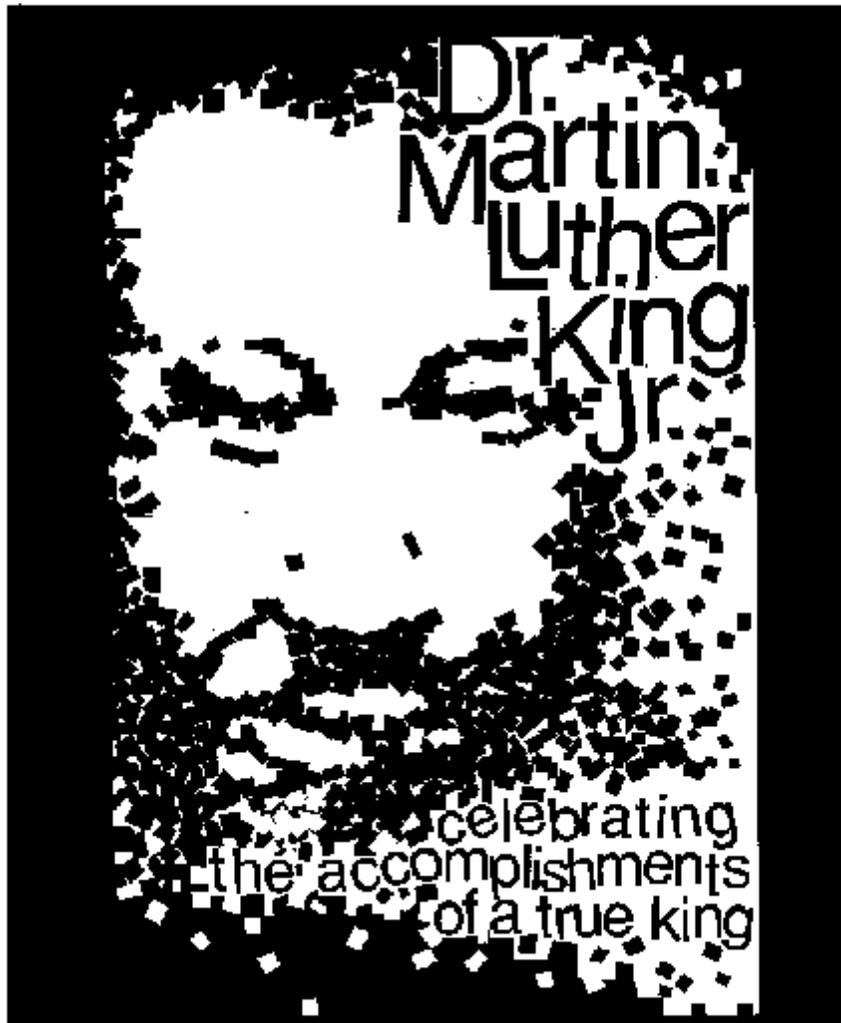


The Price of Freedom



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Essays and Poems by Columbia Public School Students

Columbia Values Diversity Celebration
January 15, 2004

The Price of Freedom Then and Now

Immigrants have been coming to the United States for hundreds of years and continue to do that still in our own society today. Some come for religious reasons, career change, a better life for their families, or to escape from the government. In my life, I have had some encounters with immigrants.

Meliha, one of my friends, a Bosnian immigrant, moved here when we were in the fourth grade and had told me a lot about life in Bosnia. Her father had many reasons for coming here: he had been out of work for a while because the government took his office. His children were not receiving a good enough education. They spent everyday worrying about whether their house would be bombed or if they would be shot. Meliha is very smart. She has adjusted to the American way of life and will be applying for citizenship shortly. They are doing wonderful: her father and mother have jobs, the kids are doing well, and they definitely feel safe. The price they paid was leaving their grandparents in Bosnia. Meliha's father tells me his dream is to someday return to Bosnia and get his parents but his parents say they will not run away for fear of being caught.

