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.

Those involved in the Memorial process had to learn to listen to other perspectives, share their personal opinions and practice patience and civility all while working through their own grief and vulnerability. Though the discussions were difficult and emotional at times, everyone was committed to ensuring those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever would always be remembered.

The essay committee at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is deeply interested in how engaging in civil conversations have made a difference in your life and how respectful discussions can lead to a kinder, gentler world.
The contest is open to all public, private, parochial or homeschool students in grades 5-12.

ELIGIBILITY

The contest is open to all public, private, parochial or homeschool students in grades 5-12.

SUGGESTED WORD COUNT

| Grades 5-6 | 350 words |
| Grades 7-8 | 350 words |
| Grades 9-10 | 500 words |
| Grades 11-12 | 500 words |

PRIZES

| Grades 5-6 | 1st Place: $100 |
| Grades 7-8 | 1st Place: $150 |
| Grades 9-10 | 1st Place: $500 |
| Grades 11-12 | 1st Place: $1,000 |

| Grades 5-6 | 2nd Place: $75 |
| Grades 7-8 | 2nd Place: $100 |
| Grades 9-10 | 2nd Place: $300 |
| Grades 11-12 | 2nd Place: $750 |

| Grades 5-6 | 3rd Place: $50 |
| Grades 7-8 | 3rd Place: $75 |
| Grades 9-10 | 3rd Place: $150 |
| Grades 11-12 | 3rd Place: $500 |

DUE DATE

Entries must be received online at MemorialMuseum.com/essaycontest by 11:59pm CST on Sunday, February 21, 2021.

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please make sure the following are completed before submission:

• Is your essay titled?
• Have you reviewed your essay for proper grammar and punctuation?
• Is your student release form complete?
• Is your essay free of names or identifiable information on 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 12, 2021, and will be recognized at a ceremony later that month. A list of the winners and their essays will be posted on the Memorial’s website, MemorialMuseum.com.
The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is leading an initiative titled Better Conversations in which community members meet together to discuss their opinions in response to challenging and important questions. These conversations are based on the belief that listening to others is important because it can lead to understanding and growth.

Describe someone you know who is a good listener. What makes that person a good listener? Then describe a time when they helped you by listening to you. How did talking to them help you grow, learn, or change?

**Essay Prompt - Grades 5 and 6**

(Suggested word count, 350 words)

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

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is leading an initiative titled Better Conversations in which community members meet together to discuss their opinions in response to challenging and important questions. These conversations are based on the belief that listening to others, even when we disagree, can lead to understanding and growth.

In your essay, describe a time when you learned something important about another person by listening to them. What did you learn about that person? In what ways did hearing about their experiences change your beliefs or your understanding of an issue or of other people? Why is it important to listen to others even when we disagree?

**Essay Prompt - Grades 7 and 8**

(Suggested word count, 350 words)

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

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is leading an initiative titled Better Conversations in which community members meet together to discuss their opinions in response to challenging and important questions. These conversations are based on the belief that, with the uncertainty of what is happening in our world today, it is more critical than ever to stay connected and work through difficult issues.

In your essay, describe a time when you learned something important about another person by listening to them. What did you learn about that person? In what ways did hearing about their experiences change your beliefs or your understanding of an issue or of other people? Why is it important to listen to others even when we disagree?

**Essay Prompt - Grades 9 through 12**

(Suggested word count, 500 words)

**9/10 Prizes:** 1st Place $500  2nd Place $300  3rd Place $150
**11/12 Prizes:** 1st Place $1,000  2nd Place $750  3rd Place $500

The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum is leading an initiative titled Better Conversations in which community members meet together to discuss their opinions in response to challenging and important questions. These conversations are based on the belief that, with the uncertainty of what is happening in our world today, it is more critical than ever to stay connected and work through difficult issues.

It has been said that the mind is like a parachute, it only works when it is open. In listening to others, how important is it to remain open to opinions and beliefs different than yours? Have you experienced being open to another’s viewpoints and then changed your thoughts or attitude about a situation? How could this experience help a community or influence our world?