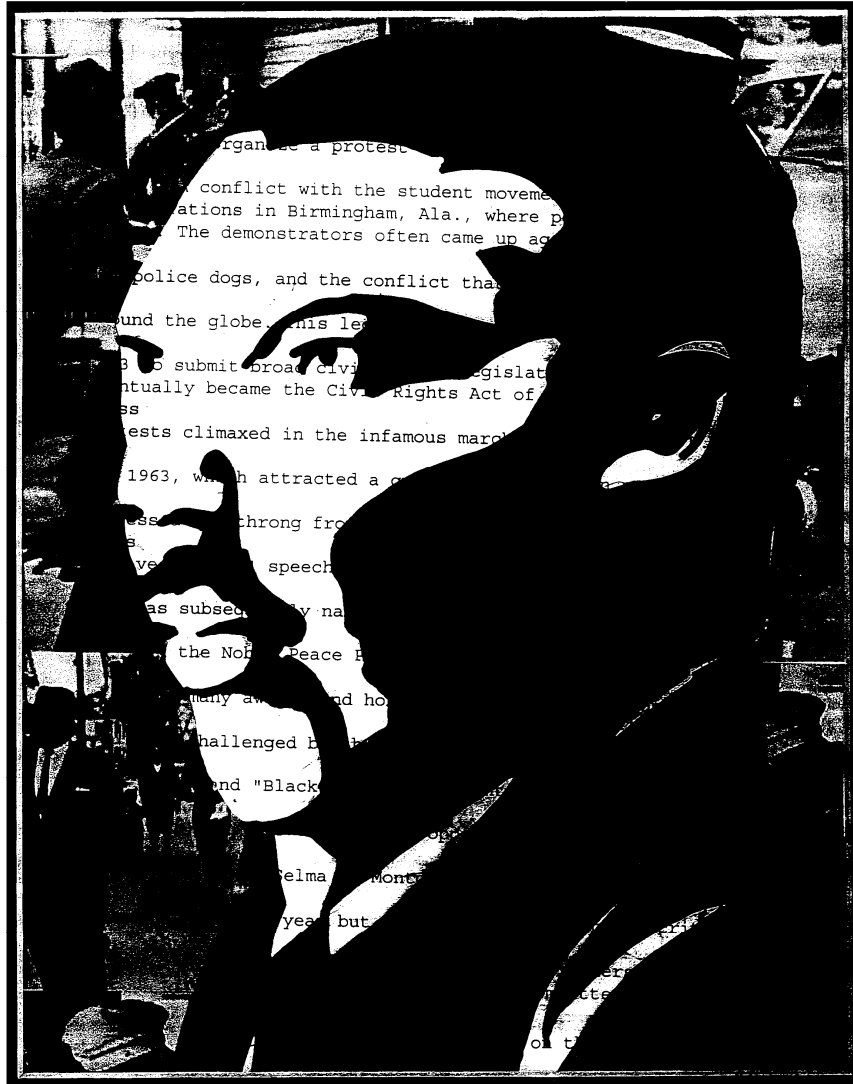


Visions of Unity 2011



Literary Anthology

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Visions of Unity

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Literary Anthology

2011



High School Students of Torrance, California
address the themes of
racial and cultural unity;
prejudice, peace, and conflict;
empathy for others;
promoting harmony and understanding;
and furthering the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sponsored for the 11th Year
By the Human Relations Forum of Torrance,
with Torrance Memorial Medical Center, Volunteer Center South Bay-Harbor-
Long Beach, Torrance Unified School District, League of Women Voters of
Torrance Area, and the Palos Verdes Chapter LINKS, Inc.

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Participating High Schools:

Torrance High School
North High School
South High School
West High School
Shery High
SoCal ROC

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Thanks to the team of coordinators who have given so generously of their time and expertise for so many years, led by Lea Ann King and including Facilities Coordinator, Shirley Ho, and the Visual Arts Coordinator, Heidi Ashcraft; and to the dedicated Technology Director Kamy Akhavan for maintaining the websites, online entries and database.

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Thank you to the two renowned musicians, JB Eckl and Roman Collins, for each offering the musical component, another form of arts advocacy, to enhance the contest reception.

Thank you to Ruth Vogel and Mary Lou Busch for once again mounting the artwork at the Katy Geissert Library. The works will be on display during the month of April.

Final thanks to the many others who work throughout the year to coordinate the contest, including Contest Committee members: Helen and Paul Nowatka, Janet Baszile, Terry Ragins and Tammy Khan.

We thank and honor each teacher – and the teacher in all of us – for we each lead one other by our examples of unity in diversity, originally defined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., evolving in the models of unity we recreate each day.

*Congratulations and Best Wishes
On the Success of the
2011 Martin Luther King, Jr. Arts Contest*

南郡學子多菁英 文學詩畫競殊榮
黑裔采風金恩魄 團結願景振托城

by Shirley Ho (何張翠姝)*

*Talented youth
in the South Bay
unite to honor MLK.*

*Black culture...
Dr. Martin Luther King's spirit...
artistic performance...*

*all unveil the
Vision of Unity
in Torrance.*

*Shirley Ho has served as Facilities Coordinator for the contest since 2000.

To the Young Writers and Artists

Today, in oppression-weary cities around the world, people rise to defeat tyrants. Must we raise a battle cry or can we raise a pen to become a force for change today - to raise a nation to a higher plane? A world in transition replies, as movements now often begin online -- in the hearts and through the pens of ordinary people.

In his time, Martin Luther King, Jr. swept onto the American landscape just when a peaceful warrior needed to redefine the possibilities, dreams and rules of engagement for people on both sides of the color barrier. His recorded oratory we remember—the extent of his compassion and the height of his conviction rather than the size of his shoes trudging on the pavement.

A generation later, a simpler action commenced when a piano teacher named Jan Jackson tired of her four children—two black and two white —feeling unable to live by Dr. King’s dream. She determined that an annual King Day observance should occur, along with a high school arts contest, in Torrance. The Baha’is of Torrance and the city’s Community Unity Task Force assisted in her efforts. When she passed away of melanoma, the Human Relations Forum of Torrance led the charge to continue the contest. Modeling the goal of unity, many factions of the community came together to participate and have done so since 2000, under the direction of County Human Relations Commissioner Lea Ann King.

Today, we remind each young person what a single committed artist can do to inspire visions of unity. Through the arts, we march through the streets of ideas. We nimbly craft the signs of hope by forging bonds with listeners, readers and viewers. The skills we learn, the convictions we earn...these are the dreams that will carry our own generation toward an ever more genuine vision of unity.

Young artists, writers, poets, you are the architects of that vision. Your contract with the future starts today. Our friend, the late Jan Jackson, will be your muse. Please hear her music. It was the music of change, and you are living proof of that, as compassionate creatives have always known.

Anyone can revolt. It is more difficult silently to obey our own inner promptings, and to spend our lives finding sincere and fitting means of expression for our temperament and our gifts.

