
National History Day Celebrates Student Winners at 2026 National Contest **Exploring *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History***

COLLEGE PARK, MD – June 22, 2026 – National History Day® (NHD) hosted its annual National Contest last week at the University of Maryland, College Park, where nearly 3,000 middle and high school students from across the country and around the world gathered to showcase their year-long historical research projects.

To coincide with the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, NHD's 2026 theme was *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*. Finalists emerged from local, regional, and state competitions involving hundreds of thousands of students. Project categories included documentary, exhibit, performance, website, and paper across both junior and senior divisions.

"It is inspiring to see so many students engage with primary sources, craft their own historical arguments, and dedicate a school year to researching a topic they are passionate about," said National History Day Executive Director, Dr. Cathy Gorn. "This year, as our nation's democracy is at the forefront of everyone's mind, it is especially empowering for students to take on the theme *Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*. Every NHD student should be proud of their research and accomplishments."

This year's National Contest student winners include:

Junior Group Documentary

- **First Place:** Sarah Jackson, Mya Kacal, Emery Hobson; Killeen, TX, Lake Belton Middle School; *Brought to You By the Letter R! As a Reaction to Poverty, Sesame Street Became the Revolutionary Idea That Reformed Children's Television*
- **Second Place:** Haadi Nouman, Viyan Kshetry; Westlake, OH, Birchwood School of Hawken; *Toxic Wake-Up: The 1993 Cleveland Lead Summit That Stirred Citizens and Shaped Reform*
- **Third Place:** Andrew Terrence, Colton Schoales, Marion Paulson, Savannah Gilbert, Chase Belmont; Clovis, CA, Alta Sierra Intermediate School; *Giving Credit Where Credit is Due: The Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Reform of American Finance*

Senior Group Documentary

- **First Place:** Helen Collins, Sara Rosenthal; Minneapolis, MN, Roosevelt High School; *Fusing Religion and Politics: How the Iranian Revolution Led to Radical Reforms*
- **Second Place:** Lena Yumoto, Evelyn Rubens, Aria Fulton; Highland, MD, River Hill High School; *Sunlight and Dynamite: The Secrets of the Stasi Files*
- **Third Place:** Hansika Kolli, Soina Kaur; Folsom, CA, Vista Del Lago High School; *The COINTELPRO Files: A Hidden Dissonance of Democracy*

Junior Group Exhibit

- **First Place:** David Orellana, Jack Pettine, Austin Thomas; Baytown, TX, Baytown Junior High; *On the Line of Scrimmage: Revolution, Reaction and Reform Under the Helmet*
- **Second Place:** Julianne Pashe, Katie Smith; Ellington, CT, Ellington Middle School; *"Once Seen, Never Forgotten": How the Revolutionary Coney Island Incubator Babies Reformed Neonatal Care*
- **Third Place:** Caiden Morrison, Raphael DSouza, Gavin Morrison; Harrisburg, PA, Holy Name of Jesus School; *Holy Smoke!*

Senior Group Exhibit

- **First Place:** Anika Pruessner, Meredith Krell; Washington, D.C., School Without Walls High School; *The 1982 Tylenol Murders: How 7 Bottles Reformed American Consumerism*
- **Second Place:** Aubree Taylor, Mackenzie Day; Okeene, OK, Canton High School; *From Crisis to Care: The Orphan Trains and America's Child Welfare Reform*
- **Third Place:** Francesca Ocampo, Emily Owca; Des Plaines, IL, Maine West High School; *The 1963 Chicago Public School Boycott: The Fight Against the Injustice in Chicago's Education System*

Junior Group Performance

- **First Place:** Liliana Paciaroni, Abigail Mannino; Albertson, NY, Herricks Middle School; *This is Our Story: How the Revolutionary Reaction of the "Code Girls" During World War II Led to Reforms in Cryptology*
- **Second Place:** Wiam Titraoui, Zaynab Umair, Sasha McCurdy, Jianna Mathew; Bayonne, NJ, Midtown Community School #8; *"R is for Revolution, Reaction, Reform": How Sesame Street Changed the Channel on Children's Television*
- **Third Place:** Nora Mathistad, Peyton DeRocher, Jace DeRocher, Nola McKee, Quinton Hart; Akron, IA, Akron Westfield Middle School; *The Cherry Sisters: How the World's Worst Act Reformed Freedom of the Press*

