On April 16, 1963, while confined in a Birmingham jail for participating in a protest march in that city, the Reverend, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who came “across a recent statement made” by some of the white clergy presiding in the city, claiming his activities were “unwise and untimely.” In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail, King responded to his fellow clergymen the following: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” But King didn’t end there. He added “We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." He also stated “An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself.” King likewise drew the readers of his very detailed letter into an impassioned use of illustration, noting that “Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application.” One instance he gave is “I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.”

The Liberal Arts Diversity Advisory Committee (LADAC) is sponsoring a Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Essay Contest. All Purdue students and high school juniors or seniors are encouraged to write a 3 to 5 (or 750 to 1000 word) page essay explaining ‘What does King’s “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” quotation, mean to you?’

The deadline for essay submissions are Saturday, December 31, 2016 before 5 p.m. Essays must be submitted as email attachments to Holly Tittle-Hudson at htittleh@purdue.edu. Students should be sure to write, “Liberal Arts MLK Essay Contest-Purdue,” or “Liberal Arts MLK Essay Contest-HS” on the subject line of all email submissions.

Students should include an original title on a separate page including a contact phone number where they can be reached, as well as an email address, and the name of their college at Purdue or high school. Photographs, images, and/or illustrations will not be considered in the word or page count for submitted essays. Students may only submit one essay, and all entries must be as an original essay. These essays should also include references on a separate page, using at least 3 sources. The sources do not need to be from King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

Essays must be typed, using a Times Roman of Calibri font size 12, double spaced, and on one side of the page. These essays will be evaluated based upon the author’s arguments and knowledge about the legacy of Dr. King and a students’ interpretation of the quotation, originality of ideas, clarity of expression, organization, and grammar and punctuation. All submissions will be evaluated separately either on college-level (Purdue) or high school level.

Three winners will be awarded an Amazon gift card
1st place winner(s) will receive a $250.00 gift card
2nd place winner(s) will receive a $150.00 gift card
3rd place winner(s) will receive a $100.00 gift card

LADAC members, which consist of a committee of CLA faculty, students, and staff, will evaluate all entries. Winners will be announced Friday, January 13, 2017, and invited to a luncheon that will be hosted by CLA Dean David Reingold Friday, January 20, 2017. Winners will receive a certificate and awarded prizes.