Junior High/Middle School
First Place

Jilyan Wilson
Van Buren Middle School

"I AM" I Am Your Neighbor Essay

I am convinced that boys think that girls can't do certain things because they think of us as weak or helpless (just of my past experiences). It's a discrimination/segmentation that has developed many times in history and to every woman once in their lives. As long as I am in Kettering, I have seen woman that have been discriminated by what they wear, what they eat, what their voice is like, and their favorite pursuit.

I have been stereotyped many times by how I dress, what my hobbies are, and my personality. I'm a tomboy and I like to play video games. I was once into girly stuff at a young age, but I grew out of that stuff and I got more into the stuff that a typical boy would like. In school, boys would often keep asking me questions about why I'm not into stuff. People would tell me I can't play video games because I'm a girl or because I should be into make-up. It is not a good feeling to be called out for being myself. It makes me feel like an outsider and I feel bad for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and what he had to go through.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had to go through segregation and discrimination at a young age with having to go to a different school than whites and even going to different bathrooms. When he was younger, one of his white playmates told him that his father was forbidding him to play with Martin Luther King Jr. He told his parents what happened and they told him that it's hard to face racism. Martin then decided that he would hate every white person. He and his family were a religious group and his parents often told him to love everyone. Martin thought this would be difficult because he didn't know how to love people that hated him. I felt the same way with hating everybody who discriminated me. I can understand him and what he had to go through, except his discrimination was harsh back in the day.

I think that Kettering or even the whole world can reduce and end this segregation of gender roles by not thinking a product as a female product or male product. Boys and girls should be able to buy, wear, and play with whatever they want. Girls can play with boy toys and boys can play with girl toys. Girls can wear guys apparel and guys, even guys, can wear girl apparel, as long as it makes them content. People should not have to alter who they are or who they want to be because of people ordering them they should be a certain way. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was able to change segregation for all black people by using the power of his voice. All of us could end gender-roles and all the discrimination in the world by telling our view on the matter and making speeches. We all have to work together and if Martin Luther King Jr. can do it, we can, too! I have been inspired to stand up to all segregation in my school and in Kettering.


Lilli Scarborough
Van Buren Middle School

"I Am Ready"

I am not just a tall girl with curly hair. I am a living, breathing human being. I have felt pain. We all feel pain in some form. One form of pain is stereotypes.

Sterotypes may seem harmless to some, but for others, stereotypes have taken over their identity. Gender stereotypes. For me, this seems to come up a lot in my daily life. For a sixth grader, my goals and aspirations are colossal. I want to be a neurosurgeon. Anyone I mention this, some flaw with my gender is said by someone. I feel that with my hard work, I will be able to achieve my goals. Although, these stereotypes make me feel otherwise.

As I see it, Kettering could overcome this barrier by having powerful female role models speak out in our community. I feel this will not only empower young girls, but all of our citizens. This could be as small as a woman speaking about her profession once a year at a school. I think Kettering does an incredible job connecting school age kids to hard working adults in our community, so this is definitely not out of reach.

While gender isn't the only attribute of a person that can be stereotyped, deep down inside all stereotypes hurt. As Martin Luther King Jr. would say, “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.” This quote inspires me to say, why change tomorrow, when in reality, you can change today. I am more than you see. I am a dancer. I am a student of Van Buren Middle School. I am ready for what come next in stopping stereotypes in our city.

Evan Loyd
Van Buren

Honorable Mention

When I was in the third grade me and my parents decided that I should be accelerated a grade. So, in the year of 2014-2015, I spent the first 2 months in a third grade classroom. And after the first couple months, I moved up to the fourth grade. The first couple days of me being in fourth grade were fine but, the other students started figuring out what happened and started asking question. Most of them were fine questions like “do you miss all of your other friends?” but other questions were very hard to talk about, like, “why are you here?”, “How old are you?” and “why are you so short.” and I was stereotyped because of my age. No one would ever let me play football or tag with them because I was just the little new kid that wasn't as strong or as big as anyone else. The next year was a little better because I had made some friends. But I was still the youngest kid there and was always made fun of. My grades were good the second year, but I could never concentrate trying to keep up in class, because everyone would treat me like I was super stupid, and always tried to give me false answers. So I ended up just having to do all my homework at home, every day. The teachers were not as mean as the students, but they never gave me the hard questions, or even the normal questions, when they were explaining something, they would give me the easy questions and even if I got an answer wrong during class to give an answer they never called on me. “I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear” is one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s most famous quotes. I wish that everyone could live like that. The world would be a much better place if no one was made fun of for being young.

