

## Students discuss MLK's impact in NAACP speech contest

Daniel Carson , Reporter 2:35 p.m. ET April 5, 2017



(Photo: Daniel Carson/News-Messenger)  
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FREMONT - City students spoke about what the words and message of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. meant to them at the NAACP's annual public speaking contest.

The Fremont NAACP branch hosted the Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest Tuesday evening at Fremont Middle School.

Regina Holland, the Fremont branch's secretary and education committee chairperson, said about 50 students in grades K-12 had signed up to participate in the contest.

The students were grouped by age into five different divisions (primary, elementary, intermediate, middle school and high school) and wrote their own speeches about King, his teachings, and the importance today of the civil rights leader's message of nonviolence.

Holland said the contest gave students experience speaking in front of people in a public venue.

"It gives them skills they may not have for other opportunities," Holland said.

In the middle school division, several students referenced King's "I Have A Dream" speech, which the civil rights leader gave in front of massive crowds in Washington D.C. in August 1963.

Ava Smith, 11, of Fremont stepped out from behind the podium and talked about the iconic speech and how it held to the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Olivia Jones, an 11-year-old middle school student, said if King had never been born, "we'd be a lost country."

Holland said Fremont City Schools Superintendent Traci McCaudy encouraged teachers to get students involved in public speaking.

Organizers picked Tuesday to hold the contest because it was the 49th anniversary of King's assassination in 1968.

NAACP President Dallas Leake said King's teachings are needed more today than ever.

"We're here tonight to celebrate our future," Leake said.



**Ava Smith, 11, of Fremont, talked about the importance of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 'I Have a Dream' speech.** (Photo: Daniel Carson/News-Messenger)

Winners in Tuesday's contest included Jeriah Martin, Victoria Rhea and Jaxon Summers (primary division); Breanna Rhea, Kayla Schwochow and Ruby Smith (elementary division); Akira Haun, Kamiya Harmon and Hunter Wheeler (intermediate division); Alana Smith, Seth Brickner, Morgan Shetzer and Ava Smith (middle school division), and Jazmin Bulger and Idallas Levario (high school division).



**Alana Smith, 12, took part in Tuesday's NAACP Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest at Fremont Middle School. (Photo: Daniel Carson/News-Messenger)**

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