



Our Authors Study Club, Inc., Los Angeles Branch of
Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH)

RISING VOICES ORATORICAL PROGRAM ENTRY FORM 2026 Theme: A Century of Black History Commemorations

Date:

Grade:

Student Name:

Address:

Parent Phone:

Student Phone:

Student Email Address:

Parent Name(s):

Name of High School:

Hobbies:

Student Activities:

Career Interest(s):

Desired Colleges(s):

Overview / Purpose:

(This is not a dramatic speech presentation.)

1. Cultivate strong oratorical and public speaking skills, emphasizing clarity, organization, and persuasive communication
2. Strengthen critical thinking, research, and the effective articulation of ideas
3. Provide high school students with a platform to express informed perspectives on community and societal issues
4. Encourage intergenerational engagement through the study, honoring, and sharing of African American history
5. Increase participants' knowledge of Black history and its contemporary significance, connecting historical insight to present-day realities

Program and Speech Requirements/Final Contest Rules:

1. Participants must attend and/or send a representative to the informational/orientation unless they are excused with prior permission.
2. Only one (1) speech is to be presented.
3. The original copies should be submitted by May 2, 2026.
4. Speech must adhere to the 2026 ASALH Black History National Theme: **A Century of Black History Commemorations.**
5. The speech must be a minimum of 4 minutes and not exceed 6 minutes.
6. Contestants must prepare and deliver original speech selections. The content of the speech is a decision of the contestant.
7. The speech must be original and written by the contestant.
8. A small excerpt from a speech written by a famous individual or historical figure may be included in the speech with proper acknowledgment.
 - If the contestant decides to include information already published, we recommend that the selection not be limited to speeches delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There are many great speeches by other prominent African Americans, including Mary McCloud Bethune, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B DuBois.
 - The selected excerpt cannot exceed one paragraph (4-5 sentences) in length.
9. The speech is not to be presented as a dramatic presentation.
10. Costumes and props are not permitted.
11. The material must be completely memorized. The use of notes will disqualify a speaker from participating in the contest.
12. Students should demonstrate a level of confidence with a microphone.
13. Contestants that exceed 6 minutes or whose speech is less than 4 minutes cannot win a monetary prize.
14. Contestants that stop and restart two or more times cannot win a monetary prize.
15. Contestants will be judged on the following:
 - Content (5 points) – What you say; solid facts and deep ideas
 - Language (5 points) – How you speak; polished grammar, powerful words
 - Organization (5 points) – The flow; logical structure, strong beginning, middle and end
 - Theme Mastery (5 points) – Connection; deep understanding of a century of Black history
 - Impression (5 points) – The vibe; competence, passion and main character energy

Oratorical Contest Overview

1. Any coaching or rehearsal session requested by the student entrant will be via Zoom. Email Ms. Gretchen Morris at gmorris4931@icloud.com.
 - Wednesday, April 29, 2026
 - Saturday May 2, 2026
 - Wednesday, May 6, 2026
2. Black History National Theme: *A Century of Black History Commemorations*

Dates & Deadlines

Application Deadline

- **Sunday, April 26, 2026**, or by permission

Orientation & Writing Support

- TBA: **Orientation Meeting & Idea Development Session**
 - April 18, 2026 from 2PM to 4PM via Zoom (go to oascla.org/rsvp for link)
 - Applications may be submitted at this time

Important Contact Information

- **Contest:** Gretchen Morris
- **Phone:** 323.240.6609
- **Email:** gmorris4931@icloud.com
- Completed applications must be emailed to: gmorris4931@icloud.com and watto@oascla.org

Eligibility & Participation Requirements

- A parental consent form is required prior to participation. If consent is revoked after the contest, the contestant must forfeit any prize money awarded.
- Coaching/practice sessions may be scheduled individually with coaches on request if available. Advance permission is required.
- A recent head shot photograph must be submitted with the application.

Contest Day

- Saturday, May 16, 2026
- Time: Contestant Check-In: 10:15 a.m., Contest Begins: 11:00 am to 12:30 pm (Reception immediately following)
- Location: AC Bilbrew Library | 150 E. El Segundo Blvd., LA, CA 90061