Georges Rouault (1871 -1958)

2011 Visual Arts Winners

Sculpture: First Place
Torrance High School

Aliza Le

Photography: First Place
South High School

Rachel Tice

Second Place
South High School

Savanah Wernik

Art: First Place
South High School

Soodam Lee

Second Place
West High School

June Tong

Third Place
South High School

Joseph Jung

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SoCal ROC

Amanda Shields

Second Place
SoCal ROC

Alejandro Gonzalez

Third Place
SoCal ROC

Brandon Fernandez

Visions of Unity 2011

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Short Stories

Short Story: First Place
The Watchers

By Ethan Faneuff

My name is not important, nor is my origin. I doubt you'd recognize or remember me anyway. All you need to know is that I've watched over this world with my brethren since its beginning as an ashen ball of rock. Humans have provided a very interesting subject of observation for us, especially seeing how you've changed over the years. And how you haven't.

I remember seeing the first emergence of slavery in the East, and later, the enslavement of the Africans, doomed to spend their lives serving another. A brother of mine suggested we end the world then, but that order must be unanimous, and too many vouched for your lives, myself included. You may thank me later.

Eventually, you started to earn our trust again as time wore on, with Lincoln laying the foundations for black freedom. Yet still many of my kind were dissatisfied with the treatment of the Africans, even with the slow and eventual equality they gained. I find it interesting what it took to get two different colors of the same species to work together over prejudices, like this second world war of yours. More interesting to me is how as soon as the fires of war burned out, things went back to the way they were for decades.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and his crusade were inspiring to behold for my people, even restoring my cynical brother's faith in your kind. But this goes beyond the struggles of black and white. My brothers and sisters watched as the cold northern empire of Russia branched out, supposedly to aid the struggling workers of the world, only to bring success to their leaders, while leaving the so-called "brother proletariat" out in the cold. We watched with warped fascination as this concept of Communism threatened to end your world faster than we could, with every country taking a side in what looked like a third world war. Some of us cast bets on who would survive, who would fire first. But it never happened. And then there are the modern-day problems of your world. The cartels in Mexico. The human rights atrocities in the Middle East. The iron-fisted control of dictators in countries everywhere.

These are just some of the issues encouraging us to finally push the button and send this world back to the beginning. But against this, the behaviors of your people that have redeemed your image to us again and again. The Berlin airlift. The Aftermath of 9/11 and Katrina. The earthquake in Haiti. Even small things like charity and helping your fellow human make an impression on us. Every action your kind performs is seen by us, from the kindness to random strangers to the mindlessly hostile actions between your financial and social castes. You have succeeded in confounding us for years now, these actions balancing each together disturbingly well. You and your people are full of surprises, good and bad. Some of my kind suggest that perhaps your flaws are simply something that must be lived with, but I disagree. I know you can do better.

The racial tensions of the past seem to be dissipating, perhaps for good. We can only hope so. You are showing encouraging signs for such flawed creatures. Perhaps the words of one of my brothers were correct: Time can fix even the most damaged lost cause. But do not begin to wallow further in the arrogance your entire kind seems to be suffering from. I am allowed to tell you this much from our

observations: No one of your kind has fully figured out the true answer to lasting peace. Your kind has made that difficult in many ways, and no one group is to blame. But if what we have seen so far is an indication, I am confident you will figure it out in due time. After all, look how far you've come now.

Whatever happens, it will certainly be interesting to watch. So go on, prove yourselves once again. We'll be watching. And who knows? Maybe one day you will see us walk amongst you and the shining world you can still build together. But until that day, do not bother looking for us. We've been here all along, in the one place you and your vaunted scientific advancements cannot reach. The bottom of the ocean makes for a dark but secure location for our home, where we can watch in complete isolation. We stay separate to avoid contaminating results of our observations...and to avoid doing unnecessary harm.

Let me end this encouraging message with a very clear warning: I have watched you rise from the dirt to ascend to the stars, watched you mature into something resembling a high society we can be proud of. Do not throw all of that away by treading where you do not belong. Continue to grow closer together as a species, and I promise we will meet in person soon enough.

Short Story: Second Place We Are One

By Jahangir Ashraf

The king of the North sat upon his throne one day and thought about the troubled times they lived in. The East was at war with the West, the South with the West and the East with the South. Complete chaos was occurring between the three kingdoms. With much difficulty, the king of the North had managed to stay neutral in the ongoing conflict.

The king sat and pondered the thought of all kingdoms living in harmony in a peaceful land without any discrimination, prejudice and hate. Suddenly, an idea overwhelmed him. Excitedly, he sprang up from his seat and ran towards his messenger. He quickly scribbled down three letters inviting one representative from each kingdom to come and help out with a problem the king was having. Peering over his shoulder, the king's squire hastily exclaimed that any problem the king had could be overcome by the assistance of anyone throughout their own nation, why invite the others to fix it? The king turned, glaring at his squire, he said angrily that a problem could not fix itself, then hastily walking away, leaving the squire with his own thoughts.

Soon the letters were received, and the kings of the South, East and West, thinking of the event as a method of proving their own greatness, enlisted the most eligible person from their kingdoms and sent them on their way. The representatives each came in one at a time stating their name and State. As one saw another, they became incessantly enraged. Each screamed at the king, questioning him of the presence of the other. The king quickly calmed the three down and told them of the situation at hand.

There was a garden at the back of the castle that had been once prosperous and beautiful, however, now it has been reduced to mere soil, incompetent of being able to grow anything anymore. The king presented the three with a challenge; if they would be able to tend and recreate the garden into the prosperous greenery it once was, they would be awarded with the greatest treasure known to man. Also, with the added clause that since there was a representative from each part of the land, there should be one for the North. For this, the king chose his very own squire.

With the challenge accepted by the four representatives, the king left them on their own and thus the four men began their mission. The man from the East quickly brushed everyone aside and said that his people had dealt with this problem since the dawn of time. Getting out a small satchel, he got a pinch of powder, and sprayed it all over the fields. He turned to the others and exclaimed that they shall behold what his people have to offer. Days passed and nothing happened. Frustrated, the man from the West decided to try his own method. He got a bottle from his pack and sprayed the contents all over the field. He pompously told the others to watch and learn. Again, days passed and nothing happened. Getting even more anxious, the man from the South pulled an odd looking tool from his pack and tended the field with it. With the same amount of confidence as the other two, he walked off. For the next few days, again, they waited to no sign of prosperity. In the end the squire tried his hand at it by coming up with a mixture of different ingredients in order to fix the problem which hailed to no success.

Discouraged, the four men went to the king stating that they were not able to return the garden into its original state. Angered by these words and the lack of progress, the king ordered that the men were not to leave until some sign of life was sprouting from that garden. Becoming immensely homesick and tired of living in the outdoors, the representatives decided to do the unthinkable. They each gave their materials to the squire, who then used his ability to conjure up remedies in order to make a restoration potion out of the powder, liquid and the strange tool for mixing. As soon as they sprayed this newly formed mixture onto the field, grass began to flourish from every corner.

Excited, the four men rushed to the king to share their story of success. Hearing of the tale of prosperity, the king told them to wait while he fetched their reward. Now able to tolerate each other because of the long, exhausting experience they had been through, they stood and waited quietly. The king returned with five branches. He presented each man with one and kept one for himself. Observing the useless trash they were given, each representative, including the king's loyal squire, threw down their branches in front of the king and screamed angrily that they had been cheated and that this is nothing of great value. The king sat calmly on his throne while he watched and heard the criticism of each person and of his own apparent treachery. When all the men had said what they had to say, the king stood up with his own branch in hand. He continued to snap it in half.

