



The Center for International Private Enterprise announces the

## 2007 Essay Competition: Meet the Winners

### Theme: Engaging Youth in Reform

CIPE's 16 essay competition winners come from 13 countries spanning four continents. Each essay demonstrates the passion that the authors have for participating in reform in their countries. Below, you will find brief biographies of the authors and quotes explaining, in their own words, why they entered the competition.

To read the winning essays, visit [www.cipe.org/essay](http://www.cipe.org/essay).

### Citizenship in a Democratic Society

#### 1st Place: Mladen Joksic – Serbia

Mladen was born in Belgrade, Serbia on 19 August 1978. In June 2007, he received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Belgrade, specializing in political analysis. He was recently awarded an Erasmus Mundus Scholarship in Public Policy, which consists of two masters' degrees: one in development studies and the other in public policy. He is currently pursuing his master's in development studies at the Institute of Social Science located in The Hague, the Netherlands.

*"I came across the CIPE competition on the Internet and recognized that it was a great opportunity for me to express myself and to communicate my ideas about the problems that Serbia is experiencing throughout its democratic transition. In Serbia, initiatives like this—which stimulate young people to think about the problems in their societies and to offer solutions for how they can be solved—are really rare. Knowing that there was a possibility that my ideas could be read and shared with other young people throughout the world, possibly motivating them to get more involved in public life, was the main motivation for my decision to apply. And, of course, the chance that some of these ideas might be implemented in practice was a major goal."*

#### 2nd Place: Mito Mitov – Bulgaria

Mito was born on 13 May 1984 in the town of Pernik, an industrial zone near Sofia. Currently, he is a full time senior (last year) student at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," majoring in Business Administration. He has been working as a freelance web designer and programmer for the past few years. Mito recently became involved in the management of the Bulgarian Table Soccer Federation, a new sports organization that aims at promoting table soccer among young people; he serves there as IT coordinator and event organizer.

*"I have always been passionate about citizenship, democracy, and active participation of ordinary people in governance. CIPE's competition itself was a way for me to express my views to the world and be heard, so I didn't hesitate and went for it. The fact that I was selected among the winners is a great incentive for me to continue in the same direction and it also makes me believe that the drive for change lies in the hands of people from the masses, and not in the hands of a few governors."*



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### **3rd Place: Gulmira Churokova – Kyrgyzstan**

Gulmira is a student at American University in Central Asia, where she studies sociology. She is highly interested in international organizations and political and parliamentary debates. Gulmira volunteers at the Eurasian Fund in Central Asia, where she conducts research about civil society in Kyrgyzstan. At the Debate Center (described in her essay), she works as a trainer and judge, and sometimes participates in debates. She loves reading novels, poems, and philosophical works.

*“When I am inspired by something, I write poems or short stories. In 10th grade, after hot discussions at the debate center about raising the capacity of our youth, I came home and sketched all my ideas concerning this topic. From that very moment, the idea of my essay began to grow and since then I have made changes and added new details – all of them were on my mind and on some pieces of paper. When I heard about this competition, I just thought ‘it is time to show all my thoughts.’”*

### **Honorable Mention: Pie-Pacifique Kabalira-Uwase – Rwanda**

Pie-Pacifique was born on 21 August 1980 in Rwanda. He has lived in exile in South Africa since 2001. He recently completed his first degree in Physics (BSc) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and is currently working at the Science and Technology Education Center at UKZN. Pie-Pacifique enjoys sports (swimming, running, rope jumping and soccer), music (especially drumming), drawing/painting, and reading.

*“I entered the competition because I saw it as an opportunity to get in touch with my deepest feelings about my home country Rwanda, my host country South Africa, and the continent I cherish so much. I wrote the essay to explore my beliefs about citizenship and democracy, and to reflect about my personal experience in this context. In addition, I have a passion for youth development. This was a perfect opportunity to think about the youth of my beloved continent, and what can be done to uplift them.”*

### **Honorable Mention: Majed Bamyá – Palestine**

Majed is a 23-year-old Palestinian refugee who had the chance to return to his country. He studied at the French Lycée of Jerusalem before leaving to attend university in France. There, he earned a master’s degree in international law from the Sorbonne. During his years in France, he stayed active in the General Union of Palestine Students – France and was its president in 2006. Majed now works in the European Parliament as an advisor on the Middle East for a political group (United European Left/ Nordic Green Left).