Senior Group Performance

- **First Place:** Sergio Cisneros, Isabella Castaneda Garcia, Karol Arriaga, Damian Ledezma; Brownsville, TX, Rivera Early College High School; *The Space Race: Revolution Through Rivalry*
- **Second Place:** Kaylin Moon, Vivian Gu, Sarah Lei, Akanksha Revuru; Sammamish, WA, Eastlake High School; *"Bombard the Headquarters!": Dazibao Propaganda's Reaction in the Chinese Cultural Revolution*
- **Third Place:** Sua Chung, Subin Shin, Sia Park, Yije Hong, Audrey Lee; Seocho District, Korea, Saint Paul Preparatory Seoul; *5.18 And the Students' Fight for Democracy: From Its Political Beginnings to Multifaceted Legacies*

Junior Group Website

- **First Place:** Zahava Wiznia, Isabella Halem; New York, NY, Manhattan Day School; *A World*

Wrapped in Plastic: From Birth to Ban: The Revolutionary Plastic Bag

- **Second Place:** Anita Ma, Honbria Hung, Quan Lo; Rosemead, CA, Temple (Roger W.) Intermediate School; *Howling at Moloch: A Revolutionary Cry Against Postwar America*
- **Third Place:** Avish Arzaga, Carl Gantala, Alexis Abregano; Honolulu, HI, King David Kalakaua Middle School; *Chernobyl: The Nuclear Reaction That Revolutionized and Reformed the World*

Senior Group Website

- **First Place:** Olivia Lim, Valerie Fu, Katie Zhao, Stephanie Tan; Carmel, IN, Carmel High School; *The War Powers Resolution: Redefining the Separation of Powers in the Vietnam Era*
- **Second Place:** Amrutha Veeramaneni, Arya Gurumukhi, Collin Nguyen, Nanditha Sharath, Arko Barua; Plano, TX, Plano East Senior High School; *Deciding Destiny: How the God Committee Revolutionized Bioethics and Reformed Federal Healthcare Policy*
- **Third Place:** Natalie Martin, Kayla McCloskey, Hanna Ariannejad; North Potomac, MD, Poolesville High School; *Silent Spring: DDT, Dissent, and the Dawn of a New Era*

Junior Individual Documentary

- **First Place:** Adrian Gillette; Bettendorf, IA, Bettendorf Middle School; *Brought to You by the Letter R: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in Sesame Street's Mission of Educational Equality*
- **Second Place:** Pavit Thakkar; Jersey City, NJ, Learning Community Charter School; *The Mortgage Backed Crisis of 2008: A House of Cards*
- **Third Place:** Anika Bhandari; Bothell, WA, Leota Junior High; *Jazz: The Sound of Revolution That Transformed America*

Senior Individual Documentary

- **First Place:** Chengyue Wu; Burlington, Canada, Hillfield Strathallan College; *Stolen Children, Unbroken Nations: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in Canada's Residential Schools*
- **Second Place:** Enoch Akinbade; Prosser, WA, Prosser High School; *Reaction to the Warren County PCB Protests: The Revolution That Reformed the Environmental Justice Movement*
- **Third Place:** Shaunya Kumar; Shakopee, MN, Shakopee High School; *From Baby Snatching to Justice: The Revolution for Family Sovereignty, State Reaction, and the Indian Child Welfare Act's Reform*

Junior Individual Exhibit

- **First Place:** Emogene Shaw; Monroe, WA, Sky Valley Education Center; *Timber Wars: Forestry Reforms That Gave Flight to an Environmental Revolution*
- **Second Place:** Malai Walker; Minneapolis, MN, Justice Page Middle School; *Vanguards of a Revolution: Freedom House and the First Mobile Emergency Room*
- **Third Place:** Emberly Thompson; Canton, OK, Canton Elementary School; *Out Of The Dust: How Earth's Revolt Led to Conservation Reforms*

Senior Individual Exhibit

- **First Place:** Yesha Gupta; Irvine, CA, Northwood High School; *The Day Iceland Stood Still: From National Reaction to Global Revolution and Reform*
- **Second Place:** Abigail Lee; Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Bergen County Technical High School - Teterboro; *The Black Panther Free Breakfast Program: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in the War on Child Hunger*
- **Third Place:** 'Ānelalani Suapaia; Honolulu, HI, Kamehameha Schools - Kapālama Campus; *Revolutionizing Native Hawaiian Nutrition: The Impact of Claire Ku'uleilani Hughes*