"What I have given you today," said the king at last "is much more valuable than any amount of gold you'll ever obtain in your lifetime." Confused, the men looked at each other as to where the king was heading with this. "Few weeks ago, I saw branches, not men, come in, able to do anything. However, when a slight pressure was applied to them, they would easily break." The king continued to snap his own branch and throw it at the feet of the men, picking up the remaining four branches in the process. "Now, I see those same branches, joined together, using their individual abilities as one to overcome anything that comes their way." The king continued attempt to break the four branches together to no avail. "See how they cannot be broken? These branches represent you and the bonds that you have created. Alone, you cannot do anything, but together, everything is within the grasp of our hands."

Short Story: Third Place
Another Lesson for the Infant

By Rica Feng

My professor entered the auditorium and turned on the projector. Then, he began his speech:

“Every human is shaped by their early beliefs,” he began. The image of an infant presented itself on the screen. Usually in presentations like this there would be notes on the side, but there weren’t any today. The professor continued, “The only stage of life where anybody is free from any belief is in infancy.” In my head, I agreed, but I knew the other students and I realized that whatever our professor had in store for us, it would be tedious.

He continued his speech: “Infancy is the stage where the mind is neutral and that it can make no difference between black and white. So then tell me, why do we have problems with prejudice and discrimination in the world today?”

Some of the students were bewildered at the sudden change of material. In Psychology class, we had been studying the brain for weeks now. Everybody already knew prejudice is bad; it’s looked down upon. My friends often talked about their pals who had to deal with discrimination, but as far as I saw, I don’t think their conversations ever made any difference in their dilemma.

Despite the strange change in agenda, I continued listening and my hand went up. Actually, all 60 hands in the room shot up in the air in response to the professor’s question. The professor chose a student near me.

“Not everyone in the world was brought up in the same way,” the chosen student said. “Many people come from different backgrounds and cultures, so some people are influenced about other cultures when they are younger. These people then grew up and might have misleading thoughts about other races. Those who were not prejudiced probably weren’t influenced at all. They thought of everyone as the same.” I thought it was a good answer, and it was something that was expected from a high-ranking college like this.

“Yes, that’s all true.” The professor said not content with his answer. “You there—the redhead,” he said pointing to another student, “What do you think of all this?” This professor was notorious for the way he spoke to his students. Nobody argued with him though.

Although the girl was called by her hair color instead of her name, she still answered. “It’s not completely true that everyone is born neutral. There was a study I read up once about tests done on

babies. They were given photographs of both deformed and beautiful people, and they were asked to choose which picture they liked more, and they always chose the beautiful ones!”

The professor leaned on his desk. He was always so intimidating. “That’s a very interesting study,” he said. His tone of speech started to get more aggressive. His next question: “What has been done to help cure this awful way of thinking? Was there anything even done at all?” Fewer hands shot up.

“Well...” another girl said after being picked, “There were a lot of social reforms for African Americans and women in the past. Because of them, they were given many more rights including suffrage and jobs and other opportunities. “

“What about the common people?” The professor asked. “What did they do to help?” Judging by his voice, the professor was becoming impatient.

“Well, the social reforms were mainly run by the common people-“

“So would you say those who were not in these social reforms are prejudiced?” The professor interrupted.

“...No.” she answered quietly, and then she stopped speaking. Was he just doing this to show how intimidating he could possibly be? He diverted his attention away from the girl. “Does anybody else have anything to say?” he shouted. I thought the class would disrupt into chaos but amazingly, a few students still lifted their hands into the air. The professor chose an outrageous boy in the back corner of the room and then, the largest irony of the day unfolded.

“You can’t be serious,” stated the boy confidently. “You can’t talk about such things when you’re prejudiced too.”

At this point some of the students yelled and I felt nauseous. I also saw some of the anxious students nod slowly in agreement. The professor asked the boy to recall his prejudiced nature and he responded with a few examples from past weeks, all involving conflicts with other students. He then stated that the professor always judged students based on background and not on academics or character. The boy was right; and he always did this in front of all the students. He had done so for weeks, and nobody ever opposed him until now. Maybe, everybody was just too frightened.

“So what?” the professor retorted. “Do you think I still would have judged my students based on background if at least one of you spoke up? Not a single one of my students ever opposed my actions, even when I humiliated them. You all sat and watched everyday as I did this. Do you all believe not speaking up will make anything any better?” The professor frowned and then he said, “I’m ashamed of all of you. Is it possible to make any sort of difference in the world if you won’t even stand up for any of your colleagues?”

Everybody in the room knew the answer, but not a single guilty hand was present in the air now.

Short Story: Honorable Mention
전소사 (Holocaust)

By Scott Shima

At the end of the Korean War, otherwise known as the “Forgotten War”, one country became two.

November 20th. 2:00 A.M. I stood alone. Tattered clothes, a broken soul and a hungry stomach. The weather was biting cold. This may be the last chance to turn back. Defecting from North Korea is a capital offense punishable by torture, forced labor, and sometimes even execution. Failure was not an option. But I had no fear.

The plan is to run. Nothing else. The obstacles in my path are: A large fence, guard towers armed with sniper rifles, the frozen Tumen River and a long stretch to a new land. There was no other option. Why leave? Was it the numbing pain from hunger, the freezing winters, the limited freedoms, or was it just that there was nothing left?

My family and I resided in the countryside of Kaechon until they were sent to one of those most harsh labor camps in North Korea, camp number 14, for speaking out against our leader Kim Jong Il. They disappeared. I never heard from them again. I guess I will never know what happened to them in camp. I wondered why they didn’t take us too? I was forced to take care of my little brother and sister. Unfortunately, they didn’t make it through the harsh famine and winter, for they were only infants at the time, and disease was imminent. I am now left only with a faint memory of them; I was only 10 at that time. I spent my childhood scrounging for food, tearing bark off trees and picking grass. I never went to school, just tried to live day by day finding food. I got used to it. I am now 18, 5’10, and 100 pounds.

It was time to go, no regrets, no fear, no emotion, no hope. Escape was the only option. I was hidden by the falling snow and night. I was just a shadow in the distance. I ran. Freezing. Across the frozen Tumen river. Across the snowy plains. Over a mountain. Into an abandoned house. I had made it. I was out of North Korea. But my troubles were far from over.

Two months later. I had met up with a group of other North Koreans who knew of a way to safety. An underground railroad. A path to freedom. We were being hunted; the consequence: deportation. We had not made it yet. The only thing to do now was to hide and wait.

While in hiding I had met a girl named Mi-Sang, who told me her story. When she crossed the border, she was sold off by her landlord to a Chinese brothel for 400 dollars. She also spoke of other North Korean women who had been sold to brothels. It was hard to hear.

Our goal was to make it to Seoul, South Korea, where there were places for us to stay. Warm beds. Hot food. Good conditions. A South Korean pastor was to escort us across China and help us get to other countries where we weren’t being hunted. I was extremely humbled by this. He taught me about Christianity. I had never heard of anything like it. Faith. Compassion. Love. But the time for that was later. It was time to go now. A sense of relief came over me. I was on my way to freedom, a new home, a better life. But again, my troubles were far from over.

