



**OPERATION PROTECT AND DEFEND
STORY OF AMERICA ESSAY CONTEST**

APPLICATION FORM (Must be completed and turned in with essay – please print clearly):

Entry # _____ (leave blank) Date _____

Name: _____ Grade: _____

School: _____ City: _____

Home Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian Contact: _____ Phone No. _____

STUDENT’S DECLARATION:

I declare that this essay is my original work, that I have not used or relied on, in whole or in part, AI or an artificial intelligence software program or website, and that it was written for my social science/government/economics class. I declare that I have read and understood the requirements for submitting this essay for the Story of America essay contest. If I am chosen for an award, I give permission for my essay, and any photos taken of me at or for the awards event, to be reprinted and/or redistributed and used for educational and promotional purposes related to Operation Protect & Defend.

Student’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

I certify that my student completed this essay under my supervision.

Teacher’s Name: _____

Teacher’s Phone Number: _____

Course Title: _____ Title of Essay: _____

Teacher’s Signature _____ Date: _____

Entries must be turned into and uploaded to the Operation Protect and Defend Google Classroom no later than Monday, March 11, 2024. The Classroom Code is: dbudior. Email opdlawday@gmail.com with questions.

Story of America Essay Contest

The goal of **Operation Protect & Defend’s** *Story of America* Essay Contest is to encourage critical thinking, active discussion and thoughtful writing about what it means to be a “good citizen” in America today. Americans enjoy a broad range of Constitutional rights that persons living in many other countries do not. These rights include freedom of speech and religion, a right to a fair trial, a right to due process and equal protection, to name a few. Along with these rights, we believe, come certain responsibilities, including the responsibility of each new generation of Americans to maintain and protect those rights in light of the circumstances and challenges facing their lives, their communities and their nation.

Teachers working with Operation Protect & Defend have developed a curriculum related to the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, an examination of the cases that both shaped and flowed from *Brown*, and how the legacy of *Brown* has changed during the past 70 years. This course of study includes selected readings provided by your teacher and court opinions. It also involves in-class discussion and in-class writing about questions raised by the readings.

All 12th grade students in classes participating in the Operation Protect and Defend program are invited to enter this essay contest. Students will compete for the following cash awards:

Justice Robert K. Puglia Most Original & Inspirational Essay Awards	\$1,000 each
Frank C. Damrell, Lawyers’ Choice Awards	\$1,000 each
Jean McEvoy Memorial Scholarship Award	\$1,000
Bion M. Gregory Essay Recognition Awards	\$250 each
Teacher’s Choice Awards	\$200 each

It is expected that the essays submitted for the competition will be based on the student’s own research and understanding and will be their own original work. It is not permissible for someone else to rewrite, change, or add text to a student’s essay. However, it is permissible for someone to note spelling, word usage, grammatical, punctuation, and formatting errors. Using the work of someone else – in whole or in part – is considered plagiarism and is not permitted. Students should be careful to identify and give credit to any portion of the submitted essay that comes from another source.

Notification of Winners and Award Dinner: Winners will be notified by the end of April 2024. An awards ceremony will be held in early May, with details distributed later so please stay tuned.

STORY OF AMERICA 2024 ESSAY PROMPT



In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment, which prohibits states from making or enforcing any law that denies its citizens equal protection of those laws, allowed the separation of citizens based on race so long as each race was treated equally. Separate, but equal. That decision was the law of the land for more than 50 years.

Then, in 1954, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* reversed course, holding that “separate but equal” has no place in public education. To reach that decision, the Court recognized that separating children because of their race could deprive Black children of education and mental development, lead to feelings of inferiority, and affect their motivation to learn. The remedy for this constitutional violation was requiring integration, or, to use another word, diversity.

In the decades that followed, schools sought to increase racial diversity in classrooms and campuses. For example, schools held admission places for certain minority groups or gave a “tip” or “plus” to students based on their race. But those programs have faced legal challenges on grounds that giving a preference to someone because of their race is inconsistent with the idea that the Constitution should be color blind.

The debate over whether the guarantee of equal protection allows consideration of race continues today. On the one hand, the Supreme Court has said the Fourteenth Amendment does not permit using race-based measures to cure the effects of societal discrimination. But in the same opinion, the Court said consideration of *how* race affected a person’s life may be permitted.

So where does that leave *Brown Court*'s legacy on the promise of integration today? Is racial diversity, the goal set forth in *Brown*, still a benefit to public schools? And if not racial diversity, is there another type of diversity that would be a bigger benefit to you as a student? Or has the goal of color blindness in education been achieved?

Explain your answer using what you learned in the curriculum and the cases that have been discussed. You may support your answer with personal experiences if appropriate.

Story of America Essay Contest: Rules and Instructions

1. The *Story of America* Essay Contest is open to all eligible 12th grade students enrolled in participating social science/government/economics/legal classes within the Sacramento City Unified School District, Twin Rivers Unified School District, San Juan Unified School District, Natomas Unified School District, Elk Grove Unified School District, Folsom Cordova Unified School District and the Sacramento County Office of Education. Relatives of Operation Protect & Defend steering committee members are ineligible.
2. The essay must be based on the reading materials, in-class discussions and in-class writings relating to the topic. The essay must be your original work.
3. Provide ONE copy of your essay. Your essay may be typewritten, word-processed, or neatly handwritten. It must be **double-spaced** using one side of 8-1/2 x 11” paper. Number the pages consecutively (1, 2, 3. . .). If you handwrite your essay in class, you are strongly encouraged to staple a typewritten or word-processed copy of the essay to your handwritten entry. However, any substantive differences between the handwritten in-class essay and the typewritten or word-processed duplicate may be grounds for disqualifying your essay from the contest. Illegible essays will not be considered.
4. The maximum number of words permitted is 2000. If typed, the type font must be 12 point or larger in a legible font (such as *Times New Roman*).
5. The completed Application Form must accompany the essay. **Your name must NOT appear on the essay itself, only on the application form.**
6. You must do your own work, during class as assigned and under the supervision of a teacher participating in the project. Your teacher must receive a copy of your essay and sign your application form. **Your essay must be turned into and uploaded to the Operation Protect and Defend Google Classroom by March 11, 2024** to ensure that you are entered in the Contest.
7. The *Story of America* program sponsors reserve the right to reprint entries. Essays will not be returned. If you want a copy of your essay for your own records, you must make a copy before submitting it.

Story of America Essay Contest
Judging Criteria:

A distinguished group of local judges, lawyers, and community leaders will judge the essays. Judging guidelines include:

UNDERSTANDING (Maximum points 10)

10	Demonstrates a meaningful understanding of all key issues
8	Demonstrates a meaningful understanding of some key issues
6	Demonstrates a meaningful understanding of a key issue
4	Demonstrates a basic understanding of some issues
2	Demonstrates a limited understanding of the issues

PERSPECTIVE/ORIGINALITY (Maximum points 15)

15	Expresses original ideas and extraordinary sense of personal commitment that inspires reader
12	Expresses some original ideas and a strong sense of personal commitment that is compelling
9	Expresses personal feelings on the subject that are compelling
6	Expresses a strong statement on the subject
1	Expresses limited personal interest in the subject with few original thoughts

WRITING (Maximum points 5)

5	Demonstrates exceptional command of the language, including clear organization of ideas, grammatical accuracy, and a precise word choice
4	Demonstrates strong command of the language, generally free from errors in grammar and language usage
3	Demonstrates reasonable control of language, with some minor errors in grammar and structure
1	Demonstrates limited writing skills, with errors in word choice and grammar