



8<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Winner

**Ashley Gilkerson**

St. Louis Middle School  
Owensville, Ohio

Principal: Ms. Hunsberger  
Teacher: Mr. Albino

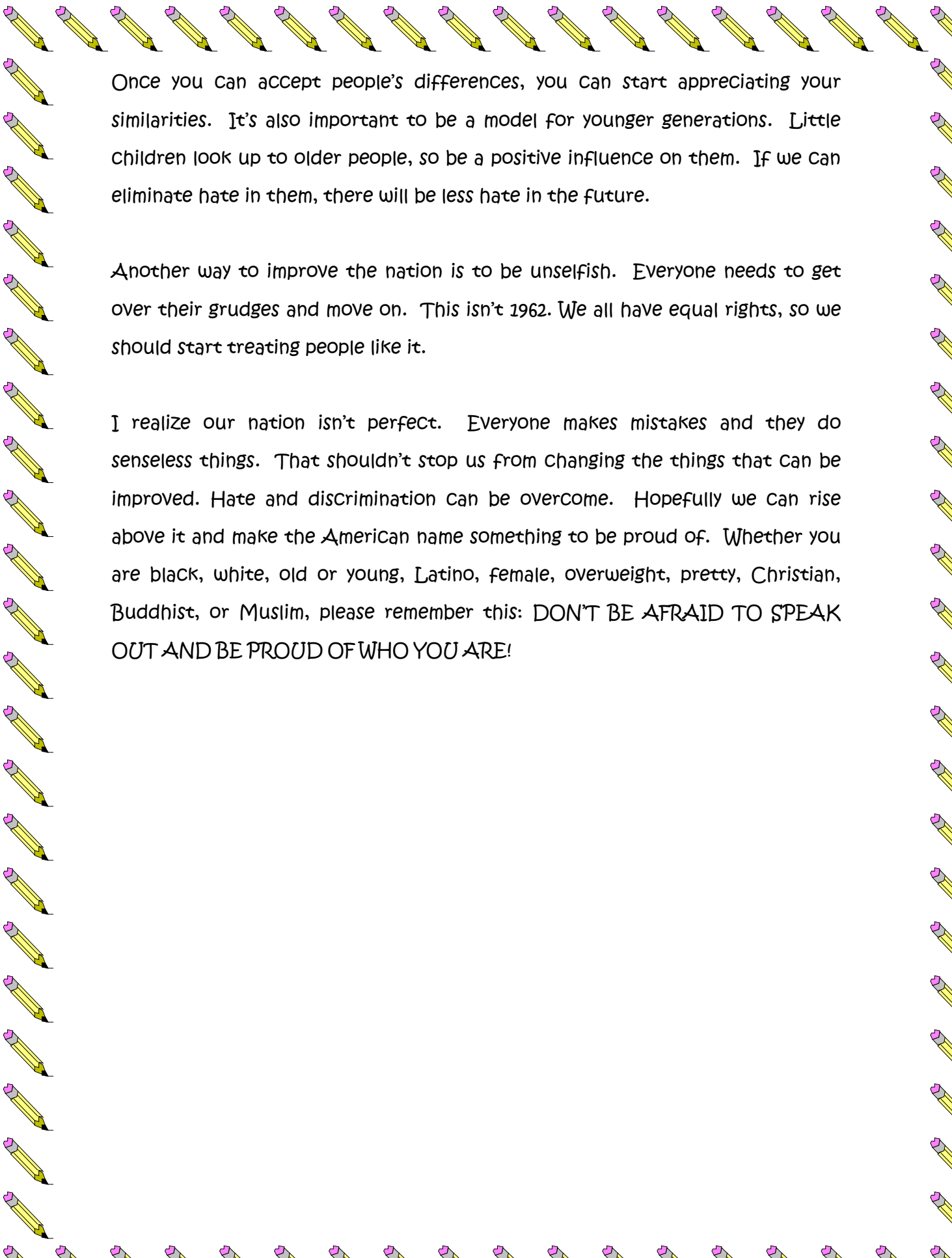


## Ashley's Essay

Wouldn't our world be boring without diversity? No two people on Earth are exactly the same. I have blue eyes; you may have brown eyes. I'm a Catholic; you might be Jewish, Muslim or Buddhist. None of that matters. We are all humans. We can breathe and laugh, and we all have a brain and a heart. We can love and be loved, but because we are human, we can also hate. Hate is the center of prejudice, racism, discrimination and violence. Hate's the product of the uninformed. It causes communities to fall apart, and people to betray one another.

Some people vent all their hate towards certain groups of people. This causes discrimination. People can discriminate against almost any group, whether it is females, teenagers, Buddhists, Latinos or 85-year-olds. It's depressing to realize people are hurting other individuals because they're different. Sadly enough, many people must deal with discrimination everyday. Martin Luther King Jr. thought this was wrong. Millions of people agreed with him but agreeing isn't enough. It's not enough to just sit back and nod your head when you could be supporting a cause. Martin Luther King Jr. didn't hesitate; he took action. You can take action too.

Success is only possible if you stand up and fight. In America, you can make a difference. Martin Luther King Jr. didn't change the U.S. by keeping his ideas to himself. Speak out even if you are laughed at. You never know, you just might change the world. There are many ways to end discrimination now. It is possible to dissolve hate, but to do that, you must teach tolerance. If you can be tolerant of other people, everyone can live more peacefully. Being tolerant of different people doesn't mean you must agree and accept all of their ideas. You can just tolerate them instead of ostracizing them or making fun of them.



Once you can accept people's differences, you can start appreciating your similarities. It's also important to be a model for younger generations. Little children look up to older people, so be a positive influence on them. If we can eliminate hate in them, there will be less hate in the future.

Another way to improve the nation is to be unselfish. Everyone needs to get over their grudges and move on. This isn't 1962. We all have equal rights, so we should start treating people like it.

I realize our nation isn't perfect. Everyone makes mistakes and they do senseless things. That shouldn't stop us from changing the things that can be improved. Hate and discrimination can be overcome. Hopefully we can rise above it and make the American name something to be proud of. Whether you are black, white, old or young, Latino, female, overweight, pretty, Christian, Buddhist, or Muslim, please remember this: **DON'T BE AFRAID TO SPEAK OUT AND BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE!**