Last year when I did my 6th grade project, I chose the topic, “IMAGINING A WORLD WITHOUT HATE.” It was based on a Public Service Announcement produced by the Anti-Defamation League and it imagined what the accomplishments of 7 people who had been victims of hate crimes might have achieved had they lived. That video was my first introduction to Daniel Pearl. Daniel was the South East Asia Bureau chief for the Wall Street Journal, and after 9/11 his responsibility as to cover the “War on Terrorism.” Danny was Jewish which made that part of the world particularly dangerous for him because of all the Anti-Israel sentiment. However, Danny was a journalist who sought truth and understanding and a good foreign correspondent would never put their personal fears before their responsibility to get the story out. So in January of 2002, Danny was in Karachi, Pakistan following up on a lead when he was “set up” by an organization with ties to Al Qaeda and kidnapped. He was held captive for 9 days while his captors claimed he was a spy. On the final day of his life, his captors videotaped him forcing him to make anti-American statements, Danny did so and then knowing in his heart they were going to kill him, he used the videotape to send a message to the world of his pride in his identity. His final words were “My mother is Jewish, my father is Jewish, I am Jewish.” Following those worlds, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, one of the chief architects of 9/11 slit his throat and cut off his head. The beheading was captured on video and released to the world in a video they titled “ The Slaughter of the Spy-Journalist, the Jew Daniel Pearl.” Then they chopped his body into 10 pieces and buried them in various places. It took 8 months for his whole body to be found so his family could give him a proper funeral. When researching Daniel as part of my project, I learned my mom’s family and his family had a lot in common. His parents had three children, the oldest a boy- just like my mom’s family. His first job was as a reporter for the North Adams Herald so he lived in Williamstown, MA at the same time my Uncle was in college there. He was born in Princeton, N.J. which is where my Uncle and cousins live. His family’s ancestral home in Israel is only 6 miles from my family’s ancestral home. His sister’s name and my mother’s name even rhyme, and when there was a movie made about Danny’s murder, the actor chosen to play “Danny” was one of my mom’s oldest friends since high school. Danny was Jewish just like me- and the fact that he was Jewish led to his murder, just like 114 of my Aunts, Uncles & Cousins who were murdered at the Concentration Camp at Treblinka during the Holocaust. I tell you all of this because just like I had so much in common with Danny, I am certain if any of you searched deeply enough, you would discover your own “Danny”… someone just like you in so many ways that was murdered because of intolerance. Right now, I can give you one name – Stuart Todd Meltzer. He was killed in the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001. If you or your family are huge Red Sox fans, you have a lot in common with Stuart except he was murdered in a hate crime at 32 years old leaving behind a wife, parents, and siblings, a 4-year-old son and a 4-month-old son. Stuart was so crazy devoted to the Red Sox, he used wake up at 5am on to drive from NY City to Boston almost every weekend to go to games and every season he would think, “this is going to be the year.” Stuart was murdered before he could see the “curse of the bambino” broken and live his dream of a Red Sox World Series victory and jumping around his living room hugging his dad, high-fiving his sons, and rubbing it in the face of his Yankee fan friends for weeks. I’m sure you and your family got to do that and it was awesome, and this year there is a good chance you’ll do it again. If you do – maybe take a second and think of Stuart’s sons, Jake and Dylan who won’t get to celebrate and high five with their dad because of intolerance and hate, and think how lucky you are.

The more I learned when working on my project, only made me want to learn even more. That led me to try to contact Danny’s family and find out more about him and the kind of man he was. Luck was on my side, or to say it as my great grandparents would have- it was “beshert” which is Yiddish for “meant to be”, and I found an email address for Danny’s father Dr. Judea Pearl on the Internet. I emailed him and told him my family’s story, about my project, and about how much Danny had come to mean to me. I wrote from my heart asking his advice not only on my report, but how he thought I could be an “agent of change” for my generation, **our** generation. I told him I was sick of all of the hatred, and prejudice in the world. Angry that issues that started long before we were born, continue to affect us and threaten us. Our generation doesn’t deserve to be victims of decisions we had nothing to do with. We deserve to think for ourselves based on the world today and make our own choices. I believe that if we did, not only would there be a lot less hate crimes but probably a lot less bullying.

Dr. Pearl told me one of the things I could to would be to start a tradition of “Harmony for Humanity” concerts at our school. “Harmony for Humanity” concerts are the way the Pearl Family decided to honor Danny’s life and create his legacy. The idea came from his sister, Michelle who when after his funeral, the family was trying to figure out how to best celebrate Danny’s birthday on October 10th. Everyone agreed they should celebrate the way Danny would have- by having jam sessions with his musician friends. These jam sessions evolved into what are now “Daniel Pearl Music Days”, and every October since then music has circled the earth in Harmony for Humanity. This year, 2013 during this month when Danny would have celebrated his 50th birthday, hundreds of concerts were held everywhere from Afghanistan to the Sacheil Islands to express that despite all our differences, if we try hard enough, and believe enough in the power of our generation to work together in hope rather then act out fear, we can create a world where all of our different voices, opinions, accents, and beliefs can be expressed in a way that instead of creating chaos and hatred, merge into harmonies that fit together as one beautiful melody, one inspiring uplifting majestic voice. A voice of humanity that celebrates diversity. A voice that makes a commitment toward tolerance. And in our case, the voice of a new generation. We, as a generation have our entire lives ahead of us to try to reclaim this world and help restore peace and mutual respect for all human beings regardless of the color of their skin, the god they worship, who they love, what they look like or where they live. We just have to figure out how to work together and to use the power we already have and the power will come into. Then together, people our age all around the world can join together and discover a shared voice. A voice of a generation that respects all of humanity. A voice of diplomacy that allows all men and women, and all boys and girls to stand together with pride and with dignity as global citizens of planet earth. That is what Daniel Pearl strove for and put his life a risk for every day, choosing not to live in fear but instead to live in hope. Hope that through his reporting, he could unearth truths and supply us with knowledge, because knowledge is power and power combined with respect and determination, leads to change. So in recognition and appreciation of gift he gave us, the gift of power, today, we give him the birthday gift he appreciated the most, harmony.

So together, in harmony, let us all say:

In Arabic/Farci:

TA -WAL-LO-DET MO-BAA-RAK تولدت مبارک

In Mandarin:

SHEN-GRI KU-AI-LE

生日快乐

In French:

JOY-EUX ANN-I-VER-SAI-RE

**Joyeux Anniversaire**

In Hebrew:

YON- HUL-ED-ET SAME-AKH יום הולדת שמח

In Farci:

TA -WAL-LO-DET MO-BAA-RAK

تولدت مبارک

In Spanish:

FEL-IZ CUM-PLEAN-OS

**Feliz Cumpleaños**

In Russian:

S’DNEM ROG-DEN-IYA

**С Днем Рождения**

In Korean:

SAENG-IL

생일

In Urdu:

SAL-GIRA MU-BAR-AK

سالگرہ مبارک ہو.

In Pashto:

PADA-YISH RA-WAZ –DAY- UN-BARAK-SHA د زیږیدلو کلیزه دی مبارک شه

And in English:

Happy 50th Birthday Daniel.

Now, in celebration of the power of music to bring people together the way Danny did everywhere he traveled, let’s have our own very short but hopefully very meaningful “Harmony for Humanity” concert. The school is hoping to have a larger one later in the year, but in order to be sure to have one during the month set aside, let’s go for it now.

I’m going to put the lyrics up, in case you don’t know them and together lets all join in singing a song that shares the message Harmony for Humanity is all about, “LEAN ON ME by Bill Withers

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPoTGyWT0Cg>