

THE DAY OF ORATURE

Saturday, July 18, 2026 • Clinton Square, Syracuse, New York

YOUTH ORATURE COMPETITION

Program Guide, Competition Rules & Procedures, and Participation Framework

For Syracuse-Area School Districts & Youth-Serving Organizations

Submissions Open: Monday, May 11, 2026

Deadline: Sunday, June 21, 2026

info@miceregithaemugofoundation.org

www.miceregithaemugofoundation.org

A Note to Our Partners in Youth and Community

Dear Community Members,

Something extraordinary is coming to downtown Syracuse this summer — and your students and young community members are at the center of it.

On Saturday, July 18, 2026, the Micerere Githae Mugo Foundation will present ***The Day of Orature***: a free, full-day outdoor festival celebrating humanity's oldest and most enduring tradition of communication. Named in honor of the late Professor Micerere Githae Mugo — poet, author, playwright, and former Chair of African American Studies at Syracuse University — the event will fill the public square with live performance, music, and the voices of this region's young people.

At the heart of the day is the Youth Orature Showcase and Competition — an open, adjudicated performance competition inviting students from elementary through high school across the Syracuse metropolitan area and greater Central New York to submit performances in one or more of five Orature categories: Spoken Word Poetry, Oral Storytelling, Song-Based Narrative, Proverb & Wisdom Traditions, and Call-and-Response.

This document is your complete guide to the competition: how it works, how your students or youth participants can enter, what the audition process looks like, what finalists can expect on the day of the event, and what prizes are at stake. We have designed every element of this process to be clear, accessible, and joyful — for young people, their families, and the educators who support them.

We believe every young person who walks through this experience — whether they advance to the main stage or not — will leave with something real: a platform that said their voice matters, and a tradition that says it always has.

We look forward to building this with you.

With deep gratitude and excitement,

The Micerere Githae Mugo Foundation

The Value: Why This Competition Matters

The Day of Orature is not a recital or a talent show. It is something rare: a professionally adjudicated, publicly staged celebration of art forms that have carried the history, wisdom, and identity of human communities across generations. This competition says — formally, publicly, and with prizes attached — that those traditions belong to young people today.

For Students and Youth Participants

- A genuine, high-stakes creative platform adjudicated by distinguished professionals from academia, the literary arts, and cultural institutions
- An introduction to the global tradition of Orature — storytelling, poetry, proverb, song, and call-and-response — and its relevance to contemporary life
- Real financial recognition through cash awards across age groups and performance categories
- A live performance experience on a public stage before a supportive audience of family, community, and peers
- The knowledge that their voices — and the traditions they carry — are worth celebrating

For Schools and Youth-Serving Organizations

- A rich, curriculum-connected opportunity in the performing and literary arts, aligned with English Language Arts and social studies learning goals
- A community platform that brings honor and visibility to your students and institution
- A pathway into the Foundation's growing national and international programs, including the Prize for Orature
- The distinction of being founding participants in an inaugural event that positions Syracuse as a city of cultural innovation

For the City of Syracuse and Central New York

- A free, inclusive, family-centered civic event that activates downtown public space
- A celebration of the multicultural heritage and Indigenous knowledge traditions that enrich the region
- A living memorial to Professor Micerere Githae Mugo, who made Syracuse her home for three decades and who championed oral tradition as liberation
- The launch of a program with global ambitions — rooted right here

Understanding Orature: A Primer for Educators

For the purposes of this competition, Orature refers to the body of oral artistic expression that precedes and exists independently of written literature. It encompasses the vast range of ways in which human communities have communicated knowledge, transmitted culture, preserved memory, and generated meaning through the spoken word, the performed body, and the collective voice.

Orature is not informal. It is not lesser than written literature. It is, as Professor Mũgo argued throughout her career, a fully realized artistic and intellectual tradition — one that demands skill, discipline, creativity, and mastery. In many of the world's great traditions, Orature is the primary means through which history is kept, justice is demanded, and community is built.

