

2019 Strong Men and Women Student Essay Contest

Erika Garcia

Northern Region Winner

When people ask what equality means to me, I do not think about just the definition. I remember what my family taught me: That we are all created by the same God; that we all have the same rights and opportunities; and that people cannot be discriminated against because of their skin color, race, culture, language, or education. In my personal opinion, we now live in a world that is full of racism, discrimination, and envy. Some people think they are better than the others because they come from a country where they had better standards of living and status. But equality does not come easily. Sometimes we have to find our own way to make it happen.

Jennie Serepta Dean, an African American slave born in the 1800s, wanted to have the same educational opportunities as the white Americans around her. She saw the institutional injustice that was around her and decided to take matters into her own hands by forming a place of learning for African Americans. She was 30 years old when she founded a Sunday school in Prince William County. The action she took to make the United States a little bit more equal embodies what equality means for me, because she didn't just wait around for change, she was the change; she went out and she made a difference. These kinds of people are what the world needs, making everything more equal, little by little. Like Jennie, I want to be an activist who is always looking for ways to help others get equality, but also help myself reach my goals. Then I will be able to help the others in a more impactful way with the knowledge that I would have accumulated over that time.

In the world, there are sheep and there are shepherds. Sheep will go along with whatever is happening, even if it leads to their downfall, but the shepherds are there to steer the sheep in the right direction. Throughout history, we have had "shepherds" guide their people or countries to make changes that in the end benefit the majority. It is my wish to become the shepherd who will help guide people to true equality in our society.



**Strong Men &
Women in
Virginia History**

