

# Birmingham City Schools High School Essay Contest

**Applications Due November 22nd, 2019**

## What is the Jefferson County Memorial Project?

### THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

The Jefferson County Memorial Project (JCMP) was created after the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, a groundbreaking memorial in Montgomery dedicated to African American victims of racial terror violence. The Memorial contains monuments corresponding to over 800 counties where EJI documented racial terror lynchings. EJI has invited these counties to host community remembrance efforts around soil collection, historical markers, and the retrieval of their monuments to engage communities in local reckonings.

To learn more, visit EJI's website, <https://museumandmemorial.eji.org/>

### THE JEFFERSON COUNTY MEMORIAL PROJECT

JCMP is a grassroots coalition. We are currently composed of over 40 community partners and a multi-racial, multi-faith, multi-sector, and multi-generational group of committed volunteers. Together, we will complete the four goals of JCMP:

1. Research the 30 documented victims and their descendants
2. Educate the public on the importance of this history
3. Place historical markers that honor lynching victims and retrieve our monument from the National Memorial for Peace and Justice
4. Advocate for reform where racial injustice still exists today

It is our hope that our memorial retrieval will help Alabamians confront our history and reconcile for our future. For more information, visit [www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com](http://www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com).

## What is the High School Essay Contest?

This essay contest coincides with the dedication of a historical marker at Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham, Alabama. The marker will memorialize Jake McKenzie, Tom Redmond, and the practices of convict leasing in Jefferson County.

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) offers this essay contest to help students engage with both this local and national history. Mr. Redmond and Mr. McKenzie are two of over 4,400 African American victims of racial terror lynchings killed between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and World War II.

This essay contest is a chance to learn about this history, form your opinions on it, and connect our history to contemporary issues of racial injustice our communities still face today.

Your teachers, EJI, and JCMP are here to help you throughout the contest!

[www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com/essaycontest](http://www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com/essaycontest)

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## Helpful Details:

### ELIGIBILITY

The 2019 Racial Justice Essay Contest in Birmingham, Alabama is open to all students in grades 9-12 attending Birmingham City public high schools.

### ESSAY LENGTH

700 to 1,000 words

### SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CONTEST WINNERS

Scholarship winners will be announced in early 2020. Prizes totaling up to \$5,000 will be awarded to winning participants.

## The Five Steps to Write Your Essay

1. Research: On the website, review at least one source EJI provides and select a historical event described and featured on the sites provided.
2. Select: EJI has provided four prompts. Select one of them to respond to in your essay.
3. Write: Write your essay about the prompt you've selected. In the essay, use the research you've collected as well as:
  - a. An interview with a member of your family or community OR
  - b. An artistic expression that relates to the topics discussed in your essay
4. Cite: Include a list of sources used in your essay
5. Submit: Follow the instructions on the website and make sure to complete the essay entry form.

## To Submit Your Essay and Learn More:

**[www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com/essaycontest](http://www.jeffersoncountymemorial.com/essaycontest)**

What are the prompts? How do I submit my essay? Where can I go to learn more?  
How do I cite my work? All these and more are answered on the link above.