

Section 1

Young Scholars of Seton Hall University Reflections

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Introductory word

The fifth edition of this online journal is being published while the Russian-Ukrainian war of 2014 – 2024 rages on.

American students have chosen not just to write articles, but to provide messages of support as well. We address these comments to all the Ukrainian people, suffering a brutal aggressive unprovoked invasion.

In particular, we share these thoughts with the teachers and students at the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University.

Our two institutions have been working together since 2008 with support from a Deliberating in a Democracy grant from the United States Department of Education. This grant supported the work of three organizations: The Constitutional Rights Foundations of both Chicago and Los Angeles, along with Street Law. Over three years teachers from New Jersey visited Ukraine and teachers from Ukraine visited New Jersey.

In each country, we visited each other's schools, met and worked with secondary students and teachers, students and faculty of Seton Hall University and Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, and visited historical and cultural sites. Over coffee, over dinner, and in each other's homes, we shared stories of our two countries and our efforts to build and strengthen democratic civil institutions.

I remember Ihor Sushchenko, a Ukrainian teacher, who shared his experiences during the Orange Revolution at the home of a local teacher in New Jersey. We were impressed by his commitment to democracy. He told how he took his family to the mass democratic demonstrations. They had no choice, he said, it was their country and they needed to act to get out of Russia's imperial grip.

After the end of the grant, Dr. Tarasenko and I agreed that we would continue our work without funding. The benefits to our students were too significant to allow our work to end. We held virtual meetings where we discussed interesting and important topics of Ukrainian and American history and culture.

Five years after that, the Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Maidan Revolution took place in Ukraine. This happened in Ukraine in February 2014 at the end of the Euromaidan protests, which culminated in deadly clashes between protesters and government forces in the capital, Kyiv. Then came the removal of the elected President, the return to the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine, and the beginning of the Russian – Ukrainian War in 2014.

During the Revolution of Dignity – the Maidan Revolution, my students regularly communicated with our Ukrainian partners. My students received near-real-time videos and event updates.

The Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 brought our two universities together to discuss these issues. Looking back, the “strong words” and the imposition of weak sanctions by the West did not affect the occupation and annexation.

We continued to work together. Our work included winning a small university grant to support research and writing, which led to the creation of an interactive website “Visualizing the Ukrainian Diaspora” over two years. Students from both our universities worked together, virtually and independently, to create the site.

An electronic journal was founded under the leadership of Dr. Tarasenko. This has provided regular opportunities for students from our two universities to share research, ideas, theories, poetry, and photography.

After each issue of the Young Scientists Grinchenko Seton International Journal, there was a virtual session where the authors talked about their work. The fifth edition Young Scholars Grinchenko Seton International Journal, continues this work.

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, did not stop our collaborative work. We held two online meetings to hear the stories of Ukrainian students and teachers from February 2022.

Students from Seton Hall University and high school students from California, Michigan, and New Jersey participated in one of them.

Our last online meeting “Stand with Ukraine! The experience of survival of Ukrainian students during the Russian – Ukrainian War 2014 – 2024” brought an awareness of the realities of the war beyond the limits of our mass media.

Today, for millions of Americans, the heroism of the Ukrainian people is recognized and respected. My students, I, and my colleagues remain impressed by the resilience of the Ukrainian people. Your determination and commitment to democracy inspire us. The strength, the will, and the resistance of the Ukrainian people are an example for all freedom-loving people.

Слава Україні!