



Martin Luther King Jr Essay Competition January 2020

Beloit Memorial School Essay Winner
Braelyn Mayfield
9th Grade

If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way."

"If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." Often times we get stuck in our interpretations of greatness; it makes us disregard the real meaning behind achieving greatness. The key to success isn't waiting for big concepts to come across you. It's setting a goal and taking baby steps towards it. Doing many small things accurately will equal greatness eventually. King had to overcome small challenges before being able to achieve the greatness he dreamed of. There are still problems with race; police brutality, oppression, racial extermination and many others. In 2019 alone, 150 African Americans were shot and killed by police. 1,133 since 2015. A lot of these stories weren't publicized. The loved ones of these people had to take their own small steps to achieve greatness. That was their way of attempting to show what life is really like for people of color. Black people are 9 times more likely to be seen as threatening than white people. There are a lot of activities blacks can't confidently engage in without being treated suspiciously, having the police called, or being beaten, shot , or killed. Apparently, this is what you should expect being a person of color living in America. Although the legal laws of enslavement and segregation ended , little to nothing has been done to reset the minds of those that still have racist ideas. They're taught that we're criminals, we're violent, we're predators, and we need to be monitored. Voter rights are still being suppressed, our criminal justice system is continuing to propagate a new yet disguised Jim Crow. Being reduced to a race-based generalization is horrible. Black people shouldn't be scared to walk around their own neighborhoods. The youth should not be being incarcerated at alarming rates. Blacks are 7 times more likely to be wrongly convicted than whites. On top of this, the future of blacks were set up for failure. Black people were not given much after slavery was ruled unconstitutional. So, the cycle continued years down the line. Reverse racism is a common rebuttal for whites to defend themselves, but you cannot oppress the oppressor. When whites mock us, they're continuing to enforce a system that dates back years. When racist cops are pointing guns at a black man's head, they don't see a human being. They see a monster, a thug, a danger to society. No longer will we allow these people to treat us this way. Or claim it to be a mistake. We are taught the severity of racism and oppression from a young age. It is not a mistake. The world force feeds us labels from birth, eventually we swallow them and become whatever they labeled us. We accept these labels and don't doubt them. Who we truly are is not the color of our skin. Our true selves is found inside. Who would you be if the world never gave you a label or a box to check? We would all be one. Labels blind us from seeing someone for who they are. Instead we see them from a judgmental, and prejudicial filter of who we think they are. The things Dr. King was fighting for , are still going on today. But we need to continue pushing, continue striving. We may not be able to solve all problems right away. We can do small things like spreading awareness and making it known that we're fed up/ the only way we can change our social norms, is by taking these small steps, and continuing to do so until we achieve the greatness of racial equality. What creates lasting change is motivated individuals like me and many people in this room. We have to be consistent. So, if you can't do great things, attempt to do small things in a great way. Just as Dr. King said, keep pushing and being dedicated and all will prevail.