

Maltz Museum Presents

STOP  **P** THE **HATE**

MALTZ MUSEUM'S ESSAY WRITING CONTEST

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STOP THE HATE ESSAY CONTEST

BE THE LIGHT

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I NO LONGER BELIEVE THAT WE CAN CHANGE ANYTHING IN THE WORLD UNTIL WE HAVE FIRST CHANGED OURSELVES. ~ ETTY HILLESUM

ETTY HILLESUM WAS A YOUNG, JEWISH-DUTCH WOMAN WHO WROTE DIARIES IN AMSTERDAM DURING WORLD WAR II. IN 1943, SHE WAS MURDERED AT AUSCHWITZ, AT ONLY 29 YEARS OLD.

**PERSONAL
CHANGE:**

What is a definition, word or a feeling that describes personal change?

Examples of **personal change**?



WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. YOU HAVE A VOICE!

Essay Requirements:

- 500 words or less
- **True Story**: Have you seen (even on TV), witnessed or experienced acts of racism, discrimination or hate based on race, gender, religion or other reasons?
- No School Name, No First/Last Names
- **Take a stand. Speak up!**
- **Action plan!** Share your personal change! How can your own change lead others to also change in a positive way?
- **Learn.maltzmuseum.org**

Due:

6th-10th

Thurs., February 8, 2024

11th-12th

Thurs., February 15, 2024

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. YOU HAVE A VOICE!

AWARDS

9th-10th

- 1st place winner: \$400 cash prize
- 2nd place winner: \$100 cash prize

11th-12th

- Grand Prize Winner: \$20,000 scholarship + \$5,000 grant for their school
- First Runner Up: \$10,000 scholarship + \$2,000 grant for their school
- Second Runner Up: \$5,000 scholarship + \$2,000 grant for their school.
- (7) Honorable Mentions: \$1,000 cash prize + \$500 grant for their schools

All winners receive a free one-year membership to the Maltz Museum.

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. YOU HAVE A VOICE!

Gianna Miller

12th Grade, Rocky River High School

I was sitting in the back seat of my mom's smoke-filled car when the police knocked on the window. My mom was higher than I had ever seen her, and the officer determined she was putting herself and others in danger. Differing from her previous arrests, we were on my elementary school's campus, as she was picking me up from aftercare in second grade. Unluckily for me, all of my classmates were playing outside waiting to be picked up. Everyone saw my mom get arrested. This is when the bullying started.

Classmates began looking at me differently, but quickly it progressed to much worse. Beginning in second grade, I had to sleep over at my mom's house on Tuesday nights, and on Wednesdays I showed up to school with dirty clothes smelling like cigarette smoke, embarrassed at my hygienic state after being at her house. People stopped talking to me, but rather started talking about me. An older student I rode the bus with told me that my family being different was a bad thing. I stopped wanting to go to school and was embarrassed not only of my mom's addiction but also of my family dynamic of a broken home.

Growing up, my dad was the light that I needed to be able to separate my identity from my mother's battle with addiction. My dad helped me deal with the negativity coming from my classmates and my mother, as well as my own self-deprecation. Although I grew up in a neighborhood where my situation was unique, as I get older I realize that there are many other children who grow up having to suffer the consequences of their parents' addiction. Although I had my dad to guide me through the situation, I know that many children do not have any form of light in their lives.

Throughout my high school career, I have volunteered with a local rehab center in order to try to make a positive impact. Although it has been difficult for me to share my story due to the initial response I received from my classmates, it is my goal to be a light for other children whose parents are addicts. I did not have anyone my age to be a light when I was struggling with my own identity despite my mom's addiction, which is why it is my goal to help someone in a similar situation.

In situations like this, it is important to shine a light on the reality of the circumstances for everyone involved, in order for addiction to become destigmatized. I was treated poorly by my classmates because no one understood what I was truly going through. By shining a light on my situation and being a light for someone in a similar situation, I can help destigmatize addiction and ensure someone else does not have to endure the same situation I experienced.