This competition honors five expressions of Orature:

Category	Description	Performance Time	Audition Video
Spoken Word Poetry	Original, self-composed poetry performed live — using voice, rhythm, and bodily expression as instruments of meaning	2–5 minutes (live), 2–4 min (audition)	Max 500MB, MP4/MOV
Oral Storytelling	Narrative performance — personal, cultural, or ancestral — conveyed through voice, gesture, and presence, without a book or script held during performance	3–5 minutes (live), 3–5 min (audition)	Max 500MB, MP4/MOV
Song-Based Narrative	An original or traditional story conveyed through song or musical performance — integrating narrative content with musical form	2–5 minutes (live), 2–4 min (audition)	Max 500MB, MP4/MOV
Proverb & Wisdom Traditions	A performance rooted in the oral knowledge traditions of proverb, riddle, communal teaching, or philosophical wisdom — contextualized and performed with artistry	2–5 minutes (live), 2–3 min (audition)	Max 500MB, MP4/MOV
Call-and-Response	A participatory performance in the communal Orature tradition — engaging an audience, a group, or a co-performer in shared vocal or physical response	3–5 minutes (live), 3–4 min (audition)	Max 500MB, MP4/MOV

Educators are encouraged to introduce students to Orature traditions from the African diaspora, Native American and other Indigenous communities, and the global south — but performances drawing from any cultural tradition, including the student's own heritage, are welcome and celebrated.

Competition Structure: Age Brackets and Tiers

The Competition is organized into four age brackets. Contestants will be adjudicated and recognized within their bracket. Age brackets exist to ensure age-appropriate evaluation standards, equitable competition, and meaningful recognition across all stages of development.

Tier	Approx. Ages	Notes
Tier I: <i>Young Storytellers</i>	Ages 6–10	Elementary school; performances assessed for age-appropriate expression, engagement, and confidence
Tier II: Developing Artists	Ages 11–13	Middle school; evaluation emphasizes craft, content, and delivery development
Tier III: Emerging Practitioners	Ages 14–16	High school; higher bar for artistic sophistication, content depth, and performance control
Tier IV: Adult Practitioners	Ages 17–18	Final year students; evaluated on mastery, originality, and readiness for public artistic voice

Important Notes on Age Brackets:

- Contestants are placed in brackets based on their age as of the submission deadline, Sunday, June 21, 2026
- Contestants may enter multiple performance categories but compete in the same age bracket in each
- Contestants must be at least 6 years of age as of the submission deadline to enter; the maximum age is 18
- Home-schooled students should register by their age as confirmed by a parent or guardian
- In the event of insufficient entries in any single bracket, the Foundation reserves the right to merge adjacent brackets for that category; affected contestants will be notified in advance

How to Submit: The Digital Audition Process

All initial entries are submitted digitally through the competition portal on the Foundation's website. There are no in-person auditions. Contestants upload a filmed audition video, complete a contestant information sheet, and provide a signed parent/guardian consent form. The process is designed to be straightforward for contestants and families, while generating the information the adjudication panel needs to make fair and thorough assessments.

Step 1: Register on the Competition Portal

Contestants (or their parent/guardian if under 13) must first create a free competitor account on the competition portal on the Foundation website. This portal will open on May 11, 2026.

www.miceregithaemugofoundation.org/submit-your-audition

Registration requires:

- Full name of contestant
- Date of birth (for age bracket verification)
- Current school and grade
- School district or home-school designation
- Parent or guardian name and contact information
- Email address for correspondence (parent/guardian email recommended for contestants under 18)

Step 2: Select Performance Category or Categories

Contestants may submit auditions in more than one performance category. Each category requires a separate submission, a separate video upload, and separate documentation. There is no additional registration fee — all submissions are free. Contestants who enter multiple categories will be evaluated independently in each and may advance as a finalist in more than one category.