My great grandfather, Lynagh, was born and raised in Scotland. He had three children. Finally, he had heard so many good things about America that made him want to visit or live there. He thought about it and decided that he needed a better job. He wanted to give his kids a better chance at life so he decided to move. He got a job and sent his earnings to his family. He got a house and the family eventually moved to America to be with him. When he got to America, he moved to New York City. Grandfather Lynagh started sending money just like he had promised and then my great grandmother would spend the money instead of moving to America because she knew the price of her freedom would be moving thousands of miles away from her family and loved ones. When great grandfather found out she was not coming he went over to Scotland himself and got his wife and three kids. My grandma was born in the United States but remembers growing up and hearing her brothers and sisters tell their sides of the stories. He knew his price of freedom and I think if he was here today he would say he made the right choice and his children did grow up to have a good life and they became successful adults.

Our freedom is often taken for granted that we forget the "Oh yeah, there are people dying for me right now". We also forget about people that came before us. Sometimes we forget that you need to thank the people who gave you the opportunity to live freely. I know I do, so "Thank you."

Sam Sheehan, Gentry Middle School

And now that he doesn't walk among us any more,
I must take up his quest.
The miracle of Martin Luther King Jr. occurred before I could act,
And people of all races,
Of all religions,
Gained the equal rights,
I once knew a man who had a dream,
A dream that all races in America,
This great and splendid country,
Would have equal rights.

This man was my mentor,
That my mentor had been working so hard for.

Today when I look around,
I still find discrimination in this country,
And around this world,
I hope one day, all blacks, whites, Arabs
Will be friends,
Not discriminating against each other:
This was my mentor's dream,
Now I make it mine.

Alex Petersen, Jefferson Junior High School

Forever

August 28, 1963: "I have a dream." That's part of the speech that Martin Luther King, Jr. said that would change the world.

Forever.

That's the speech he spoke to 250,000 men and women, both black and white. All of them would be changed.

Forever.

That's the speech that rolled across the U.S. of A. like the words rolling off his tongue. About 25,000,000 of Earth's population changed that day.

Forever.

Martin Luther King, Jr. died on April 4th, 1968. This moment struck the hearts of all. He was shot in the neck by James Earl Ray. No one will forget Martin Luther King, Jr. His soul will live on.

Forever.

Collin Garrett Sees, Rock Bridge Elementary, 4th Grade

The Price of Freedom

Our sole document
Protects every breath of life
Protects every step we take.

The people are cruel
That is no lie.
It is complete truth
Cannot deny it
Separate but equal
HA!
No such phrase exists.

Judges make mistakes
Who does not?
But change is enforced by people
The same who created conflict.

How to learn from
Previous mistakes
Comes from within.

Peace is hard
What is not?
It is our mistake
And our responsibility
The future.

Molly Ramsey, Jefferson Junior High School

The Price of Freedom: Integration of Major League Baseball And the End of the Negro Baseball Leagues

Beginning in the 1880s, African American baseball players were not allowed to play in white professional baseball leagues. This led to the formation of the Negro Baseball Leagues. These were professional baseball leagues with all African American players. Negro Baseball Leagues became very popular during the early 1900s. Games were played in large stadiums before thousands of fans. The fans dressed up like they were going to church because it was a big event. Restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, and other black-owned businesses developed around the Negro Baseball League franchises. Hollywood stars, entertainers, jazz musicians and other black celebrities attended and entertained after the games.

On April 15, 1947, baseball and America changed forever. On this day Jackie Robinson played for the Brooklyn Dodgers. This was the first time an African American player appeared in a major league baseball game. Baseball's color line was finally broken. Major league baseball had been integrated.

While Robinson playing in the major leagues marked the beginning of a new era in baseball, it also marked the beginning of the end of another era. Robinson was the first of many black baseball stars to play major league baseball as baseball became integrated. At the same time, however, the Negro Baseball Leagues began to fade away. Since the late 1880s, African Americans had played baseball in professional leagues of their own. While African Americans gained equality in major league baseball, the price of freedom was losing their own baseball leagues that had become an important part of their culture.

