

CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION ESSAY CONTEST WINNER INTRODUCTION

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Center for Democratic Deliberation

During the 2021-2022 academic year, Penn State’s Center for Democratic Deliberation (CDD) in generous cooperation with *Young Scholars in Writing* sponsored an essay contest to encourage undergraduate research in rhetoric, to publicize the CDD’s continuing support of a website devoted to the study of the rhetoric of the civil rights movement (<https://sites.psu.edu/civil-rights-rhetoric/>), and to recognize outstanding student work. It was my honor to oversee the contest.

Dozens of student submissions were received, many of them superb rhetorical analyses of various discourses connected with the African American Freedom Struggle. But in the end, Professor Kyle King of Penn State—Altoona, the contest judge, chose Dana Diab of Emory University as the winner for her essay, now published here in *YSW*. (Her teacher at Emory, Kathleen Leuschen, also received a cash acknowledgment.) Anna Grace Mixon (Baylor University) earned second place, and Fisher Calame of Sewanee University was awarded third place. Their essays and other worthy ones are now included on the website, where they can be used by teachers to illustrate approaches

to rhetorical analysis and to demonstrate the accomplishment that is possible when talented students meet outstanding mentors.

Dana Diab’s essay was unusual in that it considered the rhetorical work of not one but three people who made significant contributions to successes in the ongoing struggle for civil rights: Septima Clark, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ella Baker, all affiliated during the 1960s with the Citizenship Education Program associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Impressed with the concept of “bridge leadership,” Dana Diab analyzed the communications of these remarkable women to illustrate how leadership is created through communicative action. Skillful rhetors—like these women—approach communication as a challenge to the unique circumstances of the case at hand, and they devise rhetorical strategies and tactics to overcome those challenges. Dana Diab’s essay will impress you with its learning, its originality, its eloquence, and its research resourcefulness—I’ll bet many teachers end up recommending it to their own students.