

**DATE:** **February 16, 2026**  
**TO:** Youth Directors/ Church Leaders/Educational Leaders and Organizations  
**FROM:** The MLK, Jr. Oratorical Contest Committee  
**RE:** *Martin Luther King, Jr. ORATORICAL CONTEST*

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**THEME:** *A Century of Black History Commemorations*  
**WHEN:** Sunday, April 12, 2026 @ 3:00p.m.  
**WHERE:** First African Baptist Church, 405 Telfair Street, Dublin, GA 31021

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Thirteen years ago in 2012, during the celebration of the Dublin Bicentennial, a group of dedicated civic-minded individuals sponsored the *first-ever Oratorical Speech Contest now known as the **MLK, Jr. Oratorical Contest***. This year, we're doing it again!

You are encouraged to sponsor or consider sponsoring a young person in the *MLK, Jr. Oratorical Contest*. It will entail the following:

- EXPOSURE** – Tell Young People about this exciting venture!
- SOLICITATION** – Select and Follow-up with a Young Person to Participate!
- COACHING** – Train or Secure a Trainer/Speech Coach for a young boy or girl!
- TRANSPORTING** – Help a Young Person attend any meetings connected with this venture!
- ENCOURAGING**—Help a Young Person catch a vision of him/herself performing in this way!
- CONTINUING** – Don't give UP even when you feel like you have given OUT!

**HERE'S OUR TIMELINE:** (*All events held at First A.B.*)

- **Saturday, March 21, 2026 @ 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. MLK, JR. ORATORICAL CONTEST ROUND-UP RALLY AND WORKSHOP**
- **Wednesday, April 01, 2026 : ALL APPLICATIONS DUE**
- **Mail to address as given:**

**MLK, JR. ORATORICAL CONTEST**  
**C/O 111 Hedge Way**  
**DUBLIN, GA 31021**

**Attached are the following documents:**

- 1) **Essay About the Theme**
- 2) **Flyer About the Contest**
- 3) **The Application to Enter the Contest**
- 4) **Speech Evaluation Guidelines**
- 5) **Writing The Informative/Inspirational Speech**

Thank you in advance for your continued support of our Youth.  
(For Overview information, Call: Jerry Davis: 478-697-6817).

Sincerely,

*Jerry Davis*

**Jerry Davis, Committee Chairperson**

## **2026 BLACK HISTORY THEME A CENTURY OF BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIONS**

**2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history.** Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, George Cleveland Hall, William D. Hartgrove, Jesse E. Moorland, Alexander L. Jackson, and James E. Stamps Institutionalized the teaching, study, dissemination, and commemoration of Black history when they founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) on September 9, 1915.

**In 1925, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson planned the inaugural week-long observance of Black history, he could have hardly anticipated the imprint he would leave on the world.** From Negro History Week to Black History Month, ASALH has carried forth the tradition and the observances have become part of the woof and warp of American culture and increasingly the global community. **For its 100th theme, the Founders of Black History Month urges us to explore the impact and meaning of Black history and life commemorations in transforming the status of Black peoples in the modern world.**

As part of the global African Diaspora, people of African descent in the United States have viewed their role in history as critical to their own development and that of the world. **Along with writing Black histories, antebellum Black scholars north of slavery started observing the milestones in the struggle of people of African descent to gain their freedom and equality.** Revealing their connection to the diaspora, they commemorated **the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, and the end of slavery in Jamaica.** They observed American **emancipation as Watch Night, Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations.** Eventually they feted the lives of **individual figures who fought against slavery,** most notably Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. **The scholar Arthur A. Schomburg captured the motivation of Blacks to dig up their own history and present it to the world: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future."**

**When Carter G. Woodson, as director of the Association, established Negro History Week he did so as part of that tradition.** Yet, by concentrating the attention of the American public on the scientific findings of historians, he sought to turn the commemorations more forthrightly into a far-reaching, organized, and sustained **effort to transform how Black folks viewed themselves and how the world viewed**

**them.** Year after year, he built Negro History Week into an African American and American cultural institution. **He set the themes and provided materials to illustrate the contributions** people of African descent had made to the movement of history and modern culture. **As his contemporary, W. E. B. Du Bois put it, "He literally made this country...recognize and celebrate each year a week in which it studied the effect which the American Negro has had upon the life, thought and action in the United States.** I know of no other man who in a lifetime has unaided built up such a national celebration." Since the passing of the founder, ASALH has not only continued his work, but also made Negro History Week and Black History Month an even more deeply rooted American institution. **On February 10, 1976, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month during the United States Bicentennial.** Then in **1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244 designating February as Black History Month.** These efforts have made February the month where Black history finds its way not simply into the schools of the American nation, **but also in the cultural heritage sites (i.e. museums, archives, libraries, parks, etc.), public squares, workplaces, houses of worship, and homes across the land and across the oceans.** These institutions, and others across the country, offer sites to discover and learn more about African American history through programming, camps, book displays, and exhibitions.

