



2017 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Art, Writing, & Multimedia Contest

Speak

I like to imagine the world as a vibrant canvas decorated by individual history. It is simple, mysterious and endless with blank openings. People, like aging wooden brushes, are treasured in vibrant color. They are the reverent tools that give life and uniqueness to the vast world portrait. They drip yellow, green, red, blue, indigo and any other color you can think of, making sloppy yet perfect footprints on the white space.

Art is language, an honest form of human communication. Its words can be kind or defiant.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sings love in both kindness and defiance. His timeless song inspires a diversity of life, a diversity of color. He teaches next generations to paint lovingly. Tenderly. The smooth strokes of the future are like embracing and accepting arms. A nonviolent battle to the mindset of intolerance. The gentle melody, in tune to marching feet, insists on finding common ground. Its words, the language you find in all art forms, is clear - "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

However, despite the enormity of love, shadowy hate creeps into the world portrait. Intolerance, as history has proven over and over again, is a reality of our modern world. Its darkness mars the purity of bright color.

Yet, we all have darkness. The parts we'd rather not put on the world canvas, but we drip anyways. Although, if experience has taught me anything, no person is only one color. I think all artists, all people, are slightly marred because their views have been skewed by the shadowy parts of the world.

Where ignorance lives and hate festers.

I have witnessed hate in small and big ways because, again, it is a reality. Moments devoid of color and beauty, where I feel like darkness consumes me. In those moments of dull life, I quietly drip into the shadowy space.

Inequality. Discrimination. Crime. Poverty. The loud taboos of our society. Words we know, but rather not say and intolerance thrives in the silence.

To fight the consuming and dominating color of hate, I try to remind myself of purple moments. Green moments. Yellow ones. I find courage in memories that remind me of how I like to imagine the world. I find bravery to speak for what I believe in – that every person is a valuable, priceless individual dripping in beautiful color.

Most of all, I remember that love drips red. It is a color that is gentle and bold. Just and merciful. Loving and loving. A quintessential part of the art language.

Language equips us with words. Martin Luther King Jr. understood their vital importance to his cause.

But what words do we use? How do we use them? What if we are afraid?

My answer is that words themselves are not enough. Red love is more than that. It is our actions, our beliefs and our colors. It is the necessity, the duty of being a human being, to adding to a sloppy yet perfect masterpiece. As you paint your tiny important section of the world, I admire the tilt of your proud chin and the softness of your eyes. It is the face of the beginning of a leader who has finally stood up and said 'no.'

Close your eyes. Stroke red paint with an old, wooden brush. Listen to the tender song. Feel the words. Be intimate with them.

Then speak.

For what you believe in. For what is good. For the people who have no voice.

Speak.

Martha Reifenberg
12th Grade Writing Winner
Ursuline Academy, Blue Ash

Shauna Whelan, Teacher
Tom Barhorst, Principal



Driving out Hate

