



Art, Poetry and Essay Competition

Influenced by

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s - "What is in Your Life's Blueprint?" speech given at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967

Award 1: \$150 • Award 2: \$100

Award 3: \$50

What is in Your Life's Blueprint?¹

I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is in your life's blueprint? This is a most important and crucial period of your lives for what you do now and what you decide now at this age may well determine which way your life shall go. Whenever a building is constructed, you usually have an architect who draws a blueprint, and that blueprint serves as the pattern, as the guide, as the model for those who are to build the building, and a building is not well erected without a good, sound and solid blueprint.

Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint. I want to suggest some of the things that should be in your life's blueprint.

Number one in your life's blueprint should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your own worth and your own somebodiness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you are nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance. Now that means you should not be ashamed of your color. You know that it is very unfortunate that in so many instances our society has placed a stigma on the Negro's color. You know that there are some Negroes who are ashamed of themselves. Don't be ashamed of your color. Don't be ashamed of your biological features. Somehow you must be able to say in your own lives and really believe it I am black but beautiful and believe it in your heart. And therefore, you need not be lured into purchasing cosmetics advertised to make you lighter. Neither do you need to process your hair to make it appear straight. I have good hair and it is as good as anyone else's hair in the world. And we have to believe that. Now in your life's blueprint be sure that you have there the principal of somebodiness.

Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as a basic principle the determination to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor. You're going to be deciding as the days and the years unfold what you will do in life — what your life's work will be. And once you discover what it will be, set out to do it, and to do it well. And I say to you, my young friends, that doors are opening to each of you—doors of opportunity are open to each of you that were not open to your mothers and your fathers — and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to enter these doors as they open. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, said, in a lecture back in 1871, that "If a man can write a better book or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door." That hadn't always been true — but it will become increasingly true, and so I would urge you to study hard, to burn the midnight oil; I would say to you, don't drop out of school. And I

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmtOGXreTOU>

understand all the sociological reasons why we often drop out of school, but I urge you, in spite of your economic plight, in spite of the situation that you are forced to live so often with intolerable conditions — stay in school. And when you discover what you are going to be in life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it. And don't just set out to do a good negro job but do a good job that anybody can do. Don't just set out to be a good negro doctor, a good negro lawyer, a good negro school teacher, a good negro preacher, a good negro barber, or negro beautician, a good negro skilled labor. For if you set out to do that you have already flunked your matriculation exam for entrance into the University of Integration. Set out to do a good job so well that the living, the dead and the unborn couldn't do it any better. If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill, be a scrub in the valley. But be the best little scrub on the side of the hill. Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be the sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or you fail be the best of whatever you are. We always, we already, have some noble examples of black men and black women who have demonstrated to us that human nature cannot be catalogued. They in their own lives have walked through long and desolate nights of oppression and yet they have risen up and plunged against cloud filled nights of affliction - new emblazoned stars of inspiration. And so from an old slave cabin of Virginia's hills Booker T. Washington rose up to be one of America's great leaders. He lit a torch in Alabama and darkness fled in that City. And yes you should know this because it is your own city from a poverty stricken area of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Marian Anderson rose up to be the world's greatest contralto so that Toscani could say that a voice like this only comes once in a century. And Sibelius of Finland could say my roof is too low for such a voice. And the red hills of Gordon County, Georgia in the arms of a mother who could neither read or write Roland Hayes rose up to be one of the world's great singers and carried his melodious voice into the palaces and mansions of kings and queens. From crippling circumstances there came a George Washington Carver to carve for himself an imperishable niche in the annals of science. There was a star in the diplomatic sky and then came Ralph Benson, the grandson of a slave preacher and he reached up and grabbed it and allowed it to shine in his life with all of its scintillating beauty. There was a star in the athletic sky and then came Jackie Robinson in his day and Willie Mays in his day with their powerful bats and their calm spirits. And then came Jesse Owens with his fleet and dashing feet. Then came Joe Lewis and Muhammad Ali with their educated fists. All of them came to tell us that we can be somebody and to justify the conviction of the poet "Fleecy lock, and black complexion cannot forfeit nature's claim. Skin may differ, but affection dwells in black and white the same." And if "Were I so tall as to reach the pole to or grasp at the ocean at a span, I must be measured by my soul; the mind is the standard of the man."

And finally, in your life's blueprint must be a commitment to the eternal principles of beauty, love and justice. Don't allow anybody to pull you so low as to make you hate them. Don't allow anybody to cause you to lose your self-respect to the point that you do not struggle for justice. However young you are you have a responsibility to seek to make your nation a better nation in which to live. You have a responsibility to seek to make life better for everybody and so you must be involved in the struggle for freedom and justice. Now in this struggle for freedom and justice there are many constructive things that we all can do and that we all must do and we must not give ourselves to those things which will not solve our problems. You have heard the words "non-violent" and you have heard the word "violent". I happen to believe in non-violence. We struggle with this method with young people and adults alike. All over the South and we won some significant victories and we have to struggle with it all over the North. Because the problems in the North are as serious in the North as they are in the South. I believe that as we struggle with these problems we have to struggle with them with a method that can be militant but at the same time does not destroy life or property. And so our slogan must not be burn baby burn. It must be build baby build. Organize to organize. Yes, our slogan must be learn baby learn so we can earn baby earn. And with a powerful commitment I believe we can transform dark yesterday's of injustice into bright tomorrows of justice and humanity. Let us keep going toward the goal of self-hood, to the realization of the dream of brotherhood and toward the realization of the dream of understanding good will. Let nobody stop us. "And I close by quoting once more the man the young lady quoted that magnificent black bard who has now passed on, Langston Hughes. One day he wrote a poem entitled "Mother to Son" and the mother didn't always have her grammar right but she uttered words of great symbolic profundity: "Well, son, I'll tell you: life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it, boards torn up, and places with no carpet on the floor -- bare. But all the time I've been a climbin' on, and reachin' landin's, and turnin' corners, and sometimes goin' in the dark where there ain't been no light. So boy, don't you stop now. Don't you set down on the steps 'cause you finds it's kinder hard. For I've still goin', boy, I've still climbin', and life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

Well, life for none of us has been a crystal stair, but we must keep moving. We must keep going. And, if you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving.

**ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2018 BY 6:00PM**

For consideration, be sure to follow all of the below-mentioned guidelines.

Rules & Guidelines:

1. Entry Form must be submitted with the entry.
2. Participants can submit only one ITEM, and it must be the participant's original work.
3. The submission must be on one side only.
4. On the entry form that accompanies the submission, all of the following must be submitted:
 - a. Author's name;
 - b. Parent's/Guardian's/Caregiver's name, home address, phone number, and email address.
5. Do not place the author's name or any other identifying information on the submission.
6. All productions must include the references, utilizing the YouTube Videos:
 - a. Published on May 19, 2015: Rarely seen footage of Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking to students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967, where he delivered his speech "What Is Your Life's Blueprint?"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmtOGXreTOU>
 - b. Published on Feb 11, 2015: Provided to YouTube by TuneCore – “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution”, National Cathedral - March 31, 1968 · Martin Luther King
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLsXZXJAURk>
7. The production will be judged on the author's perspective on “What Is In Your Life's Blueprint? How has this speech affected you or your future plans? What different opportunities do you need to accomplish those plans? (originality of ideas, relevancy to the essay theme(s), connections between the two YouTube videos, clarity of expression, organization, spelling, and grammar)
8. Children and grandchildren of St. Therese of Lisieux Church Social Justice Committee Members are not eligible.
9. All productions will be evaluated by the St. Therese of Lisieux Church Social Justice Committee Members and St. Therese of Lisieux Church Youth. Decisions of the evaluation committee are final. The committee must receive at least seven contest entries for this age range to conduct the contest.

Prizes will be awarded to:

First Place - \$150

Second Place - \$100 -

Third Place - \$50

Along with the award, participants will:

- Be invited to attend the St. Therese of Lisieux Church Social Justice Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Celebration where participants will be publicly recognized for their achievements.

Deadline & Submission: There will be no exceptions.

Email Submissions:

To submit an ESSAY production by email:

1. In the subject area of the email, write the title of your production.
2. Your registration entry form and your ESSAY production must be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to _____ at _____.

Do not include your name or any entry form information (except title)
on your ESSAY production.

Registration Deadline: Tuesday, February 18, 2018 at 6:00pm.

A confirmation will be sent to the email address listed on the registration form within three business days.

Mail-in Submissions:

To submit your speech by postal service:

1. Print and complete the registration entry form.
2. Attach the registration entry form to your ESSAY production.

Do not include your name or entry form information (except title)
on your ESSAY production.

3. Mail registration entry form and production to:

St. Therese of Lisieux Church Social Justice Committee Members
1281 Troy Avenue,
Brooklyn, NY 11203

ESSAY productions must be received by **Sunday, February 18, 2018 at 6:00pm.** A confirmation will be sent to the email address listed on the registration form within three business days.

Walk-in Submissions:

ESSAY productions may also be submitted on a walk-in basis and hand-delivered to _____. Walk-in essays must be received by **Sunday, February 18, 2018 at 1:00pm.**

1. Print and complete the registration entry form.
2. Attach the registration entry form to your ESSAY production.

Do not include your name or entry form information (except title)
on your ESSAY production.

3. Mail registration entry form and production.
A confirmation will be sent to the email address listed on the registration form within three business days.

Notification of Winners

Winners will be notified by email and telephone.

Special Note

No responsibility can be assumed for lost or late mail or email. Entries will not be returned.

Questions:

St. Therese of Lisieux Church Social Justice Committee Members

Phone # _____; email address _____

Entries will only be considered when this
Registration Entry Form is completed and
attached to your ESSAY production.

Author's First and Last Names:

Parent's/Guardian's/Caregiver's First and Last Names:

Parent's/Guardian's/Caregiver's Home Address:

Parent's/Guardian's/Caregiver's Phone Number:

Parent's/Guardian's/Caregiver's Email Address:

Submission Title:
