

Black History Essay Contest 2023 Guidelines

Essay Theme

“Fists in the Air: Protesting for Social Justice”

Grade-Level Essay Prompts

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| Elementary (3-5): | After reading at least one source about a protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance, develop an essay that supports your claim that it improved the lives of African Americans. |
| Middle School (6-8): | After reading at least two sources about a protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance, develop an essay that supports your claim that it improved the lives of African Americans. |
| High School (9-12): | After reading at least three sources about a protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance, develop an essay that supports your claim that it improved the lives of African Americans. Your essay MUST include at least one counterclaim |

Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement should explore the significance of a protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance that improved the lives of African Americans. In your essay, you must explain how the event improved the lives of African Americans in one or more of the following ways:

- Environment
- Culture
- Health
- Housing
- Business Development/Economics
- Behavior
- Educational Attainment
- Job Attainment
- Civic participation (such as voting)

Sample Thesis Statements

1. The 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama led by John Lewis improved the lives of African Americans by prompting the passage of the Voting Rights Act, which allowed more African Americans to vote peacefully.

2. Tommie Smith and John Carlos’ Black Power salute during the 1968 Olympics brought more attention to the mistreatment of Black athletes and helped to improve the lives of African Americans participating in athletics.

What Must Be Included in Your Digital Essay

1. Provide the problems that existed that made the act of resistance important. Include the context of what was happening in the country at the time.

2. Describe the ways that the act of resistance improved the lives of Black people. Did the event help to prevent discrimination? Did it help to improve access to healthcare? Did it help people to get jobs, vote, or go to school? Include all the ways the event helped improve the lives of African Americans.
3. If possible, describe the effects the act of resistance had on the community. Include any statistics about how many people's lives improved or any other information you can find about the effects of the event.
4. Provide a description of how the act of resistance affected you personally. You may include the reason you chose your topic, how it has made you feel, or what you will do differently now that you know more. **You must include this personal statement. It is mandatory.**
5. If you are in high school, you must also include one counter-argument. Why were people opposed to the act of resistance?

Examples of Topics

- 1963 March on Washington
- Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Million Man March
- Greensboro Sit-Ins
- 1913 Suffrage March
- Jena Six Protests
- George Floyd Protests

Submission Guidelines

- All writing must be in your own words. No copying from text unless it is a direct quote or otherwise necessary to support an argument.
 - Elementary school students must have at least 200 words. Middle school participants must have between 200 – 400 words. High school participants must have between 500 – 700 words.
 - Presentations must be submitted as a PDF file.
 - Participants must include a Bibliography with all sources listed (at least one source for elementary, two sources for middle school, and three sources for high school).
 - Participants must attach the "Intent to Submit" form (see below)
 - High school students must have at least one counterclaim. A counterclaim is an opinion that rebuts yours.
 - Text must be in Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman and at least 12 point font.
 - All presentations must include a Cover Page that includes:
 - Name and Grade
 - School and Teacher(s)
 - Participant's email address, if applicable
 - Home address, including zip code
 - Parent/Guardian's name, phone number, and email address
 - Title of the essay
- *The Cover Page is not included in the word count.

Important Dates

January 13, 2023	Intent to Submit form due Email To: sdac.bhec@gmail.com
January 31, 2023	Essay Due Email PDF File To: sdac.bhec@gmail.com
February 1 – 13, 2023	Scoring Period
February 20, 2023	Finalists Notified
February 25, 2023	Reception Rehearsal
February 26, 2023	Reception and Awards Program

Black History Essay Contest
Intent to Submit
“Fists in the Air: An Exploration of Protest in the Fight for Social Justice”

Filling out this form provides your intention to submit an essay for the 2023 Black History Essay Contest. This form will not be graded. It helps us to know how many essays to expect to score. This form also helps you to think through your essay topic more carefully and ensure that it meets the guidelines of the contest. You will find important dates and contact information at the bottom. Please mark your calendar so that you submit your essay on time.

Name: _____

Grade: _____

School: _____

In two sentences or less, tell us which protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance you will be writing about:

Did the protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance impact any of the following areas of American life? Check all that apply.

*Remember, you are required to write about the conditions that existed before the protest, boycott, sit-in, or other act of resistance and how it improved the lives of African Americans for each of the areas you check below.

Environment _____

Culture _____

Health _____

Housing _____

**Business Development/
Economics** _____

Behavior _____

Job Attainment _____

Educational Attainment _____

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Finalists notified

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