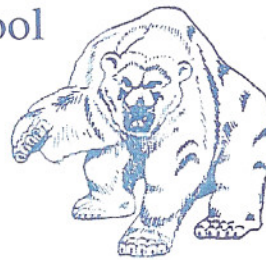


Woodward High School

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Guidance Department



Sarah Barman, Guidance Director
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To Whom It May Concern:

On February 27th and 28th of 2007 we brought in a speaker, Mr. Marcus Gentry, to do a presentation on respect. In the fourteen years that I have been in education, I have never witnessed a speaker's impact on staff and students quite like Mr. Gentry's impact. He is a highly polished and accomplished speaker with great charisma. He held an auditorium full of 450 female students at rapt attention for nearly two hours. And then did the same thing with 450 male students. It should be known that our student body is racially mixed and that they come from a low economic urban neighborhood. On more than one occasion, we have halted assemblies because the students were rowdy and inattentive. It was incredible the way Mr. Gentry held their attention, especially in light of the fact that they were used to hour long assemblies, not the two full periods that we set aside for Mr. Gentry. Earlier, he performed another "miracle" by keeping an audience of 125 staff, parents, and community members hanging on his every word.

The message that Mr. Gentry imparts is, by his own admission, nothing new. No wheels were re-invented and no magic formulas were discovered. But the concepts, stories, and dialogue that formed his message struck a chord with both staff and students. The topics that he covered are topics that have lost their urgency, commonality, and visibility as the bonds of the nuclear family have disintegrated. Fewer and fewer parents have the time or energy to discuss or model such concepts as: developing and maintaining respect, discipline, vision, focus, roles and responsibility, individual value, overcoming challenges, communication, goals, creating opportunities for success, and developing positive relationships. Mr. Gentry touched on each of these topics in such a way that it was meaningful and impactful to each of his three audiences.

Here is a testimony as to how our kids took Mr. Gentry's message to heart: Mr. Gentry met and talked with several of our students after his presentation. Several asked for his cell phone number so that they could further communicate with him. He didn't hesitate in giving them this personal information, which in itself speaks of the genuineness of his caring nature. Then came a glowing example of the impact of Mr. Gentry's presentation. As he and I were sitting in my office not much longer than thirty minutes after the school day had ended, Mr. Gentry received a phone call from one of our students friends who does not attend Woodward. He wanted to know how he could find out about what his friend had heard. Was there a book? A cassette? Or a DVD? He wanted to hear about just what had made his friend so excited. To me, it is amazing that a student would rush home and be so pumped up by what he had heard that his friend would be so influenced by this exuberance to call and find out how to get more information.

As I mentioned in my opening paragraph Mr. Gentry's presentation was by far the most fruitful that I have heard in fourteen years of educational employment. With most

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speakers you hope to get one or two useful tidbits for later use. Mr. Gentry's presentation was a continuous barrage of relevant and pertinent information. I firmly believe that Mr. Gentry's program can have a lasting effect on changing the attitudes and behaviors of our staff and students from tolerant indifference to mutual trust and respect. We are currently exploring ways to bring Mr. Gentry back in an expanded role. If you have any questions regarding Mr. Gentry's presentation here, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

James H. Alexander