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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UMOJA DEBATE LEAGUE LAUNCHES 2023-2024 DEBATE SEASON



Students at Henry Ford High School prepare for 1st Debate Tournament

Umoja Debate League gears up for the start of the 2023-24 debate season. With the support of the Michigan Department of Education's Out-Of-School Time Grant, Umoja was able to expand into 12 additional sites this year, bringing the total number of teams to 20. Serving both middle and high school students, the league is poised to ignite passion, critical thinking, and civic engagement in young minds across the Metro Detroit area.

Umoja Debate League has an unwavering commitment to accessibility. Regardless of background or financial status, all students are welcomed with open arms to join this enriching experience. Twice a week, participants gather at their respective schools, where dedicated Umoja Debate League coaches, in collaboration with teachers, embark on a transformative journey with their students. Together, they are responsible for preparing students for debate competitions against one another. This includes case construction, speech etiquette, and comprehensive research on relevant topics, laying the foundation for future leaders and changemakers. This routine takes place at all participating schools.

Umoja Debate League assigns community-relevant debate topics for students, and once a month, hosts debate tournaments where students and their schools get a chance to compete against one another. Tournaments will take place once a month. The regular season tournaments are in March, April, and May. The final tournament (championship) will take place in June.

The stakes are high this year. The winning middle school team and high school team will win a trip to Ghana this summer.



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According to Mr. Gavin Buckley, who serves as the DPSCD Debate Coach at Henry Ford High School, “Umoja's commitment to accessibility has made debate popular with students rather than exclusive. Students who may have never considered themselves public speakers or intellectuals are showing up to school excited to debate issues from city policy to movement strategy. I see firsthand how impactful it is for students to debate topics that are relevant to their lives and their experiences in this city. Umoja is helping students see themselves as change-makers, as deep thinkers, as creative solutionaries in a broad tradition of Black excellence. Students connect with the material, the process, and the coaches because of that reality. Umoja is walking the walk when it comes to providing a meaningful and enriching experience to all of our kids.”

Mark your calendars for the first debate tournament of the season! On Saturday, March 9th, from 10 AM to 2 PM, join us at Wayne State University’s esteemed Community Arts Auditorium for a captivating display of intellect, eloquence, and passion. Open to the public, this event promises to be an unforgettable celebration of youth empowerment and academic excellence.

Umoja Debate League prides itself on bringing community partnerships and education together. One of the partnerships that the organization is most proud of is with Wayne State’s Black Student Union. Taylor James serves as the President of WSU’s Black Student Union and as the Grants and Operations Manager for Umoja Debate League.

“Umoja Debate League has always been so much deeper than debate, and this season is no different. Some of the middle school students I coached when I started with this organization are now in our newly formed high school program, which I am proud to have helped develop. Umoja’s culture continues to propel our students into excellence while also propelling my leadership to new heights. I look forward to seeing hundreds of new students undergo this transformative learning experience in which their confidence, critical thinking, and leadership skills will flourish.”

About Umoja Debate League: *Umoja Debate League is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We are a youth debate team based in Detroit, MI. By using debate as our vehicle, we provide students with the opportunity for self expression, critical thinking skills, and conflict resolution skills. <https://www.umojadebateteam.org/>*