



PRESS RELEASE: 28 August 2013

New Zealand teenager triumphs in world's oldest and largest essay competition

Nineteen year old Katherine McIndoe has been named the Senior Prize Winner in the Royal Commonwealth Society's 2013 Commonwealth Essay Competition.

Katherine's winning entry, entitled *"To boldly go": a letter to the lost girls* was chosen by a panel of Commonwealth judges from more than 4,500 Senior entries.

Writing on the topic 'To boldly go...', Katherine's entry takes the form of an impassioned letter addressed to the 100 million+ 'lost girls' who have suffered abuse and discrimination because of their gender and is a call to action for women across the globe.

The judging panel said: *"You can really hear Katherine's voice in this entry. It is well researched and structured and elicits a strong emotional response from the reader. Katherine takes a powerful idea and makes it accessible. Whilst keeping a dual focus on the girls she is addressing (the entry is called "A letter to the lost girls") and her reader, Katherine holds the tension of this throughout with clarity and skill. It is really impressive to write like this when still so young!"*

Katherine said: *"I'm overwhelmed and hugely honoured to have won".* Explaining why she entered the competition, she said: *"I had become more and more aware of how privileged I am in the choices and freedoms available to me, and that so many girls and women around the world don't have these freedoms. The violence against women in India that came to international attention in December last year really crystallised my thinking, and I wanted to express my feeling that the opportunities that I have – to be educated, to walk down the street without fear, to make my own decisions – must be available to girls everywhere."*

Currently studying at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, Katherine is undertaking a double degree; studying for a Bachelor of Music, majoring in Classical Singing, and a Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies. Before university, she attended Wellington Girls' College where she was Head Girl in her final year. At school she initiated fundraising activities for local and international causes and continues to take a strong interest in organisations working for global change.

As the Senior Prize Winner, Katherine will be invited to attend a special award ceremony in London in November.

The Essay Competition was founded in 1883 and is the world's oldest and largest international schools' writing contest. For 2013 the competition was sponsored by Cambridge University Press and more than 11,000 entries from over 830 schools in 55 Commonwealth countries and territories were received across the Junior and Senior categories – a record for the competition.

Mike Lake, Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society said: *"As the Commonwealth Essay Competition celebrates its 130th anniversary I am delighted that the contest remains an important outlet for expression in the association. Having received a record number of entries this year, it is fantastic to see so many talented and bright young Commonwealth*

citizens expressing their opinions and engaging in the international community. I am grateful to our sponsors, Cambridge University Press, and to the participants for helping to make the contest the vibrant and exciting competition that it is today."

Notes to Editors

Senior Prize winner: *"To boldy go": a letter to the lost girls*, Katherine McIndoe, New Zealand, age 19

http://www.thercs.org/youth/Filestore/Competitions_2013/Senior_Winner_2013_Essay.pdf

Senior Runner up: *The little girl in me*, Abby Wells, Canada, age 16

http://www.thercs.org/youth/Filestore/Competitions_2013/Senior_Runner-Up_2013_Essay.pdf

Junior Prize winner: *Is change a good thing*, Tabitha Carr, Guernsey, age 13

http://www.thercs.org/youth/Filestore/Competitions_2013/Junior_Winner_2013_Essay.pdf

Junior Runner up: *The clothes of sleeping giant mountain*, Catherine Yu, Hong Kong, age 9

http://www.thercs.org/youth/Filestore/Competitions_2013/Junior_Runner-Up_2013_Essay.pdf

The Royal Commonwealth Society is the oldest and largest civil society organisation devoted to the Commonwealth. Founded in 1868, it conducts a range of events, research and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. The RCS has a global membership and a presence in over 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England and Wales. (226748). www.thercs.org

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