

## **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest**

What is injustice? Merriam-Webster describes injustice as the absence of justice, a violation of one's rights, unfairness. To me, injustice is when a decision is made by a person in power that violates basic human rights or mentally affects someone or a group of people negatively. Slavery was unjust. Segregation was unjust. Voter suppression is unjust. The killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor were unjust. The lack of immediate action following these devastating events was unjust.

Following the series of racial injustices that have been occurring on a national level, I took action. I began to create a website called "The Black Library." This website contains 41 unheard stories of African-Americans who made and continue to make a revolutionary change. The purpose of this website is to shine light on the Black community during times that are difficult for everyone. I am extremely excited about the completion of "The Black Library." Though I cannot be sure of the impact that this will have, I hope it will encourage and inspire young people with big dreams and bring positivity to everyone during uncertain times. Some people may question the difference that writing can make, but I know the difference writing can make because of the difference Amiri Baraka, Daisy Bates, Alice Allison Dunnigan, Francis Harper, Ida B. Wells, and Carter G. Woodson made.

The injustices I referred to and stood up against happened on a national level, but injustice can occur right in your community. Many people may not see it this way, but I believe that the Howard County grading policy for elementary school students is unjust. In every class, students are graded on their effort. This is based on their task completion, class participation, the quality of their work, and their timely submission of homework and classwork. The issue with this is that effort is something that can change based on your circumstances, and what you're

going through personally, emotionally, and mentally. There is no way to know how much effort someone is truly putting in. When someone is truly trying their best and they receive an effort grade that is subpar, it can be discouraging. I brought this concern to my former elementary school in perfect timing for their “ACT4GES” program, which encourages change in the school. The principal invited me to some of their meetings that were otherwise only for adults. There, I will have an opportunity to share my ideas and make change hopefully on a county-wide level because I would have spoken my truth and voiced my opinions. Like “The Black Library,” this is a change that is in the process of occurring, but I believe in the potential impact that will be the outcome of me speaking my mind and standing against what I believe is unjust.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” Through my actions against injustice, I am not only discrediting the words and actions of my enemies, but I am empowering the voices of my friends. I truly hope that I can continue to act against injustices, just as Dr. King did.

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