

Northern Winner Essay

Student Name: Ilaria Cabell
Teacher Name: Mrs. Goldman
School: Forest Park High School
County/City: Manassas
Grade Level: 12th

I can learn from the perseverance of African Americans that no man can stop you. By the unlimited glory of God, we have the will to get through any trial. God tells his children that he does not put them through anything they cannot handle. The years of enslavement are gruesome and sickening. Yet, the ones who realized they were slaves had the willpower to battle for their freedom. From studying my heritage and knowing my ancestors' stories, I embed that into my everyday life. My ancestors were shipped to Lynchburg, Virginia, hundreds of years ago, but most of my relatives still live there today. And because of that, it becomes a constant reminder when I stand on their land, drive past old cotton fields, and breathe in the air. Saying "to be black in America is hard" is an understatement. It seems to be an everyday war, or maybe even a first-world country bondage. So I analyze every situation I'm in, realize how blessed I am, and strive for excellence even if it kills. Black excellence is alive because our enslaved ancestors gave it to all of their kin.

As a young person, knowing the past is holistically so important, because knowing the past stops it from happening in the future. As children, a white-coated version of slavery is bashed into our heads numerous times, to the point that it doesn't make us flinch. For today's youth, it is our duty, our responsibility, to read behind that and know what actually happened. Post-slavery and current events can easily get overlooked, so I choose to read on. I tell myself sometimes, "If you don't pay attention to it, how are you certain other people will?" Over time, I noticed that a major way to keep this song flowing is by passing it on to others. To try to preach the word of my ancestors will do no one else any harm, so I take advantage of it. The children younger than me are the most important, because their minds have not been corrupted with lies and half-truths. Also, just forcing myself to talk about uncomfortable topics such as this or to research stories to push myself a little further helps keep the feeling alive.