

Youth: Capturing the Vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award

Award criteria: Nominees must have demonstrated an adherence to one or more of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Six Principles of Nonviolence, which are:

- 1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.*
- 2. The Beloved Community is the framework for the future.*
- 3. Attack forces of evil, not persons doing evil.*
- 4. Accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause to achieve the goal.*
- 5. Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence.*
- 6. The universe is on the side of justice.*

Nominees must have been 20 or younger on Nov. 30, 2022.



Ernie Davis III
Wyoming

Ernie is a force for good in greater Cincinnati at only 11 years old. As a student at Wyoming Middle School, he spends much of his time studying and playing on his basketball team. In his spare time, he volunteers as Professor Ernie, teaching kids about Black heroes and she-roses of today and years past. Through his passion for Black history and his offering of time and energy teaching his Roots program, Ernie is demonstrating Dr. King's concept of the beloved community as the framework for the future.

Dr. King acknowledged that realizing his vision would involve the reform of many American systems with education being one of them. What Ernie does with his Roots program augments the education students receive in schools by illuminating the less-often taught historical figures who were instrumental in forging the United States. Each month he reads books from the library, organizes his thoughts into a slide deck, and teaches K – 8 students about one hero and one she-ro. He began Roots presentations in December 2018 as a 7-year-old in Chicago. And then during the COVID pandemic, he was concerned young people would miss their regularly scheduled Roots sessions so he taught via Zoom and published his content on YouTube.

Today, Ernie and Assistant Professor Judith (also known as his mom) are back to teaching classes in-person each month. They have been presenting at the College Hill Branch of the Cincinnati Public Library since the summer of 2022. His motto is 'everyone deserves to know their roots' and thinks exciting, positive stories build confidence in children.

His dedication to his community goes beyond his Roots program. He helped raise funds to donate books from diverse authors to his local library. He helped develop a set of anti-bullying recommendations for his school. He also helped develop the first Diversity Day at his elementary school, where he also delivered a Roots talk to students and families of various cultures and ethnicities. And after winning first place in the Frederick Douglass National Historical Site Oratorical Contest in 2019, Ernie shared tips on memorizing and delivering orations to other young people participating in their first speech contests. In keeping with 'the universe is on the side of justice' principle, Ernie intends to become a lawyer and advocate for those oppressed by systems of inequity.