**COMPETITION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BABITA GURUNG**

“In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Those words were spoken by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, a man who dedicated his life to fighting for equality and justice for all. As an activist in the civil rights movement in the United States, Dr. King sought to find a way to secure equality for ALL people. He used his voice to inspire change and instill acceptance… to enlighten and motivate people to take action and to realize that we really are all equal, no matter the color of our skin. His mission was to bring attention to the cause, show people that there is strength in numbers, and to passionately and relentlessly fight…. In a peaceful way… for equality.

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.” This was also said by Dr. King. In the mid fifties, he realized he “didn't see the whole staircase” but he knew there was a cause for which he had to fight. In Montgomery, Alabama, racism and discrimination was rampant. It was also nothing new. This type of hate had gone on for a very long time, but in 1955, Dr. King was ready to step in and find his path. He began by organizing a boycott of the city’s buses. He felt it was no longer acceptable for people of color to be forced to ride only in the back seats of busses. His involvement in that issue acted as a means to shine a light on an ugly subject. He knew that by hitting the Montgomery transportation system “where it hurt…” namely in its ability to make money, people would start paying attention.

And so people DID start paying attention. Dr. King became known as a leader who pushed for change and acceptance…. using non-violent means. In the mid-1960’s he was instrumental in and very responsible for passing the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in the United States. Passage of both acts brought focus to the cause of equality and integration. Although he concentrated on the advancement and acceptance of Civil Rights in the U.S., the impact of his actions and campaigns opened the doors and enlightened the minds and actions of people throughout the world. His message was so strong that by 1964, the membership of the United Nations had doubled in less than twenty years. Almost 75% of the new members that joined this esteemed international body were from emerging nations inspired by his passion and compassion and commitment to fighting racial injustice and supporting equality. It is probably no small coincidence that at the same time that Dr. King was spreading his message, the chains and restrictions of Apartheid in South Africa were also beginning to crumble.

Although there is still a long way to go to advance the causes of equality for all, it has been said that Dr. King’s dream, inspired by faith, passion, purpose, patience, and persistence really changed the world and how each one of us responds to social injustice. Thanks to this leader, we begin to realize that “Silence is death,” and that it is not acceptable to be a spectator in life. We must all use our voices and our votes to effect change.

No matter the struggles he faced…. No matter the hate he had to endure, he believed in possibility… the possibility that we can all live together in brotherhood. He dedicated his life to inspire nonviolent action to forge change. He said, “We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.”

I invite you all to listen to his words and heed his wisdom. If we are moved to follow in his path, then Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s legacy will live on in all of us.

Thank you.