



2019 Racial Justice Essay Contest Equal Justice Initiative

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) is pleased to announce a scholarship contest open to students grades 9-12 attending high school in Alabaster, Pelham and Shelby County Schools where prizes totaling \$5000 will be awarded to winning participants.

This scholarship essay contest coincides with the recent approval to have a historical marker installed in Montevallo, AL to recognize the double lynching that occurred there in August 1889. Winning participants will be recognized at the unveiling of this lynching marker in March 2020.

Eligibility

The *2019 Montevallo Community Remembrance Coalition Racial Justice Essay Contest* is open to all public high school students in grades 9-12 in Alabaster, Pelham and Shelby County Schools.

Guidelines for Entries

The history of racial inequality and economic injustice in America has created continuing challenges for all Americans. The lives of African Americans have been profoundly impacted by the era of slavery, the era of racial terror that continued from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 until World War II in the 1940s and 50s, the era of Jim Crow and racial apartheid that produced the civil rights movement, and the present-day era of mass incarceration. EJI has documented over 300 lynchings of African Americans in the State of Florida between 1877 and 1950. We believe that a deeper understanding about our nation's history of racial injustice is important to addressing contemporary questions of social justice and equality.

Instructions

To participate in the scholarship contest, you will need to prepare an essay between **700 to 100** words that explores the connection between a particular **historical event and present-day issues** based on the instructions below. Your essay should include (1) reflection on how history informs our present using one of three essay prompts, (2) engagement with other people or artistic expressions that add insight to exploration of our past and present, and (3) personal reflection on how historical issues of race and class impact their lives today.

1. **Review at least one** of the following four websites and **select one historical event** described and featured on the sites. After choosing a historical event from the sites, learn more about the historical event using other sources, as well.

Website 1. <https://racialinjustice.eji.org/timeline/>

Website 2. <http://lynchinginamerica.eji.org>

Website 3. <https://segregationinamerica.eji.org>

Website 4. <http://voicesofthecivilrightsmovement.com>

2. **Read and consider the three prompts below. Select one prompt** you would like to respond to in your essay. Be sure to include specific examples and/or practices to support your explanations.

Prompt 1. Think about the historical event you chose and think about the children related to both sides of the violence or injustice. What are the major challenges that might prevent those children from living peacefully? Do you think it is possible for those children to overcome those challenges? If yes, why and how? If no, why and what should they do?

Prompt 2. Using the historical event you selected, discuss how the history of racial and economic injustice can explain a specific issue in our society today. Do you see economic and social impacts of this history in your community today? If so, what are those impacts? Do you think awareness of history can strengthen the ability of community members to change their current realities? Explain why you do or do not think so.

Prompt 3. A myth of black inferiority and white supremacy was developed to justify slavery in the United States, and that narrative of racial difference was never explicitly challenged by the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery. Based on your examination of the historical entry you chose, do you think narratives of racial difference continue to shape American society? If so, how can we change these narratives? What myths do you see shaping the way people in your community respond to each other?

3. Respond to your selected prompt using your **research about the historical event** and include **additional reflection material** from one or more of the following sources:

Additional Source Material 1. Identify and **interview a member of your family or community** who perhaps experienced some aspect of the historical event you chose, works in a field related to the issues you are exploring, or has strong feelings about the legacy of your historical event and present-day issues. Include some of your interview in your essay and discuss how you agree or disagree, and what you learned from the interview.

Additional Source Material 2. Select an **artistic expression** that relates to the historical event, the prompt, or the issues you discuss in your essay. You can choose from multiple artistic expressions, including song lyrics, theater scripts, movies, poetry, paintings, or other forms of artwork and artistic expression. Think about how the artistic expression relates to the historical event or present-day issues, what the artist/author may have wanted

to convey and describe how you think the artistic expression relates to the events and issues you discuss in your essay.

4. **Include a list of all sources used**, including the website used to select your historical essay and the source for your additional reflection material, at the end of your essay. No specific format is required.

Submission Details

Contestants should **include the attached entry form** which requests the name of the student, home address, email address, telephone number, name of the school they attend, their grade level, title of the submission, historical event referenced, and a word count. Submissions must not be longer than 800 words and no less than 700. Entries that are not the original work of the student will be disqualified.

Essays along with the entry form must be submitted by **Friday, January 10, 2020** via email to **Gabrielle Daniels** at the Equal Justice Initiative at gdaniels@eji.org or via mail to the following address:

Equal Justice Initiative
c/o Gabrielle Daniels
122 Commerce Street, Montgomery, AL 36104

Awards

Scholarship awards will total \$5000. Winners will be notified via phone or email and receive their awards and scholarships at a historical marker dedication ceremony planned for March 2020 (specific date to be determined).

Questions

For questions and/or additional information about the 2019 Montevallo Community Remembrance Coalition Racial Justice Essay Contest, please feel to contact:

Sierra R. Turner, PhD
diversityandinclusion@montevallo.edu

Gabrielle Daniels
gdaniels@eji.org