The van had stopped. The wait. The back doors opened. We stared down the faces of 3 Chinese officers. We knew it was over. Some tried to run. It was no use. They had arrested the South Korean pastor who was driving. A Chinese officer took down a child and her mother. Anger overcame me. Anger that they would be deported and sold off; anger that the government would not help them; anger

against North Korea. I took action. I jolted out. I began beating the guard. For my dead family. For my lost childhood. For everything I was denied. Until I was restrained. Although the rest of us had been caught, thankfully the mother and daughter escaped. I thought to myself, there must be a God. We were deported. But it was not all over. There is still hope for others.

This may be a fictional account of a North Korean refugee, but it is not exaggerated in any way. What most Americans do not realize is that these kinds of things happen all the time in North Korea. People die. Including children. There is a Holocaust much like the one that occurred in Nazi Germany going on NOW. Concentration camps are enforced to those who break the laws, where inmates are forced to do harsh labor and are beaten, raped, and starved to death. Government regulates everything. The outside world is unknown. Eighty percent of women are sold off to the sex trade. Under a corrupt communist dictator, North Korea is a stricken place to live. How can you help? North Korea is thousands of miles away. You can speak. Don't let ignorance blind you. Tell the stories. Be willing to learn. Be united as one. There is no "us" and "them." In the end we are all human beings. Heal the world. "Be a voice for the voiceless."

Short Story: Honorable Mention The Island

By Steven Kawamoto

The sky was getting grey. We had been warned about inclement weather before our flight. All of a sudden: RIP! RUMBLE! FLASH! We had flown into a thunderstorm. The flight had become a roller coaster ride. Up, down, shake, rattle, roar! It was getting worse. The pilot screamed over the intercom, "Fasten your seatbelts!...I think the plane is going down!" Just then another CRACK! BOOM!....and then silence. The engines had died. The pilot cried "This is it! Brace yourselves!"

I awoke amid coconut trees and birds singing. I couldn't make out where I was. My body hurt all over. I gritted my teeth and crawled out of the vegetation. I called out "Hello! Anybody out there?" No response. Off in the distance I saw two objects approaching. I couldn't make them out. Are they animal or human I thought? Where are the other passengers who were aboard the plane? The two objects approached closer and I discerned that they were two men. Goodness...I'm not alone!

The stout and dark of the two was named Dante. The slim and bald one was named Jose. We had taken the Cessna together from Jamaza to Hamoa. It was only supposed to be a two- hour flight. We had exchanged brief conversation aboard the plane regarding our trip plans, backgrounds, and origins. As the two came closer, I met them. "What in the world happened? Where are we?"

Dante replied, "Jack, your guess is as good as mine."

Jose added, " Geez, you think anyone else is on this island? What are we going to do?"

We deliberated and decided that we would split the island into three parts due to our cultural differences. One for each us – every *man* for themselves! Dante took the west, I the middle, and Jose the east. Each part of the island had its advantages and disadvantages.

The island was not so large. It was small enough such that we could observe each other. Dante was African-American. With his height he could obtain food from the high trees. With his strength he could recover materials to build a strong shelter. Unfortunately, he lacked the know-how to make use of his resources effectively. He struggled to make a hospitable shelter.

I was the ingenious of the bunch. I was able to produce fire! I was able to catch fish from the sea. I could navigate our direction. But everyone has a disadvantage. Mine was a prosthetic leg. And although I had the knowledge to do for my own, the rigors of daily survival would test my physical abilities. My upscale Caucasian upbringing wouldn't serve me here.

Jose was Mexican. He had spent time living on a ranch. He had wilderness training. PePe, as we would come to call him later, had knowledge of the land. He could identify edible vegetation. Despite his training and knowledge, PePe was not suited for survival. He was overweight and diabetic. He tired easily. The chores of daily survival would strain him almost beyond his capacity.

And so we set out to live on the island. Separate but together. Each could see how the other was fairing, for good and for bad. Each had their own challenges and fortitudes. But no challenge was greater than finding a way off the island. Individually, each man could survive on his part of the island. But survival is not living. In order to live we would have to play our strengths for our weaknesses and swallow our pride and work together.

One day I decided to set out to the shore. I had fashioned a flag out of plane wreckage and built a fire so all could see. I roused the attention of the others. Leery eyed and probing they approached. I invited them to come closer. I offered some of the local wildlife I had caught and cooked. They accepted apprehensively. They questioned my motives. I explained our situation. I implored their cooperation. After some debate we agreed to work together. Dante was charged with gathering materials to build a

shelter and some sort of boat or canoe. Jose was given the role of cooking and preparing meals and maintaining the shelter. I was charged with devising a way off the island.

Initially we fought and argued. Life was hard. We would take two steps forward and one step back. Our fighting would become friendship as our efforts began taking shape. We would swap stories of growing up during this whole time. Dante came from Bronx, New York. Jose was from Zacataces, Mexico. I was from Boston, Massachusetts. We had different upbringings, morals, values. How could three people from such different walks of life ever get along I thought? And although we looked, walked, and talked different there was one thing we did have in common: We were all human beings. Human beings that shared a desire to live!

After one year and many failed attempts at leaving the island, we had finally honed down just the right vessel to make our journey off the island. Had we continued living separate lives, we would have perished. This is the way of the world. A separate, divided, singular world is a world that will perish. A united and harmonized world is one that will see the end of time.

Short Story: Honorable Mention Unity and Racial Harmony

By Ben Kim

My Name is Nick Jackson. I been teaching sixth grade at Washington Elementary School for three years. Kids at Washington Elementary are mostly from poor white families but there are a few black students who attend. Those black students are also from poor families; however, white students still treat them badly.

There are 22 students in my class: 20 are white and 2 are black. As a black teacher, I have hard time dealing with my white students. They always ignore me when I am trying to say something and insult me when I make mistakes, but I try to understand them and show how much I care for them.

However, my two black students, Jacob and Derek, hate white students because white students make fun of their skin, noses, lips, and accents. They don't want white students to pick on them. I told them once, "The one who endures the suffering is the true winner." I tried to give them some hope and try to encourage them to understand white students.

One day in April 1987, something that I never expected happened. Jacob and Derek beat up a white student named Jake, who always makes racist comments about them. I yelled at Jacob and Derek, "See me after school!"

Jacob and Derek came to my office after school to see me. Even though they may look scary to some classmates, they are good students. They work harder than most white students. I am really proud of them, but I was upset with them because they beat up Jake. I asked them why they did it. They said Jake spit on them and called them "negro." I told them, "I know how you guys feel, but in life, there are things worse than getting picked on by white kids. My father and mother got killed by five white farmers when I was 10 years old. So I had to live with my uncle. I used to hate white people when I was your age. I thought that all white people are evil and cruel, but I changed my mind when I went to Harvard in 1979. I met a white professor named Dr. Smith. He was different from other white people I'd seen. I was getting a C in his class, but he gave me special tutors every Thursday night and I was able to get a B in the class. Dr. Smith once told me, 'Only the uneducated whites don't appreciate people's value. I believe everyone is born equal and should be equal no matter what his or her skin color. I treat everyone with compassion and love.' He gave me hope and made me change my mind about white people." Jacob and Derek were crying. I said, "Don't cry. Be strong." I sent them home.