Step 3: Upload the Audition Video

The audition video is the core of the submission. It is the primary material the adjudication panel will use to evaluate contestants and select finalists. It should be treated as a genuine performance — filmed with care, in a setting appropriate to the tradition being performed.

Video Technical Requirements

Requirement	Specification
File format	MP4, MOV
Maximum file size	500 MB per video
Minimum resolution	720p (1280 x 720); 1080p preferred
Video length — Spoken Word Poetry	2–4 minutes (audition)
Video length — Oral Storytelling	3–5 minutes (audition)
Video length — Song-Based Narrative	2–4 minutes (audition)
Video length — Proverb & Wisdom Traditions	2–3 minutes (audition)
Video length — Call-and-Response	3–4 minutes (audition)
Orientation	Landscape (horizontal) strongly preferred; portrait accepted
Audio quality	Clearly audible; no excessive background noise; ring-light or quiet indoor settings recommended
Number of performers	Solo or group (up to 4 performers in Call-and-Response and Song-Based Narrative); solo required for Spoken Word Poetry and Proverb categories
Use of props or instruments	Permitted and encouraged where appropriate to the tradition
Costumes	Permitted; not required
Scripts or notes during performance	Not permitted during the filmed performance — performances must be delivered from memory or improvisation

Filming Tips for Families and Teachers:

- Film in a quiet, well-lit space. A classroom, community center, or living room works perfectly.
- Use a tripod or prop the phone/camera against a surface to avoid shaky footage.
- Make sure the performer's full body is visible, not just their face.
- Do a test recording to check sound quality before the final take.
- The video should not be professionally produced — but it should be clear, stable, and audible.
- **The video should consist of the performer's name and performance only.** All other introduction information should be captured in the registration form.

Step 4: Complete the Contestant Information Sheet

Each submission must be accompanied by a completed digital Contestant Information Sheet, submitted through the portal alongside the video. The information sheet captures:

- Full name and age of contestant
- School/Sponsoring organization, grade
- Performance category entered
- Title of the piece
- Brief description of the performance (50–150 words): What is it about? Where does the tradition come from? What does it mean to you? (This is shared with judges — it is a chance for the contestant to contextualize their work.)
- For group entries: names and ages of all group members
- Teacher or program coordinator contact (optional but encouraged for school-based entries)

Step 5: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

All contestants under 18 must have a parent or guardian complete and digitally sign the Consent Form, which is integrated into the submission portal. By completing the form, the parent/guardian:

- Confirms the contestant's identity, age, and school enrollment
- Consents to the contestant's participation in the competition and appearance on stage at *The Day of Orature*
- Acknowledges the Terms and Conditions of the competition (summarized below and available in full on the portal)
- Grants the Foundation non-exclusive rights to use the audition video and any Foundation-produced footage of the live performance for educational, archival, documentary, and promotional purposes (see Media Rights section)

Note for School-Based Submissions:

School districts and youth organizations may choose to run their own internal selection process to identify students who submit auditions to the Foundation. In such cases, the district or organization is responsible for its own internal selection procedures. All students who submit to the Foundation's portal must still complete individual registration and parent consent, regardless of how they were nominated.

Terms, Conditions, and Submission Eligibility

Eligibility

- The competition is open to all young people between the ages of 6 and 18 as of the submission deadline in the Syracuse metropolitan area and greater Central New York region.
- Contestants from outside this region may apply and will be considered on a space-available basis; priority will be given to CNY-region students in finalist selection.
- Contestants must be 6 years of age or older as of the submission deadline to enter.
- There is no limit to the number of categories a contestant may enter; each requires a separate, independent submission.
- Professional or semi-professional performers (those who have received payment for performances as their primary source of income) are ineligible.