I hope that kettering can reduce the fear of people being stereotyped for their outward appearance. The 7th graders in kettering recently had a thing called redo-day, where the students talk about their feelings. I think that if we more assemblies like this students would be more kind to other students. I personally know that many students learned a lot from redo-day and have been treating others nicely. This has helped me and the people going through, and I have been treating other nicely. But others also learned about my constant fear of being made fun of for my age, and many students have been treating me a lot better.
I am not sure of what I am. I am, however sure of what I am not. I am not a terrorist, I do not want anyone getting hurt and I certainly do not push my religion on anyone. Hello, my name is Selma Younes. I grew up right here in Kettering, Ohio but not too far away from the Muslim community. I was always treated fairly and my friends are my family. I have seen what the Islamic culture is like, the peace of Islam, the religion of peace. The religion that created medicine, hospitals, universities and even Algebra itself. I would never want to see anyone fight against it, why are we labeled as terrorists? Questions that would go unanswered throughout most my years of life.

I went to J.E. Prass elementary school. It truly was a fantastic school equip with great teachers and staff. However, I was one of the only kids with dark skin. During kindergarten and first grade, it felt as if no one saw color. Once we got a little bit older, that's when things started to go wrong. My best friend was one of my closest friends, a Muslim. I always knew him from the moment I entered kindergarten. However, it was no-one's fault but my own. I was confused of what to call myself at the time, it seemed there was only black or white, it was no one in between. The way he acted, and the way he dressed, it was like he already knew what I did not. I felt like this was my identity. Then as we get a little older, kids started to tease. Even small comments cut deep. People would call me Muslim, Indian, and other stereotypes. I remember that at that time, I got so mad, I was so frustrated that kids were not educated enough and I started thinking they were all ignorant. Me on the other hand, what if I am the ignorant one?

I remember one day what I was in 5th grade, on the news, I saw the word, "terrorist," a person who uses unlawful violence and commission, especially against civilians, in pursuit of political aims. The definition uses a "person." How did "a person" shift to Muslims. So many people do bad things each and every day. So why were bad people that were Muslims behind bars, but not people who were not Muslims? It was my responsibility. I wanted to see how we can avoid them in the future. If we can spread the truth about certain stereotypes it could prevent both violence and fear towards not just Muslims but all ethnicities. If we can learn from past mistakes and avoid them, we can prevent this from happening. I hope we can solve this problem by getting to know the truth about stereotypes and addressing past mistakes and by addressing past mistakes to see how we can avoid them in the future. If we can spread the truth about certain stereotypes it could prevent both violence and fear towards not just Muslims but all ethnicities. If we can learn from past mistakes and avoid them, we can prevent this from happening.

A large part of my story is having an Chinese nationality, but also being very accustomed to the standard American culture due to being raised in the United States. To distinguish Chinese culture and American culture is different stereotypes. I hear very often that it's not really a wonder I'm smart, I'm Chinese. Or that it doesn't surprise others that I play the cello because I'm Chinese. I've also been asked several times if I was related to another person of Asian ethnicity because we "look exactly the same." It turns out, though, most people who ask these questions are oblivious to the fact that they are undermining the different Asian and ethnicities in the world. When only looking at the surface of the cultures, you can't even see the rich histories and lifestyles between the different communities of Asia. While often giving in to the cliches of the Chinese culture, very few people really look at what's underneath that surface. Adding on to this idea, many also don't take past their thoughts that someone is smart, talented, or athletic because they are of Asian descent. I could definitely see that people who don't really know my culture but put forth my best efforts. I also believe that my musical abilities comes from my decision to practice and extend my learning in an instrument. I think many people might fit into the stereotypes of their race, but that's just not because of who they are from. Personally don't come from a certain country; a personality is something that is unique to each one of us. The American culture is more than just the Americans from China Earth. To overcome all of the stereotyping in the world is nearly impossible, but you've got to start somewhere. The city of Kettering is a great place to start, but people need to learn that there are several different ethnicities and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races. To do this Kettering may consider a week or even a month of cultural educating others in different cultures and races.