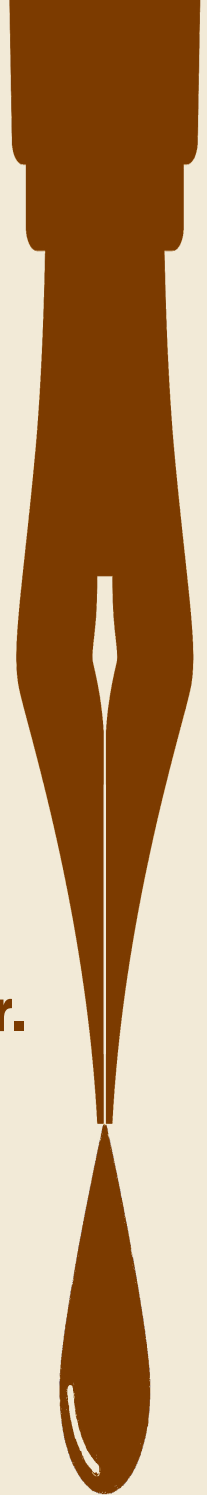




MLK SB

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
ESSAY & POETRY AWARDS
PROGRAM
2023 AWARD ENTREES**

**Sponsored by the Martin Luther King, Jr.
Committee of Santa Barbara**



Congratulations!

To all our 2023 Essay & Poetry winners!

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Poetry (Ages 13-18)

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Essay - Ages 6 - 12

Speak Out

Reagan Schroeder - 1st place
Grade 6 - The Riviera Ridge School

Speak out your words, your thoughts and your mind.
Speak out your wisdom.
Speak out to everyone and everywhere all around you.
Speak out to Asia, Africa and America.
Speak out to the land across the sea.
Speak out your words, your thoughts and your mind.
Speak out your wisdom.
Speak out every little word has a great impact.
Speak out your peace.
Speak out your thoughts and your dreams.
Speak out and share your thoughts with everyone.
Speak out, it will help the world.
Speak out and help others survive.
Speak out to the world.
Speak out and give freedom to everybody.
Speak out with passion and kindness.
Speak out.



Martin Luther King

Adaine Alexander Le Renard -
Grade 6 - The Riviera Ridge School

If you think about it, the world is a jar of jam. Jam takes a long time to expire, but it does! And no one likes when the jelly expires. Whenever the jelly expires, that will come soon, unless we help people who need help. People are having to plead for food, sometimes their whole families. If we help each other, and bring our friends up, that is basically buying a new jar of jam, and spreading it on a slice of bread, delicious, sweet, and savory when you take a bite. Dr King was a fabulous man. He helped people get equal rights, he helped people get what they deserve, He thought that everyone deserved to be heard, and loved. Now, what I want to do to help the world is help my friends when they are feeling down. I'll try to help my friends if they are stressed about life, people, or bullying. What will YOU do?



Essay - Ages 6 - 12

From my Heart

Isla Ramirez

Grade 4 - The Riviera Ridge School

I see the future.
I hear peace.
I touch the heart.
I hear the world telling us what it wants, it wants peace and everyone and everything to be equal.
I am sometimes told that I am bad at this or good at that either way I work hard.
I want everyone to be equal with food, health, water, and more.
I want people to look in other people's perspectives, see what they see, feel what they feel, hear what they hear, touch what they touch that could make a difference in the world, if you share.
I wonder what the world feels.
I worry about the ocean filled with trash.
I hope the U.N. goals help the world even more.
I want the world to bloom like a flower, I want the world to sprout, not just be stuck in the dirt.
I want people to care, I want them to be kind and help the community help the world.
I am hopeful.
I am positive I believe in the world.

I want people to help the world.
I want people to help the world like the U.N. goals.
I want the world to be happy. I don't want the world to be sad.
I want the world to be sunny. I don't want the world to be raining.
I know people are poor and are trying to help their families. Put yourself in someone else's shoes for the day. In Iran, people have a culture; women can't show their hair; they are dying and sacrificing themselves. Women are cutting their hair. A girl named Mahsa Amini was arrested for not wearing a hijab, I don't think that is fair.
Thank you for letting me share my thoughts. This essay was from my heart.



