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Brenna is a senior at Western Illinois University, double majoring in Communication and Economics. She is the President of Beta Epsilon chapter, a mentor to students in the First Year Experience Program, and the Vice President of Rho Lambda Honor Society. She has recently served as the Chief of Staff for the Student Government Association and as a Recruitment Counselor for Formal Recruitment.

Compassion.

What does it mean to be compassionate and how will compassion change the world?

If you search “define: compassionate” on Google, you will find a definition that states, quite simply, that the word “compassionate” means “feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others.” However, as someone who prides herself on being a compassionate person, I believe that this definition is a disservice to all that it means to be compassionate. This definition oversimplifies what it means to be compassionate.

To be compassionate is more than to just feel sympathy or show concern. To be compassionate is more than simply telling someone that you care. To be compassionate is to feel deeply for another person as they experience the ups and downs associated with life. To be compassionate is to not just tell someone that you care, but also to show them that you care by being there before they even ask for it. Compassion is a complex, beautiful phenomenon which allows us to empathetically relate to another human being and provide support for them in whatever way we can.

For me, compassion and empathy go hand in hand. I challenge myself to be compassionate each and every day, whether in my student leadership roles, at my place of work, or in my daily interactions with others. Compassion starts with the understanding that everyone you meet is fighting their own battle of which you know nothing. That frame of mind makes it easy to treat others with love, compassion, empathy, and understanding. We are all humans facing great challenges, and when you realize that, compassion becomes easy.

I believe that compassion will change our world one person and one compassionate act at a time. Gandhi once advised that we must be the change we wish to see in the world, and I believe that if we wish to see a compassionate revolution, we need to start by being compassionate to others in every aspect of our lives.

So many of the problems in our world stem from a lack of compassion. Violence and hatred could be solved with a little compassion, or a little understanding that we are all humans with strengths and weaknesses. How often do we think about the struggles facing the person in our class with whom we do not get along? When was the last time you thought about what the

person who cut you off on the highway was dealing with before getting angry at them? Do we consider people's reasons for having a certain opinion before writing them off and disagreeing with them?

While these may seem like simple scenarios, I believe that compassion can truly make a difference when applied to any kind of scenario like this. So often major tragedies result when someone reaches their tipping point or their last straw. Could those situations be changed if individuals were shown a little compassion along the way? I am no psychic and I cannot see the future, but something tells me that compassion would make a big difference.

If we want to change the world by being compassionate, we need to start with ourselves and the small things in life. We need to embody compassion each day in our lives to each person that we encounter. Little by little, we will change the world. After all, life isn't all about the big things; life is made up of the little things. A little compassion, a little love, and a little understanding can leave a significant mark.