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Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest

From the minute a child is born, they are labeled. A box gets checked. The hat is blue or the hat is pink. The baby is either a boy or a girl, and that label will likely follow them for the rest of their lives.

My whole life, my parents have told me that I can do anything. So what my sister and I are girls? We can do anything we put our minds to. Girls can do anything that boys can do. There's no such thing as girl things and boy things. These are the messages that we have heard repeatedly throughout our childhoods. Due to this, I have always believed that women's rights are very important and are worth fighting for. So a few years ago, when I had the opportunity to participate in an event to stand up against injustice towards women and girls, I was very excited to take part in it.

In 2017, when I was ten years old, I participated in a Sister March with my mom, my sister, my aunt, and my cousin. This Sister March was in Howard County, Maryland, and it was a smaller version of the massive Women's March that was taking place in Washington, DC. This Women's March took place the day after President Donald Trump was inaugurated. President Trump had made- and has continued to make- numerous statements and comments that are negative and derogatory towards women. Women and girls from all over the nation came together to show unity at the Women's March, and at Sister Marches in many areas, to protest against injustice and raise awareness for women's rights. The march in Washington is still, to this day, the largest single-day protest in United States history. I am so proud to say that I was a

part of this huge stance against injustice. My family and I marched around Centennial Lake, and we all held up signs as we walked. Mine read, "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back. -Malala". This quote resonates with me because Malala's words are so true. Fifty percent of our world's population consists of women. Strong, bold, inspiring, powerful women, who deserve to have a voice, and who are entitled to every bit of respect that their male counterparts get.

While my taking part in this demonstration of unity didn't necessarily make a large impact alone, the fact that millions of people- especially women- stood together to stand against injustice made a lasting impact on our nation. The year following the March in 2017, record numbers of women expressed interest in running for political office. Also, the #MeToo movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment was revived. The Women's March likely inspired a lot of this change, because it made people feel less alone. I helped inspire these changes, just by showing up at the park to stand up for what I believe in, that day in January of 2017.

This fight against injustice, and for women's rights and gender equality, started many years ago, beginning with the suffrage movement. This movement began in 1848, it continued through Dr. Martin Luther King's time during his work for the civil rights movement, and it is still one of the most prominent movements today. People have continued to fight for women's rights throughout the past two hundred years. Despite the fact that women have been fighting this fight for so long, gender discrimination and bias has remained a current issue. One of the main reasons that the Women's March took place when it did was because of insensitive and inappropriate comments from President Donald Trump. It is because of the comments and actions from people like him, that women are still being held back in our country.

Years after the march, at the age of fourteen, I am still thinking about these issues. I am still thinking about what I can do to support women and the women's rights movement.

I am so inspired by the many incredible, strong role models of the past, the present, and even the future, who believe that women's rights, in addition to human rights, are important. People like Malala, people like Dr. King, who have been unapologetic, and have fought hard for what they believe is right. It is people like them who inspire me to participate in things like the Sister March near me, or even current fights against injustice, like Black Lives Matter rallies and protests. I know for a fact that Dr. King's incredible work made an impact on millions of lives around the world, and it is my hope that I can try to stand up against injustice and do the same for people today. I hope that my actions in the past and the actions I will take in the future will positively impact at least one little girl out there. I wish that I can inspire someone, the same way that Dr. King inspired so many. I hope that one day little girls won't be held back just because their box was checked with "It's a girl". I know that I will continue to fight for what I believe in, and Dr. King is someone who has inspired me to do that.