



# **ALPHA PHI ALPHA FRATERNITY, INC. OF HOWARD COUNTY OJISE ORATORICAL CONTEST 2017-2018**

The Howard County Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. with the financial support of the Alpha Foundation of Howard County presents the Ojise Essay Contest. This contest is designed to encourage critical thinking and analysis among the African American high school age males in the Howard County Public School System. At the same time, this initiative exposes students to important research, history and literature that are relevant to the African Diaspora. Ojise is a word in the language of the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria, West Africa. It means, “messenger”.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

All African American male students that attend Howard County Public School and are active members of the Alpha Achievers Program are invited to participate in the Ojise Oratorical Contest.

## **SELECTION AND AWARDS CRITERIA**

A set of questions based on the assigned topic will be provided. Each applicant will then choose one question to compose an essay response. The maximum score on your essay is 100 points. The top three essays will be invited to participate in the oratorical contest. The following prizes will be awarded to the top three finalists.

- First Prize – \$350
- Second Prize – \$150
- Third Place - \$100

## **APPLICATION PACKAGE**

All contestants must complete the attached application form by the timeline outlined below. In addition, the parent or guardian of the winners must sign a release that enables the sponsor to share the essay with the public to promote literacy and critical thinking among Howard County youth. Below is the general timeline.

- November 13, 2017 - Essay contest information and associated questions will be sent to Alpha
- February 15, 2018 - All essays are due
- February 16-23, 2018 – Screening and ranking
- February 28, 2018 - Contestant meeting
- March 10, 2018 – Ojise Oratorical Contest during the March meeting

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- June 9, 2018 - All winners will be recognized at the Edward d. Young Reception

## OJISE ORATORICAL CONTEST REFLECTION QUESTIONS

### CHOOSE ONE OF THE SIX QUESTIONS BELOW FOR YOUR ESSAY

*We suggest that you work in collaboration with a peer or a professional in drafting your response to this prompt.*

“We can choose either to walk the high road of human brotherhood or to tread the low road of man’s inhumanity to man. History has thrust upon our generation an indescribably important destiny – to complete a process of democratization, which our nation has too long developed too slowly. The future of America is bound up in the present crisis. If America is to remain a first-class nation, it cannot have a second-class citizenship.” – Martin Luther King, Jr., 1959

**Theme:** “The Future of America is Bound Up in The Present Crisis”

**Background:** In the year since the 2016 elections, a number of incidents: the outrage resulting from the Immigrant Ban, the Charlottesville incident, the impacts of a series of hurricanes that battered Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, the NFL protests, and, most recently, the one of the worst mass civilian shootings in American history, have laid bare the tensions that have historically existed in this country.

Hate crimes have skyrocketed in number, and rollbacks of civil rights protections have impacted low-income individuals, immigrants and immigrant hopefuls, racial minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, and other marginalized groups. Americans are polarized (that is, in disagreement with one another, generally along the lines of political party identification) by record rates; to add to this issue, faith in such institutions as our government is at record lows. By several standards, the country is undergoing a period of “crisis”.

**Subject:** Martin Luther King, Jr. penned the above quote in 1959, an emotional appeal to his countrymen to begin the process of recognizing the equal rights owed to a significant portion of the American population – Black Americans, in particular – after centuries of stripping this group of their human rights and dignities. King presents the moment as a critical one – a watershed moment in which the nation must stop and either begin to right generations of wrong, or hypocritically continue to subjugate this group of people, while claiming success as a democracy. King asserts that, if America is to be able to become truly the nation, which it presents, one that on its face is meant to guarantee “equal protection under the law” and which boasts a Declaration that states “We hold

These truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights”, it must come to terms with and solve its discrimination issue.

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We can understand why Dr. King wrote this note, being that it was authored in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, in a period in which “For Coloreds Only” signs still forced Blacks and other people of color to utilize sub-par facilities. **Does this note apply today? Is America still yet to complete its process of becoming a true democracy – in which its people have equal rights and full citizenship? Why or why not? What will be your role in building a better future for your community?**

1. What is a “second-class citizen”? Are there still groups of people who are treated as “second-class citizens” in today’s society?
2. Consider the issues that America (as a government or as a society) grapples with concerning its ability to guarantee equality for all people, regardless of race, class, nationality, etc. Think particularly about those issues, which have impacted your life and/or the lives of your family members. How do those personal experiences illustrate the major problems that America has with eliminating the class of “second-class citizen”.
3. After centering on what you consider to be the main issues, which keep America from being fully the “first-class nation”, that it appears to be, think about the ways in which the crises America finds itself in can serve as an opportunity for change.
4. How can the country address those who it has treated as “second-class citizens”? Is equality – a scenario in which everyone suddenly has the same rights and access as everyone else – enough? What is the difference between equality and equity? Which approach should we take to solving the problem?
5. What causes are you particularly passionate about? As a professional, how will you help to alleviate crises in your community?
6. How are you and your generation uniquely prepared to lead the country in the future, and to combat the crises that the country finds itself in? What traits do you all possess that will help you to empower your community to be able to forge a brighter future?

Additional Research: The Declaration of Independence stated, “All Men are created equal”. At the time that it was written, what groups lacked all of the rights of citizenship? How have these groups mobilized over time to work to win their rights (think about Chicano Movement as an example)? Which groups still are “second-class citizens”?

**Suggested Length:** 500 words (or 3-5 minutes spoken)

**Submission Deadline: February 15, 2018**

All applications should be either be emailed to [kpl.edu.committee@gmail.com](mailto:kpl.edu.committee@gmail.com) or mailed to the address below:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. – Howard County Chapter

Attention: Chairman, Scholarship Subcommittee

P.O. Box 321

Columbia, Maryland 21045

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# APPLICATION FOR OJISE ORATORICAL CONTEST

## Personal Information

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last* *First* *M.I.*

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Street Address* *Apartment/Unit #*

\_\_\_\_\_ *City* *State* *ZIP Code*

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Email \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last* *First* *M.I.*

Parent/Guardian Email \_\_\_\_\_

High School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

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