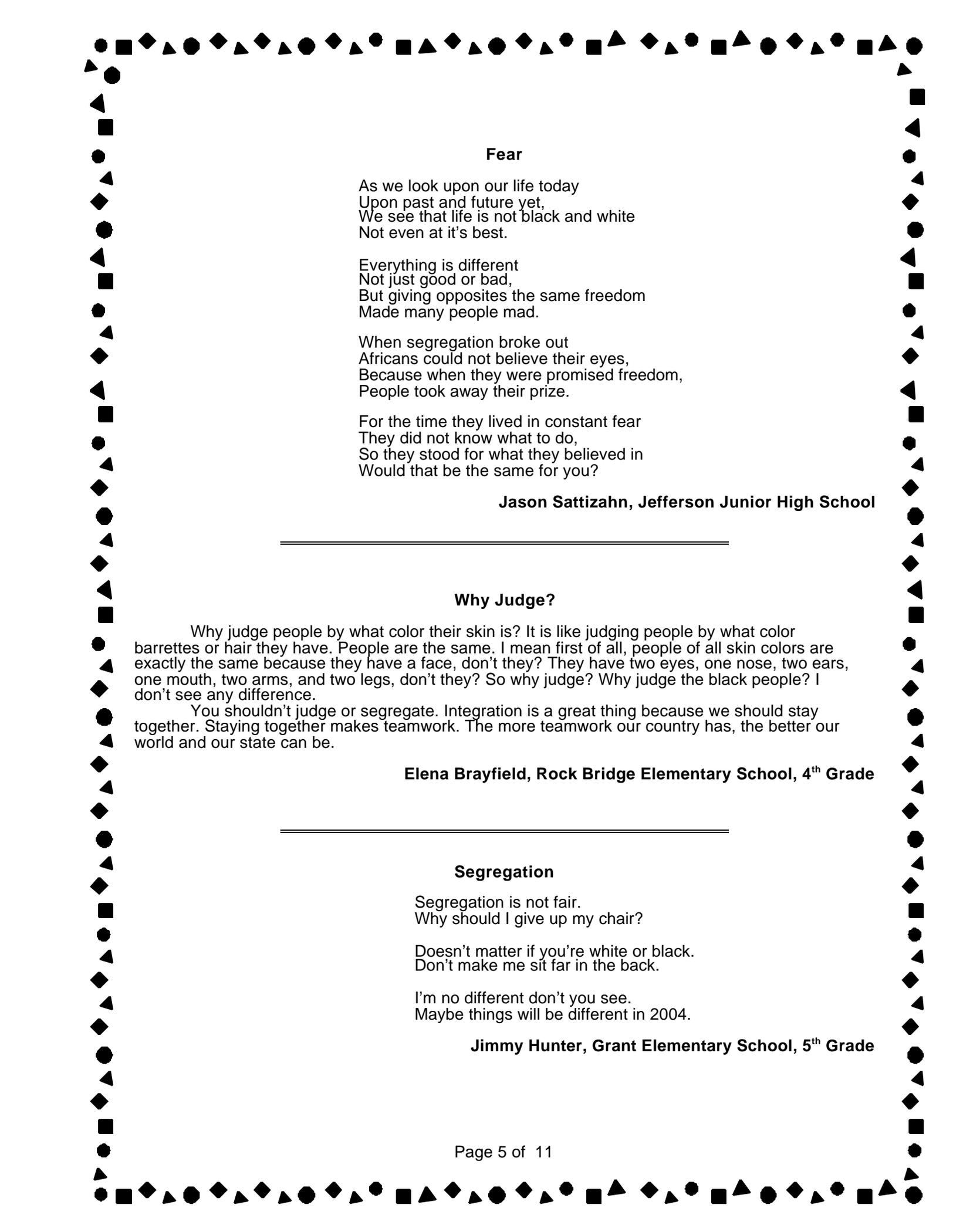
It was good that African Americans got to play in the major leagues but it was too bad they lost their baseball leagues and some of their culture.

Brian Smarr, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

Rights for All

After long fights
Came the Bill of Rights.
However, people of different races
were not treated on the same basis.
All the whites
Had civil rights.
What the masters saw
Was made a law.
Separate be equal
Was the sequel.
Throughout the nation,
There was discrimination.
To a person who was non-white,
Basic liberties were denied.
Dr. King led demonstrations
And encouraged the population
To stand strong
Against laws that were wrong.
There was a major improvement
After the Civil Rights movement.
Finally, everyone gets respect,
Something that all are to expect.

Rado Marinov, Jefferson Junior High School



Fear

As we look upon our life today
Upon past and future yet,
We see that life is not black and white
Not even at it's best.

Everything is different
Not just good or bad,
But giving opposites the same freedom
Made many people mad.

When segregation broke out
Africans could not believe their eyes,
Because when they were promised freedom,
People took away their prize.

For the time they lived in constant fear
They did not know what to do,
So they stood for what they believed in
Would that be the same for you?

Jason Sattizahn, Jefferson Junior High School

Why Judge?

Why judge people by what color their skin is? It is like judging people by what color barrettes or hair they have. People are the same. I mean first of all, people of all skin colors are exactly the same because they have a face, don't they? They have two eyes, one nose, two ears, one mouth, two arms, and two legs, don't they? So why judge? Why judge the black people? I don't see any difference.

You shouldn't judge or segregate. Integration is a great thing because we should stay together. Staying together makes teamwork. The more teamwork our country has, the better our world and our state can be.