I sat on my chair thinking about how to deal with racial discord between white and black students. I wanted to educate both white and black students so that they realize that skin color doesn't matter that much in life.

The next day, I taught the class about the early history of humans. In the middle of the lecture, I said, "Our human species started in Africa. We humans, no matter our racial differences, share a common ancestor. Our DNA is 100% identical to each other. We have to feel compassion toward each other, care for each other, and work together to create a better society.

I paused to see students' facial expressions. Everyone looked amazed. I spoke again, "Who are we? We are American. Not Asian- American, African- American, or Mexican- American, but we are all equally American. No matter what our skin colors are, we are all American living in the United States. We all grew up in the United States, eat the same food, live in the same types of houses, drink the same water, and share the same American dream. We must be united despite our racial differences. We are

the number one country that other countries look up to. If we get rid of our old belief that whites are superior to other races and adopt the new belief that everyone is equal, then other countries will follow in our steps and try to adopt the new belief. Let's open our mind; we are no longer living in 1800s. Slavery was abolished a long time ago. We are living in the late 1900s. We are educated enough to realize that our old belief is wrong. Everyone must be equal and treated equally. Everyone deserves happiness, freedom, and love. Racial harmony must be accomplished to be the united people of the United States of America!"

My students cried with compassion. Students hugged each others. I looked around and found Jake, who was talking to Jacob and Derek. Jake said, "I am truly sorry, forgive me. Do you guys want to play basketball today after school?" Jacob and Derek said, "We forgive you, bro. sure, let's play!" They shook hands and smiled at each other. It was the happiest day at Washington Elementary School. Since that day, white students and black students no longer hated each other. They achieved racial harmony and unity.

Short Story: Honorable Mention
The Cultural Clash

By Emily Fang

My mother snatched her hand away from me. "You are not allowed to marry him, Chu-Xing! I will not allow it. You are breaking every single Chinese traditional foundation that is established in your life. You will not be my daughter if you marry this white man," she said coldly.

I stared at her in disbelief. "Aside from color, is there any reason why I cannot marry this man? If he was Chinese, you would by no means speak to me like this. If you are my mother and you love me, you *will* be there for me."

From the beginning, my family had always opposed my relationship with John. I tried to introduce him to my family, trying to ever so quietly slowly slip him into my life. They had none of it. Where there were family dinners, there came questions. They probed about his income, family, religion, and culture as soon as he left the room. Chinese relatives and family members questioned our relationship. "Why not a good Chinese man who shares the same customs? You should not have gone to America." I heard those statements frequently and it frustrated me to the core. They were basing their opinions on our two different cultures. To them, it didn't matter if I loved him. Tradition was tradition. Long family blood lines had done the same and in their justification, I was an unjust, shameful rebel for not respecting my parents' wishes. The American culture and Chinese culture were worlds apart and of course, it was preposterous to mix these two entirely different ones together.

Maybe it was because my parents never had the choice of finding true love. They were forced into an arranged marriage at the ripe age of 17, built under an inescapable agreement, wedded amongst familiar customs and traditions. I didn't want that. I wanted true love. I wanted to wear a sparkly, white dress followed by a long train. I wanted to exchange my vows in English. I wanted to see John in his tuxedo at the altar, standing there with his gorgeous smile. But most of all, I wanted desperately for my mother to understand that behind his color and race, there was a man who loved me and respected my culture.

Days passed and our wedding date loomed closer. I felt nauseous. On John's side, his entire family would attend. Though hesitant at first, they were proud of this cultural clash; they just simply accepted it.

But two hours before the wedding, I heard a loud clamor that I could distinguish easily from the soft, reserved murmurs in the hall. I peeked outside my door and a long line of Chinese people, dressed in red, trickled into the church and sat on the seats. To the Chinese, red was the color of health, happiness, harmony, peace and prosperity.

My mother walked up to me and put her two hands on my shoulders. "Chu-Xing, I should not have said those words to you. You're in a different culture now and I was afraid you would lose your heritage," she said as a tear rolled down.

I hugged her and whispered, "Mom, I'll always be your daughter. I will always be Chinese. Just married to an American man, that's all."

We laughed in each other's embrace and she stood back, fixing my veil. I looked at my mother carefully. She was born in a traditional world, always accustomed to the same customs that her whole blood lines had created. Letting me have my happiness was hard for her. I finally understood why she had been so reluctant. To her, letting me go was letting tradition go. I was going to birth future generations who would not be closely familiarized with Chinese customs.

As I walked down the aisle, I smiled at the strangeness of it all. To the right, John's American family sat in formal attire with tuxedos and long dresses. To the left, my own Chinese family sat in red frocks, embroidered with elaborate gold and silver designs. As I got up to the altar, I held John's hand. We had finally been united, but best of all, we had brought two worlds together.

On Christmases, we spend our days in sunny California with John's parents. The tree is always decorated with assorted, colored bulbs and shiny ornaments. The fireplace is lit and we gather around the table, giving thanks to the Lord and eating with antique silverware. On Chinese New Year, we fly over to China. Relatives and friends bring their children to the feast and we play with firecrackers on the street. We eat dumplings, rice, and noodles with chopsticks, which John has some difficulty with. Then every August, the month when we were married, our two families would converge. Despite language barriers, they picked up bits and pieces of each other's words and got along well. It still makes me smile to see my parents greet John's parents with bows while his parents greet them with a hand shake. Though so different in every aspect, these two cultures managed to meld together quite beautifully.

Short Story: Honorable Mention

Unity in Family

By Natalie Vela

My grandparents were the first Hispanic family to move into a predominately white neighborhood. My grandma remembers saying, “I bet all the white people are thinking, ‘There goes the neighborhood,’” and she laughs. She says she laughs because they thought the same thing when years later, the first African American family moved in.

Two weeks after my grandparents moved into the neighborhood, a lady named Mary, from up the street, came over to talk to my grandma. Grandma says Mary was a very nice lady. She would invite them over for dinner and she would come over and teach my grandma English. She introduced them to the rest of the neighbors, who later became really good friends with Grandma.

When Grandma moved into the neighborhood, she was pregnant with my mom, and six years later she had my uncle. They were the first Hispanic children to go to the all white school. Shortly after that, the African American families moved in and went to the same school.

My mom remembers going to Queen Anne. She remembers having all kinds of friends. Her friends were white, African Americans, Mexican, Samoan, and Chinese. She thought it funny that at school all the children got along, but at home, it was a different story. A lot of the children always got into fights and called each other racial slurs. My mom knew it was because of their parents. My mom and uncle were never involved in any of those fights or confrontations.

My mom’s parents never taught them to be racists. Just like when the African Americans and Chinese moved in, so did they. My grandma says, “We are all the same people—just different colors.”

So now that I take a look at my family, I give thanks to my grandma for being the person she was then and the person she is now. My oldest brother’s first wife was Filipino; therefore I have a niece who is half Filipino. My second oldest brother’s wife is Japanese, and my niece and nephew are the cutest kids ever. My next brother’s wife is African-American. She is very tall and beautiful and I can’t wait until they too have children because they too will be gorgeous and born into a great family, filled with diversity and unity. As for me, my boyfriend is half Jamaican and half Guatemalan and he is the most beautiful person.

