Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Fund, Inc.

Middle & High School Essay Contest (Grades 6-12)

AWARDS for Harford County Students (School Year 2025-2026)

Grades 9-12 Essays: 1st Place: **$1,000**; 2nd Place: **$750**; 3rd Place: **$500**.

Grades 6-8 Essays: 1st Place: **$500**; 2nd Place: **$250**; 3rd Place: **$125**.

Plus 10 Honorable Mentions. **All winning students also receive a framed certificate.**

About Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton

Alfred B. Hilton was born in the Hopewell area of Harford County. On September 29, 1864, the 4th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.), with Hilton leading and carrying the National flag, advanced against entrenched Confederate defenses in the Battle of New Market Heights, Virginia. Although almost immediately wounded, Sergeant Hilton nonetheless continued forward, carrying his flag, plus the Regimental standard of a fallen soldier, until he was unable to continue.

Saying "Boys, save the colors!" Sergeant Hilton then passed both standards to Sergeant Fleetwood of the U.S.C.T., and then fell. He died from his wounds on October 21, 1864, and is buried at the Hampton National Cemetery in Virginia.

On April 6, 1865, Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton was posthumously honored with the Medal of Honor for "Gallantry in action as color-bearer."

He is the only Harford County native to be so honored.



ESSAY CONTEST INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Choose ONE of the 6 ESSAY TOPICS listed here, and write an essay answering the questions that topic asks.
2. Your essays must be at least 1,000 words long, but should not exceed 2,500 words.
3. Submissions must be in Microsoft Word, using Times Roman 12 point font, double-spaced, with 1" margins on all sides.
4. The use of AI or other auto-writing programs to generate the contest essay is strictly prohibited.
5. Please e-mail your submission to the teacher who announced the contest, or to James Thornton at jthornton@thorwoodreg.com



ESSAY TOPICS (CHOOSE ONE):

1. What factors contributed to Lincoln's decision to allow Black men to join the United States Army? After examining these factors, which do you believe carried the most weight — and what does your choice reveal about leadership in a national crisis?

2. Before the Emancipation Proclamation, white Union soldiers had mixed reactions to the enlistment of Black troops. What were the reasons for support and opposition? Looking back from today's perspective, which reasons stand out to you the most — and how do your own values shape your interpretation?

3. In what ways did members of the U.S.C.T. contribute to Union victory — militarily, politically, and symbolically? Which contribution do you believe had the greatest long term impact, and why?

4. In what ways was Sgt. Alfred B. Hilton typical — and not typical — of Black soldiers in the U.S.C.T.? Based on what you've learned, what do you imagine he was thinking during the battle in which he was mortally wounded, and what does his story mean to you personally?

5. Who were the other U.S.C.T. Medal of Honor recipients in the Civil War, and what actions earned them the award? What strikes you about their courage, and how do their stories shape your own understanding of heroism?

6. Imagine you are a young Black soldier in the U.S.C.T. writing a letter home during the Civil War. What would you say about your hopes, fears, and reasons for fighting?

DEADLINE FOR ESSAYS SUBMISSION:
APRIL 17, 2026



FOR MORE INFORMATION about Sgt. Hilton, the U.S.C.T., the battle, the other Medal of Honor recipients, and this contest, please scan this link:

or go to:
https://sgtalfredbhiltonfoundation.com

MISSION STATEMENT: The Mission of the Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton Memorial Fund, Inc., is to preserve his memory, establish a memorial in his honor, educate the public about Harford County's only native Medal of Honor recipient, and highlight the impact of the nearly 185,000 United States Colored Troops who valiantly fought during the Civil War. **CONTACT INFORMATION:** Sergeant Alfred B. Hilton Foundation, P.O. Box 123, Bel Air, MD 21014 • **Web site**: sgtalfredbhiltonfoundation.com • **Facebook**: Facebook.com/SgtAlfredBHiltonFoundation • **E-MAIL**: James Thornton <jthornton@thorwoodreg.com>