To understand the modern world, especially nations where Black peoples form a significant population, one must grapple with the impact that the public observances have had on the past and the present. **During this year, which we are also commemorating the 250th Anniversary of United States Independence, it is important to not only tell an inclusive history, but an accurate one.** Thus, the need to examine the role of Black History Month **could not be greater than today when forces weary of democracy seek to use legislative means and book bans and challenges excise Black history from America's schools and public culture.** *Black history's value is not its contribution to mainstream historical narratives, but its resonance in the lives of Black people.*

**ASALH MISSION** (*Association for the Study of African American Life and History*): **To promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community.**



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GEORGIA



Sponsored by OHSNAA ,Inc.; First A.B. Church; Visit Dublin Georgia; & FVSUNAA, Inc.

• **2026 MLK, JR. ORATORICAL CONTEST**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2026 - 3:00 P.M.**

@ First African Baptist Church  
405 Telfair Street; Dublin, GA 31021

• **ROUND-UP WORKSHOP**

@ First African Baptist Church  
405 Telfair Street; Dublin, GA 31021

**SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2026 12:30 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.**

• **APPLICATIONS DUE ON OR BY**

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 01, 2026**

Mail to: *MLK, JR. ORATORICAL CONTEST*  
C/O 111 Hedge Way  
DUBLIN, GA 31021

**GENERAL THEME: "A CENTURY OF BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIONS"**

**THIS CONTEST IS FREE AND OPEN TO ALL ELEGIBLE IN THESE CATEGORIES**

Contestant-Categories & Prizes To Be Given

Categories	Middle School	High School	Senior High
Grades in School	6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup>
First Prize	\$500	\$500	\$500
Second Prize	\$300	\$300	\$300
Third Prize	\$100	\$100	\$100
Participation	\$10	\$10	\$10

For Information call: Mr. Jerry Davis 478-697-6817

# \*SPEECH CONTESTANT APPLICATION

THE ORATORICAL SPEECH CONTEST ~ APRIL 12, 2026@ 3:00 P.M.

(In celebration of the LEGACY of MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., winner of the Oratorical Speech Contest which was presented at First African Baptist Church, Dublin, GA on April 17, 1944)

Please type or print

Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First MI

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zip

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_; Cell \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Academic Information

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipated Major \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Name of Adult Coach

To Help You Prepare \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Parents' Permission

My child \_\_\_\_\_, has my permission to participate in the Oratorical Contest. I will be responsible for providing transportation for my child to and from the Contest event on Sunday, April 12, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. I further acknowledge that as part of this event, I am also giving permission for my child to be featured in media events which may include live-streaming.

**Dress Code:** Please dress appropriately as for any school competitive event or other state competition: (i.e. FBLA, FCCLA, GMBC, and Beta Club).

Telephone No. (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

\* PLEASE MAIL THIS FORM TO:

MLK, JR. ORATORICAL CONTEST  
C/O 111 Hedge Way  
DUBLIN, GA 31021

**DEADLINE: Wednesday, April 01, 2026**

\*\* Parents, Teachers, Ministers or Other Adults are eligible to Coach any number of Contestants.



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## GUIDELINES FOR SPEECH EVALUATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### **CONTENT (50 PTS.)**

#### **INTRODUCTION (10 POINTS)**

Attention-getting material:  
Relevancy to central idea:  
Transition sentence:

#### **INFORMATION AND ORGANIZATION (25 POINTS)**

Interesting:  
Developing of central idea:  
(supporting material, psychological appeals and length)  
Documentation of sources:  
(credibility)

Issue arrangement:  
(organized to meet time limit)  
Transitions:  
Comprehension: (logical arguments):

#### **CONCLUSION (15 POINTS)**

Summary  
Clincher

**POINTS ARE BASED ON JUDGING SCORES AND  
JUDGES' RANKING.**

### **DELIVERY (50 PTS.)**

#### **VOICE (15 POINTS)**

Natural conversational manner:  
Vocal variety:  
Projection:  
Rate:  
Animation/enthusiasm:  
Intonation:

#### **EYE CONTACT (15 POINTS)**

Directness:

#### **AUDIENCE APPEAL (10 POINTS)**

How the Audience responded over-all

#### **BODILY ACTION (10 POINTS)**

Gestures:  
Facial expression:  
Posture:  
Movement:  
Animation/enthusiasm:

#### **MEMORIZATION (25 POINTS)**

Contestant Spoke with Complete Memory (25)  
Contestant Demonstrated Memory Problem (15)  
Memory Attempt Made but Failed (05)  
No Attempt at Memory (0)

**USE OF AIDS** (Permitted. Use or Non-use of an aid will not affect overall evaluation but attention should be paid to the following :)  
Relevancy to central idea; Handling of aids; Appearance of aid, if visual:

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Possible: **125**

Points YOUR SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

### **SPEECH LENGTH LIMITATIONS (3-5 Minutes)**

*At least three (3) minutes but no more than five (5) minutes are allotted for each presentation.*

*Less than three (3) or more than five (5) will be penalized.*

## WRITING THE INFORMATIVE/INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH

- **Informative** – This speech serves to provide interesting and useful information to your audience. Some examples of informative speeches:
  - A speech informing others about the importance of history of Blacks in America
  - A student talking about his/her ancestral lineage history accessibility
  - A brochure about places that offer different types of blue collar work in America
  - A class report examining the student’s connection to the African diaspora
  - A student commemorating the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, or the end of slavery in Jamaica
- **Speaking to Inform**—The goal of this speech is to convey information; to educate; to increase knowledge or awareness not to persuade. Your success, to some large degree, hinges on you being able to communicate (a) accurately, (b) clearly, and (c) in a meaningful and interesting way to your audience.

### TYPES OF INFORMATIVE SPEECHES:

- **Objects** - things that are visible, tangible, and in stable form that enhance, demonstrate or dramatize the value of creative work
- **Processes** – Steps you took to discover and access information.
- **Events** - anything that happens or is regarded as a significant happening. A particular event focusing on times of historical significance.
- **Concepts** - information about beliefs, values, ideals, etc. related to the chosen topic of focus. As a result, this type of informative speech is often less commonly developed compared to the other choices.
- **Historical Sites** – information about places, locations, structures, etc. that have great importance nationally, culturally, historically as related to the discussion of **A Century of Black History Commemoration**.

### GUIDELINES FOR INFORMATIVE SPEAKING:

- **Don’t overestimate what your audience knows about your topic, but don’t under-estimate what they know either.** For example, some of us have no idea what the end of the slave trade was like! You may reveal that. Yet, don’t talk down (underestimate) to your audience but be clear and explain basic concepts or ideas for the average person.
- **Relate your subject directly to the audience** - show them how or why they should be aware. Try to talk about issues or describe locations so they can relate to them; not everyone finds your topic personally exciting or relevant. For example, not everyone follows the historical significance of many historical occurrences, but relate and share historical significances related to the Black history commemorations the founders of Black History Month urges us to explore in transforming the status of Black peoples in the modern world over the years.
- **Don’t be too technical** - remember who your audience is; a general interest group not a specialty group.
- **Avoid abstractions** - try to describe items or events in concrete language. Saying things like “it was really cool” or “it was really bad” does little for your audience. Comparing or contrasting one item to another is also a good way to avoid abstractions.
- **Personalize your ideas** - when you can (sometimes we cannot) provide personal examples that relate to your topics. Speakers who have personal experience relevant to their subjects are often more meaningful for their audience.

## **Brainstorming Typical Speech Titles**

After reading the 2026 Black History theme *A Century of Black History Commemorations*, create a title of your own, or use one of the following titles which resulted from a committee brainstorming session.

1. Some Observations of the Transformation from Negro History Week to Black History Month
2. Exploring the Impact of Black History and Life Commemoration in Transforming the Status of Black People
3. How People of African Descent View Their Role in History
4. Observation of the Milestones in the Struggle of People of African Descent to Gain Their Freedom and Equality
5. The Observance of Black American Emancipation Thru Watch Night, Jubilee Day and Juneteenth Celebrations
6. How a Century of Black History Commemorations Are Observed in Dublin, Georgia
7. An Overview of the History of Juneteenth Celebrations in Dublin, Georgia
8. The Presidential Response and Impact to Recognizing Black History in the United States
9. Historical Sites During a Century of Black History Commemoration
10. Commemorating the Recent Honor of Phillis Wheatley Stamp Series
11. Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s First Speech at First African Baptist Church in Dublin, GA
12. Commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Receiving the Noble Peace Prize in 1964
13. Commemoration of President Barack Obama Receiving the Noble Peace Prize in 2009
14. Commemoration of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson Working on NASA Space Program
15. The Commemoration of Jackie Robinson as the First African American to Play in Major League Baseball on April 15, 1947
16. Commemoration of Kenneth Walker III, Seahawk Player, Winning the Super Bowl LX MVP Award and Breaking the 28-Year Absence of Running Backs Winning the Award
17. In Commemoration of Jessie Jackson and the Civil Rights Movement