Elena Brayfield, Rock Bridge Elementary School, 4th Grade

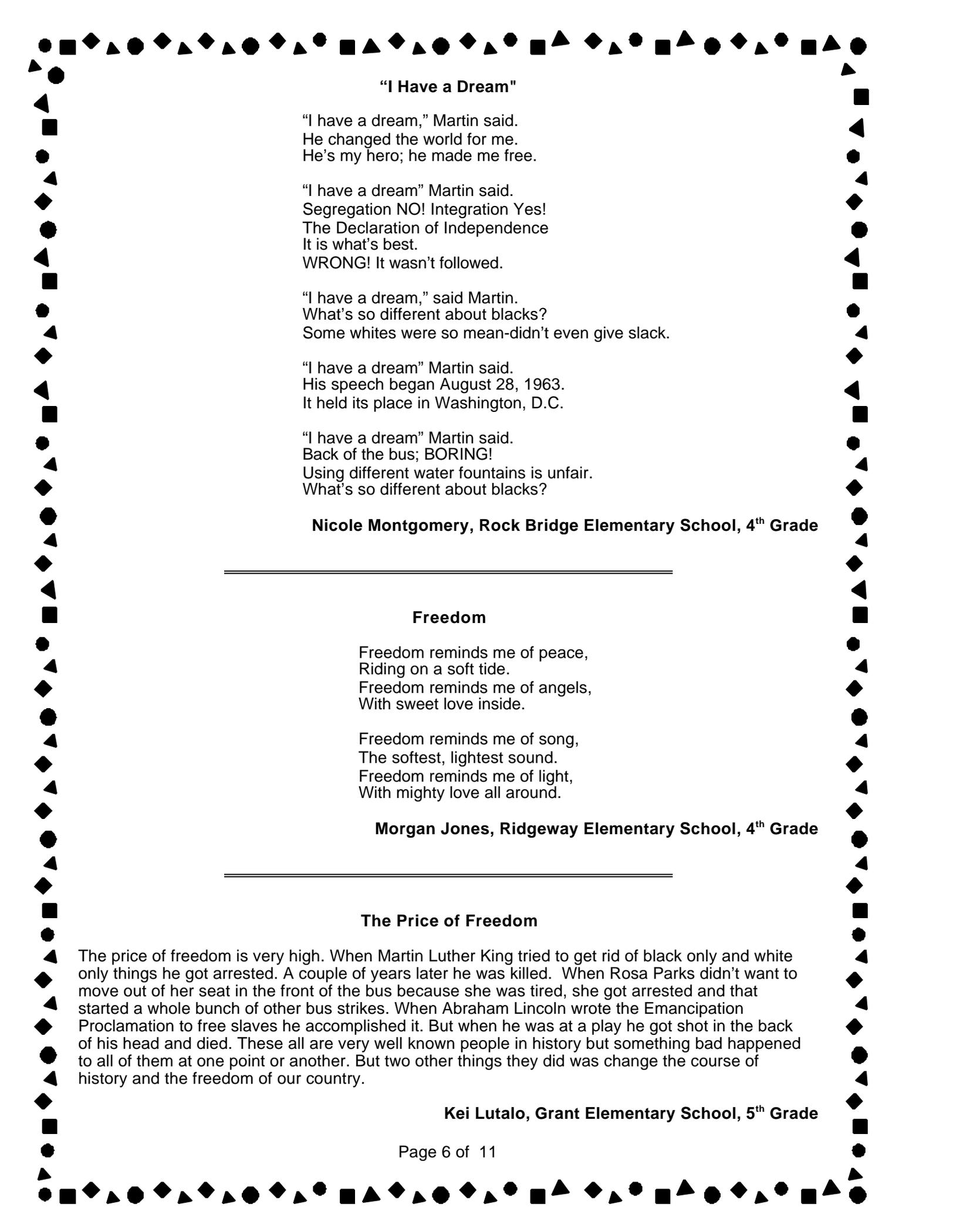
Segregation

Segregation is not fair.
Why should I give up my chair?

Doesn't matter if you're white or black.
Don't make me sit far in the back.

I'm no different don't you see.
Maybe things will be different in 2004.

Jimmy Hunter, Grant Elementary School, 5th Grade



"I Have a Dream"

"I have a dream," Martin said.
He changed the world for me.
He's my hero; he made me free.

"I have a dream" Martin said.
Segregation NO! Integration Yes!
The Declaration of Independence
It is what's best.
WRONG! It wasn't followed.

"I have a dream," said Martin.
What's so different about blacks?
Some whites were so mean-didn't even give slack.

"I have a dream" Martin said.
His speech began August 28, 1963.
It held its place in Washington, D.C.

"I have a dream" Martin said.
Back of the bus; BORING!
Using different water fountains is unfair.
What's so different about blacks?

Nicole Montgomery, Rock Bridge Elementary School, 4th Grade

Freedom

Freedom reminds me of peace,
Riding on a soft tide.
Freedom reminds me of angels,
With sweet love inside.

Freedom reminds me of song,
The softest, lightest sound.
Freedom reminds me of light,
With mighty love all around.

Morgan Jones, Ridgeway Elementary School, 4th Grade

The Price of Freedom

The price of freedom is very high. When Martin Luther King tried to get rid of black only and white only things he got arrested. A couple of years later he was killed. When Rosa Parks didn't want to move out of her seat in the front of the bus because she was tired, she got arrested and that started a whole bunch of other bus strikes. When Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation to free slaves he accomplished it. But when he was at a play he got shot in the back of his head and died. These all are very well known people in history but something bad happened to all of them at one point or another. But two other things they did was change the course of history and the freedom of our country.

Kei Lutalo, Grant Elementary School, 5th Grade

The Price of Freedom

North VS. South, they made a fuss,
Plus Rosa Parks got kicked off the bus.
There was a Montgomery Bus Boycott.
After that, America agreed, NOT!
All of this nonsense cause' people were black!
Long ago "WHITES ONLY" was common on a plaque.
Schools were separated, black from white.
All this segregation caused a big fight.
Dr. King Jr. was shot,
He believed that America shouldn't have fought.
Now you know, freedom has a price,
Because everyone is a different spice!

Lindsey Whitt, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

How Would You Feel?