Gianna Miller has been swimming competitively for 10 years, and she is the president of the school math club. She also volunteers with a local rehab center. Gianna will be attending Brown University in the fall, where she has committed to the swim team and plans to study neuroscience. She is especially interested in the wide-ranging effects of addiction and other neurological and psychological disorders.

Gianna Miller

THINK ABOUT:

- What was the problem?
What was the injustice?
- How do you think this injustice impacted others?
- What kind of personal change did this experience inspire in Gianna?
- How can her change lead to positive changes in others?

Misa Huls

Misa Huls

12th Grade, Avon Lake High School

My new high school, in a small, predominantly white town, was in high contrast to the diverse South Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia where I grew up. I quickly noticed that I was often the only person of color in a classroom. Early on, I experienced racism and microaggressions, which I had never dealt with before.

One impactful situation was when a fellow student, someone I had no prior exchange with, commented on my curly hair as smelly, since "you know, they put fish oil in it." A dozen responses and emotions flooded my mind over the course of the hour, but I sat stunned among my silent classmates as the teacher carried on in the moment. Later that night, the same student sent a Confederate flag to the class group chat: "If this flag offends you, I don't care." Given our previous interaction and being the only black student in the class, I understood it was meant for me. Initially I felt alone, anxious, and even angry—dark emotions for my affable nature; yet this unfortunate occurrence also helped to kindle a passion for social justice.

I shared my experiences with my counselor in hopes to improve the climate at my school. One outcome of those conversations was an opportunity to pilot the Peer Leadership Program, a group of leaders tasked with fostering a more inclusive school culture. When I decided to tell my new friends about my experience, I worried they would gaslight me, but instead I was met with empathy and they wanted to help.

Ultimately, shedding light on my experiences and offering a different point of view helped me to gain a deeper connection with my school community because, on the other side of those challenges, I learned that I have allies and that I can use my voice to help others. While the process can be arduous, the upshot of putting diversity in the spotlight, especially when inclusion is an overarching goal, can bring people together for a common good and make a positive difference.

In my faith, believers are described as lights, not to be hidden but to be shared for others to benefit. Light is synonymous with truth and hope, which in my view applies to my personal fight and goal toward a more inclusive and just world. While the scale may seem small right now, bringing to light issues of diversity and inclusion looks like everyday interactions—working with fellow students through Peer Leadership, inviting a classmate without a partner to join my workgroup, sharing an inclusive perspective in history class, taking courses like Contemporary Social Issues that challenge my own worldviews, and talking openly to friends at lunch about our shared and different experiences and perspectives.

I will bring the success and lessons from these interactions with me beyond high school as I build my toolkit and explore these issues deeper to accomplish far-reaching change. I hope that my story will spark others to share their story and shine their light for good.



Misa Huls enjoys reading, especially dystopian fiction, and watching criminal mind documentaries. Her favorite classes are AP Psychology and AP Literature. Misa currently serves as a Core Leader for the Peer Leadership Program at her school and volunteers regularly as a member of the National Honor Society. Misa plans to attend The Ohio State University as an exploratory student, where she hopes to explore her interests in social justice and human behavior.

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE. YOU HAVE A VOICE!

THINK ABOUT:

- What was the problem/injustice?
- How do you think this injustice impacted others?
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#Brainstorming

Have you ever been treated in a biased or unfair way?

Has anyone ever made an assumption about you that wasn't true?

Have you harmed someone, even unintentionally, with your words or actions?

Have you ever been inspired by someone you saw speaking out or taking action in a moment of injustice?

Have you ever made an assumption about someone else that was wrong?

List any historical or current events you learned about where the injustice of the situation really struck you.

Have you ever heard people talk or gossip in a discriminatory way about a person or group who wasn't present?

Have you ever seen someone treated in a way you felt was wrong?

Have you ever stood up for yourself or someone else who was being treated unfairly?

STOP THE HATE:

MAKE THAT PERSONAL CHANGE!
MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
BE THE DIFFERENCE

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