

## STRAIGHT-UP

## CHARACTER!

Clarence Brown is a Senior at Providence St. Mel. He gave this speech at Providence's Annual Fundraiser on Thursday, October 21, 1993.

What is character? When this question is asked in my English class I know my teacher is speaking of an actor or someone in a story. That is not the type of character about which I want to speak tonight. I want to speak about the personality trait of character according to Webster's Dictionary, character is defined as... The aggregate (gathering) of properties and qualities that distinguishes one person or thing from another.

From my SOAL (Summer Opportunities Of A Lifetime) experiences, I've found character to be a sense of responsibility that we accept to make right decisions when we are placed in situations that challenge our morality. My character was challenged greatly this summer.

This summer, I went to Europe to study drama. However, I learned a lot more than drama and theater. I learned that my character is a lot stronger than I ever

character was challenged because there were teenagers in Europe who smoked, drank and did drugs; they offered me a chance to do the same. I automatically told them no. After telling them no, I realized that I could have easily said yes. But I didn't.

There was no one to watch over me to make sure that I didn't do anything wrong...there was no one to watch over me to make sure I didn't get myself in trouble...in short I didn't have a babysitter. Yet, I decided to do what was right. Why? I have a strong sense of character. If I don't smoke or drink while a supervisor is around, then I won't smoke or drink when they're not around.

Character isn't based on what we do when someone's watching us...it's

based on what we do when no one is watching us.

How does character build and where did this sense of character I experienced come from? For me, my character was developed almost subconsciously. The building began when I was young with the instruction and care of my mother. It was strengthened with the rigors of Providence-St. Mel School.

The building continued three summers ago when I studied at Arizona State University...and again two summers ago on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.

In these last two places, there was strict adult supervision which left little room to do something wrong. There was time to study and time to play. I never realized that during these summers my character was being built through the little things the

However it wasn't challenged until I went to Europe and was placed in a situation that caused me to question my morals. This was the first time that I realized that character builds independence and respect: respect not only for others but respect for ourselves.

Moreover, character instills a sense of pride. It lets someone like me, an inner-city young Black man who wants to achieve something in life, know that there's no need to depend on others to help us succeed in life. If we can accept responsibility, advocate independence, build self-esteem and most importantly, keep in mind that our character can and will help us in life, we can and will achieve any and everything that we put our minds to.

HARD WORK  
PAYS OFF!

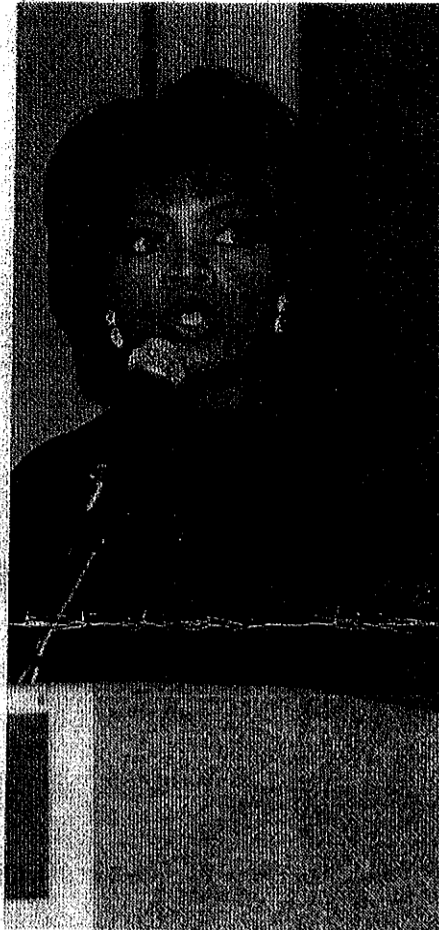
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She then raved to Mr. Graham about the students. After visiting PSM, Ms. Winfrey said she wanted to do something for the students at PSM.

Ms. Winfrey talked about cleaning out her shoe closet and taking her old shoes to Harpo Studio where she sold them for \$10 dollars and \$5 for gym shoes. She then called Mr. Adams to the stage and presented him with a shoe box filled with \$675 in cash. While the audience was applauding this donation she said, by the way, here is a check for 1 million dollars.

The emotions that came over the crowd gathered there for the \$500 a plate dinner was first surprise and then extreme happiness. I personally have never seen so many people from such diverse backgrounds all cry of happiness for the same reason all at one time. Many people broke into tears of joy and everyone was speechless, especially Mr. Adams who had intended to make a speech but after that, there was nothing he could say except, "HARD WORK PAYS OFF, HARD WORK PAYS OFF, HARD WORK PAYS OFF!" The evening then ended with Mr. Adams asking all of the students in the audience to stand and recite the school's Mission Statement.

Everyone in the PSM family would like to say "Thank you, Ms. Winfrey" for her generous contribution to Providence-St. Mel.



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## STRAIGHT-UP

Teachers and students needed  
to write about events at their school.  
Articles must be in on Friday of each week.  
Submit pictures if possible  
color or black and white.