

Written—Sunday, 24 October 2010

As I sit in Starbucks on Georgia Avenue, at the Howard University Campus, I think of James Perkins, the Salutatorian of his 8th Grade Class, 2009, Johnson Middle School, Washington, DC. It's difficult to block out the tragedy that occurred on 13th of June 2009. The students who enter and exist, who sit and discuss all topics, who peck away at their laptops, who figure math problems and take in the music from Stevie wonder to Pink Floyd, to Cat Stevens and John Lennon, to Neyo and Chris Brown, these young college people each, all embody the best of a ribbon of the many facets of James Perkins.

There is no saying that James was not a social icon. As Salutatorian, it comes with the territory: most talented, most committed, most popular, most productive, most caring, most involved, most mature, most thoughtful and most in tuned to ones' community and the world at large. James was not only brilliant, he was also a deep and thorough thinker who considered and weighed the consequences of his and others actions in an endless process to make sense of the what, when, where and who of things, little and big. He left no stone unturned. He was a researcher who enjoyed studying topics from every angle. His computer was one of his best friends. Even though in Mathematics class, there were not very many research projects, when there was one, James always turned it in on time, typed and well put together. Extra credit was no hurdle for him; it was a given. Without asking, it was a given. James never announced that he was going to turn in a well-put together project; he just did it. He was quietly subtle, outspoken with impeccable politeness and respect. His level of discipline was highly developed; not rigid, but on target. There were times, very few, when he would come to me and say, Ms. Rabain, "I couldn't finish all my homework because I was just too tired and had to finish a project for Mr. / Mrs. So-in-So." I would say that's okay because I know you will get to it when you can. He would measure his time and still get his work to me in a timely fashion. He always followed through. There's a saying, "God Bless the Child that has his own." James has loving, caring and thoughtful parents, who provided him with a solid foundation. Going to college, James was a winner, most likely to succeed and excel in college. He had all the traits, inherited brilliance, as well as a polished, well-developed, focused, healthy and disciplined attitude toward life. His leadership and wisdom are still greatly missed and will be for a long- long time to come.

Sincerely, Ms. Rabain, former 8th Grade Math Instructor