Original and Traditional Works

- Spoken Word Poetry and Proverb & Wisdom Traditions entries must be original compositions or arranged performances drawing substantially on original content. Recitation of entirely pre-existing published works without original creative arrangement is not permitted.
- Oral Storytelling and Song-Based Narrative entries may draw on traditional or ancestral material, so long as the performance is the contestant's own creative interpretation and presentation.
- Call-and-Response performances may use traditional frameworks with original or adapted content.
- Contestants may not perform material that infringes on the intellectual property of a third party without documented permission.

Content Standards

- All submissions must be appropriate for a general public audience that includes children and families.
- Submissions must not contain explicit language, violence, hate speech, or content that demeans individuals or groups based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability, or other protected characteristics.
- The Foundation reserves the right to disqualify any submission that does not meet these content standards, with or without prior notice to the contestant.

Media Rights and Intellectual Property

Ownership: All contestants retain full ownership of their original work. Participation in this competition does not transfer any copyright, ownership, or intellectual property rights in a contestant's creative work to the Foundation.

Non-Exclusive License: By submitting to the competition, contestants and their parent/guardians grant the Micerere Githae Mugo Foundation a non-exclusive, royalty-free license to use, reproduce, display, and distribute the audition video and any Foundation-produced footage of live performances for the following purposes only: educational and archival documentation; promotional and marketing materials for the Day of Orature and the Foundation's programs; reporting to partners, funders, and community stakeholders; and social media, website, and documentary content produced by or for the Foundation.

Third-Party Restrictions: The Foundation will not sell, license, or transfer contestant footage to third parties for commercial use. Contestants or guardians may request removal of their footage from Foundation platforms at any time.

General Conditions

- All decisions of the adjudication panel and the Foundation regarding finalist selection and awards are final.
- Finalists are required to be present in person at the Day of Orature on July 18, 2026, to compete for prizes. Finalists who are unable to attend will be recognized as finalists but will forfeit the prize competition.
- The Foundation reserves the right to modify competition categories, prize amounts, or procedures with reasonable notice to registered contestants.
- Submission of an entry constitutes acceptance of all Terms and Conditions.
- The Foundation may contact contestants and their families for media, promotional, or educational purposes in connection with *The Day of Orature* and the Foundation's programs. Contact information will not be shared with third parties.

Adjudication: How Finalists Are Selected and Winners Are Chosen

Adjudication takes place in two stages: a pre-event screening panel that selects finalists from submitted auditions, and a live jury that evaluates finalist performances on the day of the event and determines prize winners.

Stage 1: Pre-Event Screening Panel (Finalist Selection)

Following the submission deadline, all complete and eligible entries will be reviewed by a Screening Panel — a team of trained reviewers with backgrounds in performance arts, education, and Orature traditions. The Screening Panel's task is to identify finalists for each category and age bracket who will be invited to perform live on stage at *The Day of Orature*.

Screening Panel Composition

- The Screening Panel will consist of 4–6 reviewers, potentially organized into sub-panels by performance category
- Each sub-panel will include at least one reviewer with specific expertise in the relevant Orature tradition
- Reviewers will include educators, artists, community leaders, and cultural practitioners from the Central New York region and beyond
- No reviewer will evaluate submissions from a school or district with which they have a professional affiliation

Screening Evaluation Criteria

Each audition video will be evaluated by independent reviewers using a standardized rubric across ten criteria:

Criterion	What Reviewers Look For
Artistry & Craft	The deliberateness and skill with which the work is made — language, rhythm, structure, imagery, and the shaping of the whole.
Content & Meaning	The intellectual and emotional substance of the work — what it says, how deeply it says it, and whether the performer truly knows what they mean.
Authenticity & Connection	The genuineness of the performer's presence — whether the story is truly owned, felt, and shared rather than simply delivered.
Age-Appropriate Impact	The degree to which the work speaks meaningfully and powerfully to the specific age group it is designed for.