Essay Ages 6 - 12

He had a Dream and so do I

Charlotte Carter

Grade 5 Honorable mention

The Riviera Ridge School

One day. People will understand him.

They will understand the way he thought.

They will be a leader like him.

Dr. King saw the world through a different lens.

He looked at the world differently than other people.

Martin didn't just look at the world's problems,

He took action and made a difference.

If Martin made a difference, so can you.

Everyone is capable of making a change, good or bad.

What is stopping you?

Nothing is in your way.

The lights, the clapping and the people cheering. Dr. King standing

there. Performing his iconic "I have a dream" speech in front

of thousands and thousands of people. He was shaking but he

didn't show it. His motivation

kept him going. He didn't stop, he

didn't give up. He had a dream

and so should you.



Poetry - Ages 6-12

Let us Fly

*Amelia Maday – Grade 4
The Riviera Ridge School*

It is time to fly
I made wings for the world so we
can fly
Rise together as one, stronger
than before
We will climb the hill of injustice
and reach victory peak
We will cry for justice and
peacemaking taking charge
Not leaving one behind, what the
world deserves, we deserve
It is time to fly
It is time to soar
Speaking our minds about the
world will put us at an advantage
Our nation, once divided cannot
be mended like the way it was
before
There will always be a scar, a
scratch that was too deep to heal
completely
we can close the gap
We all will be ready to make a
mark on our concrete perspectives
Through time we can together
It is time to soar
It is time to change
If our minds remain unchanged
Our nation will crumble as we will
realize the structure wasn't secure
The atmosphere is full of hatred
as is and if we add more we will

fall down again and it will be
harder to come to our feet once,
regain balance
Our nation was supposed to be
united like we were named will
you notice before this fire burns
the embers to ashes, we won't fall
again
It is time to change
It is time to be passionate
We cannot live another day full
of this hate so strong some are
forced to the streets begging for
food, water, shelter, the basics of
survival that everyone deserves
We need to realize poverty is
surrounding some from every
angle and they can't break free
Like you are trapped in an empty
room, despair, cut off from all your
relations and happiness
You can't help yourself
It is time to be passionate

It is time to realize how it could've
been and how it is to this day
This world is a burning ball of
injustice, one fire extinguisher
won't do enough to douse a flame
We will rise together, help each
other, nobody needs to blow and
worsen the flames
Life is a marathon full of choices,
someone falls you stop to help,
won't leave us behind, won't leave
you behind

Poetry - Ages 6-12

One person can be the change,
change can be a boomerang,
people from Idaho to New
Hampshire need to hear your
words
You will speak, I will listen, We will
change together
It is time to realize how it could've
been and how it is to this day
We will change in time
Maybe a year from yesterday or a
day after tomorrow, we will change
It's a ripple in the pond, you
tossed a rock, change laps the
bank of the world
Peace is something we should be,
not we pray for, cry for, and fight
for
We all deserve to live our life to a
full extent
If everybody but you changes the
way they live to help others live
and you don't
We haven't made an impression,
you don't press once for a mark, a
scar is made with repeated pain
Just for a day we will soar, not a
care in our perfect world
We will change in time
We will change the world
When we do, nobody will be the
wiser, peace will ripple through our
oceans,
crashing waves of harmony, we
will revive those lying on the
streets
There never will be a time when

those wings can't help us fly, we
are waiting for you, I cannot wait
decades
Change will come when we call
it forth, look at your enemies
one last time and run to them as
friends for life
Today is the day
We will change the world
We can, we will
He was...



Poetry - Ages 6 - 12

He Was...