*“I joined in this competition because citizenship and democracy are empty words until you fill them with ideas, experiences, hopes, and doubts. This essay contest gave me the opportunity to explore these concepts deeper than before and try to give them a concrete meaning and begin thinking how can we provide ourselves, as youth, the tools allowing us to exercise our citizenship, as this is the only way to build a living democracy. It is also my will to give special attention to the particular challenge facing Palestinians at a very difficult time where we need to find means to rethink and rebuild our national movement.”*

## **Educational Reform and Employment Opportunities**

### **1st Place: Tirthajyoti Sarkar – India**

Tirthajyoti is a native of West Bengal state in India. He completed his early schooling in local institutions and received an undergraduate education (in electrical engineering) from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur. Currently, he is pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Chicago, also in electrical engineering. Apart from studying and research, Tirthajyoti likes to read about various scientific, technological, and social issues (for example global warming, effect of technology on modern lives, energy security for developing nations) around the world. He also likes playing computer games and solving puzzles, and he used to take part actively in stage dramas during high school and college.

*“Along with all the flashing stories of ‘India is booming’ with 9% GDP growth, I have seen, first hand, the plight and difficulty of my young friends in getting a decent job after finishing higher education and their despair and frustration, which sometimes lead to many negative outcomes. This essay contest came as a wonderful medium to express my opinions and views on this issue and prompted me to write about them.”*

## 2nd Place: Caroline McDermott – USA

Caroline is from Centennial, Colorado. She is currently a junior at Davidson College in North Carolina, pursuing a major in political science and a minor in Spanish. She especially loves Latin American politics and is currently studying abroad through a Davidson program in Arequipa, Peru. Caroline became particularly interested in the topic of education reform through her incredible internship at the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, where she helped put together a public-private coalition of business and educational interests to improve education in science, technology, engineering, and math in Colorado.

*“I entered this competition because it addressed an issue I am passionate about and very familiar with: educational reform. After twelve years in the U.S. public school system, I have lots of ideas about how we can improve it. I was particularly interested in CIPE’s competition because it was the perfect forum to write about globalization and the role that the business community should play in educational reform. My dream is to work for an organization like CIPE someday, promoting similar market-oriented reforms all over the world.”*

## 3rd Place: Roselyn Sekai Kapungu – Zimbabwe

Roselyn was born on 30 January 1982. She earned a bachelor’s degree in economics at the University of Zimbabwe in 2003. After a year-long job search, she was awarded a scholarship to study in Norway at the Norwegian University of Life Science, where she earned a master’s degree in development and resource economics in 2006. Soon after returning home, she took an internship at the Zimbabwe Women’s Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN). Despite the paltry salary, Roselyn decided to stay – both at ZWRCN and in Zimbabwe. There, she worked on a gender budgeting project, and because of the relative newness of the concept, it was a very interesting learning process for her. In early 2007, she was made a permanent employee of ZWRCN and is now working as the information officer (research and publications).

*“At the insistence of my relatives in the UK, I almost started the process of seeking a visa for me to go there. I have, however, seen how they live, people who were professionals there...I could not. I thought to myself, there is a chance for me here [in Zimbabwe], I will fight for it!”*

## 3rd Place: Manilka Leamage – Sri Lanka

Manilka is a 21-year-old full-time student, pursuing a career in management at the University of Wales through the Imperial Institute of Higher Education. He is also taking a part-time management accountancy course, and is currently employed as a freelance writer with Mobitel (Pvt) Ltd. (a mobile telephone operator in Sri Lanka). Manilka’s interests lie in writing, which has led him to enter numerous essay competitions, both locally and internationally. While he has won many national competitions in Sri Lanka, the CIPE competition is the first international award that he has won.

*“I entered the competition because as a student of the [Sri Lankan] education system, I know how it feels to study under a system which gives you very little opportunity to get what you want, and is more focused on what you should become. The current system I am in is more practical, fun and worthwhile, and helped me appreciate what I learned, unlike previous experiences, and I would love to see other students getting a similar opportunity, at a younger age, which I did not get in full.”*

## Honorable Mention: Kinley Rinchen – Bhutan

Kinley works as planning officer in the Royal University of Bhutan, the only university in the kingdom. As planning officer, he looks after the development, implementation, and monitoring of the University Strategic Plan. He is also responsible for the formulation of the university’s Five Year Plan and for the development, implementation, and management of various projects in the university. In his spare time, Kinley enjoys reading and writing essays, papers and articles for various forums of academic exchange like seminars, symposia, conferences, and competitions.

*“When I came across the announcement of CIPE essay competition in the internet my excitement knew no bound. I felt that the topics are very much relevant to our situation here in Bhutan. I felt it a very good opportunity to contribute a paper in the international forum. Since I am working in the education sector, I felt more comfortable to write on the topics concerning education and employment.”*

## **Honorable Mention: Jason Gavina – Philippines**

Jason is studying economics at the University of the Philippines and plans to go to law school after earning his bachelor's degree. He wants to be a great lawyer or legislator in the future. Jason is an active member of the UP Junior Executive Society. He enjoys writing, watching films, and reading books and magazines on leadership and entrepreneurship.