Criterion	What Reviewers Look For
Performance and Delivery	The command of voice, body, space, timing, pause, and physical presence — the full instrument of the oral performer.
Use of Oral Tradition Elements	Knowledge and fluent use of specific African oral tradition forms: proverb, praise poetry, call-and-response, epic structure, riddle, dirge, and others.
Language and Voice	The distinctiveness of the performer's individual artistic voice and the depth of their cultural and linguistic rootedness.
Community Resonance	The degree to which the performance activates orature's communal covenant — drawing the audience in as participants rather than spectators.
Preservation and Memory	The conscious engagement with the practitioner's role as custodian of cultural memory, ancestral knowledge, and living tradition.
Social Justice Orientation	The work's commitment to justice, human dignity, liberation, and community, and the artistic force with which that commitment is expressed.

Finalist Numbers

The Screening Panel will select finalists per category per age bracket. The final number of finalists and the breakdown by category and Tier will be determined and announced before the event, based on overall submission volume and the performance time available on the day. All contestants will receive notification of the outcome of their submission.

Stage 2: Live Jury (Prize Competition)

At the Day of Orature, finalist performances on the main stage will be evaluated by a distinguished Live Jury. The Live Jury determines prize winners in each category and age bracket.

Jury Composition

- The Live Jury will consist of 4–5 distinguished judges drawn from academia, the literary arts, performance, and cultural institutions
- Jury members will be publicly named in event materials; each will bring documented expertise in Orature traditions, performing arts, or Indigenous literature and culture
- At least one jury member will be drawn from the Syracuse University academic or alumni community, honoring Professor Mugo's institutional home
- The Foundation will endeavor to ensure the jury reflects gender, cultural, and geographic diversity

Live Jury Evaluation Criteria

The Live Jury will evaluate finalist performances on the same four criteria as the Screening Panel (Artistry & Craft, Content & Meaning, Authenticity & Connection, Age-Appropriate Impact), with the following additions:

- Live Presence: The quality of the performance in the live, public context — energy, audience engagement, command of the moment
- The Live Jury will use a standardized scoring sheet; scores from all jury members will be averaged; in the event of a tie, the jury chair will cast a deciding vote

Conflict of Interest Policy

Any jury member or screening reviewer who has a personal, professional, or familial relationship with a contestant must declare that conflict and will be recused from evaluating that contestant's submission. The Foundation will maintain and publish a conflict of interest log for the competition.

Competition Timeline: From Submission to Stage

The following timeline governs the competition cycle. All dates are firm unless communicated otherwise by the Foundation. With a submission window of May 11 to June 21 and an event date of July 18, the screening phase benefits from a comfortable review period of nearly four weeks — allowing thorough evaluation and considered finalist selection.

Date / Period	Phase	Key Actions
Monday, May 11	SUBMISSIONS OPEN	Competition submission portal goes live. All submissions received will receive acknowledgment of receipt within 72 hours; early submission is strongly encouraged.
May 11 – June 7	Outreach & Early Submission	Active school and community outreach; contestants submit at their own pace; Foundation responds to portal enquiries within 48 hours. Districts running internal processes should aim to have selections made and students registered by early June.
Sunday, June 7	Early Submission Checkpoint	Recommended soft target for early submissions. All entries received by this date acknowledged within 24 hours.
Sunday, June 21	FINAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE	Portal closes at 11:59 PM EST. No late submissions accepted. All required components — video, contestant information sheet, and signed parent/guardian consent form — must be complete and successfully uploaded before midnight.
June 22 – July 4	Screening Panel Review	Panel reviews all complete submissions; scoring and deliberation across all categories and age brackets; confidential process. Each submission evaluated independently by at least two reviewers.
Monday, July 6	Finalist Notifications Begin	Finalists notified by email and phone. Foundation confirms performance time slots and day-of logistics.
Friday, July 10	All Notifications Sent	All contestants (finalists and non-advancing) notified. Finalist confirmation responses due by July 12.
Sunday, July 12	Finalist Confirmation Deadline	Finalists must confirm attendance; unconfirmed slots may be offered to alternates.
Saturday, July 11	Finalist Information Call	Optional virtual orientation for finalists and families; Q&A with event staff; stage logistics reviewed. (See note below if you received a later slot.)

