

## Central Region Essay Winner

*John Roakes*

*Hanover High School  
Hanover County*

They say that I am just a kid. That I can't change anything. They say the world is a cruel and heartless place, and it is.

In today's world people are more concerned with their text messages than their neighbors. People are more worried about *Jersey Shore* than the bullying at local schools. But the real problem is not their ignorance, it is their indifference. They play the "life is unfair card," and move on. But not me.

To change the world, it starts with a single person. That single person has to have the moral and emotional strength to stand up for what they believe in. One single act of bravery in the face of certain defeat can inspire a lasting change on the world. Rosa Parks didn't move from her seat, Dr. King shared his dream with the world, and Barack Obama rewrote history. By overcoming the odds, and never giving up, these legendary people not only inspire millions, they serve as a blueprint on how to change the world.

I believe that in order to change the world, I must first change myself. I have to be the Rosa Parks of my school. I have to refuse to give in to the bully, and the "accepted" way that things operate; I must challenge the wrongdoings of others in spite of the consequences. I have to be the Dr. King of my state, sharing my voice and ideas with others. Not so that they can agree with me, but to inspire them to change their own lives and their own communities. Most importantly, I have to be the next Barack Obama of this great nation. I must inspire the nation to have hope, and to desire a change in the status quo. To change the world, I must have the strongest character and the desire to share it with the world.

My greatest fear is not death, it is being forgotten after I die. To be remembered, you need one thing: a strong enough character to change the world.

As Nannie Mae Berger Hairston once said, "I want children to remember that the most important part of your life is your character. It goes with you all through your life. I learned long ago that to make it a better world, it had to begin with me."