*"I wrote the essay after I returned from Taiwan, where I studied under an academic scholarship, being more aware of the economic realities of my country, being aware of some issues and struggles that Filipino workers face abroad, and how seemingly unending problems of poverty and unemployment can be significantly solved by taking sustained institutional reforms in the school system. I believe entrepreneurship and financial literacy should be promoted at an early age. I believe that we can affect positive and significant change in the world and our communities by becoming social entrepreneurs."*

## **Entrepreneurship and Leadership**

### **1st Place: David Musiime – Uganda**

David is 23 years old and just completed a bachelor's degree in social sciences (economics/administration) at Makerere University Kampala. During his years at the university, he completed many internships, most notably at the Institute of Corporate Governance of Uganda (a business association that partners with CIPE) and the Capital Markets Authority. David enjoys research, debate, and discussing current global issues. His hobbies include adventure and sports, including lawn tennis and rugby.

*"I saw this essay competition as one of the greatest opportunities where I could get my ideas known and put to serious action. The youths in Uganda have the potential to be entrepreneurs but the mindset is such that they would rather work for someone than have someone work for them. This is the problem to which I thought I would offer a solution by participating in this challenge."*

### **2nd Place: Chinwe Miriam Onwubiko – Nigeria**

Chinwe graduated from the Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria with a B.Sc (honors) in marketing. She is also an associate of the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria. Married with a child, Chinwe enjoys reading, writing, traveling, and listening to gospel music. She is currently developing a project aimed at stimulating improvement and innovation in education, both formal and informal, and youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

*"I entered the competition as a means of drawing attention and creating awareness to the need to constantly interact with the youth so as to identify their challenges, potentials, and visions for self-development."*

### **3rd Place: Competition Participant – Rwanda**

The author is 30 years old and enjoys reading, travelling, working with children and youth, and volunteering.

*"With the youth accounting for more than half of our population however, [Rwanda's] potential can be phenomenal. Without a concentrated effort, though to enhance the entrepreneurial and leadership capacity of the youth through appropriate education and skills training, financial sector streamlining, infrastructure and institutional building, private sector empowering and finally, the repair of the present social and policy fabric, a great deal of the country's potential will remain untapped."*

*"I entered the essay competition because I am personally touched by the numerous problems of my country and I am interested in starting a youth initiative for self help and a forum for sharing knowledge on issues affecting Rwanda – a lot of which I believe can be changed with enhanced capacity among the youth. I am not yet sure what shape this will take but I thought being part of a powerful international forum like CIPE would be a great starting point. I am certain the home experiences shared by my fellow participants from all over the world will be of great value to this initiative."*

## Honorable Mention: Obasogie Osamwonyi – Nigeria

Obasogie is a senior at the Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State, North Central Nigeria, where he studies polymer and analytical chemistry. He is an excellent soccer player and enjoys watching documentaries on television, such as Ali Mazuri's documentaries titled "Africa." He loves literature and writes poems and short stories with the hopes of one day writing a novel. Obasogie also loves to travel because he finds it is the easiest way to learn about people and places.

*"I entered the competition because I found the topics stimulating and thought-provoking, as in Nigeria the topics are contemporary and represent our reality and the challenges we are faced with. By writing, I reckoned it was a proactive way to sign up and learn how to be part of the solution."*

## Honorable Mention: Thandazile S. Mpfu – Zimbabwe

Thandazile holds a bachelor of commerce degree with a specialization in marketing from the University of South Africa. Until recently, he worked in the marketing department of a large commercial banking in Zimbabwe, CBZ Bank Limited, as a brand manager. He is now living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, working as an English language instructor at the Windsor School of English. Thandazile enjoys playing lawn tennis and is an avid reader of short stories and articles that provide insight into other cultures and peoples. He is a practicing Roman Catholic and loves to cook while listening to punk rock.

*"The opportunities to become entrepreneurs are not obvious to most who are aware of the situation in Zimbabwe. However, the need to survive has compelled the country's citizens, especially the youth who are most affected by unemployment, to identify and exploit these with some success. Advancing the activities of self-employed youths in the country will require certain barriers to be reduced, the largest of which is deficient business management skills and training."*



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CIPE is a core institute of the National Endowment for Democracy, which provides funding for many of CIPE's projects.

The Center for International Private Enterprise is a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy. CIPE has supported more than 1,000 local initiatives in over 100 developing countries, involving the private sector in policy advocacy and institutional reform, improving governance, and building understanding of market-based democratic systems. CIPE provides management assistance, practical experience, and financial support to local organizations to strengthen their capacity to implement democratic and economic reforms. CIPE programs are also supported through the United States Agency for International Development.



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