I am thankful for my grandma for being the type of strong and forgiving person she was because if she hadn’t been, we wouldn’t be the family we are today.

When we come together for a family get together it is so much fun. We hear all types of music. We dance different dances and my most favorite of all is the different types of food. What one place can you find pancit, lumpia, greens gumbo, sushi, udon, Guatemalan tamales, and arroz con pollo? Not many!

We are all so diverse, why can’t we all live in unity? My family makes it seem so easy. When I get older and I have children of my own, I will teach them to be like my grandma, my mom and my brothers. I will teach them that we are all the same people, just different colors.



Poetry

Poetry: First-Place Tie
Thoughts on the Death of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By Justine Esmino

Once again, hatred speaks,
uttering ugly epithets.
Once again, prejudice delivers a verdict
and the sentence is death.
Once again, a martyr is made
From the tapestry of a life,
a passionate life, a public life.

A muzzle flash and a gunshot sounds
and a promise is left unfulfilled.
One heart dies and millions break
at the sight of hope bleeding on the floor.
Only in hindsight can we know
that though the heart stopped,
the spirit soared

and the promise is not yet broken.

Poetry: First-Place Tie
Our Trek

By Andrew Hwang

We come from an obscure place far, far away.
From long, arduous voyages across stormy seas
From disease-ridden living quarters in the belly of a wooden monster
From putrid stench rising into unfortunate nostrils
To the colossal green statue at the end of the tunnel,
Whose torch burns with the promise of a new life.

We come from isolated communities of brothers and sisters.
From rejecting strangers with different appearances
From long lines for run-down bathrooms
From sitting in the back of public buses
To igniting the burning passion for equality,
A journey that would result in pain, suffering, and ultimately, unity.

We come from a nation in turmoil.
From bullets meant for innocent lives
From murdering a man for whistling at a woman
From gallons of water blasting against raw flesh
To a dream that touched millions,
In which white hands were able to clasp black hands.

We come from overcoming seemingly impossible odds.
From breaking down invisible barriers
From turning fantasy into reality
From discovering success through cooperation and collaboration
To one singular nation,
Finally worthy of the name United States.

Poetry: Second Place Tie
I Am Me

By Matthew Jones

I am from television
From forks and spoons
I am from the apartment building
cold and small
I am from the banzai trees and
the palm trees
whose long gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

(festivals)

I am from おまつり and curly hair
from Dwayne and Miyaki
I'm from procrastination and laziness
and from stubbornness.

("Be patient")

I'm from "がまんしろ!" and "Don't try, do!"
and the star-spangled banner
I'm from たいがい (contests)
I'm from Yokohama, Japan and Gardena, California
rice and chicken
from the house floating away
my grandma and grandpa
losing their house to a flood.

**Poetry: Second Place
A Conversation Over Tea**

By Kelly Kodama

Honey child,
Do you know that now we can both use the same honey pot to sweeten our tea?
It wasn't happening in 1960. You see now . . .
Tea leaves from China, India, South Africa, are loose and free
The East call it red tea, the West thinks its black tea
Cultivated by human hands from the soil rich in diversity
I can read the leaves in the bottom of my cup
And the symbol I see is a House
This means success and change
With Nations united and no more blame
Countries working together offering their best resources for all
to live in harmony and peace...
"Pip pip cherrio" my soul is happy to feel that
one day Martin Luther King and Lin Xiaobo's nonviolent struggles
will not be in vain.
"Peace in the Middle East," I hear it proclaimed
Not trite but true
For honey child this is what I can see when I look into my tea

**Poetry: Third-Place Tie
Cabbage Unity**

By Prachumsri Wudhidham

Past the scorching Sahara desert,
On the banks of the Nile,
A crocodile bird stays alert,
Inside a crocodile.
The bird continues without fear
To peck and eat off of its peer,
By looking out for any threat,
The bird and croc are a perfect duet.

And over the fence,
In your neighbor's backyard,
A Swiss chard grows
With little offense.
Planted near,
Not so far,
A cabbage grows,
Without a scar.

The differences between
May be obscene,
But together they make
A flawless team.
The bird sees danger
And warns its friend.
The cabbage and chard
Make amends.

Now if you and me
Would stop and see
That even nature has some unity,
Then you and me
Would end this spree
Of hatred and animosity.

Poetry: Third-Place Tie
A Simple Sphere

By Angela Bang

Once upon a dream
Not quite real, but yet very so
Gathered a group of sad beings
Different in body, mind, and soul
With only mistrust of each other to unite their roles.

“Let us make something beautiful,” they cried
Eyes shining with hope
“Something wonderful, that will help us cope.”

The first to begin still had tears on her face
Her heart broken by cruel words
She brought forth a sphere, quite plain
Dues paid, she withdrew, amid stares of disdain.

Sneering at the first, the second stepped forth
Beating in his chest a ghastly lump of lead
In longing for his heart he had, so full of cheer
Bestowed the color upon the sphere.

“Such an ugly shade, that is!” said the third
A barren body had made her vicious indeed
And in remembrance of her once child
Planted inside the sphere seeds, and smiled.

“Wait!” cried the forgotten fourth
Desperately, before the spell could be done
He added his own touch of taste to the cache
And in doing so, felt some of the pain seep away.

An apple then formed
From the hearts of four souls
Round, red-faced
Full of seeds and sweet of taste.

And taking part of their creation
The four broken beings could not help but see
If they all worked together without discrimination or fear
They could make something wonderful out of a simple sphere.

Poetry: Honorable Mention
The Sculptor

By Giacomo Casanova

There once was an ignorant sculptor with a dream
But along the way another man came
And told him to stop chasing his dreams.
Then the man said "I am a sculptor
And my dream is to make a sculpture of a child's mind."
Then the other simply replied
"You are but a fool who does not care,
As you are building it but
Are doing it wrong"
"What do you know? I will build this mind
With what I consider essential beliefs for a child"
The other man then told him he forgot unity
And that the child's mind was in disarray.
The sculptor then grew red -- as red as a man could.
He yelled, "What is unity?
A way for one to shed a man's dignity and proudness.
This mind does not need others.
It can live on its own."
The other man accepted the sculptor's wish
And to make amends he offered the sculptor help.
"I will aid you by bringing you materials
But I by myself can't bring you what you need.
I will request for my brothers aid, if that is fine with you."
The sculptor agreed and later that day
The man and his brother came.
All three men by the end of the day were exhausted from working.
But it all paid off as the sculptor had finished.
As the sculptor admired his masterpiece, he hears the man laugh
The man informs him how he got his way
And the child's mind knows of unity
The sculptor yells "What? You put unity in my sculpture?"
"No," the man said, "I only taught it how to see
And that mind saw three men work together
Even if they have different ambitions and values."

**Poetry: Honorable Mention
Then and Now**

By Miles Blum

A long time ago people would discriminate against other races.
Now, you all see a bunch of different colored faces.

People would discriminate against Asians, Latinos and Blacks.
Now, we have overcome many stepping stones to change that.

During the last century one big problem was segregation.
Now, we have grown into a much better and equal nation.