Date / Period	Phase	Key Actions
Saturday, July 18	THE DAY OF ORATURE	Full-day festival at Clinton Square; finalist performances on main stage; live jury adjudication; awards ceremony and closing celebration.

For School Districts & Organizations:

- Schools and organizations running internal nomination processes are advised to complete their internal selection by May 30, to allow time for individual registration on the portal before the June 21 deadline.
- A dedicated point of contact at the Foundation will be available for queries throughout the submission period.

The Day of the Event: How the Competition Runs on Stage

The Day of Orature is designed as a festival, not an auditorium competition. Finalist performances are woven into the fabric of a full-day celebration, with musical guest performances and community programming interspersed throughout. The stage is joyful, the audience is warm and supportive, and every young person who steps up to the microphone steps into a tradition that belongs to them.

Performance Order and Scheduling

- Finalist performances will be scheduled across two main performance rounds: Round One (morning/early afternoon) and Round Two (early-to-mid afternoon)
- Performance order within each round will be organized by age bracket, moving from youngest (Tier I) to oldest (Tier IV), to build the energy of the day
- Each contestant will be assigned a specific performance time slot and notified in advance; late arrival forfeits the slot
- A backstage coordinator will manage all finalist logistics on the day, including lineup order, props, and warm-up space

Tentative Day-of Performance Schedule

Time	Program Element
11:00 AM	Doors Open — Festival grounds open; community gathering begins; contestant check-in and backstage orientation
12:00 PM	Opening Ceremony — Welcome remarks from Foundation leadership and City of Syracuse representative; land acknowledgment; introduction to Orature and Professor Mugo's legacy
12:30 PM	Youth Orature Performances — Round One (Tiers I & II)
2:30 PM	Intermission/Musical Guest Performance during Round One adjudication
3:00 PM	Youth Orature Performances — Round Two (Tiers III & IV)
5:00 PM	Intermission/Musical Guest Performance during Round Two adjudication
5:30 PM	Final Jury Deliberation — community entertainment programming and festival activities continue on stage
6:30 PM	Awards Ceremony & Closing Celebration — All finalists recognized; category and Tier prize winners announced; cash prizes awarded; closing remarks
7:30 PM	Event Closes

Stage Logistics for Finalists

- All finalists must check in at the Finalist Registration Table by 11:00 AM on the day of the event, regardless of their scheduled performance time
- A dedicated backstage area will be available for finalists to warm up and prepare
- Each finalist will be introduced by the emcee before their performance; the introduction will be based on the information provided in the Contestant Information Sheet — contestants should ensure that information is accurate and reflect how they wish to be introduced
- Performance time limits on stage are firm; a time signal will be given at 30 seconds before the limit; performances that significantly exceed the limit may be subject to a score adjustment at jury discretion
- Microphone, basic amplification, and stage access will be provided; contestants requiring specific technical accommodations (keyboard, percussion, etc.) must notify the Foundation no later than June 27
- All finalists will be seated together in a designated Finalist Section near the stage; families and supporters will have reserved seating in an adjacent area

Awards and Recognition: Prizes for Every Finalist

The Day of Orature is a celebration of voice — and every finalist who reaches the main stage deserves recognition. Prize awards are structured across all four age Tiers in each of the five performance categories, ensuring that excellence at every level of development is honored. Prizes are awarded per Tier, per category.

