



"I HAVE A DREAM" – THE COURAGE, CHARACTER, AND CONSCIENCE OF MLK

2012 Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest

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Thank you Buford Middle School!
EOP is proud to announce the following winners in our 2012 Essay Contest celebrating the life and vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. Students chose between two topics and we are awarding the top three entries in each category.

First Place Winners:

Stella Sokolowski – *Forbidden Love*
Paul Groeschel-Johnson – *Stand up to Bullies*

Second Place Winners:

Addie Brown- *A Healthy Future*
Frances Espinoza – *Courage*

Third Place Winners:

Ian Cropley – *A Better World*
Grace Fezell - *Courage*

EOP will be visiting Buford Middle School to award prizes to the winners.



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FORBIDDEN LOVE

There once was a man who dreamed of a world where people of different color could hold hands without being torn apart. Well,, I have a dream that two people could love one another, regardless of gender. A dream where two people of the same gender can legally recite their vows, and are looked at as a man and woman are. A world where love of any kind is accepted.

Homosexuality has never been accepted. The possibility that society is breaking hearts all around the world crosses barely anyone's mind. The millions of tear stained pillows out there don't seem to be taken into much account. When the fact is, the stereotypical fruity, prissy gay is probably one of the bravest people one could ever meet.

Some say God is the reason they cannot accept homosexuality. They claim that God would damn those to Hell who love one of the same gender. Homosexuality is considered a sin. The thing that really confuses me about is that I thought God was supposed to be cherished? To me this all sounds like an accusation, accusing God of causing all this pain. When the real question is, if God loves us all, why would he ever take love away from us?

We all have rights. This nation even has the Bill of Rights to confirm it. Though what really stumps me is that we don't let everyone have a right we're all born with; the right to love. We say that this country is where no one is judged — where everyone can speak their minds, even if others disagree, or find it inappropriate. Therefore, shouldn't people have the right to homosexuality, regardless of what others think? Not only that, but love isn't like freedom of speech. Love is the one thing we cannot live without; it's the one thing we hang onto through this mess of a life.

Everyone's read fairytales. We've all heard the story of the prince and the princess, but who's ever heard of a prince and a prince? Or a princess and a princess? No one has. Only a prince and a princess ever get their "happily ever after." The same goes for reality. We all dream of living a fairytale, but only a man and a woman can ever live one. Homosexuality is truly, forbidden love.

Stella Sokolowski

The same man who dreamed that two people of different color could hold hands, dreamed of equality. We cherish this man, yet we never really pursued his dream. We never gave gay people the rights they deserve. We just keep telling them they are damned to Hell while we keep living our fairytales. So the next time we say something disparaging about homosexuality, I think we should ask ourselves, how would we feel? How would we feel if we could never walk down the aisle and see our prince or princess at the other end? How would we feel if we could never have our "happily ever after?"

STAND UP TO BULLIES

Martin Luther King demonstrated courage throughout life by standing up and speaking for what he believed was right.

There was a kid I knew. He had personal issues. He attended the school I use to attend. Since he was different he had a harder time making friends. Sometimes I would see him in the hall. One day I saw a group of other boys going up to him. I could not make out what they were saying. But the next thing I knew they pushed him to the ground. I jumped to my feet and yelled "HEY WHAT ARE YOU DOING. STOP IT!" They looked at me and just laughed and said what are you going to do about it. They didn't concern me anymore because I saw the guidance teacher racing toward them. I guess the teacher saw what was going on and put a stop to it. But good people are not always around when someone is bullied so this kid like others' needs learn how to stand up for himself.

If you think about it Mr. King was bullied too. He had to learn how to face his bullies and prevail. Mr. King is quoted as saying "He who passively accepts evil, is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it."

At Buford, I don't believe bullying is a problem because people at our school come as a package. You can't mess with one without messing with everyone else. Everyone seems to have brothers, sisters, cousins, family and friends. These serve as shields against bullies. But what if a kid is alone without support?

STAND UP TO BULLIES

According to statistics more than half of all students have witnessed bullying while at school and 15% of all students who do not show up for school say it is because of fear of being bullied.ⁱⁱ

Phoebe Prince was 15 when she killed herself two years ago. The day she killed herself, the bullies taunted her at school in the library and gym and then a guy threw an empty soda can at her. Even after she died, mean comments were posted on her Facebook page.ⁱⁱⁱ Why was she bullied? I heard it was because of her accent and the way she spoke.