Junior Individual Performance

- **First Place:** Lexi Kruse; Glencoe, OK, Morrison Junior High School; *She Would Not Be Silent: Kate Barnard and the Cost of Reform*
- **Second Place:** Kallie Sapp; Fruitport, MI, Whitehall Middle School; *Prologue or Epilogue? How the Chernobyl Nuclear Explosion Revolutionized Modern Radiation Science*
- **Third Place:** Hope Bailey; Hendersonville, NC, Hendersonville Middle School; *War of the Dots*

Senior Individual Performance

- **First Place:** Braydon Chen; Great Neck, NY, Great Neck North High School; *Groundwork for Stability: How Hamilton Turned Reaction into Reform and Built American Finance*
- **Second Place:** Jasmine Marlow; Lebanon, NJ, Homeschool; *Elizabeth Coleman White and the Reactions to Child Labor at Whitesbog*
- **Third Place:** Eli Raskolnikov; Bronx, NY, Horace Mann School; *Trofim Lysenko, Nikolai Vavilov, and the Tragic Lessons of a Pseudo-Scientific Revolution*

Junior Individual Website

- **First Place:** Aaron Aldrin; South Windsor, CT, Timothy Edwards School; *The Day the Sun Took Center Stage: Copernicus' Silent Revolution and the Collapse of an Old Cosmos*
- **Second Place:** Nora Gillum; Dripping Springs, TX, Dripping Springs Middle School; *The King's Revolutions: Rethinking the Historical Significance of Elvis Presley in 1950s America*
- **Third Place:** Bernadette Cate; Towson, MD, Home School; *The Free Speech Movement: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform at Berkeley*

Senior Individual Website

- **First Place:** Ila Lu; Sammamish, WA, Eastlake High School; *Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media: Indymedia's Revolution in Citizen Journalism*
- **Second Place:** Allyson Terrazas; Santa Clara, NM, Silver High; *Reaction, Revolution, & Reform in the Animation Industry: The Screen Cartoonists Guild and the Disney Revolt of 1941*
- **Third Place:** Sophie Lee; Minato-ku, Japan, The American School in Japan; *Sweetness and*

Subjugation: Van Houten's Revolutionary Hydraulic Cocoa Press, Imperial Expansion, and the Bitter Limits of Labor Reform

Junior Paper

- **First Place:** Ethan Zhang; McLean, VA, Cooper Middle School; *From Revolutionaries to Reluctant Reformers: The Remaking of China's Sent-Down Generation*
- **Second Place:** Anne Fei; Westlake, OH, Birchwood School of Hawken; *Blood or Birthplace? How United States v. Wong Kim Ark Revolutionized Citizenship in America*
- **Third Place:** Sam Gibber; New York, NY, Manhattan Day School; *Justice on Trial: Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in the Capture of Adolf Eichmann*

Senior Paper

- **First Place:** Ruopan Song; Boston, CT, Loomis Chaffee School; *The Railway That Toppled the State: The Sichuan Railway Protection Movement and China's Gentry-State Rupture of 1911*
- **Second Place:** Hugo Richards; Chicago, IL, Independent Scholars; *A Revolution Within a Revolution: Washington, Smallpox, and the Continental Army*
- **Third Place:** Tyler Malkin; Greenwich, CT, Greenwich High School; *A Tale of Two Revolutions: How the Response to a Revolutionary Medical Breakthrough Saved the American Revolution*

In addition to these national award winners, [21 special prizes](#) sponsored by various partners, such as the National Park Service and the Library of Congress, were awarded to students across all categories and divisions. Special prizes include African American History, Immigration History, Indigenous History, Women's History, and more. All documentary category award winners were also named Next Generation Angels Awards winners, sponsored by The Better Angels Society.

During the National Contest, National History Day also honored Ms. Ann Jackson from B.R. Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa, and Mr. Josh Elders from Peters Township Middle School in McMurray, Pennsylvania, with the 2026 National History Day Teacher of the Year Award in the junior and senior divisions, respectively. The winners were selected from 78 middle and high school teacher nominees from NHD affiliates across the world. The prestigious award celebrates outstanding history scholarship and innovative classroom instruction and comes with a \$5,000 cash prize.

The full list of winners and a recording of the 2026 National Contest Awards Ceremony are available on the [NHD website](#).

About National History Day (NHD)

NHD is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, that seeks to improve the teaching and learning of history. Established in 1974, NHD currently engages more than half a million students each year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest and supports teachers through professional development

opportunities. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the annual National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD is sponsored in part by the Joyful Noise Charitable Foundation, The Better Angels Society, Bezos Family Foundation, Library of Congress, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Behring Global Educational Foundation, and the National Park Service. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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