

## Central Winner Essay

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Grade Level: 12th

It is extremely important to remember the bravery and resilience of African Americans. While suffering discrimination and severe disadvantages, African Americans have accomplished great feats; they deserve to be honored accordingly.

I have learned many valuable lessons from African Americans' perseverance. For example, Rosa Parks, who inspired the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, has taught me to boldly advocate for others. Harriet Tubman, who risked her life multiple times to lead slaves to freedom, has taught me to risk my comfort for the greater good. Dr. Alexa Canady, whose medical work has saved many lives, has taught me to fight past challenges in the professional and academic world. Henry L. Marsh III, a Virginia politician who made great contributions toward civil rights in Virginia, has taught me the importance of using education to help others. These are only a few African Americans who have made impactful contributions in America. From Garret Morgan, who invented the stoplight, to Henrietta Lacks, whose cells have led to life-saving medical breakthroughs, African-Americans have made countless contributions that benefit everyone. Therefore, African-American history is a part of American history and should not be absent from our collective narrative. With racism still prevalent, learning about African-American history can break down stereotypes and prejudices. Additionally, African-American children deserve to see themselves in their history classes. Representation fosters confidence, which contributes to good overall mental health and well-being.

While I have learned about African-American history through supplemental resources, I wish I could learn more in school. Not everyone has the opportunity to study African-American history independently, so the addition of more African-American history and culture into school curriculums will help alleviate this problem. African-American history IS American history, not just a mini, independent unit to be taught during Black History Month. Also, more funding should go toward local NAACP chapters and other organizations that promote this effort. These organizations do important advocacy and awareness work in the community, which is extremely important in fighting for equality and ensuring that African-American contributions are identified and celebrated.

African Americans have greatly contributed to medicine, politics, academia, the arts, athletics, and so much more. Learning about African-American history and culture reveals a history of strength, perseverance, dedication, and the resilience of the human spirit. As I enter the adult world, I intend to continue studying African-American history, amplifying their voices, and advocating for additional African-American history in school curriculums to ensure their histories and cultures are never forgotten.