

**Gregory-Lincoln Elementary student wins annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratory Competition**

*Fifth-grader wins $1,000 prize for original speech inspired by civil rights icon*

*Jan. 12, 2018* – Gregory-Lincoln Elementary School fifth-grader Tchanori Kone channeled the composed, fighting spirit of her civil rights activist grandfather, Ester King, while presenting her winning speech about what her dream is for today’s world.

Kone, a native Houstonian, was awarded first place for her original speech titled “Making the Dream Come True” at the 22nd annual Martin Luther King Jr. Oratory Competition. The event was held Friday at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Christ in downtown Houston. She was among 12 HISD students to participate in the final round of the competition sponsored by Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP.

The program invites fourth- and fifth-grade students to write and present a short original speech that envisions King’s message in today’s world. This year’s theme was “What is your dream for today’s world?”

“I was determined to win this year because I lost last year,” said Kone after being announced as the winner. “This competition has connected me to Martin Luther King and his message, as well as to my grandfather. I started going to a new school this year, and I was inspired by what I see every day on my way there: homelessness. I wondered why the homeless and poor can’t have what everyone else has.”

Second-place winner Caleb Kiteka of Windsor Village Elementary School and third-place winner Nhedrick Jabier of Crespo Elementary School both intertwined the leader’s fight for freedom and justice in their speeches.

During the competition, students were judged based on delivery, stage presence and decorum, content interpretation, and memorization. The winner was awarded a $1,000 prize. The second-place winner received a $500 prize while the third-place winner was presented with a $300 prize.

A $100 monetary award was given to the remaining finalists:

•             Jernee Craig – Whidby Elementary School

•             Kimahni Dew – Burrus Elementary School

•             Jaida Gatlin – Foster Elementary School

•             Natalie Greene – MacGregor Elementary School

•             Armani Holmes – Thompson Elementary School

•             Nyla Johnson – Lockhart Elementary School

•             Maryam Khan – Sutton Elementary School

•             Shawn Ward – Pleasantville Elementary School

•             Summer Whitaker – Cornelius Elementary School

“Every year I come to this competition eager to see some of our brightest students put what they’ve learned about important figures in our history on display,” Board of Education President Wanda Adams said. “And just like previous years, these scholars left myself and many others inspired. Kudos to all of the educators and parents who helped them prepare for this program.”

The winner will be performing an opening speech at the A.D. Players Theater at 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 18 (5420 Westheimer Rd., 77056). Media interested in securing one-on-one interviews with Kone can contact the HISD Press Office at 713-556-6393.

The winning speeches can be viewed online at [www.Facebook.com/HoustonISD](http://www.Facebook.com/HoustonISD) and on <http://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/>.