

## Lake Worth High wins Palm Beach County Ethics Bowl

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PALM SPRINGS —

They were dressed in their Sunday best — blazers, ties and shoes for the boys and a blazer and skirt for the only girl — but don't let their attire fool you. They fought a battle Saturday at Palm Springs Middle School, and the more persuasive side won.

Lake Worth High School took home the trophy at the third Palm Beach County Ethics Bowl, beating Boca Raton High School in the final round.

The final culminated a day-long series of ethics debates involving 18 teams from 13 Palm Beach County high schools.

The winning team — comprised of Devonta Battles, 18, Brandon Nandlal, Henry Calway, and Kelecia Grant, all 17 — will go to North Carolina in April to compete in a national ethics bowl.

The teams were tasked with arguing ethical positions on issues that affect the lives of millions of people in America: a person's right to kill another, and whether marijuana should be legalized.

The ethical questions were presented in the context of two issues at the forefront of public awareness — the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman and the fact that more African-Americans are arrested for marijuana use than whites.

Ranging from common-sense arguments to lofty ethical principles, the two teams respectfully argued their positions while a row of judges scored their performances.

Both teams studied before the debate, which showed in the repeated references to philosophers and ethical theories.

"If we mention Emmanuel Kant much more, I fear he will rise from the dead," Calway said, apparently confident enough to try — and succeed — to draw a laugh from the spectators.

It was only after the official debate was over that the students seemed to let their passions fly.

The three judges' heads bobbed to the left and right, amused grins on their faces, as the two teams started arguing with gusto, gesticulating and interrupting each other.

And the school district brought in the experts — attorneys, politicians, business people and religious leaders — to judge the students' performances. State Attorney Dave Aronberg, County Commissioner Paulette Burdick and School Board Chairman Chuck Shaw judged the final round of the day.

But that doesn't mean they weren't challenged, too.

"It's really very intimidating to be a judge because the students are so bright," Burdick said.

Asked whether judging an ethics debate affected his professional life, Gary Walk, an attorney who judged one of the semifinal debates, said yes.

“It makes us think about ethics in a more systematic way,” he said.

Despite their smiles and confident handshakes after their victory, the winning Trojans team members have more work to do. Until they go to North Carolina, they’ll meet about once a week to prepare, said their coach, Jenneí Preston.

In the meantime, it’s the parents who will bear the brunt of the students’ skills.

“Try living with them (the kids)! It’s a nightmare. Try arguing with that boy — it’s impossible,” said David Calway, Henry’s father. “I give up.”