How would you feel if white people were always trying to boss you around, trying to stay away from you and were keeping you from most things just because your skin color was different? The inside of all people is the most important thing. I am so glad that the world has changed. Just like Martin Luther King said

"I have a dream that one day...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today!"

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., August 28, 1963.

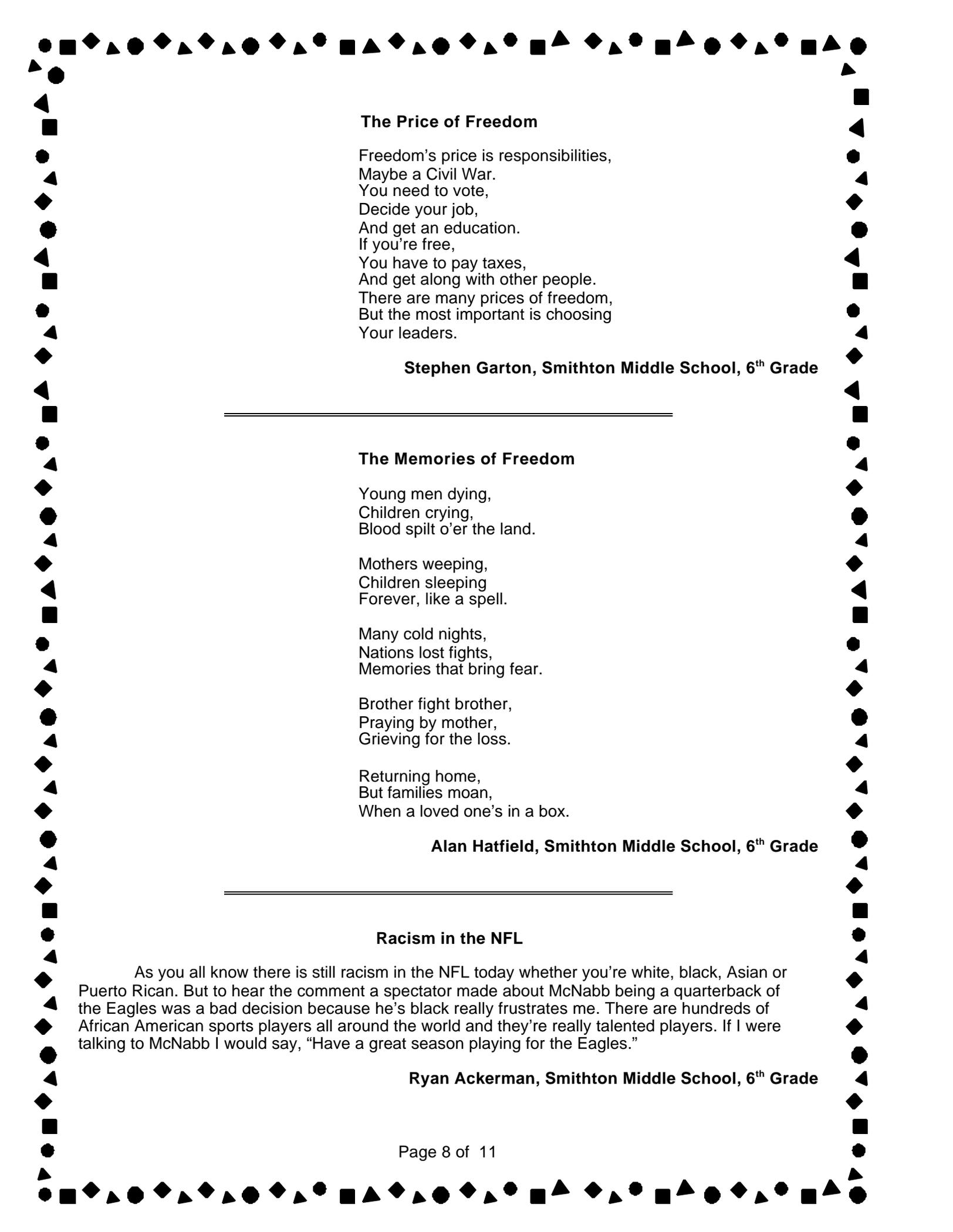
I am so glad that the history has changed.

