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Life and Religion

Life's inspiration from inauguration

Published Thursday, January 15, 2009
by [Ryenne Persinger](#)

Marquis Grimes will never forget his 21st birthday.



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Marquis Grimes is bound for Washington, D.C. on a one day bus trip to the inauguration.

His birthday is Jan. 15 - the same as Martin Luther King Jr. - and as a gift, his mom, Adrienne, bought him a ticket to Washington D.C. on Jan. 20 - President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration day.

"I thought that would make a good birthday present," Adrienne Grimes said. "I hope it gives him some focus and direction of where he wants to go. I'm really excited that this means so much to him."

Marquis is traveling with Queen City Tours, which leaves for Washington on Jan. 19 and returns Jan. 20.

Although Marquis doesn't have tickets to attend any of the inaugural events, he's just happy to be a part of history.



"I see myself in Obama," Marquis said. "This is something I can tell my kids about. Older people always say how they gave (youth) an opportunity, now I can say that to another generation."

Juan Whipple of Queen City Tours says basically the inauguration trip is getting people to D.C. and back.

"This is a part of history that has not been accomplished before," he said. "You have a lot of people who fought for and dreamed about a day like this for several centuries; since we were brought over here as slaves."

Whipple added: "We're talking about the most powerful man in the modern world is going to be African American. Some people have died for us to get to this point."

Marquis stood in line for 90 minutes in October during early voting at the public

library on Idlewild Road to cast his vote for Obama. It was his first time voting in a presidential election. And the Butler High School graduate recognized the importance of going to the polls.

"In the '60s and '70s there was a big civil rights movement," he said. "This is the first time in my generation that I get to experience something like this. I feel like we did something."

Like Obama, a single mother raised Marquis. Of four children, he's the only son. Every couple of years Marquis says his father will send him letters with no return address and he really doesn't have a relationship with him.

"That's my motivation," Marquis said. "As long as I don't end up like (my father) I'm good. I heard my father was smart just like I am, but he wasted his talents, I guess."

But Marquis isn't. Last year, during his freshman year at Clinton Junior College in Rock Hill, he made the dean's list. After he completes his sophomore year, he plans to attend a four-year university and become a doctor or physical therapist.

"I think I'd be one of the first people in my family to graduate from college," Marquis said. "My mom just wants better for all of us. She knows my potential."

Adrienne Grimes says she is impressed with the man her son has turned out to be and sees a lot of similarities between her son and Obama.

"He almost looks like Obama," she said. "He had a huge Afro and he went out and got it cut for this trip. I'm just hoping (when he goes to D.C.) that he'll be able to see diversity and the different races coming together as well as seeing the opportunities that are out there."

The likelihood of Marquis seeing Obama in person is slim to none, but he doesn't mind. Merely being in the same city is enough for him.

"For me, I never used being black as a crutch," Marquis said. "I just hope (Obama's election) will stop giving black men an excuse and instead (become) an opportunity."

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