Alexandra Le Renard

2nd Place Poem

The Riviera Ridge School

He was peace as he marched on
the streets
He was peace as he yelled words
that would be cemented in history
He was peace as he refused to
use buses, sacrificing the soles of
his shoes for equality
He was peace as his home was
bombed and rose up into flames
He was peace as his family faced
violence, he didn't raise his fist
back
He was peace as he walked
through a world that was unfair
I will be peace
Through violence and
discrimination
I will be peace
I hear the screams of Ukraine on
the news
I will speak peace
I will help people get peace
I will find peace and spread it like
stardust
I will be peace



A Divided Poem

Declan Yeung

3rd Place Poem

The Riviera Ridge School

I want the word me to change to
we
I dream that one day, that even in
hard times, we stand not for one
but for all
I dream that we don't think apart
but together
We're fighting a war, not against
an enemy, but our own nation -
maybe ourselves
We need to stand together like
flower petals on a flower
I know we can't be perfect, but we
can't fall apart
We are one nation but we have
dents from fighting...north, south,
red, blue
It's said that we are one, but are
we?
If we're apart, what good is it to be
a nation?
I want the world to change us
I hope that one day we will not
fight
Will we ever be a nation?
I hope to change the world




Poetry - Ages 6 - 12

Making People Happy

*Kai Wanner –Notable Mention #1
Los Olivos Elementary*


How do I make the world a better
place?
I complement everyone so there is
a smile on each face
I complement people every day
I always wonder what they are
going to say
Martin Luther King is a hero to me
I brighten people's life by being
silly
I will keep the world a happy place
By making it a happy space



Change the World

*Julie Parker
Poem Notable Mention #2
Oak Valley Elementary*

Make a difference
Anyone can do anything
Respect others
Think about ways to help others
If you believe it then you can do it
Never give up
Let no one get to you
Use your imagination
Tell the truth
Help others
Everyone matters
Responsibility for your actions
Kindness can change the world
If you treat others the way you
want to be treated then you might
get the same
Now's the time to make a change
Go be you
Jealousy is not good
Realize you can and should follow
your dreams



Poetry - Ages 6 - 12

My Brother

Lochlan Whalen

Honorable Mention #3

Los Olivos Elementary

How do I make the world a better
place?

I help my brother rest with a smile
on his face

Helping my brother every day

Enjoying his smiles while we play

Martin Luther King was a great
man to me

He was very confident which is key

I will try to make the world the
place he wanted it to be

A place for my brother, where he
can be free



Essay & Poetry

Ages
13-18

Essay - Ages 13-18

Flower to Fruit

Benke Sepulveda – 1st Place Essay
Dunn School

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is ‘what are we doing for others?’” - MLK

What are we doing for others? When I read that quote, I feel that it is being asked not just of me personally, but of all of us as a community, as a whole. What can we be doing better? What do we have to do to tend the flower of humanity, so we can not only help the children of the future, but make sure that they live in a better world than ours? In order to do anything, you have to start by doing something. We can start by tackling the first obstacle and talking to someone you would normally never speak to, or going out of your comfort zone to help those you would normally avoid. Once you have the willpower to do this it can only get easier. Right? No, not really. After that first obstacle, there are bound to be others. But you’ll have to keep moving forward through the muck and the darkness that will try to drag you down. That is the problem, it sounds so good on paper but actually going out there and doing something is hard.

Look, we can talk about a

problem as much as we want, but it’s not going to get us anywhere. If you want to make a difference in the world you have to try. There is no cheering from the sidelines, there is no saying something you do not actually mean. There is no sitting on your couch writing an essay. Because, in the end, these will get us nowhere. It is imperative that we go out of our way to help others. If you are walking down the street and see a houseless person, stop and offer to help. If you see someone being treated unjustly because of their religion or the color of their skin, stop and offer help. If you see someone who is crying or hurting, stop and offer help. It sounds so simple but when it comes to it the majority of people will just walk past and pretend they don’t notice. I know this for a fact since I struggle with this myself. I would love to help, but from the sidelines, not on the field of battle. But don’t we realize how dehumanizing this can be? Put yourself in these people’s shoes, imagine you are the one sitting on the street asking, begging, for help, and yet, everyone walks past not even looking at you as if you were some infectious disease that spreads as easily as the common cold in fall. Imagine

