

CEDRIC THORBES SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



CEDRIC THORBES

is a senior at Glenville High School in Cleveland where he is very active in community service. Cedric is the golf captain and a former member of the wrestling team. He also loves poetry and performance art. He intends to major in business education, possibly at Bowling Green State University, and plans to be a teacher.

I felt like Dr. Martin Luther King standing in front of an angry, racist mob delivering a peace sermon. I looked into the crowd only to see rolling eyes and angry faces. Staring at facial expressions of aggression and anger, I didn't feel welcome.

Placed on a panel discussion in southern Ohio, I was told to express my feelings about my high school experience. The majority of the audience was white. So were the four other students I sat on the panel with. I was third in line to speak. I waited my turn as the first two students went to the podium and delivered their speeches. As each finished the crowd offered them thunderous applause. Now it was my turn. Nervously, I stood. The group in the front row shrank back into their seats. It seemed that they were frightened by me. As I walked over to the podium, people walked out. I knew it wasn't time for a bathroom break. My white counter parts didn't receive the "walk out" treatment. As I began to speak, I heard chatter coming from the right corner of the room. I heard murmurs of the words "poor" and "nigger".

Rattled and confused, I finished my speech. There was absolute silence. I didn't receive the roaring ovation that my white counter parts did. I went back to my seat feeling underappreciated and useless. My presentation was well prepared. I couldn't understand why I didn't receive applause from the crowd. Was it because I was black? Was it because I was from I was from the inner-city? I had no clue why they gave off this vibe. Being one of only six blacks in the room made me feel uneasy with this company. They showed they weren't too fond my being there. I had no idea why this discrimination and racism occurred. After my experience on the panel, my spirit was crushed. After witnessing the uncomfortable audience, I felt that maybe they think one race is superior to the other.

Something had to change. I began to join organizations that pushed social justice. I am currently the president of the SCLC Youth Division of Cleveland and The B.R.I.C.K. Program which stands for Brotherhood, Respect, Intelligence, Conduct and Knowledge. I am most proud of my presidency over the Cleveland NAACP Youth Council. As president I speak out against injustice and for civil rights issues. From Cleveland to Chicago, from Washington D.C. to Atlanta, I have held peace rallies and marches to stop bullying and discrimination. I hold protests to speak out against the injustices of the youth. For someone to be treated as unequal because of economic status or skin color is wrong. Dr. King said a man should be judged not by the color of his skin but the content of his character. So I will preach the sermons of justice and peace and speak out against discrimination so no other student will have to hear the silence of racism again.