



INTERFAITH CENTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE (ICRJ)

“... invoking a community of respect and Justice”



2019 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Middle School Essay Contest

Background

In the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of a great revolution taking place in the world, and the challenges facing America: “to develop a world perspective, to eradicate racial injustice, to rid the world of poverty, and find an alternative to war.”

Challenges as described by Dr. King in a speech in 1968 (adapted):

- We are challenged to develop a world perspective. No individual can live alone, no nation can live alone, and anyone who feels that he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. The world is geographically one. The challenge that we face today is to make it one in terms of brotherhood.
- We are challenged to eradicate racial injustice. I can see nothing more urgent than for America to work passionately to get rid of the disease of racism that poisons us all.
- We are challenged to rid our nation and the world of poverty. There is nothing new about poverty. What is new is that we now have the resources to get rid of poverty. The real question is whether we have the will.
- We are challenged to find an alternative to war. Anyone who feels that war can solve the problems facing mankind is sleeping through a great revolution.

To read Dr. King's speech **“Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution”** in its entirety, visit:
<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/publications/knock-midnight-inspiration-great-sermons-reverend-martin-luther-king-jr-10>.

Essay Question

Which of the challenges facing 1960s America mentioned by Dr. King, do you believe remains our greatest challenge for 2019 and beyond?

Task

Write an argument in the form of an email to President Trump that makes a claim about which of Dr. King's stated challenges should be a priority for him to address in 2019. Make sure your email includes a claim, evidence, and reasoning.

You will need to conduct your own research into the challenges mentioned in Dr. King's speech, determine which you believe to be the priority, and provide evidence and reasoning to support your claim. You may also choose to include what you think are some promising solutions to this challenge!



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Prizes

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd place students will be notified by December 21, 2018.
- Winning students will receive iTunes gift cards in the amounts of \$25 for 1st place, \$15 for 2nd place, and \$10 for 3rd place courtesy of the Macomb Reading Council.
- The winning student will receive three (3) seats to the MLK Holiday Celebration on the evening of Monday January 21, 2019, where they will be announced and honored for their achievement.
- The winning essay will be included in the MLK Holiday publication (distributed throughout the county).

Requirements

- Due: **Midnight, December 3, 2018**
- 1000 word maximum
- Double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font
- Include your name, school, grade, teacher's name and email address, home or parent telephone number and parent email address (if applicable) in the header
- Submit via email to: smcbrady@misd.net or mail to:
Sean McBrady
Macomb ISD
44001 Garfield Rd.
Clinton Twp., MI 48038

Guidelines – Teachers/Parents may help with the research and understanding of the topic and task, but the writing must be done without help. You may use dictionaries or any other resources to support spelling and mechanics.

Teachers - Contact Sean McBrady (smcbrady@misd.net) with any questions about engaging students with this issue.

Scoring: Essays will be scored by a panel of judges including education consultants from the Macomb ISD and representatives from the MLK Holiday Celebration planning committee.

Statement of purpose/focus—claim is clearly stated, focused and strongly maintained; counterclaims, if presented, are clearly addressed

Organization—response has a clear and effective organizational structure; uses of a variety of transitional strategies; logical progression of ideas; effective introduction and conclusion

Elaboration of evidence—response provides thorough and convincing support/evidence for the main idea; use of evidence from multiple sources is smoothly integrated, comprehensive, and relevant

Language and Vocabulary—response clearly and effectively expresses ideas; use of academic and domain-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate

Conventions—response demonstrates a strong command of conventions: few, if any, errors are present in usage and sentence formation; effective and consistent use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling