



## **Speech Given at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City on Sept. 19, 2008 for the UN International Day of Peace**

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The Jane Goodall Institute and its Roots & Shoots program are built on the inspiring messages that we are all responsible for our shared future and that each and every individual can make a difference. Today we are honored to participate in the 2008 United Nations International Day of Peace Conference to share our experience of how the informed and compassionate actions of individuals can transform “human rights” from abstract concepts into everyday realities.

At its core, Roots & Shoots is about making connections between people across the world. In April of 2008 the first-ever Jane Goodall Global Youth Summit brought together 100 of the most outstanding young leaders from 28 different countries for a week of workshops, panels and speakers. I was fortunate to be among the 100 attendees. We learned about and discussed possible solutions to the most challenging issues of our time. Though we came to the summit as strangers, we quickly became connected through our shared passion to ensure a brighter future. As we left the summit, it quickly became apparent that these connections would run much deeper than we ever could have imagined; we left the summit united as a global family.

Today, when war, natural disaster or civil unrest strikes any part of the world, we who came together at the summit are forced to take a look at what is happening. When the earthquake hit in China, mass emails went out among us trying to locate Tony, Vivi, Yakai and their Roots & Shoots groups in China. When we hear of fighting between the Palestinians and the Israelis we can only think of Itai, Haya and Farouq, three youth from those two countries who, during the summit, were able to put aside their differences to bridge a gap in the name of peace. And when I hear heated discussion over Mexican immigrants, it is no longer a political debate for me; it is personal, because I am reminded of Erica and the reality her family faces in her home country of Mexico.

This past July I traveled to Tanzania with 16 inspiring Roots & Shoots youth leaders from United States. We met with Congolese youth from the Lugufu Refugee Camp in western Tanzania. At the Lugufu Refugee Camp, where cultural misunderstandings and community tensions have caused hostile relationships between the displaced Congolese and the native Tanzanians, Roots & Shoots has played a critical role in bridging that divide. With Roots & Shoots, the natives and the refugees now share a common goal: They’re working together to promote peace campaigns, cultural understanding and HIV/AIDS education. The youth at the camp told us that in the face of their traumatic experiences and extreme life challenges, the Roots & Shoots program has helped them



replace their fear and grief with hope and empowerment. They are now able to envision a future that is not torn apart by war, but is being held together by understanding and cooperation.

So, when I get word that the Lugufu Refugees may be forced to go home to the Congo, I can only think of Shadrach and Zebra and worry about their fate.

But Roots & Shoots is not only making connections. We offer real solutions as well. Right now, Roots & Shoots has a dedicated team working on our newest campaign, “Drop of Hope: Water for the World.” Through this campaign, we will not only be educating people in the United States about water conservation, but we will be selling reusable water bottles. For each bottle that is purchased, we will provide clean and safe drinking water for a student in Africa. In the United States, our New England Youth Leadership Council has been leading a “Peace Through the Arts” campaign, which gives youth around the world the opportunity to respond to the violence in their life through the nonviolent action of creating artwork. The artwork is compiled into a book or poster and shared with others—including youth at Lugufu Refugee Camp—to show the importance of human equality and peace.

Many times I am asked why I get so involved. I tell people that I consider the Roots & Shoots community my family, and when your family is struggling and in crisis, how can I not be involved? This is how Roots & Shoots makes human rights personal.

So, when we come together, we come with a different story, a different culture, a different experience of the world, but Roots & Shoots is about weaving these stories together to create a common thread that unites us all.

Before I went to Tanzania, I connected with a Roots & Shoots pen-pal, from Kigoma by the name of Bedan. We had been emailing each other for over a year. When we finally met, after a long embrace, he handed me this scarf, a gift from his mother. These are the threads that bind us together.

And now I would like to show you a public service announcement that was made at the Jane Goodall Global Youth Summit 2008.