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Education in the United States is in sorry shape. Not only in terms of low test scores compared with other nations, but also in the general attitude towards knowledge. Teachers often focus on preparing students for standardized testing, not for changing the world. Students now mirror this attitude, motivated by attractive salaries to become investment brokers, lawyers, and engineers. From where will the next generation of caring activists rise? Where will we find the people who care about preserving humanity, the environment, the world? Education is indeed a catalyst for global change, and should equip students today to solve the problems of tomorrow.

The first step towards changing the world is an attitude shift. We are selfish by nature, so we first have to look away from our own interests—namely, our greed—to focus on helping others. As a young child, I discovered that helping others made me happy. Since then, I have not stopped volunteering. My desire to serve others has defined much of my life. My career goal is to enter the field of biomechanical engineering so that I can improve the quality of life of those around me. We are all given talents and skills for a reason: to help others.

The second step is education. Education equips us to help others. Through learning, we realize and develop our strengths so we can understand the world's problems and design effective solutions. History and social sciences could be viewed as facts to be memorized, or as an opportunity to learn about the ethnoreligious background of poor children in northern Nigeria. Problem sets in calculus or physics are not just for a test grade, but are preparation for a future as an engineer designing efficient petroleum substitutes. English essays may seem cumbersome and unnecessary, but are essential to communicating and analyzing solutions. All education is preparation, equipping young men and women to make an impact on the world. Once we accept our role and responsibility as world-changers, education takes on a new meaning. It is truly the powerful weapon with which the world can be changed.

The third step is action. The world-changing weapon of education must be used to be effective. Once we students realize our potential to change, we must act. Nelson Mandela did not fight apartheid on his couch thinking, "Someone else will." Rachel Carson did not raise awareness about environmental problems by saying, "Someone else will." Eleanor Roosevelt did not work to create the UN and solve global problems by sitting around reasoning, "Someone else will." They all stood up and boldly said, "I will." We must do the same. We must all stand up and say, "I am educated, so I can, so I will."