

1st Place

5th-6th Grade

23rd Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

A Sense of Hope

You thought that your eyes would see the sun for the last time. You would inhale heavy air and accept your fate. Then, a hand would reach down and stroke your skin. The hand would turn into an arm. You were then blinded by broad daylight shining down on you, surrounding a shadowed person. A sudden warmth filled your body, what you recognize as a sense of hope.

“Are you okay?” the shadow would ask. You don’t speak. You can’t speak. All you feel is pain. You replay what had just happened. It was the morning of April 19, 1995. Smoke and pieces of debris shot into the air. You instantly broke into a run, dodged obstacles of collapsing walls, sprinting to the nearest exit. But it was too late. The ground beneath you suddenly split, sending you flying before slamming into sharp pieces of debris. The walls collapsed on top of you. You tried to move your legs and arms, but you only felt pain.

“Are you okay?” the shadow asks again. You try to reply, but you can’t make out any words. Suddenly, more hands pull at your shoulders.

“Don’t panic. We’ll get you out of here.” The hands lift up the fallen walls around you, enough to where you can move, grab your crippled arms and start to haul you out. You look to find that the hands not only belong to identical brown, striped sleeves but also to sleeves of different colors and even bare arms. The sunlight catches the shadows, revealing different faces of firefighters, men, and women. You didn’t know them. But they still helped you.

Our people bring a sense of hope, the need to help those in need. The story you read in the time of the bombing could’ve been the experience of many other survivors. They opened their eyes to find hands of people whom they didn’t know. The people didn’t care but to help each other during a heartbreaking moment.

“You and I may not know each other, but in the time of need, we would help each other,” Victor Chavez says. This quote best explains the sense of hope that we feel, the hope everywhere around us, and tells us that these are the people who would help if they can, they would have each other’s backs, even if they are unknown strangers.