

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Palo Alto and San Jose Students Win Prizes in C-SPAN's National Documentary Competition

Students explore the American story through the Declaration of Independence

Awarding $100,000 in Cash Prizes to students and teachers

WASHINGTON (March 11, 2026) — As the nation commemorates its historic 250th anniversary, C-SPAN today announced that students in Palo Alto and San Jose, California have earned national recognition as 2026 winners in C-SPAN's annual StudentCam documentary competition.

Jonah Sandel and Benjamin Sandel, siblings and students at Palo Alto Senior High School in Palo Alto, are second-prize winners and will receive $1,500 for the documentary, "Claiming our Consent: Reengaging the Youth Vote." This documentary will air on C-SPAN's networks on April 6 throughout the day.

Ian Jiang, Carolina Madeira and Yaby Ketema, students at Palo Alto Senior High School, are third-prize winners and will receive $750 for the documentary, "The Invisible War of America's Veterans," about veterans' mental health awareness.

Audrey Cheung, Matthew Dinh and Racko Lee Cabunoc, students at Yerba Buena High School in San Jose, are third-prize winners and will receive $750 for the documentary, "The Modern Ethnic Struggle," about the past and present-day challenges of Asian communities.

The following students are honorable mention prize winners and will receive $250 for their winning documentary:

- Abigail Neumann, Vivian Porter and Azan Shaikh, students at Palo Alto Senior High School, for the documentary, "The Public Defender Crisis," about the justice system.

- Siri Holbrook and Siena Marku, students at Palo Alto Senior High School, for the documentary, "Title IX Noncompliance and the Price of Inequality."

- Sanjay Manamala, Bryce Noh and Rohan Chunduri, students at Evergreen Valley High School in San Jose, are honorable mention prize winners and will receive $250 for the documentary,

"Unalienable Erasure: How the Battle for Books in California Threatens the Pursuit of Happiness."

C-SPAN also recognizes the following advisers who served as mentors throughout the StudentCam competition, helping guide this nationally recognized achievement.

- Caitlin Drewes and Ken Tinsley, Palo Alto Senior High School
- Clay Hale, Yerba Buena High School

In recognition of the United States' Semiquincentennial, C-SPAN — in cooperation with its cable and satellite television partners — challenged middle and high school students across the country to examine the enduring power and relevance of the Declaration of Independence by exploring:

(1) its influence on a key moment from America's 250-year history

– or –

(2) how the values stated in the foundational document touch on a contemporary issue impacting them or their communities.

Through this project-based learning experience, students engaged in in-depth research, critical analysis, and original storytelling to explore matters of both personal and national importance. The response was extraordinary: C-SPAN received more than 1,800 documentary submissions from nearly 4,000 students representing 38 states and Washington, D.C., underscoring the competition's broad national reach and civic impact.

Among the most frequently addressed topics were:

- Themes of Equality (16%)
- Rights and Freedoms (13%)
- Immigration and Deportation (10%)
- Economy and Tariffs (9%)
- Health (8%)

By earning recognition in this highly competitive national program, these students join a distinguished group of civically engaged young filmmakers whose work contributes to a deeper public understanding of America's founding principles and their continued relevance today.

"As we recognize America's 250th anniversary, this year's StudentCam participants masterfully documented important political as well as societal issues and key moments from our nation's history through compelling videos that highlight the values and enduring legacy of the Declaration of Independence," said C-SPAN's Director of Education Relations Craig McAndrew. "Each of their prize-winning videos is sure to spark meaningful reflections among viewers across the country and inspire future generations of filmmakers. On behalf of everyone at C-SPAN, congratulations to the exceptionally gifted young people who triumphed in the 22nd annual competition!"

C-SPAN is funded by America's cable, satellite and streaming television companies as a commercial free public service. In Palo Alto and San Jose, C-SPAN is available through Comcast, our local partner in StudentCam.

“As our nation approaches the milestone of America 250, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on the ideas that have guided our country since its founding and to elevate the voices shaping its future. Through StudentCam, young people from across the country are doing exactly that,” said Tuck Rainwater, Senior Vice President of State & Local Government and Community Affairs at Comcast. “Comcast is proud to support C SPAN and this program that empowers students to explore their history, examine issues that matter to their communities, and contribute to the national conversation during this historic anniversary. We congratulate this year’s winners for their remarkable achievement and the powerful storytelling they bring to America 250.”

In addition to the grand-prize and first-prize winners, C-SPAN is awarding 16 second prizes, 32 third prizes and 97 honorable mention prizes. These winning videos will receive cash awards of $1,500, $750 and $250, respectively. The StudentCam competition has awarded over $1.7 million in prizes since 2004.

High school students competed on a regional level, with the United States divided into three regions: East, Central and West. Middle school students were judged on a national basis. The grand-prize winner was selected nationally among all regions and grade levels.

The 150 winning videos can be viewed at studentcam.org and may be used in a broadcast with attribution to C-SPAN. To schedule an interview with one or more of the winning students, please contact Pam McGorry at pmcgorry@c-span.org.

The annual StudentCam competition is funded by the C-SPAN Education Foundation. Videos were evaluated by a panel of educators and C-SPAN representatives based on the thoughtful examination of the competition’s theme, quality of expression, inclusion of varying sides of the documentary’s topic, and effective incorporation of C-SPAN programming.

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About C-SPAN Classroom:
C-SPAN Classroom uses the network’s programs on public affairs, coverage of Congress, nonfiction books and American history to create free digital tools for teachers, students, and the public to use in classrooms, in projects or for research. C-SPAN Classroom’s website provides social studies teachers with access to thousands of free resources, including short current events videos, Lesson Plans and Bell Ringers, plus Constitution Clips, Classroom Deliberations, and On This Day in History events. Engage with C-SPAN Classroom on X and Facebook.

About C-SPAN:
C-SPAN, the private nonprofit public affairs media organization providing Americans with unfiltered access to government proceedings, was created in 1979 as a public service by the cable television industry and is funded through fees paid by cable, satellite television and streaming companies that provide the C-SPAN Networks to subscribers, as well as donations from individual viewers and supporters. C-SPAN connects with millions of Americans through its three commercial-free TV networks, C-SPAN Radio, C-SPAN podcasts, the C-SPAN Now app, a connected-TV streaming app C-SPAN Select, C-SPAN.org and various social media platforms. The C-SPAN Networks’ video-rich website contains nearly 305,000 hours of searchable and shareable content. Engage with C-SPAN on X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Threads, and YouTube, and stay connected through weekly and daily newsletters.

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