We used to look at each other and make presumptions.
Now, many people think before they make assumption.

Racism was a large and horrible part of society.
Now, look around you at all the variety.

Back then a Black person could not been become a resident.
Look at us now, we have a Black President.

Poetry: Honorable Mention
American Spells Kin

John Villalona

I am the brown fella that roams the streets to get to place to place.
No matter what, first impressions will involve my race.
According to "first impressions" I won't amount to anything in my life.
I'll probably be in the kitchen cutting onions with a knife,
But who are they to say what will happen in my life.
We're not allowed to have money and be successful
When I'm done with my life they will be regretful.

Everywhere I go people see me differently.
Why can't they take a deeper look and see me for me?
I walk into a store all eyes on me,
This ain't Channel Five! So stop watching me like "Glee."
No matter what, I love you, you still try to hate.
And everything I do, you still gotta discriminate.
Why can't I be with an Asian or a white girl?
Is it because I lack the skin tone of a shiny pearl?
In America we are all different colors
But in the end I realize we are all brothers.
In America I look at everyone the same,
We are on the same team, in the same game.
We all wanna achieve the same thing
Get a nice wife and give her the nice shiny ring.
Have a big house and be successful.
Like I said they will be regretful.
Because no matter what, I'm gonna make it out there.
It don't matter what hood you are from, straight or kinky hair.
Everyone in America has an equal chance,
So what do you want, torn up jeans or designer pants?
You just gotta work for it, some harder than others
Because of this, people think they are better than their American brothers.
We come in and out of the world the same
Don't complicate it, it's really plain.
When ignorant people say we're different it doesn't phase me, I just sit back and grin.
Because illiterate people like them can't tell that American spells kin.
We might look a little different for example, you look like steel and I look like tin.
Even though we look different, we're all the same and that's what it means to be
American

Poetry: Honorable Mention
First Touch

By Russell Hirata

Why are our hands able to lock perfectly with each other?

I am you, you are me.

I see that different skin color,
yet we are both the same human being.

We speak in different tongues.

I recognize the joy of a smile that comes from our young.

I stare at the horrors of life,
while you take the punishments and strife.

There are boundaries separating our lands
Yet there isn't a wall to stop the grasp of our hands.

Empathy, I feel your pain.

Still, no matter what, we shall walk a road.

Yet we walk a road that is a diverging lane.

With our hands we have the power to pave a new path,
coming closer, coming together.

Yet there are differences.

Our unity is able to surpass problems, issues and corruption.

Once our hands are done with paving and finally meet,

The world will change and be liberated.

Why are our hands able to lock perfectly with each other?

Poetry: Honorable Mention
Hidden Discrimination

By Sara Valdez

Wires and broken glass are felt as I'm holding onto my stomach
I hear screams far away and I feel I can't get up
I believe I'm going insane
People surround me and I start to lose my breath
I hear strangers talking but I don't understand what is said
Dragged and being pushed around took only seconds
Just for being the person I am and the people I'm seen with
Discrimination keeps contaminating these buried souls
Hole hearted and unsure
I don't understand all this fear
I'm staring out at this cold cruel world
No one seems to notice me but they all just stare
Not one person seems to care
I'm tired of the racism and the things seen on T.V.
Like the white racist family on these talk shows
To the hate of interracial relationships
People just don't like the reality of things
Blinded eyes and hidden faces
Too much to deal with all these different cases
Stop the hate and lend a hand
Forgive the past and live up to the future
Everyone should accept every different culture and race
Changes are made every single day
Change for the better
No more abuse
Don't judge on color or on a person's appearance
Just knowing the heart is the way to go
Just let it go and unite

Poetry: Honorable Mention
Language Barrier

By Ik Hun Chang

I speak a language different from you
but is that a reason for us to be untrue.
English as a second language
comes with a certain baggage.

One day I was in school.
My classmates made me feel like a fool.
I said a word in a certain tone
and their reaction made me moan.

I try so hard to speak just right
but it only becomes a fight.
Not with them but with me
I want to overcome this barrier and flee.

It's not just the speaking
but the struggle is also with the writing.
I know that language is a form of expression;
however, English as a second language affects my comprehension.

So please be patient with me
and do not judge me unwillingly.
If you take the time to understand me
you would be amazed with our similarity.

I am your peer.
There are so many things we could cheer.
Like a movie, fashion, or a song.
We could be friends before long

So next time you hear me talk
just remember to take the walk.
I came from miles away
but my language barrier should not make you go astray

Poetry: Honorable Mention
A Walk through High School

By Brittanni Burress

I walk through the gates of North High School
And I suddenly feel at home. Why?
Because I see a school with faces of different races
As I walk the halls I see so much diversity
A Japanese girl laughing and smiling with her Korean and Chinese friends
The Mexican teacher getting the respect she deserves from her students
The Black and White girl jumping with joy as they get their A's
And the Samoan boy singing his tune for the whole school to hear
Only now do I see the meaning of the saying
A nation not divided but united
North Torrance is a school that is not separate but one
A school that will take in a person no matter the color of their skin
Now I know why Dr. Martin Luther King fought so hard for this
Because I am truly blessed to have the opportunity to walk the halls of my school without criticism.
Even though he has passed on I know Dr. Martin Luther King is smiling...
His dream has finally come true

Poetry: Honorable Mention
A Vision of Many

By Daely Simons

*To stand and become one in a sea of many
to combine vision and action
to combine thought and speech
To act and think with the power for the people
of the people
by the people
One person standing alone, acting as many.
To think, to act, to become one, to make change.
Change for the better, change in a positive direction,
change for the future.
Building on the past and learning from mistakes.
Alone I make a difference, together we conquer change.*



Essays

Essay: First Place
Nobody is Born Racist

By Scott Hascup

Racism has been around since man first started traveling. Most people know of racism in the United States and about the civil rights movement, but racism has been around for much longer than that. Racism existed in Europe for hundreds of years. When the European powers started traveling to other countries and saw new looking people, they immediately discriminated against them. Most people know of racism towards blacks, but there are so many more races that have been discriminated against. Even in the United States people used to be very racist towards Asians during the industrialization era. Intolerance has led to some of the worst events in history. The Holocaust happened because of discrimination. History has repeatedly shown us that whenever one group of people believes that it is superior in every way to another group, bad things happen.

Racism was very prominent in the United States throughout the 1950's and '60's. African Americans were discriminated by most of society. One man saw this first hand and devoted his life to putting an end to it. His name was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He sought to make everyone equal, and he did this in a very effective way. He gave many speeches, but one of his most famous speeches was, "I Have a Dream," in which he really opened the eyes of people all over the world. He dreamed of a world where everyone was equal and the color of someone's skin or their beliefs wouldn't make him/her any less of a person than anyone else. He would say that if we were all color blind, there would be no racism because there is nothing besides the color of the skin that is different between different people. Martin Luther King, Jr. made it his life's goal to gain equality among all people, and his dream was accomplished.

