



2018 Racial Justice Essay Contest Equal Justice Initiative

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) is pleased to announce a scholarship contest open to all students grades 9-12 attending high school where prizes totaling \$5000 will be awarded to winning participants.

The scholarship contest coincides with EJI's forthcoming dedication of a marker in Jackson County, MO. The marker will memorialize Levi Harrington, an African American lynched in Jackson County on April 3, 1882. Scholarship winners will be announced and recognized at an event unveiling the historical marker in early November.

Eligibility

The 2018 Racial Justice Essay Contest is open to all students grades 9-12.

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 60 lynchings of African Americans in the State of Missouri, 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

(1) Students should **review at least one** of the following three websites:

- <https://racialinjustice.eji.org/timeline/> ·
- <http://lynchinginamerica.eji.org>
- <http://voicesofthecivilrightsmovement.com>

(2) Students should then **select ONE of the historical events featured on the sites** as a focus topic for their essay. Essays can focus on any event referenced on those websites. Each website presents numerous historical entries, short essays, and video testimonials highlighting events and issues in our nation's history of racial and economic injustice and

inequality. Students are encouraged to also read beyond what is featured on these websites, and independently consult other sources about their selected event.

(3) After selecting and exploring their chosen historical event, students should **respond to ONE of the following prompts with a 700 to 800 word essay**:

- **PROMPT 1:** Think about the historical event you've selected. 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:** These websites feature commentary on the history of racial and economic injustice in the United States. Using the historical entry you selected, discuss how the history of racial and economic injustice can explain a specific contemporary issue. Do you see economic and social impacts of this history in your community today? If so, what are those impacts? Can awareness of history strengthen the ability of community members to change their current realities?
- **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 responds to each other?

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 application form must be submitted by **Friday, November 9, 2018** 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 early November. **EJI Scholarship Contest Entry Form 2018 Racial Justice Essay Contest Jackson County, MO**

The Equal Justice Initiative is a nonprofit human rights organization providing legal services to the poor, incarcerated, and condemned. We challenge over-incarceration, excessive punishment, and unconstitutional conditions of confinement in American jails and prisons. EJI fights against abuse of children in the criminal justice system and the criminal prosecution of kids as adults. We are working to reform how police, prosecutors, and prisons treat the mentally disabled and other disfavored and vulnerable people, and we provide services to formerly incarcerated people. EJI is changing the way we talk about racial injustice in the United States by re-examining our country's history of enslavement, racial terror, segregation, and racial subordination. We produce reports, studies, documents, and interactive tools designed to advance social justice and protest for human rights, and we work with communities across the country to support criminal justice reform and improve the status of poor people and people of color.

Entry Form and Parent/Legal Guardian Waiver Form

Student Name:

Student Email Address:

School Name and Grade Level:

Title of Entry and Word Count:

Home Mailing Address:

City, State, Zip Code:

Parent/Legal Guardian Name:

Parent/Legal Guardian Phone Number:

Parent/Legal Guardian Email Address:

Student Signature

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

Entries along with this application form must be submitted by **Friday, November 9, 2018** via email to **Gabrielle Daniels** at the Equal Justice Initiative at **gdaniels@eji.org** or via mail to the mailing address detailed in the contest instructions. If you have any questions about how to participate in the marker ceremony or joining in the effort, please contact **Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (MADP)** at **info@madpmo.org**. If you have questions about the essay contest, please contact **Gabrielle Daniels** at the Equal Justice Initiative at **gdaniels@eji.org**.