



# 2013 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ART, WRITING, & MULTIMEDIA CONTEST

ALEXIS JOHNSON (12TH GRADE)  
PARMA COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL  
PRINCIPAL – LINDA GEYER  
TEACHER – AMY SIMON

I come from a very diverse, culturally appreciative background. My mother is white and my father is black. I know it may not seem too unusual anymore and most would assume it is widely accepted by this day and age. However, the people who believe that are only partially correct. On both my mother and father's side of the family, I have family members with strong heritages and even stronger opinions of other cultures. That being said, while growing up I was never fully accepted by either side of my family or by my community. I was made fun of, called names and exiled by some from a very young age. Evidently, I have always had a very strong understanding of how hurtful and dehumanizing prejudice can be. However, this did not make me hate those people who did not accept me for the skin I was born into. Truly, it made me care even more for them. I have always felt sorry that those were the ideas they were raised to believe were right. They have missed out on so many great people and experiences because they were taught that they should not socialize with anyone of another race or religion. It made me want to show them that love can exist between two people of different backgrounds. I thought that maybe they would feel the love I felt for them and they would see that race is absolutely no reason to judge a human being. If anyone is going to judge another person, let it be by their character and not by their appearance.

Throughout my life, my mother instilled in me to love everyone regardless of their skin color, their religion or their culture. I grew up befriending everyone that I possibly could. I was a young mixed girl from a nondenominational home, who was best friends with a white girl that came from a family who were Jehovah's Witnesses and a girl from the Philippines who was from a Catholic home. I grew up in a predominantly African American neighborhood with little girls who made fun of me for having a white mother. However, I still loved those who didn't understand why my parents were together, why I was happy with whomever I was or why others were accepting of me. My love proved to be stronger than their disapproval. I have never been closer with my friends and family than I am now. I have friends from everywhere, of all different races and religions. I understand how it feels to be discriminated against and judged by something as benign as my exterior. It is important to learn and expose yourself to different religions, places, races and cultures. Do not restrict yourself to only learning about one type of person. Experience everything.

*Drum Major Instinct*

