

First Place (tie)

Jai Beeman

A Quiet Helper

My grandfather will ever be
Of the hardworking kind
And also remain
In a peaceful state of mind.

He went on a 6-month strike
So unskilled laborers could afford shelter and food
Even though he was a skilled worker
He cared about others; it kept up his mood.

Around the corner came retirement
But it was still not leisure time
He continued to help the unfortunate
And refused to take a dime.

Meals on Wheels, his new volunteer job
Gave free transport and food to the needy
It kept other seniors socially active
It was not possible for him to be greedy.

I remember when I was half my age
Walking the steps up the Meals on Wheels bus
Helping people get on and get off
Helping people, not making a fuss.

I remember looking through the stack
For a crumpled-up back-page story that will always say
That he had many grandchildren
And that I was on the way.

Help is needed for every person
No matter gender, age or race
I will start organizations to help the poor
And follow my grandfather's wise pace.

First Place (tie)

Israel Espinoza

Cheryl Thomas

Tolerance, patience, respect, trustworthiness. These are the traits that people look for in our athletes, these are the things that people look for in recording artists, actors, and political leaders. But yet while all these people look in the eye of the camera, I look the other way. I look towards one woman who shares all these traits, as well as kindness, dependability, responsibility, and caring. This woman is my 4th grade teacher, Mrs. Thomas.

Mrs. Thomas treated each child as if he/she were special. She taught us tolerance towards all people, no matter the race, religion, gender, or sexual preference. She was a woman who believes in equality.

One time there was this boy who did not celebrate Halloween. All of us who did celebrate were making fun of him, and Mrs. Thomas told us that it didn't matter if he didn't celebrate it, that our uniqueness made us who we were, and I realized something: she was right.

Also, Mrs. Thomas had the utmost respect towards the men who fought for equality, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Gandhi. She deeply opposed senseless acts of violence, such as slavery and the holocaust.

She taught us to look beyond the petty differences of appearance, and make friends with everyone, no matter if they're Caucasians, Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, males or females, hetero or homo, Buddhist or Catholics. A world where everyone lives in peace and harmony was one of her main goals, and she has inspired me to shoot for the same goal. Because after all, isn't equality the American dream?

Second Place

Joanna Yang

One

Just one person, one rare gem,
Speck of brilliant light.
One person, one goal so loving,
Laurel Barchas, star shining bright.
Unique, talented, caring,
Founder of immersing music.
True leader, compassionate, initiating,
Giving free lessons, so maverick.
Serving children, dedicated
Embracing music, born to teach.
Raising 11,000 dollars for funding
Purchasing instruments, books – outreach.
Phone calls, letters – a plenty
Establishing a program, creative activity
Granted space, insurance, support
Making her dream reality
A pianist embracing music,
Taking it in hand,
Helping elementary students,
Growing up joining high school band.

I've learnt that a single person
Is enough to touch a life
Have an effect, spread ripples,
Expand, preach, make it rife.
Laurel has taught me how music
Should be embraced by all.
How it improves academics
Glorifying us to stand tall
I now take the initiative,
Do what I deem as right
Stand up for what I believe in
Be persistent, accomplish whatever I might.

I envision myself going beyond the dream,
Extending my music to others,
Emitting an embracing smile,
Letting all know someone bothers.
Form a string quarter, I will,
Two violins, a viola, one cello.
Travel throughout Arizona,

ASU Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration
2004 Student Essay Winners
Middle School

Perform, enlighten – Bravo!
I can imagine myself onstage touching lives,
Bringing laughter, invoking tears.
Playing sweetly, rhapsodic, moving,
Enlightening elderly, children, peers.

Thanks to Laurel, I have learned,
Learned to impact someone else's being
To show them that I truly care
Learn to express through music what I'm feeling.

Third Place

Sarah Peralta

Leadership: Some accept it, some support it but do not lead, and others completely ignore it. Martin Luther King Jr. hoped that his children would have a better future because of his choice to be a leader. My mom, Carmen Moraza-Peralta, has also heard the call to leadership and has accepted. She too works hard for a better future for my siblings and me. She does this through service at home, at work, and in the community.

She demonstrates leadership in how she serves our family. She teaches us lovingly to have discipline, to have a happy home. She meets our needs first, then her own. I've learned to serve and help my family with love.

Furthermore, she shows leadership through service at work. I see this everyday as she tutors students after school and teaches them to be polite. Students gain confidence because she says that everything is possible if they try. She has influenced many students, positively, throughout the years.

Moreover, she provides service in our community. She donates her singing talent to fundraise for needy families. She also helps families through prayer vigils and encourages people to speak up when it's for the good of the community.

I'm learning the importance of leadership through her actions. I see the rewards of her leadership and service in my life and know that I too will make my home, school, and community a better place through my leadership and service.

Honorable Mention

Alexis Arellano

A Great Man

Cesar Chavez best demonstrated leadership through service. Chavez was not very fortunate but still helped other people less fortunate. He helped people register to vote so they could have a voice in politics. He also demonstrated, boycotted, and protested against farmers exploiting the Mexican and other foreign people. He struck and boycotted grapes so farmers would raise wages and give better living conditions. This strike lasted five years and eventually the farm owners gave in and raised the pay and living places. He has helped many people. He was a great leader.

My world is better because of Cesar Chavez because he argued for justice to migrant farm workers. My maternal grandparents worked their whole lives either on the farm picking crops or packaging them. Chavez fought for their rights and for decent pay. Working in the fields is back breaking work, and those people who did work picking crops were paid badly and had poor housing. He has made my world (and a lot of other peoples' too) better by standing up for our people.

I am learning that just by taking a stand, you can make a difference. Even if it's just talking about what you believe in.

I envision myself expressing what I believe about certain topics. I will start to volunteer more for projects and help out more in the community.

In conclusion, Cesar Chavez was a great man. He fought and he made a difference without any violence. He definitely went beyond the dream and made a humongous change in our society.