



# Summer Times



Councilor At-Large Ayanna Pressley kicked off the summer by reminding youth that big change can, and does, come from young people.

**“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”**

– DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

## Same Great Workshops, Brand New Name!

In honor and memory of Mayor Thomas Menino, a devoted advocate for Boston’s youth, our Friday workshops were renamed Mayor Menino Leadership Forums. Mayor Menino was a longtime supporter of the MLK Summer Scholars program, and we are proud to continue his legacy.

Scholars show their community commitment via social media, using #MLKSelflessSelfie to pledge and show off their good deeds.



At the end of each Mayor Menino Leadership Forum three prizes were awarded to those scholars who shared a photo using the hashtag throughout the previous week.

It was a busy and rewarding summer for all! More than 600 teens participated in this summer’s MLK Summer Scholars program, working over 100,000 hours at local non-profits. If that isn’t impressive enough, they also attended a series of development workshops where they were inspired by speakers such as Councilor At-Large Ayanna Pressley and George Foreman III and participated in an online learning course, *Commons: Digital Town Square*. Driving home the program’s theme of service, the summer wrapped with students composing op-eds about issues that affect their community. Contest winner, Chris Cadogan, chose to write about the obstacles facing LGBTQ+ youth; his insightful essay is presented below.

## THE Op-Ed PROJECT

### LGBTQ+ Youth

By Chris Cadogan  
MLK Summer Scholar,  
Youth Enrichment Services

Many assume that national legalization of same-sex marriage in America means that issues facing gay or transgender youth have been fully solved, but this is far from the truth. LGBTQ+ youth are consistently abused, attacked, and persecuted in America and countries around the world. In America today, the majority of LGBTQ+ youth can be fired without reason or recourse due to their gender identity and/or sexuality. Currently, in 29 U.S. states, employment non-discrimination laws still do not cover sexual orientation, while 32 states don’t have non-discrimination laws in place covering gender identity. Additionally, the epidemic of bullying persists for LGBTQ+ youth. Currently, 82% have reported feeling personally attacked at one point in their life due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, while 42% feel they live in an unwelcoming environment. To date, 40% of all homeless teens, roughly 700,000 people, identify as LGBTQ+,

many of whom are forced into homelessness from abuse, neglect, or ostracization.

This persecution must end today! To remedy this ongoing mistreatment, we as a society must strive to educate ourselves about the LGBTQ+ community and work to better support struggling LGBTQ+ youth. We must speak out against bullying in schools and communities. We must protest for gay and trans rights in Congress, and make sure we vote for pro-equality legislation and those who support it. As a community, we should volunteer, donate, and advocate for gay rights organizations, like the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission or GLAAD! We must strive for increased advocacy for LGBTQ+ youth rights! How can we progress as a society, if we let such blatant neglect occur in the LGBTQ+ community? If you are reading this, I urge you to educate yourself and advocate tolerance for all people, no matter their sexuality orientation or gender identity!

### Other Top Essayists:

- Ryan Cheung – Military Spending; Genna Medina-Cook – Gentrification;
- Victoria Delvalle – Sexism; Ivaniel Diaz – After School Youth Programs;
- Drew Galls – Religious Freedom; Kimberly Goncalves – METCO Program;
- Sophia Liu – Environmental Philanthropy; Nedjie Thompson – Gun Violence;
- Sherley Valeus – Teen Drug Abuse Prevention

## Special thanks

Thank you to everyone who made this summer’s program a success, especially Boston Cares, the Center for Teen Empowerment, and Everfi for sharing their expertise and helping to manage our program.

