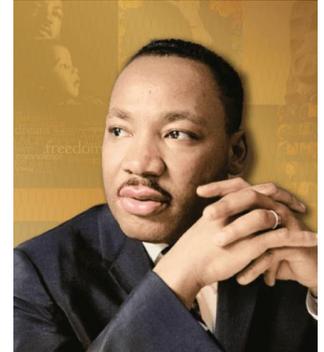




The State of Rhode Island
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission
presents the
Annual Essay Contest

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



CONTEST RULES

- Entries must be from RI middle or high school students.
- Essay must be typed in Microsoft Word format and limited to 500-750 words (middle school) or 750-1000 words (high school).
- Submission must include completed Parental Permission form (attached) and be submitted individually as the original work of only one student.
- Essay and Parental Permission form MUST be electronically submitted to RIMLKESSAY@gmail.com.
- The Commission reserves the right to promote, publish, and/or distribute any or all entries.
- Four winners will be chosen, 2 middle school and 2 high school. Prizes of \$200 for first place and \$100 for second place will be awarded for each level.

The Entry Deadline is November 21, 2025

MIDDLE SCHOOL ESSAY PROMPT

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Discuss this quote in the context of King's belief in the power of forgiveness and reconciliation. What does this quote mean to you as an individual? Is there a person current or during your lifetime (can be someone you know, or a fictional television or movie character) that best demonstrates a similar philosophy to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr?

Expectations are that your essay letter will contain well-organized thoughts that are clear and concise, as well as proper use of vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation.

HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY PROMPT

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote about the importance of forgiveness, stating that:

"He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love."

Write about a time someone had to forgive or was forgiven. What did you learn about the power of forgiveness and its impact on relationships?

Expectations are that your essay will contain well-organized thoughts that are clear and concise, as well as proper use of vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation.

Middle school and high school students will read their winning submissions at school and at the annual MLK State Holiday Commission Ceremony scheduled for Monday, January 19, 2026.