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Thornton Fractional District 215  
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### **Thornton Fractional North students place in IHSA state speech competition**



*T.F. North speech students Destinee Owens and Kayla Gilmore*

**Calumet City, IL-** Last weekend, Thornton Fractional North students Destinee Owens and Kayla Gilmore represented Thornton Fractional District 215 at the [Illinois High School Association state speech tournament](#). The state tournament on February 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> was held virtually, as was the entire IHSA speech competition season.

Gilmore, a senior at T.F. North, qualified for state competition in both the prose and poetry reading events and finished second in the state in poetry reading. Gilmore performed a program that combined excerpts from several poems on the topic of the [“#SayHerName”](#) campaign. The campaign centers on overlooked police violence against women of color. Gilmore finishes her high school career with 83 speech competition medals, setting a record at T.F. North. Speech team coach Shaunwell Posley stated, “It has been such a pleasure coaching Kayla and watching her grow as a speech competitor. She is exceptional.” Gilmore plans to further her education next fall but hasn’t yet made a final decision on where she will attend.

Owens, a sophomore, finished third in the state in dramatic interpretation. Her performance was an excerpt from the book [“Rest in Power: The Enduring Life of Trayvon Martin”](#) by Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin. After earning five medals her freshman year, Owens secured 28 medals during the 2020-2021 competition season and plans to return to compete with the T.F. North speech team next year.

T.F. North principal Brian Rucinski stated, “In a year that has been full of so many obstacles, Kayla and Destinee’s dedication has given the entire school the opportunity to be proud and celebrate. I’m especially proud that Kayla and Destinee both chose pieces that took dead aim at injustices they face as Young Women of Color.” Superintendent Dr. Jones-Redmond added, “These young women are incredibly gifted and had a very dedicated coach. I could not be more proud of their accomplishments at the state competition.”

Recordings of Gilmore and Owens performing their pieces were included in [T.F. North’s virtual celebration of Black History Month](#).



**About Thornton Fractional High School District 215:** District 215 serves the students of Burnham, Calumet City, Lansing, and Lynwood at Thornton Fractional North High School, Thornton Fractional South High School, Thornton Fractional Center for Academics and Technology, and Thornton Fractional Center for Alternative Learning. The mission of District 215 is to provide diverse learning opportunities that inspire all students to become life-long learners who contribute to their community.

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