



Florida Black History Month 2023

Governor Ron DeSantis' and First Lady Casey DeSantis'
Black History Month Essay Contest

"Celebrating the Achievements of African American Floridians"

Official Essay Rules and Guidelines

Grades 4-5, 6-8, 9-12

Governor Ron DeSantis' and First Lady Casey DeSantis' Black History Month Essay Contest is open to all students attending any Florida school in grades 4-12. Six winners will be selected: two elementary school students (grades 4-5), two middle school students (grades 6-8), and two high school students (grades 9-12).

Eligibility: Contestants must be Florida residents, attend school in Florida in grades 4-12 (including public, charter, private, home or virtual) and able to provide a Social Security Number. Each student may enter only one essay, written in English, no longer than 500 words.

Entry Dates: Entries can be mailed to Volunteer Florida, Black History Month Committee, 1545 Raymond Diehl Road, Suite 250, Tallahassee, Florida 32308, or submitted electronically at FloridaBlackHistory.com. **All entries must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, February 7, 2023.** (Contestants are responsible for all shipping costs). Entries submitted electronically will receive email confirmation.

Entry Form: Student must provide all required information requested on the entry form and entry form must be legible. The student and parent/legal guardian are required to read and understand these rules in order to complete the entry form in its entirety. The entry form includes a release and certification that must be signed by a parent or guardian.

Labeling Requirements: Essays must include student's name, home address, telephone number, school the student attends, grade level, title of the essay and a word count. Essays must be no longer than 500 words in length, written in English, and should be typed.

Public Disclosure: The Florida Public Records Act, located in Chapter 120, Florida Statutes, generally requires that all activities, including this contest, are open to the public. Therefore, all aspects of your involvement in this contest, including your essay, will be subject to public disclosure.

Awards: Each winner will receive a 2-year Florida College Plan scholarship provided by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation and a \$100 gift card for school supplies. Once winners are announced, the decision is final.

In addition to the 500-word essay, each student must also submit each of the following:

- ☐ A letter of recommendation (no more than 250 words) from an educator (teacher/principal/coach) or professional (employer/community or business leader) describing why the student is worthy to receive a scholarship and how he/she stands out from his/her peers. **Letters of recommendation sent separately, via mail or electronically, will not be accepted.**
- ☐ A 200-250 word personal essay of why the student believes he/she is deserving of the scholarship, what his/her plans are for the future, and what he or she has done recently – during the past six months – to give back to his/her community.

For more information, visit www.floridablackhistory.com or contact Volunteer Florida at 850-414-7400.



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There are many examples throughout our state and nation's history of African Americans who have contributed to their community in a meaningful way. Using your own words, write about an African American who has had an impactful and inspiring effect on their community whose story should be shared. The subject of the essay should be a Floridian.

Some examples are:

- Jonathan Clarkson Gibbs II, a Presbyterian minister who served as Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction of Florida. He was the first Black Secretary of State.
- Daniel "Chappie" James Jr. was an Air Force fighter pilot and the first African American to reach the rank of Four-Star General in the U.S. military. Flew combat missions in Korea and Vietnam, and instructed African American pilots during WW2.
- Alwyn Cashe- Born, a U.S. Army non-commissioned officer and posthumous recipient of the Medal of Honor for his service in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Saved the lives of six of his fellow soldiers after the Bradley fighting vehicle they were riding in struck an improvised explosive device.
- James Weldon Johnson, a writer, civil rights activist, and a leader of the NAACP. He wrote *"Lift Every Voice and Sing,"* which is known as the Black National Anthem.
- John G. Riley, born into slavery in 1857 and died a millionaire in 1954. One of the few African Americans to own property at the turn of the century.
- Secretary Shevaun Harris, after a nearly two-decade career at the Agency for Health Care Administration, Harris was named Secretary of the Department of Children and Families in February 2021. An innovator, she spearheaded the development of the State's Canadian Prescription Drug Importation program.

Grades 4-5

Using several credible sources with varying points of view, write about an African American who contributed to their community. **The student should explain in their own words why the subject of the essay is worthy of recognition.**

Be sure to properly cite your sources on a separate page. (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>)

Grades 6-8

Using several credible sources with varying points of view, write about an African American who contributed to their community. **The student should explain in their own words why the subject of the essay is worthy of recognition.**

Write your essay in a way that encourages the reader to continue to explore the topic further.

Be sure to properly cite your sources on a separate page. (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>)

Grades 9-12

Using several credible sources with varying points of view, write about an African American who contributed to their community. **The student should explain in their own words why the subject of the essay is worthy of recognition.**

Write your essay in a way that demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic and historical context.

Be sure to properly cite your sources on a separate page. (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>)



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Essay Contest Checklist:

- ☐ Responds to prompt for appropriate grade level
- ☐ Student uses their own words to explain why the subject of the essay is worthy of celebration
- ☐ No longer than 500 words
- ☐ Written in English
- ☐ Typed
- ☐ Use of previously published works properly referenced on a separate page
(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>)

Information included on essay:

- ☐ Title of essay
- ☐ Word count
- ☐ Student's name
- ☐ Telephone number
- ☐ School student attends
- ☐ Student grade level

Additional items to be included and submitted together in the entry packet:

- ☐ Completed, legible entry form
- ☐ Signed Parent/Legal Guardian Waiver
- ☐ Letter of recommendation (no more than 250 words) from educator or professional. **Letters of recommendation sent separately, via mail or electronically, will not be accepted.**
- ☐ Personal essay including community service statement (200-250 words)
- ☐ **Submitted in time to be received by Volunteer Florida by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Tuesday, February 7, 2023.**



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Entry Form and Parent/Legal Guardian Waiver Form
Grades 4-5, 6-8, 9-12

Student Name:		Grade:	
Title of Essay:		Word Count:	
Home Mailing Address:		Age:	
City:	State: Florida	Zip Code:	
Home Phone Number: (including area code)			
Parent/Legal Guardian Name:			
Parent/Legal Guardian Cell Phone Number: (including area code)		Parent/Legal Guardian E-Mail Address:	
School Name:		County:	
School Mailing Address:			
City:	State: Florida	Zip Code:	
School Phone Number: (including area code)			

Release Statement:

As parent or guardian, I acknowledge that my child has written the attached essay. Should he or she win the essay contest, I agree to allow the essay to be distributed publicly. I also understand that if it is discovered my child plagiarized or that the thoughts expressed are not his or her own, the essay will be subject to disqualification.

I, _____,
(Print Name of Parent/Legal Guardian), hereby certify the following:

1. I am the parent/legal guardian of _____
2. My child is currently a legal resident of Florida and attends a Florida school.

Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature

Date