Essays - Ages 13 - 18

you are the one being bullied and mistreated because of your religion, the color of your skin, gender identity, or sex. What makes someone lesser or better than you just because you look different or feel differently from them? Nothing. These ideas and theories are just tools for the weak and scared to take power over others. In fact, it is not the people on the street or the people that look different that are the disease. It is us. It is our collective agreement to mindlessly judge others without getting to know them, just because of how they look. It is us, for bullying someone because they identify differently than us. When we choose to avoid the challenge before us, we are the ones endangering the flower of society... not them, us.

When we look back at our history, our culture, we have to ask ourselves, why? Why do we let politics divide a household? We should be loving each other no matter what because we are family. Why do we always consider third world countries “lesser” when in reality they have just a harder lot because half the time we would rather fight our wars on their soil? How can we let ourselves become not the one who nourishes the plant, but the

parasite who attaches itself to the plant and sucks the life out of it until the plant is dead? What we need to do is be able to realize when we are the problem. But this, too, is hard. No one wants to admit when they are wrong. Everyone knows that feeling, no matter how old or young, that feeling of helplessness, that no matter how hard you tried, you were wrong. No one likes that feeling. You never get used to it, and yet, it is an essential part of our development as human beings and it always will be. We need that feeling to help us remember that we are not better than others, nor are they better than us, because in the end we are all just people trying to survive and we are all equal.

We must remember that we are all part of a more significant movement, one that has been happening for thousands of years. We are part of the Human movement, and we all play a role no matter how big or small. I often find myself thinking, “What can I, one person really do?” We start to think that it would take much more than just us to change the world. But we have to remember: in order to do anything you have to start by doing something. No matter how

Essay - Ages 13-18

big or small, everything is a drop in the pail. When the day comes that the pail is full we can finally water the plant with the hope of millions, from generations before us; a hope for a better world. A world without social injustice, a world without unfair courts of law, a world where everyone is equal and everyone knows they are equal. But we have to become this first, as an individual. Only then can we come together and shed our seeds for the generations to come. So they may feast on our fruit and live happily in a better world.



The Importance of Martin Luther King Jr.

*Taylor Bronson – 2nd Place Essay
San Marcos Senior High*

Who is Martin Luther King Jr? Well, Martin Luther King was a leader. He led a campaign for racial justice during the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King gave many speeches and his most famous speech is “I have a dream”. I’m sure that speech spoken by Martin Luther King Jr has inspired thousands and probably millions of people to this day. He wanted a world where his children would not be judged by their skin color. Martin Luther King Jr wanted a world that was more fair, by ending segregation so people of all races will be more equal. He would also lead marches for blacks’ right to vote, labor rights, desegregation, and other civil rights. He wanted to change the world and make it a better place for everyone. Martin Luther King Jr is probably the person I would research about for every project I have because there’s so much to learn about him and how he gave back and helped so many communities.

I enjoy reading and listening to his speeches. The one I will be focusing on is “Life’s most

Essay - Ages 13-18

persistent and urgent question is “What are you doing for others?” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, 1957. And I like this speech because it highlights not just himself but others, and that we aren’t just focusing on ourselves but caring for others too. That speech just fits Martin Luther King Jr because he did so very much for others. I actually have a personal experience with this today, someone in my class didn’t eat lunch, and I offered him a snack I had. Just a simple act of kindness goes a long way. Martin Luther King did a lot for others, including approaching society’s biggest problems, organizing marches and protests for the civil rights movement.