Diana Jung, Rock Bridge Elementary School, 4th Grade

Sunshine covered the land
Golden light found every shadow
All caves and chasm bathed in pure clean light
Truths uncovered
Lies forgotten
Secrets go untold.

Darkness seizes everything
Hate and racism swirl in the air
Murderous thoughts zoom in heads
Red flames burn hearts
Hopes and dreams are lost
Children scream for the bad to go away, to go away.
Everything is beautiful
Love, glory, victory and truth
Glowed about the Earth.
Flowers weep for the warm sun
White ghost roam about, screaming and spreading bloodshed.
Golden hills sway in a warm breeze
Only happiness is felt.
Shouts and cried echo in the dark
The wind reeks of dying and hatred.
Squeals of joy are followed by the sweet scent of spring.
Winter coldness gathers in people's hearts
Life
Death
Two things always different and changing but yet always the same.

Kelsey Saragnese, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade



The Price of Freedom

Freedom's price is responsibilities,
Maybe a Civil War.
You need to vote,
Decide your job,
And get an education.
If you're free,
You have to pay taxes,
And get along with other people.
There are many prices of freedom,
But the most important is choosing
Your leaders.

Stephen Garton, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

The Memories of Freedom

Young men dying,
Children crying,
Blood spilt o'er the land.

Mothers weeping,
Children sleeping
Forever, like a spell.

Many cold nights,
Nations lost fights,
Memories that bring fear.

Brother fight brother,
Praying by mother,
Grieving for the loss.

Returning home,
But families moan,
When a loved one's in a box.

Alan Hatfield, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

Racism in the NFL

As you all know there is still racism in the NFL today whether you're white, black, Asian or Puerto Rican. But to hear the comment a spectator made about McNabb being a quarterback of the Eagles was a bad decision because he's black really frustrates me. There are hundreds of African American sports players all around the world and they're really talented players. If I were talking to McNabb I would say, "Have a great season playing for the Eagles."

Ryan Ackerman, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

The Price of Freedom

An old lady sat in her rocking chair one morning and was crying her eyes out. A little girl of about the age of 5 came to the lady and asked her, "Grandma, why are you crying?" The girl's grandma did not say anything, but, handed the little girl a piece of paper with a picture of the little girl's dad, Jessie, on it. The little girl looked really confused. She still didn't know why her grandma was crying. The girl had no one of her own left besides her grandma and her father. He was not only a father for that little girl but like a best friend. Jessie and she would always do everything together. She loved her Jessie more than anyone else in the world.

The girl then asked her grandma, "Grandma, that's a picture of dad but, why are you crying over the picture? Dad promised he would be back and he said not to miss him too much either."

The girl's grandma looked up and wiped the tears off her face. She looked the little girl in the eyes and said, "Tracy, Daddy's not coming back ever again."

Tracy looked at her Grandma like she was insane, "Grandma, what are you talking about? He is too coming! He said so, and daddy never lies to me!"

Tracy's grandma then said, "Tracy, let me explain this to you. Your dad went to go fight in a war. He went trying to gain us freedom, trying to gain freedom for Americans. He wanted us to be able to do what we want to do, say what we want to say, and act how we want to act. Your daddy really wanted this to happen. His hopes were very high. The men were all fighting and your dad's friend got hurt. Your daddy went back to get his friend. In order to save that man's life your daddy sacrificed his own." Tracy looked up at her grandma and started to cry. Tracy's grandmothers said to Tracy, "The price of freedom is very strong. Your dad went to fight for that, and there he lost his life. Not only you, but many other people have lost loved ones. Be proud of your freedom and use it well."

When Tracy was grown up, married and had children, she told her children the story of her father and how he and many others fought and lost their lives fighting for freedom. The story went down through the generations, and to this day it is still told.