A more recent event that happened on September 11, 2001 led to a lot of discrimination. There was a terrorist attack against the U.S. that destroyed the World Trade Center buildings. The terrorist group behind these attacks was called Al-Qaeda. They were a small group of Islamic Arabs. Because of what they did, many people were racist towards Arabs and thought that they were all terrorists. This was not true at all. Arabs in the United States became discriminated against everywhere they went. This was not fair at all. Just because a couple of people of a certain race or religion do something bad, it does not mean everyone else from that race is also that way. We can't be prejudiced and just think a certain way about people just because some people that looked like them did something bad. People really need to get to know each other before thinking certain ways about them.

Today, America is one of the most diverse countries in the world. We have pretty much every race and religion in the world living close together. Even in the same classroom, there are least five different races and religions all living in perfect harmony. People now don't even notice that people are of different races. Nobody is born racist; it is all in the things we pick up from the people around us. Think about what the world would be like today without other races. More and more immigrants or people of different races are holding important positions, even the Presidential office. Even though different religions, or races, might not get along, they still coexist together on this world. We all have to live in this world, so why shouldn't we respect each other? We are all people, it doesn't matter where we come from or what we believe in, we are all the same. No matter what we look like, we are all the same inside.

Essay: Second-Place Change

By Michael Whiteside

Throughout time, things are constantly changing all around us. Everything is changing, from technology to fashion, and it never seems to stop. Some things change for the better, and some for the worse. But there are certain things that always seem to be present. This includes things like discrimination. Discrimination has been present since the beginning of time, in forms such as racism and sexism, and it will most likely always be that way. As long as people have differences, there will always be conflict. In order to solve the problem of discrimination, have people become unified, and understanding of one another, the reasons for why people discriminate against one another must be known. The reasons for discrimination are that people are judgmental; they enjoy being better than others, and they fear each other's differences.

One reason that people discriminate against each other is that people always judge others based upon their appearance. Everyone does this, whether he/she realizes it or not. People always make judgments about each other based on how they look, and this affects how they think of each other. These preconceived notions have nothing to do with how they actually act and what their real personality is like. This can cause problems and conflicts between people. The solution to this would obviously be to try and not judge people before one knows them. But this is very hard to do, since it would require one to change how they look at everything. They would have to focus on the positive aspects of people instead of the negative aspects.

Another reason for discrimination is that people have this natural desire to want to be better than other people. No one simply wants to be mediocre. They enjoy knowing that there are people worse than them. Some people probably don't notice that they do this, but they are subconsciously thinking that way. The only way to change this is to change your mindset about people. You shouldn't focus on what their weaknesses are, but what their strengths are.

The final reason for why people discriminate against one another is because people are naturally afraid of what is different. People are used to their way of life and are not accustomed to how other people live their lives. And people don't want to get involved with other cultures because they don't want to change their lifestyle. They fear change because they just want to stick with what they know. They fear what they do not know. This is also difficult to overcome, since this is something that is natural to people. Once people are used to change and accept each other's differences will there be unity between people.

The problem of discrimination can only be solved if one knows where it comes from. The roots of discrimination are that people are judgmental, they want to be better than others and they are afraid of change. Being judgmental about people can be changed by trying not to judge people by how they look, but by how they actually are. People who enjoy being superior to others need to focus on what is good about a person, and not what is bad. And finally, people who fear change need to get used to the fact that not everyone is the same. Doing these things would help make everyone be more unified and promote peace.

Essay: Third-Place Over The Mountain

By Jong woo (Joseph) Roh

I was living in a small country called South Korea, and came to the United States three years ago. The country I lived in was only full of Korean people, and I thought whole world was only full of Koreans. However, I proved to myself that I was wrong. When I landed in America, I saw many people with black and white skin colors, and other Asian people. At first, I was too scared to talk to the Black and White people, because they had different appearances than I did. But later on, I figured out that they feel the same as I feel. I was happy to have friends from many different countries; however, as time passed, our heart was starting to get full of greed.

Since we are living in the tough world, we are looking at each other wearing the glasses called prejudice. When we look at the Black people, we think of a bad image like criminals. When we think about the White people, we think of a haughty person. When we think about the Asian people, we think of a stubborn person. I am feeling horribly sad about this situation, because I know that we were all born the same, from a mother's stomach, and we all have two eyes, one nose, and one mouth. But why are we opposing each other? It is because we forgot about the importance of cooperation. We are the same as a little puzzle that is part of a big picture. If we are not united, then we cannot complete the picture.

What do we need to do to complete the picture? We should wake up our sympathy that is sleeping in our corner of our heart. Before we scold people, we should listen to them first. That is the only way to complete the picture.

We all have different ways of thinking. And that often becomes the reason why we antagonize each other. To break that vicious cycle, we should try first to understand the other people's point of view. Without understanding, there will be no compromises and without the compromises, there will be no peaceful life.

The United States is the strongest leader of the world. But why can't another country be the leader of the world? The major difference between the United States and other countries is that the United States is a multiracial country. Even people in the United States are not united completely, but it is true that the United States is very close to finishing the picture with the perfect form. Black, White, and Asian people are now trying and starting to learn about each other's cultures, religions, and languages, which means that their mind is slowly opening to each other!

The world that we are living in now did not become the perfect form of the picture yet. However, it is same as climbing up the mountain during dawn. Even though we are climbing up the mountain in the darkness, with interruptions by prejudice and racism, if we don't give up, and if we to continue to fight it, eventually we will see the sun called a united world at the top of the mountain. Whenever we feel tired and want to give up, we should remind ourselves that the most dark time is right before the sunrise.

**Essay: Honorable Mention
A Better Tomorrow**

By Timothy Le

Today, we live in a heterogeneous world. The world is diverse with many different colors all around the earth. Martin Luther King showed us that we are all the same, and that he had a dream for all of us to come together. Although he did not get to see his dream, we are living the dream right now. Regardless of skin tone, we have a sense of unity, compassion, understanding, and cooperation with people in society. I'm pretty sure Martin Luther would be happy with our way of life now.

Society is now curious with the other cultures such as the American, African American, Mexican, and Asian cultures. We have a variety of people living in each place, which makes us feel included. Having each other makes us feel stronger because we feel the bonds between others. Having a great neighbor is a great gift because it gives us a friendly environment. From everyone being so friendly, I know most of the people that live on my block. I believe this is special because not everyone has good neighbors.

Sometimes in life we experience troublesome situations. To bring us up from our feet, we have friends to guide us. They give us simple advice or clear insights. Friends are willing to help a person to make a recovery. When I got a bad grade, my friends helped me back on my feet by comforting me. But the thing that enlightened me the most is when they said, "We're here for you." That powerful statement has stuck to me forever, and those are the type of people I rely on for understanding my situation.

Cooperating is a big part in work because without cooperation many big businesses would be shut down. Cooperating with one another shows a strong capacity for communication. Would we be who we are if there were no cooperation? That is one question I must ask. A person with great cooperation shows the following skills: listening, sharing, encouraging other, and showing appreciation. If we improve these skills, society can be a much better place, in my eyes.

I believe it is up to the generations to come to make a better society--a society that can overcome violence and hatred. For now we must start to make a change to improve the future, or we will stay the same. We can either stay the same with nothing unique, or we could change everyone's world view. I believe with the help of each other we can make a great change. I must say, we can strive for perfection if we try, because it's better than watching perfection. Just like Martin Luther, I have a dream for a perfect world.

