



# 2016 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Art, Writing, & Multimedia Contest

**Gabrielle Lozoya**  
**9th Grade Writing Winner**  
Sebring McKinley High School, Sebring  
Nicole Mathias, Teacher  
Chris Corbi, Principal

Every day as I walk down the halls of Sebring High School I see myself in many of the students I go to school with. In 2014, I was in a rough spot. I was not healthy, I was battling anxiety and depression and nobody knew. I played it off as if I did not have a care in the world when in reality at home I had two low life, drug abusing people called my parents. No electric, no water, no Christmas; I survived. Barely...but I survived and that's all the matters.

It took me 13 years of working, buying groceries, going without, raising 2 brothers, battling depression and eating disorders not to mention bullying to finally stand up and say something. I am now 15, I am adopted, safe and I was even lucky enough to be adopted by a very special family member. I'm a much healthier person not to mention happier. No longer battling depression, and worrying about adult things like bills and buying groceries. No, it was not easy and yes, I still think about them everyday actually. I look in the mirror everyday and see a spitting image of my father. Yes, I miss them, but not their ways of living. They're still my parents and always will be; it was hard, but I've come a long way.

I am hoping that me sharing my story will give others the strength I had to stand up and say something. It hurts to walk down the same halls everyday seeing people in my shoes, no help, no courage and no voice. As I walk down the halls I feel I can see the pain in their eyes and the sadness in their voice. I can practically smell their fears and see the tears behind their eyes from crying themselves asleep the night before. I wish I could go all around the world and save people like me before it's too late, but I can't, I am a 15 years old girl with a dream... and a voice that will be heard.

Whether I have to stand on top of the rooftops and scream until I'm heard I will be heard. I'm small, but the smallest things seem to have the biggest change. "People help the people nothing can drag us down", once sung by Birdy. I made it, I was scared, but I did it; I always thought it was impossible to be happy, but then I opened my eyes and I have seen a much bigger picture. I pictured a girl, happy, not perfect, but she was happy and not caring about what others thought and around her surrounded a big, dark, and scary world where she stood with a small light as small as a flashlight. That little light in the big, dark world is all she needed. If you cannot find your own reason to stand up and say something, I'll give you one.

Imagine you're not the only one feeling like this, boys and girls of all ages, may have it slightly harder than you and YOU can change that! We can change that, and we can help them. Instead of picturing 1 girl in a big world with one flashlight picture 1 million people standing there with flashlights. That big, dark and scary world suddenly becomes much brighter and no longer scary. You're not alone, come forward, stand with me, we can do it. Remember I said I have a dream and believe me it will be heard, I want to be heard. Find your flashlight. I'll lead the way.

## Beloved Community

