

Author India Reaves returns to alma mater Carver bearing gifts

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

When author India Reaves met Carver High School principal Travis Taylor, she jokingly told him that she should be the one to deliver the commencement speech. What she did not expect was for Taylor to take her up on her offer. He did.

A graduate and former teacher at Carver High School, Reaves' energy and passion made her stand out above all the other candidates.

"Her energy, passion and the way she connects with students and can identify with their lives..." Taylor said. "Other alums were in the running as well, but India was the best selection at the time."

After she got the news she would be delivering the speech Reaves, who is an author, decided that she could not return to her alma mater empty handed.

After the publisher of her book "I'm T.O.U.G.H" told her that it would cost \$500 to get every graduating senior a copy of her book, Reaves took to social media to rally Carver Nation to help raise funds for the books. What happened next was truly amazing, Reaves said.

"I wanted to start a GoFundMe page, but I figured I knew enough Yellow

Jackets that I didn't need to do that," Reaves said. "Before I knew it, people were calling me to donate money."

In less than 24 hours, Reaves and Carver Nation had raised over \$400.

"I was just amazed at how quickly the community rallied behind my idea, so I told myself, 'If we can do that in less than 24 hours, how much can we raise over the two weeks leading up to graduation?'" Reaves said.

Reaves then decided to give three of the graduating seniors book scholarships. Once again, Carver alumni came out in numbers to help with the project. What started out as three scholarships of \$250 each grew to \$750 each.

"People really came out of nowhere," India said. "People I hadn't spoken to in years were calling me and donating money, not even pledges, I mean actual cash."

When picking the students who would receive the scholarships, India said she wanted the students who weren't straight "A" students but were still just as deserving of the scholarships.

"I wanted three 'B'-plus students who may not be at the top but had did what they needed to do," Reaves said.

With the help of faculty and staff members, Tamir Glenn, Kayla Smith and Marlene Telez were selected for the scholarships. Tamir will be attending North Carolina A&T University; Kayla, Forsyth Tech Community College; and Marlene,



Photo by Tevin Stinson

(L to R) Tamir Glenn, Kayla Smith, and Marlene Telez were the recipients of the I'm T.O.U.G.H scholarships presented by India Reaves a Carver High School alumnus and former teacher.

William Peace University in Raleigh.

"These three students epitomize what my book 'I'm T.O.U.G.H' is about" Reaves said. "Tackling obstacles and unleashing God's hope, all three of these students had to overcome some obstacles during their four years of high school, and I'm just happy I could help them with these scholarships."

During her speech to the Carver gradu-

ates, India told the class of 2015 that it was important that on their journey through life, they should make sure they leave fossils instead of footprints. Principal Taylor is sure Reaves' speech will be one the graduates will never forget.

"The speech was not generic; it was tailored for Carver," Taylor said. "To become a fossil, you must survive obstacles, but when that is done, your place in

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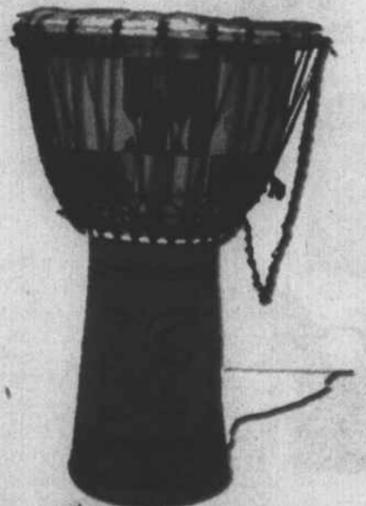
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