I believe that most people who are bullies don't realize that they are being a bully because they forget that there is another person who has feelings on the other side.

This may explain how Mr. King was bullied and harassed by people who appeared to be normal average Americans. Is there anyone now who wants to be grouped with Mr. King's bullies? I conclude no. And I believe the same is true for Phoebe's bullies and for those boys in the hall at my old school.

I do not know if the kid who I saw bullied learned to have the courage to stand up to bullies, but I hope so. Mr. King refused to physically fight his bullies. He taught others to use passive resistance to win over bullies.

I believe there are ways not to be bullied. There is almost always going to be a person there to help. But the bully most likely has a friend or a group with him or her so if you could get one of them to look at it your way then they can stand up for you.

STAND UP TO BULLIES

Mr. King had the courage to challenge bullying in the form of racism. I want to be part of a group that has the courage to stand up to bullies and not let them cause any more harm. I believe that Phoebe would still be alive if I had been in her school.. I challenge everyone at Buford to join me.

ⁱ <http://www.bullyonline.org/workbully/bystand.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.bullyingstatistics.org/content/bullying-statistics-2010.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_of_Phoebe_Prince

A Healthy Future

By Addie Brown

I think the dreams for the future of our country or world is very important. A wish or dream of mine has to do with health insurance. I hope that there will eventually be universal health insurance coverage, and that the Affordable Care Act will begin.

Health insurance, in short terms, is when you pay a company a "fee" (or premium) every month for helping you pay for when you go to the doctor's office or hospital. Whenever you feel sick, you usually make an appointment at your doctor's office. Your health insurance helps pay for your appointment. But say, for instance if you didn't have health insurance, you probably wouldn't be able to get an appointment with a doctor. You would most likely have to go to a hospital emergency room, even for a sore throat.

Universal health insurance coverage is something I hope the United States will eventually acquire. Universal health insurance means that the government will provide health insurance to every last person who needs it. Therefore, this will help people to access routine health care when needed. I think this is one of the things our country drastically needs to help with people who do not have doctors to go to.

President Obama is someone I look up to because of my dream and his plan, the Affordable Care Act. This plan has been approved by Congress, but has not been implemented yet. This plan will help the United States majorly in my opinion. For those who need it, health care will not only be more affordable, but also more available. Roughly thirty two million more Americans will be able to afford it for the first time, and working families will always have it they need it. When this plan is carried out completely, insurance companies will no longer be able to cheat their clients by doing something like canceling their insurance when a member is sick. I share the same dream with many others, hoping this will be put into full effect one day.

In conclusion, I believe that health insurance is one of our country's bigger problems. If and when the Affordable Care Act is put into action I can certainly conclude that there will be a better state of receiving health insurance and health care, which may even lead to a healthier generation of children and families, which can lead to other dreams dealing with education, nutrition and more. My hope for having a dream that has been accomplished will hopefully lead to more and more aspirations for the better of our country, leading to the better for our world. This is one of the things I believe Martin Luther King, Jr. would try to do. He would build dreams on dreams and encourage people to pursue them and see what you could accomplish. I think when you finish pursuing a dream; you move on to bigger ones and get to explore your future.

Frances Espinoza

In good times and bad times we need to demonstrate courage. It's really hard to stand up and mention an unpopular opinion and then have people disagree with you. For example, we know about Dr. King when he stood up for the African American race. If Dr. King hadn't stood up for the African American rights and showed courage, who knows what could have happened?

Courage. It was 4:30pm, and my friend and I were at the downtown mall with a couple of friends. We all walked into CVS and a cashier gave us a dirty look and said, "Stupid Mexican aliens."

My best friend Britney heard this and stopped to speak to the cashier. "Is there a problem with us being here?"

The cashier said, "Yes, I do. You all came to this country to steal jobs." That made Britney really angry. She reacted, not in a physical way, but verbally.

The next thing you knew, Britney was up at the cashier angrily saying, "I came here to this country to win, to survive, to conquer and rise! I wanted a new opportunity for education and life, and pride! Didn't you ever hear what was written on the Statue of Liberty? Didn't ya? It says, 'Give me your poor, tired and huddled masses!'"

At that moment the cashier stopped and looked at Britney with an admiring and thinking mind. Then Brittney said, "It didn't say come to steal jobs! I thought America was supposed to be the land of new opportunity."

At that moment, the cashier paused and said, "I didn't realize how much that really means, and I'm sorry."