Mydah Choudhry, Gentry Middle School, 7th Grade

I Am Diverse

This world is full of hate and bad things,
This world is full of death and down.
While clouds cross the sky,
Love is disappearing.
Through the night,
No one is hearing,
The cry! The cry of love!
I'm one anew,
No one can change that.
Diversity shines through,
No one can stop it.
OH, oh, OH!
If only the world could see me now!
My diversity is hidden
By my expression.
But my expression is only skin deep!
So is your color, race and religion,
Set these aside what do you see?
Follow your heart,
Hear its guidance,
It will lead you right
If only you look through
Another human's eyes,
And walk a mile in their shoes,
You can decide.

Kelly Steinhaus, Smithton Middle School, 6th Grade

Freedom Promised, Freedom Protected, Freedom Insured

When my mom and dad were in the fifth grade, they said that they remembered that African American children arrived at their schools in buses. Until that time, they said, they had never attended school with anyone but white children.

That seems so weird to me, now. I mean, some of my best at friends are African-American, and I can't imagine not knowing them. There don't seem to be very many racial boundaries at my school, but I think it's important that kids of my generations learn from what people like my parents experienced. It's important that we learn from the mistakes of the past so that this generation doesn't make the same ones, such as discriminating against someone because of the color of his or her skin.

When this country was first created, the Bill of Rights stated: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Since that time, thousands of people have died defending the freedom given to everyone in this country. In the civil rights movement, many Americans understood that "we the people" could not mean just some people, but all people. That includes all races, genders and religions.

I think that Dr. King would be pleased with what he sees today, not because it's the best it could possibly be, but because it is so much better than it was in his time. However, I think if he were alive today, he would still be working to make things better, because it can be better. I think he would be working in other countries to improve things for other people. I really hope that in countries where people are treated unfairly that they can be inspired by what Dr. King did, and know that they should fight for their rights.

If I had been alive when Dr. King marched on Washington, D.C., I think I would have gone with him, no matter what anyone else said I should do. I think it was important, even though my grandmother told me stories of white college students who died trying to help the Civil Rights movement. It's hard to understand how something like that could happen, especially when I see African Americans and whites as friends and even dating one another – at my school. In fact, kids at my school will often share laughs about racial differences.

It would be so much easier if there wasn't segregation at all, and if people just treated everyone the same. Then people could use their energies for other things, like curing diseases or eliminating poverty. But even though there are still improvements to be made, we have to celebrate the fact that things aren't as bad as they were 30 years ago. You don't see the government, for example, ignoring groups like the KKK. Officials don't turn a blind eye to the burning of a cross in someone's yard, but instead put people like that in jail.

We all have to work to not only protect the freedoms we have in this country, but to work for justice and freedom around the world. That way, we have really learned from history, and won't make the same mistakes again.

Nick Bruzzese, Jefferson Junior High School

The Price of Freedom...

When I think about the price of freedom, I think it must come at a great cost. One cost is the families who are separated during wars to keep our country safe. Another is the loss of loved ones who fight to let us sleep in peace every night.

Our freedom came after the Revolutionary War when we fought Great Britain for the right to govern ourselves. We are still fighting for this way of life, the right of self-government.

But everyone wasn't free. African Americans were not free until 1863. But still they weren't really free. Women were not allowed to vote until 1920, however, there was not freedom or equality for women or African Americans until much later.

Now we still fight for freedom, I think. We want for others what we have for ourselves. I wonder what the price of freedom in Iraq will be?

Hanna Kleiboeker, Ridgeway Elementary School, 4th Grade

Why?

Fair. What is fair? Was it fair that people's character and heart were measured and weighed by the color of their skin? Was it fair that blacks had to drink from different water fountains and go to different schools and eat at different restaurants? Or that they had to sit at different benches and sit at the back of the bus? Is that fair? How would you feel about that? Would you feel like a mouse in a deep pit? A caged bird? Would you stand up for yourself or back down? Think about it.

Jacob Crain, Rock Bridge Elementary School, 4th Grade

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