

## Beyond all borders: Genfest 2018

Held in Manila, Philippines, it will be the first Genfest outside of Europe, to which 10,000 people are expected to attend. The main event will last three days and will include workshops, outreach activities and concerts showcasing both Asian and international traditions and talents. Organisers have also planned a 'pre-Genfest' programme which will take place in and beyond the Philippines where we can expect a range of cultural immersion activities as well as a chance to help out with local social projects. Our group from the UK will start off in Vietnam where we'll have the opportunity to put into practice the theme of this year's Genfest - going 'Beyond all Borders.'

Each one of us comes up against 'borders' on a regular basis, these barriers or obstacles prevent us from creating fraternity. Genfest will be all about exploring the ways we can go beyond these borders in both our personal lives and on a wider scale. For me, one of the initial borders I faced in relation to Genfest was deciding whether to come or not. I was unsure about whether I wanted to come, whether it would clash with my graduation, whether I could afford it. Indecision is one of my biggest barriers, I am especially struggling with it at the moment as I approach the end of my degree and am faced with making choices about what to do next. In my difficulty in making decisions, my thoughts have become self-centred and focus mostly on my own plans (or lack of) for the future. With the help of other young people at Genfest, I am really looking forward to learning from them and trusting myself to have confidence in my own choices so I can focus more on the needs of others around me.

With so many people from all around the world attending Genfest, we have the opportunity to go so much further than our own personal borders. A commission of 180 Gen and young people worldwide have come up with several key issues to address during the event. We will be trying to find ways to go beyond the borders of conflicts, unjust economies, ignorance, differences, negative use of mass media and technology, indifference and intergenerational disinterest. In a time where I feel I can't do anything to help the seemingly endless list of world tragedies and worsening international relations, Genfest is something which inspires hope inside me. It is an occasion for young people from all over the globe, from all walks of life, with different beliefs and different cultures to work together to break down these barriers which prevent our world from being as united as it should be. On reflection, I think going beyond all borders makes a much better new year's resolution than going to the gym...

**By Rhiannon Copeland**