

NAACP, students honor King with oratory contest

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Kalayah Paton, 12, gives a speech during the Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest held by the Fremont Chapter of the NAACP at the Fremont Middle School on Tuesday evening.

(Photo: Molly Corfman/The News-Messenger)

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FREMONT - Students paid tribute to famed civil rights leader and orator Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with speeches of their own, as the NAACP's local branch held its annual MLK Oratory Competition at Fremont Middle School.

James Williams and Earlene Woodson served as moderators for the Tuesday night event, which featured 28 elementary, middle and high schools students from the Fremont area.

Williams told a group of middle and high school students and their parents that King wrote five books and delivered up to 450 speeches a year after his rise to prominence as a national leader.

"What he said 50 years ago still resonates today," Williams said.

For students, King's life and words gave them a chance to reflect on his legacy and tell audience members at the middle school what the revered civil rights leader's efforts toward bringing peace, justice and equality through nonviolence meant to them.

Kalayah Payton, 12, a sixth grade student at the middle school, spoke about King's 1964 Nobel Peace Prize award and the importance of the leader's "I Have A Dream" speech, delivered in Washington D.C. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963.

McKayla Carroll, 13, a seventh grade student at FMS, said civil rights leaders such as King and Rosa Parks gave her role models and encouraged her to stand up for her own dreams.

"He shared his big dream with others, and many brave people began to stand up for equality," Carroll said.

King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968, at age 39. Martin Luther King Day is now an annual federal holiday celebrated on the third Monday in January.

At the NAACP oratory competition, the students gave their speeches from the middle school's cafeteria stage. Elementary school students spoke in the school's Bowling Green pod area.

Some students used King's words to speak out against bullying.

Emily Whitcomb, 11, a Stamm Elementary School student, said King continues to inspire people.

She said one of her dreams was to one day have schools be bully-free.

"What can we do to make the world a better place?" Whitcomb asked students and parents in the Bowling Green room.

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The Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Oratorical Contest held was by The Fremont Chapter of the NAACP at the Fremont Middle School Tuesday evening. *(Photo: Molly Corfman/The News-Messenger)*