The Memorial’s Mission Statement was created by a 350-member task force that was brought together by an unspeakable act of terrorism. On April 19, 1995, one hundred and sixty-eight individuals were killed in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. Within months, survivors, family members, first responders and community members united to create the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum.

Instead of letting this horrific act of violence divide us, it brought people together, demonstrating the importance of finding common ground among a diversity of opinions—a hallmark of the democratic process in the United States. The power of peaceful, civic engagement overcame the choice to use violence to affect change.

The essay committee at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is deeply interested in hearing what students like you think about the benefits and challenges of a non-violent, democratic society.
The contest is open to all public, private, parochial or homeschool students in grades 5-12.

**SUGGESTED WORD COUNT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>PRIZES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-6</td>
<td>350 words</td>
<td>1st Place...$100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grades 7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grades 9-10</td>
<td>500 words</td>
<td>1st Place...$500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grades 11-12</td>
<td>500 words</td>
<td>1st Place...$1,000</td>
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**DUE DATE**

Entries must be received online at MemorialMuseum.com/essaycontest by 11:59pm CST on Monday, February 27, 2023.

**SUBMISSION CHECKLIST**

Please make sure the following are completed before submission:

- Title your essay
- Reviewed your essay for proper grammar and punctuation
- Complete your student release form
- Remove names or identifiable information from the body of your paper

**JUDGING/CRITERIA**

Essays will be judged by educators and community leaders. The decision of the judges is final. Essays will be judged on originality, adherence to topic, and proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.

**NOTIFICATION/RECOGNITION OF WINNERS**

Winners will be contacted by phone or email by March 10, 2023, and will be recognized at a ceremony on April 1st. A list of the winners and their essays will be posted on the Memorial’s website, MemorialMuseum.com.
### Essay Prompt - Grades 5 and 6

“*The country where we live, the United States of America, has a democracy. This means there are processes in place that allow us to work through our differences by talking and voting. Together we can choose what we want our government to do. In America, there is no reason to use violence.*”  
– David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City, 2022

What are the benefits of democracy? Use Mayor Holt’s quote, your own experiences, and/or knowledge of the United States to help build your answer.

**Prizes:**  
1st Place $100  
2nd Place $75  
3rd Place $50

### Essay Prompt - Grades 7 and 8

“*The country where we live, the United States of America, has a democracy. This means there are processes in place that allow us to work through our differences by talking and voting. Together we can choose what we want our government to do. In America, there is no reason to use violence.*”  
– David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City, 2022

What values are most important to maintaining a functioning democratic society? What are challenges to democracy, and how might you help? Use Mayor Holt’s quote, your own personal experience, and/or knowledge of social studies to help build your answer.

**Prizes:**  
1st Place $150  
2nd Place $100  
3rd Place $75

### Essay Prompt - Grades 9 and 10


**Greg Sargent [Washington Post]:** Do you think we should be worried about another Oklahoma City [anti-government, domestic terrorism]?

**Nicole Hemmer [Historian of American Extremism]:** Yes, I do. There’s so much violent rhetoric. There’s so much rhetoric about the federal government being out to get you.

*You are going to be a political prisoner. You’re going to be silenced. You’re going to be jailed. That feeds into a politics of violence. We’ve seen acts of terror and acts of violence domestically over the past 10 years. There’s no reason to believe it won’t escalate...  
Sargent: Civil society getting out there and even more forcefully defending our institutions and the rule of law is critical...  
Hemmer: The prognosis is grim. But you’re right about that as a starting point. We are in a moment where there is not consensus on things like democracy, on things like opposition to extremism, opposition to fascism. One step that often gets skipped is actually making the case for why we want those things: Why do you want a democratic society? Why do you want a nonviolent society? You’ve got to build that consensus back. It’s a generational project — not one that’s going to be solved overnight.

What are the benefits of a non-violent, democratic society? What are the current challenges to such a society? What can we do to overcome those challenges? Consider the interview excerpt, your understanding of history, and/or your own experience to help construct your essay.

**Prizes:**  
1st Place $500  
2nd Place $300  
3rd Place $150

### Essay Prompt - Grades 11 and 12


**Greg Sargent [Washington Post]:** Do you think we should be worried about another Oklahoma City [anti-government, domestic terrorism]?

**Nicole Hemmer [Historian of American Extremism]:** Yes, I do. There’s so much violent rhetoric. There’s so much rhetoric about the federal government being out to get you.

*You are going to be a political prisoner. You’re going to be silenced. You’re going to be jailed. That feeds into a politics of violence. We’ve seen acts of terror and acts of violence domestically over the past 10 years. There’s no reason to believe it won’t escalate...  
Sargent: Civil society getting out there and even more forcefully defending our institutions and the rule of law is critical...  
Hemmer: The prognosis is grim. But you’re right about that as a starting point. We are in a moment where there is not consensus on things like democracy, on things like opposition to extremism, opposition to fascism. One step that often gets skipped is actually making the case for why we want those things: Why do you want a democratic society? Why do you want a nonviolent society? You’ve got to build that consensus back. It’s a generational project — not one that’s going to be solved overnight.

What are the benefits of a non-violent, democratic society? What are the current challenges to such a society? What can we do to overcome those challenges? Consider the interview excerpt, your understanding of history, and/or your own experience to help construct your essay.

**Prizes:**  
1st Place $1,000  
2nd Place $750  
3rd Place $500