

2015 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship First Prize Winner  
(Chelsea Lin, West Linn High School)

*The Calculus of Conciliation*

in primary school, we are taught that  
two plus two equals four  
and  
ten times one is ten.

during middle school, we learn that  
y has a direct relationship with x  
and  
the angles in a triangle add up to one-eighty.

over high school, we progress to  
where the derivative is three  
and the area under the curve is six

but then  
why we aren't ever taught that  
people plus guns equals death

and that people minus food equals starvation

and that anger times fear equals chaos

and that violence never equals peace.

it's simple, really- i mean,  
if three plus five equals eight  
and if the slope of the line is six  
and if i'm not losing my goddamn *mind*  
then why is it so hard to teach reality?

reality is not the arbitrary calculation of numbers.

what *i* think is that  
schools *should* teach us that  
people minus guns equals security

and that people plus voices equals advocacy

and that people times love equals compassion

and that harmony always equals peace

wake up, world.

we don't need to learn the calculus of computation  
it's time to teach the calculus of conciliation.