This I Believe Essay

This I Believe, Inc., was founded in 2004 as a not-for-profit organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives.

This I Believe is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. Each day, Americans gathered by their radios to hear compelling essays from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller, and Harry Truman as well as corporate leaders, cab drivers, scientists, and secretaries—anyone able to distill into a few minutes the guiding principles by which they lived. These essayists’ words brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War, McCarthyism, and racial division. (These essays are now featured in weekly broadcasts on [Bob Edwards](http://www.bobedwardsradio.com/)‘ satellite and public radio shows.)

In reviving This I Believe, executive producer Dan Gediman says, “The goal is not to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, the hope is to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own.”

Selected contemporary This I Believe essays were featured in regular broadcasts on [National Public Radio (NPR)](http://www.npr.org/thisibelieve) in the United States from 2005 to 2009. The [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)](http://www.cbc.ca/thisibelieve/) aired essays from Canadians in 2007.

Writing Guidelines

We invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. We understand how challenging this is—it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

**Tell a story**: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

**Be brief**: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. That’s about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

**Name your belief**: If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.

**Be positive**: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

**Be personal**: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

For this project, we are also guided by the original *This I Believe series* and the [**producers’ invitation**](http://thisibelieve.org/1950s/invitation/) to those who wrote essays in the 1950s. Their advice holds up well and we are abiding by it. Please consider it carefully in writing your piece.

In introducing the original series, host Edward R. Murrow said, “Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent.” We would argue that the need is as great now as it was 50 years ago. We are eager for your contribution.

[**Directions:**](http://thisibelieve.org/submission/) Use the following page to select an aphorism to write about. Then write your *This I Believe* essay. Select a topic that is important to you…Something you really believe in. Write in an informal style, just as if you were speaking directly to the reader. We will submit these essays to thisibelieve.org and several will be selected to be published in podcast form. Those students selected will receive extra-credit.

Possible Topics

* [addiction](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/addiction/) (1011)
* [afterlife](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/afterlife/) (475)
* [America & patriotism](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/america-patriotism/) (1513)
* [atheism](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/atheism/) (233)
* [birth](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/birth/) (427)
* [brotherhood & friendship](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/brotherhood-friendship/) (4054)
* [carpe diem](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/carpe-diem/) (3257)
* [change](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/change/) (3498)
* [charity & service](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/charity-service/) (1590)
* [children](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/children/) (2437)
* [Christianity](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/christianity/) (1283)
* [citizenship](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/citizenship/) (481)
* [community](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/community/) (2013)
* [courage](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/courage/) (2254)
* [creativity](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/creativity/) (4360)
* [death](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/death/) (3292)
* [democracy](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/democracy/) (328)
* [disability](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/disability/) (650)
* [discrimination](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/discrimination/) (821)
* [education & knowledge](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/education-knowledge/) (4146)
* [empathy & compassion](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/empathy-compassion/) (2482)
* [environment](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/environment/) (1038)
* [equality](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/equality/) (1599)
* [faith & religion](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/faith-religion/) (4857)
* [family](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/family/) (12215)
* [fear](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/fear/) (975)
* [forgiveness](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/forgiveness/) (1269)
* [freedom](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/freedom/) (1009)
* [golden rule](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/golden-rule/) (1032)
* [good & evil](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/good-evil/) (1631)
* [goodness & kindness](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/goodness-kindness/) (3193)
* [government & constitution](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/government-constitution/) (562)
* [gratitude](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/gratitude/) (2790)
* [Holocaust](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/holocaust/) (64)
* [hope](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/hope/) (3403)
* [humanism](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/humanism/) (907)
* [humility](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/humility/) (519)
* [humor & laughter](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/humor/) (1372)
* [humor & laughter](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/humor-laughter/) (6)
* [illness](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/illness/) (2039)
* [immigrant](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/immigrant/) (794)
* [injustice](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/injustice/) (479)
* [integrity](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/integrity/) (1699)
* [legacy](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/legacy/) (1645)
* [love](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/love/) (5907)
* [morality](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/morality/) (637)
* [music](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/music/) (1060)
* [nature](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/nature/) (1632)
* [parenthood](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/parenthood/) (1782)
* [patriotism](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/patriotism/) (1570)
* [peace](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/peace/) (763)
* [pets & animals](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/pets-animals/) (1306)
* [place](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/place/) (965)
* [pleasure](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/pleasure/) (2203)
* [popular culture](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/popular-culture/) (2334)
* [prejudice](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/prejudice/) (654)
* [purpose](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/purpose/) (2699)
* [question](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/question/) (2288)
* [race](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/race/) (696)
* [respect](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/respect/) (1898)
* [responsibility](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/responsibility/) (2138)
* [science](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/science/) (843)
* [self-determination](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/self-determination/) (10028)
* [self-knowledge](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/self-knowledge/) (14209)
* [setbacks](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/setbacks/) (5019)
* [social justice](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/social-justice/) (840)
* [sports](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/sports/) (3380)
* [tolerance](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/tolerance/) (1493)
* [values & spirituality](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/values-spirituality/) (5798)
* [war](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/war/) (810)
* [work](http://thisibelieve.org/theme/work/) (4373