I would have to say he changed the world for a lot of people. His speech encouraged the civil rights act and voting rights and ending racial segregation in the United States. He encouraged me to do more for others and my community. I’m constantly thinking about if I do enough for my community. Especially now I will be thinking about that question and making sure I am making time for my community and others. All his kindness quotes and speeches help and

influence me to be kind every day. Have you ever thought about being the change in the world or community? I definitely have at times and I’m going to start doing it more often. You never know the impact that your words could make.

I think we need more people like Martin Luther King Jr around the world. Because he caused so much positivity at the time and we just need more and more of that as we go on in life. I also am taking a class at my high school called Leadership. This was my first elective I chose because I wanted to learn more about being a leader. This is a fun class that I’m taking and this teaches us to be leaders at our school. It is important to give back because you really just don’t know how big of an impact it can make and how it can change lives. Just giving back to any community with my friends and family! Going to events is a great opportunity to give back especially on earth day when we pick up trash at the beach. Martin Luther King is a role model to me and I’m sure many others are too and I hope more and more people are going to be inspired to be like him!



Essay - Ages 13-18

Impact On My Community

Mayleen Montes De Leon

3rd Place Essay

San Marcos Senior High

I would say I do enough for my community. Not a lot, but enough. What is enough? Enough is when you are satisfied and at peace with what you have done. But what is your definition of enough? My definition of enough is being able to breathe, knowing I have imprinted on somebody. Being able to smile and say “wow I did that.” Having the excitement to do it all over again. I have done many things for my community. Maybe not every individual, but general community groups. I have been a part of a non-profit organization called PAL (Police Activities League), and through this organization I have found the privilege to be a part of a youth council which has opened an opportunity to give back to my community. Our goal as a council is to give back to our community using our creativity, leadership, and teamwork skills to complete our mission. We have created events such as Trunk or Treat, thanksgiving baskets, winter wonderland, and even handing out nearly \$200,000 worth of scholarships to low-income families, so that their children

can have a once in a lifetime experience to go to week long camps. Some camps are overnight, and some take up most of the day. As a council, we help these families with all the paperwork and online worksheets, to make sure their experience is smooth sailing. Most of these low-income families are Spanish speaking and luckily our council is made up of most high school students that are bilingual and experts in this area. Not only are we an asset to these families when applying for these camps, they can rest knowing that even though they can't speak English, they are not at a loss for opportunities they want to take. Another event that I mentioned was Trunk or Treat. Because of the COVID pandemic we had to come up with an event that was COVID friendly and still has the spirit of Halloween for all children in the community. We weren't going to let the pandemic ruin the fun, so our council got to work. Our goal is to decorate trunks that are out in the parking lot of our PAL teen center. We come up with different themes and get creative with supplies and props that we will need. It takes us three weeks to a whole month for our council to prepare for this event. We work hard knowing that we will be greeted with beaming smiles by all the children who walk

Essay - Ages 13-18

this event. Back to my original point, I would say I have done enough to help my community. I can always do more, but I'm happy with this progress.



Hear And Heal

Clehann Howard

Essay - Honorable Mention #1

Dos Pueblos Senior High

I am proud of the person I've grown to be even if I cannot identify who I am. Every day I strive to be a representation of love and comfort because I've experienced not having that. People often fall into their darkest times because they feel alone, and the idea of community builds an undeniable support system for everyone. Community is defined as "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common" but I think it's simply the idea of not being alone in this world.

Being a young black woman in America has brought the feeling of never having any sense of belonging which has left me with some permanent internalized struggles, but instead of using a negative to project negativity, I use my experiences to provide comfort to all members in my community.

Everyone has different intersecting identities that I might not be able to relate to, but I listen. Society often proclaims that we need to make statements on everyone's experiences but the loudest voices are the ones you cannot hear.

I don't believe in change. No matter how many activists and protests and speeches we have, the problem still remains and I believe it will always remain. Just in my high school experience, I have gone through things that made me physically afraid to speak. I lost my voice so I will always try to find it through relationships built through community because trust is a power. I know I haven't made an impact on my community because I don't believe my voice can make an impact. I wish I could believe in change but when you have gone through so many things you tend to lose faith.

Adolescent years are difficult especially if you feel alone. I build relationships with everyone I can because that is what community is to me. Its trust, self-love, understanding and the overall willingness to listen. If everyone would just listen to the billions of people around us, maybe we could all finally hear and heal.

Poetry - Ages 13-18

Broken Treasures

Lauren Lee – 1st Place Poem
Dos Pueblos Senior High

People are like oceans.
Layers and layers and layers
of feelings.
Fears.
Strengths.
Secrets.
Weaknesses.
Dreams.
Most people only see the surface.
The serene Sunlight Zone that
says everything's fine.
But others
are willing to swim the extra mile.
They break past the surface,
swimming and swimming and
swimming.
It's difficult.
It's worth it.
Because treasure isn't found at
the surface.
It's
down
down
down
at the very bottom.
(hidden)
When you find it,
it's precious.
Cause you can only find it if they
let you.
And they only let you find it if
you're willing to
dive deep.

Take the risks.
Face the danger.
Swim past the zones of
embarrassment.
Trauma.
Shame.
So.
When they finally open their chest
of broken treasures,
don't take any.
Recognize their struggles,
their pain,
their sorrow.
Appreciate what they've gone
through.
Don't pity their shattered remains.
Instead,
help them put themselves back
together
into something stronger.
Because isn't that what friends
are for?



Poetry - Ages 13-18

How to Fix 77 Seconds

Anna Morrison – 2nd Place Poem
Carpinteria High School

The earth has been for 4 billion
years
But 24 hours
Humans have been here for
200,000 years
But
Seventy
Seven
Seconds
The water's getting warmer
The ice is all melting
We made it like this
And we need to start helping
No, fixing is better
This was our mess first, after all
Saving species, boycotting cars
It's up to us; it's our call
See, when I picked up my trash
And saved all my water
It was surprisingly easy
It wasn't a bother
So take only pictures
And leave only footprints
Don't you love your environment;
Don't you take care of it?
Stay true to your earth
It's been here much longer than
you
Yet we are ruining it
A few seconds too soon



Listening Goes a Long Way

Olgha Mbraka – 3rd Place Poem
Carpinteria High School

What does it mean to impact your
community?
It means that you help and are
there for others
Not just once, but whenever you
get the opportunity.
Being there for someone when
they're down,
Listening to them and giving
advice,
Sometimes all people need is for
you to stick around,
Feeling loved and important
always feels nice.
For my community I've listened,
I've been there for those around
me,
And although that may not be
what you've envisioned,
Oftentimes it can be the key.
When people are sad,
It's always good to talk,
No matter how severe or bad,
They need some kind of rock.
Someone to care,
And someone to hear,
No matter what the affair,
Whether small or severe.
That's what I do for my community,
I'm there,
Every person comes along in unity,
Today, that true friendship can be
rare.



Thank you

To the teachers, families, friends and volunteers who encouraged and supported the students who submitted their work this year.

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With gratitude to the following who donated their time as judges

Aaron Ettenberg

David Edelman

William "Bill" Johnson, Pastor

Leslie White

Linda Ryles

Melinda Palacio

Natasha Moore

Patricia Adams

Thank you to the Schools and School Districts who participated

Carpinteria High School

Dos Pueblos Senior High

Dunn School

Franklin Elementary

Los Olivos Elementary

Oak Valley Elementary

Other (Homeschool)

San Marcos Senior High

Santa Barbara Junior High

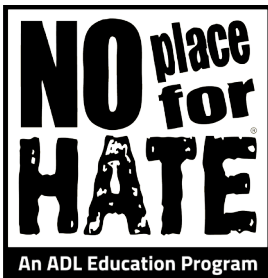
Santa Ynez Valley Union High

Santa Barbara School District

Goleta School District

Public Speaking Coaches

Melinda Palacio | Natasha Moore | Dr. Donte Newman



Co-Sponsored by "ADL Santa Barbara/Tri-Counties"