My jaws and the rest of my friends' jaws were dropping. I couldn't believe it! Brittney actually stood up with courage for our race. Finally Brittney said, "It's ok, Next time a different race person walks in, remember what I said."

See what I mean? That's right that was an example of pure courage. I'm pretty sure none of my friends would have done it or had the guts to do it other than Britney. That was one amazing show of courage. So before you go physical think about it!

Based on a true story

A Better World

Ian Cropley

Do you ever wish people would see your side of things? Do you wish they paid less attention to themselves and more to others? Martin Luther King Jr. did. He was a civil rights activist who tried to make the world a better place by getting African Americans the rights they deserved. Other things that would make the world a better place are acknowledgement, respect, and trust.

If people think about other people's ideas and accomplishments, it is acknowledgement. Everyone has good ideas and they are all worth listening to. Who knows, their idea could change the world. Also, other people's common sense could stop you making a bad mistake. Sadly, most of the time people barge on ahead not listening to others, paying no attention or regard to what is around them. Imagine, one day you want to throw the football in the front yard, but your friend says let's not, how about the back yard, you could break a window out front. Your friend could save you a lot of trouble just by saying that. If you didn't regard them and played in the back, you might break a window.

Respect is an important quality. People will not respect you if you do not respect them. Martin Luther King Jr. respected everyone; that is why he used peaceful demonstrations instead of violent ones. Respect is also why his points came across to the public, had he not respected them, the people he was trying to get through to would not have listened. If everyone respected everyone else, arguments and grudges could not be sustained, religious and racial wars would not happen, and friends would be friends again. Every one of us must step up and respect others, for where there is respect, there can always be friendship, happiness, and hope.

At some point, everyone must wish they were trusted, and everyone must trust. Trust may be the most important of life skills. You trust your parents to supply your food and shelter. If you didn't trust your parents, you would run away and find yourself alone and in a difficult position, feeding yourself, earning your own money. You would probably yearn for home. Trust is like respect, it is mutual. People won't be trusted if they don't trust others. When some people consistently make poor decisions, no one trusts them. It is important to trust people, they could help you in life. You must especially trust parents and good friends.

Everyone has an important role in making the world a better place. Everyone must play this role well to ensure a better, happier, healthier planet Earth. Using acknowledgement, respect, and trust, arguments and feuds could be resolved, wars could be ended, and every person could be happy. People

must unite to lay down weapons of war and pick up weapons of humanity. Martin Luther King fought hard for the rights of all people. This is the way he would want it, this is the way it needs to be.

Grace Feazell

Martin Luther King was a very courageous man and he stood up for what he believed in and for justice. He helped many people when they most needed it. He inspires me every day to be the best that I can and to help other people that I see who need help. One day, when I saw a friend in need, I lent a helping hand. I stood up for my friend who was being bullied and treated unfairly and had her belongings mistreated.

One day I went outside to go say goodbye to my friend. I saw her running around trying to get her bag, which a girl was throwing into the branches of a tree. Then I saw a group of boys stomping on her school picture, ruining the plastic envelope and bending the pictures. She was running around trying to get her bag and her pictures back from these people. I was following her, and at first I was a little confused as to what she was saying and doing. By the time I realized what was going on, I realized that she was being bullied and I knew that I had to do something about it.

When I saw the girl throwing the bag into the branches of the tree, I immediately walked up to her and asked her to please return the bag to me. She would not cooperate at first, and she continued to swing the bag around. I continued to ask for the bag, and I managed to get the bag from her hands. The bag was partially torn and seemed very dirty and beaten up. Once I got the bag back, I immediately stormed through the crowd, pushing everyone away so that I could get to the pictures. When I picked up the pictures, I didn't even have a second to look at them so that I could look at how damaged they were; I had to follow my friend who was going to the office. Unfortunately, there was no one there in the office to help. We rushed to the bus because she almost missed the bus. She was lucky to get back on. I could tell that my friend was upset and hurt.

After the bus pulled off, I went inside and asked my teacher if I can go talk to an administrator. When I found an administrator I told her about the bag and pictures, and told her the names of the people who were doing this. When I gave her the names she wrote them down, at that time I felt like she would take care of it.

It felt good afterwards because I knew I had done something good. I was also hurt because my friend had been bullied. I will always stick up for my friends. I will not walk by or ignore if another person is being treated unfairly. Bullying takes a toll on all of us, and it should not be ignored. I know Martin Luther King would have the same thought as I do.