

Western Regional Winning Submission

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Grade Level: 9

Essay Submission:

Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights activist and church minister, once stated, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

The countless stories of minorities' oppression, isolation, and stripping of their human rights is what America stows away, ignoring the hard truth of it all. To this day, we still ask ourselves: when will we receive our social justice? As I see it, social justice is the ability to have an equal chance at getting opportunities, privileges, and affluence, no matter who you are. Growing up as a black woman in America, every act of disparity is like a slap in the face, reminding me of this country's old roots built on hatred that still show in today's society.

The erasings of American history are real and are happening at this very moment. Our history classes are blinding their eye to the rawness and realness of it and are filling our textbooks with the romanticized bits. Is it crazy to even say that social media has educated me more about this country's ugly truths than any history class ever could? To keep going on with this falsehood, we would leave no reflection for future generations on how we paved a path to get here.

After the series of turnovers that this year took, there is one happening that will stay with me: the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. The death of George Floyd erupted a worldwide hearing. All over, people came out and yelled about the injustices in the streets and marched for a change. Juneteenth secured the freedom to all slaves, yet we still are faced with inequalities and racism day by day. With modern day lynchings to police brutality, we have never truly been free. I cannot go another day seeing another loss of one of my many black brothers and sisters. Trayvon Martin. Breonna Taylor. Ahmaud Arbery. Aiyana Stanley-Jones. Eric Garner. Kathryn Johnston. These are only a few names of the many who lost their lives at the hands of hate. With that comes a new hashtag and us wondering: When will they ever stop killing us?

With that, what can you do to be in support of social justice? In your free time, educate yourself on the movement that you'd like to support and find out what there is to achieve. To get the word out about your chosen movement, go out and protest. You can also do this by talking about the selected issues on your social media platforms. Without voices, there cannot be change. In addition, you can volunteer and donate to different organizations. Funding will help a lot in the long run to make your movement move forward. All in all, be a good ally. When you are called out on your mistakes, realize that you are at fault and improve for the better. We cannot expect a better future if we don't try to be a part of that change.