peacemaking is essential and my participation in this work is vital. I have been fortunate to grow up in a town which emphasizes individuality and community involvement. The people of Chapel Hill have instilled in me a desire to help others through volunteerism and outreach. I am extremely honored to have received your recognition for my peacemaking efforts. I feel so grateful knowing that wherever I go in life I will have the support of my Chapel Hill community.

Jordan Smith –

I believe there are two major things that fuel my passion for being a peacemaker. The first is a spirit of and dedication to kindness- something I try to put at the forefront of all of my interactions with others. Kindness isn't always rewarded or championed as one of the most important things you can be when lined up next to successful, driven, and intelligent, but I think we are all seeing how important that spirit can truly be during these difficult and uncertain times. I consider my spirit of kindness to be a part of my nature, but it has been reinforced and magnified through my interactions with others in my community, and the kindness they have shown me. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I consider myself extremely fortunate to have grown up in Carrboro/Chapel Hill, something I find myself reminded of when I interact with other queer youth in the south. I had the benefit of supportive family, friends, and the broader community, and I know that support has helped me have confidence in myself and my identity.

The second thing that fuels my peacemaking is a spirit of challenge, always pushing and advocating for better conditions for all. I've had many opportunities to learn about a variety of social issues, and in that education, I've been able to recognize issues outside of my community, but also many that permeate it. No community is immune to problems, and my dedication to justice and equality has given me a passion for making a difference that will definitely follow me through college and beyond.

Already in my life, I've put effort into making a difference on issues that I know matter. I know that getting to further explore these issues and connecting with others working towards similar goals are part of my future in college, so I incredibly value everything that Chapel Hill/Carrboro has given me to help me get there, including the support of the United Church of Chapel Hill through the peacemaking scholarship.