

UC Davis Center for Poverty and Inequality Research Black History Month Essay Contest 2026

The Center for Poverty and Inequality Research (CPIR) at UC Davis is pleased to announce its fifth annual **Black History Month Essay Competition**. The competition is open to all undergraduate and graduate students currently enrolled at UC Davis.

Theme

How Can We Reduce Racial and Economic Inequality in California?

Prize

\$500

PLUS editorial input from CPIR senior writer, who will attempt to secure publication of the winning essay as an op-ed in a news outlet. If op-ed publication should prove unviable, the essay will appear as a feature on the CPIR website and be promoted widely by the Center.

Essay Criteria

- Essays (600-800 words) should explore and offer answers to the question ‘How Can We Reduce Racial and Economic Inequality in California?’.
- Entrants may draw on published research in fields such as economics, sociology, psychology, history, education, or any other relevant discipline. They may also, if they wish, draw on personal experience.
- Submissions must be **original, unpublished work** that reflect the student’s individual voice and perspective.
- Essays should be written in the style of an op-ed and need not include formal citations. Embedding links to relevant resources is encouraged. Guidelines for writing op-eds can be found [here](#).
- Previous winners can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Eligibility and Guidelines

- Word count: 600-800 words
- Applicants must be currently enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students at UC Davis.
- Essays should be original, and written by the applicant.
- AI-generated text is not permitted.
- Applicants may only submit one essay for consideration.
- Essays should be submitted as PDF files, formatted as follows: 12-point Times New Roman or similar font; double-spaced; author’s full name, student number and email address in the header; pages numbered.
- Any questions related to the competition should be sent by email to CPIR Center Manager Jessica Harold at jwharold@ucdavis.edu.

Deadline

February 1st, 2026

Submissions

Learn more and submit your essay:

<https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/post/black-history-month-essay-contest-2026>