

## **Orator Competition: "Letters for Justice" Inspired by *Dear Martin***

**Overview:** In this orator competition, students will channel the spirit of Nic Stone's *Dear Martin*, where Justyce McAllister writes letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In this competition, participants will craft a heartfelt letter to a person (dead or alive) who has inspired them to pursue justice, equality, or positive change. They will present their letters in a live speech, combining the power of their words with their voice to convey their message of justice.

**Objective:** Students will write and present an original letter to an individual (historical figure, public leader, activist, family member, etc.) who has influenced their understanding of justice, equality, or activism. The letter should reflect their personal journey, insights on social issues, and how this individual has shaped their approach to creating positive change.

### **Competition Guidelines:**

#### **Upper Elementary (Grades 4-5):**

- **Original Letter Format:**
  - The letter should be 200-300 words and written to someone who has inspired the student to do good or be kind to others. The focus can be on qualities like fairness, kindness, and inclusion.
- **Speech Requirements:**
  - Speeches should be 1-2 minutes long, and students should read their letters aloud, focusing on clear expression and using simple but heartfelt language.

#### **Middle School (Grades 6-8):**

- **Original Letter Format:**
  - The letter should be 300-500 words, written to someone who has inspired them to consider issues of justice, equality, or respect. They may include personal stories or examples.
- **Speech Requirements:**
  - Speeches should be 2-3 minutes long, with students aiming to connect emotionally with the audience.

#### **High School (Grades 9-12):**

- **Original Letter Format:**
  - The letter should be 400-600 words, addressed to someone whose actions or ideas have deeply impacted the student's understanding of justice or social change. It should be reflective and may include specific societal or personal challenges.
- **Speech Requirements:**
  - Speeches should be 3-5 minutes long, requiring a mature delivery that emphasizes storytelling, clear messaging, and a strong connection to the audience.

### Judging Criteria:

- **Content and Depth (30 points):** How well does the letter express personal connections to justice and equality, and how deeply the writer reflects on the person they chose?
- **Clarity and Structure (20 points):** The letter should be well-organized, coherent, and free from grammatical errors.
- **Emotional Impact (20 points):** Does the letter evoke emotion? How effectively does the speaker convey their passion and commitment to justice?
- **Oral Delivery (20 points):** How well does the student engage the audience through tone, body language, and pacing?
- **Creativity and Originality (10 points):** How unique is the student's perspective on justice and how creatively do they present their ideas?

### Submission:

#### Prepare Your Essay and Video:

- **Essay:** Save your letter as a **PDF file**. Make sure it is titled in the following format: `FirstName_LastName_Letter.pdf` (e.g., `Alex_Smith_Letter.pdf`).
- **Video:** Record your reading of the letter. Upload your video to One Drive, YouTube, or other service. Create a link and share that link at the bottom of your PDF file containing your essay.
- **Compose an Email:**
  - In the subject line, type: "**Letters for Justice Submission – [Your Full Name]**".
  - In the body of the email, include:
    - Your full name
    - Age group (Upper Elementary, Middle School, or High School)
    - A contact phone number in case of any issues with the files.

#### Attach Files:

- Attach both the **PDF of your essay** and the **video link** to the email.
- Ensure that attached files are properly labeled as described above.

#### **Send to the Competition Email no later than 8:00 a.m. March 7:**

- Send your email with the attachments to [Lifestcontest@bdcs.org](mailto:Lifestcontest@bdcs.org).

#### Confirm Submission:

- Once you've sent the email, you should receive a confirmation email within 24 hours (business day). If you don't, please check your sent messages and resend if necessary.

**Sample Prompts:**

- Write a letter to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sharing how his vision of equality has inspired you in today's world.
- Write to a civil rights activist like Rosa Parks or Cesar Chavez about how their courage motivates your own fight for justice.
- Write to a family member who has demonstrated resilience in the face of injustice and how that has shaped your worldview.
- Write to a contemporary figure like Malala Yousafzai or Greta Thunberg about how their activism has inspired you to take action.

**Prizes:**

- An in-person meet-and-greet with *Dear Martin* author Nic Stone
- Gift cards for top presentations in each level
- Award Certificate
- An autographed copy of *Dear Martin* or another Nic Stone book
- The opportunity to recite your winning letter at the 2025 Literary Festival