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Juvenile Justice Youth Raps about the Constitution to Win this Year's Law Day Contest

The Santa Clara County Superior Court Law Day Contest, sponsored yearly by the Court's Community Outreach Committee and the Santa Clara County Bar Association, added something special this year ... music. Every year the Court Outreach Committee and the Bar sponsor contests allowing students to express themselves creatively within the Law Day theme. While traditionally, the Law Day contest has involved essays, poetry, or posters - this year, the contest added a video option, with submissions made through YouTube or Tik Tok.

The 2022 theme set by the American Bar Association was "Toward a More Perfect Union: The Constitution in Times of Change." With assistance from the County of Santa Clara Probation Department, youth were encouraged to explore that theme and reflect on how every member of our community works—together—toward a more perfect Union. Both the first and second place winners were youth involved in the juvenile justice system who had the opportunity to work on the project in juvenile hall. Their entries combined catchy beats with the authentic voice of youth who have had intimate experiences with the justice system. The youth recognize that the Constitution holds rights for everyone and that it is important for young people to know and understand those rights. The female first-place winner raps, "it's time to feed our youth a can of the constitution... the 6th you have a right to fight it; innocent until proven guilty." Two male students who were the second-place winners rapped, "Constitution... it's your rights anywhere, even in an institution... 27 amendments protect you anywhere you go."

The third-place winners, a team of young people currently housed at the James Ranch, submitted a piece of artwork. The 1st place winner received a \$75 gift card, the 2nd place winners received wireless headphones, and the 3rd place winner a \$25 gift card thanks to donations from the Santa Clara County Bar Association. Judges Julia Alloggiamento, Nahal Iravani-Sani, and Jesus Valencia visited students at juvenile hall, along with several judicial interns, to recognize the creative work of the participants as well as have an opportunity to hear from the youth. A visit to the Ranch is also planned for July to recognize the third-place winner.

During the award ceremony, Judge Iravani-Sani told the youth, "You are much more than the thing that brought you here. You have to pay a consequence for that action, but you are more than that, and this shows how much more you can do and how you can be a productive member of our society." Deserie Escobar, Supervising Probation Officer for the County of Santa Clara, worked on the project with the students and thanked the committee for coming to the Hall to meet with the youth, noting that "it is events like this that break down barriers."

The second-place winner said they started the project by snapping their fingers and then got more inspired to add a beat and make the lyrics. The first-place recipient exclaimed at the ceremony, “Thank you for appreciating me. You made my day,” and continued to say that she was inspired to get back into the recording studio.

Judge Julia Alloggiamento, Chair of the Court Community Outreach Committee, stated, “I am grateful for everyone who worked on this event and especially for the youth that participated in it. They took the contest's theme and spoke to it using their real authentic voice, recognizing that ‘we the people’ needs to apply to everyone, regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, or position in life. We look forward to growing the contest next year to hear more from the youth voice through this creative outlet.”

Winning submissions:

1st place:

[Law Day 2022 Student Video 1 - YouTube](#)

2nd place:

[Law Day 2022 Student Video 2 - YouTube](#)

3rd Place:

