

**Winning Essays by City Springs School Students from the
2012 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Writing Competition**

Elementary - Chelsea Gilmer, 4th Grade

Hello, my name is Chelsea Gilmer and I'm representing City Springs. I want to make our community better. Dr. Martin Luther King once said "Sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together". Dr. Martin Luther King is a wonderful person. He is what I want to be – a believer. I want to help improve my community and inspire others to support each other just like Dr. Martin Luther King did. Dr. King said "Love is the key to the problems of the world". I believe just like Dr. King that love will help to solve our problems.

Dr. King learned that he could believe in himself and back then you had to believe in everything. It was hard because people didn't believe that you could be friends with people of all colors. Today, we have different problems, but problems all the same. I want to help my school community by fighting against bullying. Just like Dr. King, I think that everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, should be nice to each other. We are all the same and must help each other. I want to stand up against people who are picking with each other. It hurts feelings, starts fights, and is an abomination. I will tell my peers that "you are as good as anyone" just like Dr. King's mother told him. I will remind them that "everyone can be great".

What I think I could do to help is to make my school better for everyone. Do things that Martin Luther King did. Work together, work hard to help. Do things like Rosa Parks. She stood up for her rights and for the women who thought they couldn't do anything. You can do something to help yourself and others. You can, it's easy. Do things like Martin Luther King Jr. Help to remind people to care for each other and most of all, love people. He loved his

community no matter what. He didn't want people throwing rotten eggs at windows and I don't want kids throwing insults at each other. So let's make it better for our community and thank you Dr. King.

Middle School – Charisma Coles, 6th Grade

Two important African American women who made extremely important contributions were Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker. Hamer’s speech at the Democratic Party Convention in 1964 resulted in two members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party being seated in the Mississippi delegation. Ella Baker was a largely unsung hero of the civil rights freedom movement who worked behind-the-scenes with some of the most well known leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ms. Baker said “Remember, we are not fighting for the freedom of the Negro alone, but for the freedom of the human spirit, a larger freedom that encompasses all mankind”. Ella Baker was a very nice person who inspired and guided emerging leaders with her powerful statements. She wasn’t just any person she was a huge hero. We seek to honor Ms. Baker’s legacy through our people-powered campaigns.

Ella Jo Baker was born December 13th, 1903 in Norfolk, Virginia. She often asked, “What is the excuse for so much poverty in a country as rich as America?”. She developed a sense for social justice early in her life. As a little girl growing up in North Carolina, Baker listened to her grandmother tell stories mainly about slave revolts. As a slave, her grandmother had been whipped for refusing to marry a man chosen for her by the slave owner and because she had disobeyed her owner she had to payback. Ella studied at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. As a student she challenged school policies that she thought were unfair. Ella graduated in the year 1927 and was class valedictorian. She then moved to New York City and began joining social activist organizations. In 1930, she joined the Young Negroes Cooperative League. She also involved herself with several women’s organizations. She was committed to economic justice for all people and once said “People cannot be free until there is enough work

in this land to give **everybody a job**". Ella was a hardworking person and a key supporter and leader who the civil rights movement who is too often forgotten.

Fannie Lou Hamer is known for publishing *Our Bridges to Praise* in 1967. She was a member of the Democratic National Committee for Mississippi from 1968 to 1977 and the policy council of the National Women's Political Caucus. She actively opposed the Vietnam War and worked to improve economic conditions in Mississippi. Ms. Hamer told us that "Nobody's free until everybody's free".

Fanny Lou Hamer was born on October 6th, 1917 in the Mississippi Delta. By the time she reached age 10, Fannie was picking as much cotton as some adults. She earned the position of time keeper. After something bad happened Mrs. Hamer would sing like "ain't no tomorrow". She was known in the civil rights movement for her passionate singing of Christian hymns. To her the right to freedom was a spiritual battle. Ms. Hamer thought that it was important that everyone be allowed to vote and be represented in her state. She was arrested and beaten, but it never changed her resolve. She was a member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that stood up to the anti-black majority. She let them know that she "was sick and tired of being sick and tired". This is why I think Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer are very nice, helpful, and important African Americans. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day I think it is very important that we all take a moment to remember these two influential and unsung leaders of the civil rights movement. Thank you.

Middle School – Shardai Little, 7th Grade

To continue the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, I could make a difference in the world, fight for peace, and impact my society. Dr. King said “Love is the key to the problems of the world”. He told us “Remember, if I am stopped, this movement will not be stopped, because God is with this movement”. Dr. King was right. His movement has not stopped and I am part of it. I want to impact my community by spreading the message that all men are created equal meaning we all are the same. Why judge people and think you are better? Everyone has equal rights to be free. I want people to have equal opportunities in pursuing their goals, I want to help them achieve in life, and I want to teach all people to be kinder to one another. I want to help drop outs succeed in life. I want people to be the best they can be.

Each year, on the third Monday in January, we celebrate Dr. King’s birthday. After the Civil War, black slaves gained their freedom. However, it was the actions of Dr. King that truly allowed African Americans to become full members of our society. He ended separate but equal policies, encouraged African Americans to vote, and changed the way different races think about each other. His birthday is the first national holiday to honor an individual black American. The legacy of Dr. King lives in each of us and we are responsible to promote, teach, and live the American Dream.

I want to be remembered as someone great not just as a nobody or a child that had a bad attitude. At City Springs School, I am the Sergeant at Arms in the Student Government Association. That means that I must serve as a leader to my classmates. It is my job to help make important decisions about policies and protocols at my school. Just like Dr. King, I try to lead by example. I do not fight or call names at my peers. I try to solve my problems and the

problems of my friends with words. Dr. King said “Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that”. Being angry and violent gets you nowhere.

I am also a DEBATER. Debating is helping me speak clearer, argue better, get my point across, and fight with words for what I need. Through the lessons learned for Dr. King, debate, and student government, I will march for what is right, help the poor, raise money for important causes like Iraq and Haiti, and find safe places for the homeless. In America, we have people on the streets. This is pitiful. Dr. King fought for equality among different races. I want to fight for the rights of people struggling with poverty. I want to use my leadership skills to help people who are poor. We need to help them because we would not want to sleep on the streets and it's not okay for other people to have to. Next, I would try to start a program to help people coming out of jail find jobs so that they don't return to crime. The economy is bad and people won't want to try to help someone with a record. If we don't help them find jobs, they will just go back to crime. We have to take steps to stop the cycles of poverty and crime. I can do this. This is how I will continue the movement of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I will end something that is making the world worse, just like Dr. King, and make the world better.

Thank you