Prize Structure by Tier

The following prizes apply in each of the five performance categories, within each age Tier:

Age Group	1st Place	2nd Place	Finalist
Tier I (Ages 6–10)	\$150	\$75	Certificate + Recognition
Tier II (Ages 11–13)	\$200	\$100	Certificate + Recognition
Tier III (Ages 14–16)	\$300	\$150	Certificate + Recognition
Tier IV (Ages 17-18)	\$400	\$200	Certificate + Recognition

Per-Category, Per-Tier Maximum Award Totals:

- Tier I: up to \$225 in awards per category
- Tier II: up to \$300 in awards per category
- Tier III: up to \$450 in awards per category
- Tier IV: up to \$600 in awards per category

Finalist Recognition (All Finalists)

Every contestant who is selected as a finalist and performs on the main stage will receive:

- A formal *The Day of Orature* Finalist Certificate, signed by Foundation leadership
- Recognition by name from the stage during the Awards Ceremony
- Inclusion in the Day of Orature Finalist Honor Roll, published on the Foundation website and in post-event communications
- A commemorative program from the event

Special Recognition: Foundation Award for Outstanding Orature

In addition to category prizes, the Live Jury may elect — at their unanimous discretion — to award a single Foundation Award for Outstanding Orature to one performer across all categories and Tiers whose work demonstrates extraordinary achievement, depth of tradition, and artistic power. This award carries a prize of \$500 and a special commendation from the Foundation.

Total Maximum Prize Pool: \$5,625

(Across 5 categories x 4 Tiers, plus the Foundation Award for Outstanding Orature)

Cash prizes will be awarded as checks made payable to the finalist (for contestants 18 and older) or to the parent/guardian on behalf of the contestant (for contestants under 18). Prizes are subject to applicable tax reporting requirements.

Pathways for School Districts and Youth Organizations

The Day of Orature Youth Competition is designed to be directly accessible to individual young people and their families — but it is also built to work with the structures of schools and youth-serving organizations. We welcome and encourage partnerships with districts, after-school programs, community centers, and youth arts organizations.

Option A: Open, Individual Submissions

Any eligible student may register individually on the competition portal and submit an audition without the involvement of their school or a formal program. Families are encouraged to support their young person in filming and submitting directly.

Option B: School or Organization-Coordinated Submissions

Schools and organizations may choose to run their own internal process — a classroom showcase, an audition session, a teacher recommendation — to identify students who will submit to the Foundation's portal. This option is particularly well-suited to:

- Schools that wish to integrate the competition into an existing arts or humanities curriculum unit
- After-school or Saturday programs wishing to prepare a cohort of participants
- Community organizations running youth arts or spoken word programs

Under this model, the school or organization is responsible for its internal selection process and may use any criteria it chooses. All students who move forward to submit to the Foundation must still complete individual portal registration and parent consent.

"The oral tradition is not a thing of the past. It is a living, breathing, transforming body of expression."

— Dr. Micere Githae Mugo

Closing Note: Every Story Deserves a Stage

"To be fully human is to live with integrity, to honor the inherent worth of every person, and to act with a consciousness grounded not in self, but in community."

— The Principle of *Utu*, as lived by Professor Mīcere Gīthae Mūgo

The Day of Orature is an act of belief — that every young person who stands at a microphone and shares their voice, their story, their tradition, is doing something ancient and essential. That belief is the foundation of this competition, and it shapes everything: the care we put into the submission process, the professionalism of the adjudication, the warmth of the stage we build, and the weight we give to the prizes we award.

Professor Mīcere Gīthae Mūgo gave her scholarly life to the proposition that the spoken word is not a lesser form of human expression — it is the original one. It is the form in which every other tradition of knowledge, culture, and justice has its roots.

This competition exists to ensure that the tradition she devoted her life to continues to find new voices, new audiences, and new life. *The Day of Orature* carries that proposition into the streets of Syracuse and says: Come. Listen. Speak. Your voice is not just welcome here. It is the whole point.

We look forward to hearing every voice this summer.

THE MICERE GITHAE MUGO FOUNDATION

In Tireless Pursuit of Utu

www.miceregithaemugofoundation.org