

Local high school students share their perspectives on immigration.

Winners of Teen Perspectives contest announced.

MALDEN, Mass, May 20, 2024 / Students from Everett, Malden and Medford high schools competed in the annual Teen Perspectives contest hosted by The Immigrant Learning Center (The ILC). They expressed their take on the theme “What immigration means to me” through essays, videos and works of art. Student finalists from first place through honorable mention were awarded cash prizes from \$50 to \$300 during the awards ceremony at The Immigrant Learning Center’s headquarters in Malden on Friday, May 17, 2024.

The ceremony was attended by the student contestants and their family members and teachers, school committee members and officials from all three school districts including: Malden Principal Chris Mastrangelo, Everett Principal Dennis Lynch and Medford Superintendent Marice Edouard-Vincent.

Malden Mayor Gary Christenson addressed the theme of the competition by sharing how immigration has expanded his worldview during his public tenure. Talking specifically of local high school graduates he said, “it's so gratifying to hear when people come back, they feel like it's been such an advantage to have lived in Malden, Medford and Everett because they have experienced things like I have, and it gives them an advantage that I don't think other students have in other parts of the state and country.”

First prize essayist Simran Tamang from Everett High School read her riveting story, *The Nose Ring on My Lip*. Through the cultural emblem of her nose ring, Tamang shares her personal journey from a child in Nepal to a scared fourth-grade “outsider” in Malden to becoming the confident young adult she is today.

The piece concludes with her saying, “The flow of my vocal resonance slowly maneuvers my nose ring out of my lips and back to its former residence. No longer are my lips sealed by the ornament decorating my face. More so, I am delighted to uphold a piece of my culture in educational settings and beyond it. I am a presence who transcends beyond the nose ring that once governed my life. I am an advocate for my community, a skilled accountant, and just a girl with a nose ring. And proud of it.”

In the visual art category, Everett High School student Gabriela Paniagua Castro finished first for her vibrant and vivid artwork called *Nuevas Esperanzas/New Hopes*. In selecting this piece, the

judges described it as “a profound depiction of the aspiration shared by many immigrants striving for a better future for their children.”

Three contestants were recognized in the video category: Medford High School student Michael Pach received the Journalistic Achievement Award, Medford High School student Mosammat Habiba received the Narrative Achievement Award and Everett High School student Elisa Alves received the Visual Achievement Award.

Other finalists included Malden High School student Kathleen Yick for second place essay, an anonymous Medford High School for third place essay, Malden High School student Miaoyi Hu for second place artwork and Malden High School student Hadjar Yousfi for third place artwork. In total, 14 students from all three high schools received honorable mentions.

This year’s judges were: Mark Puleo from Brazilian Magazine, Carmel Salhi from Northeastern University and Jodie Zalk from Malden Reads for essays, videographer Seth Bender and Anne D’Urso-Rose from Urban Media Arts for videos, and artist Bitho Faustin, Ed Rocha from Rola Education, Pam Shanley from Arts Collaborative Medford, Anna Thai from Anna Thai Embroidery and Kevin Thai from Three Circles Studio for visual arts.

All of this year’s submissions as well as previous year’s winners can be seen on The ILC’s website at <https://www.ilctr.org/contest>.

About The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (The ILC) of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that gives immigrants a voice in three ways. The English Language Program provides free, year-round ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes to help immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston become successful workers, parents and community members. The Public Education Institute informs Americans about immigrants and immigration in the United States, and the Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture with George Mason University, produces valid, reliable and objective multidisciplinary research on immigrants and immigration to the United States.

For more information, visit the website <http://www.ilctr.org>. The ILC can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Photo Caption 1: Simran Tamang, Everett High School student and essay winner of the Teen Perspectives 2024 contest

Photo Caption 2: Everett High School student Gabriela Paniagua Castro with her winning work of art (on left) at The ILC Teen Perspectives 2024 award ceremony

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