



Brotherhood
Enthusiasm
Accountability
Scholarship
Tenacity

Young Man with a Plan Weekly Update June 25, 2018

Jaykyri and Des attended graduations at Coalition schools and YMWAP had its own final meeting/celebration on June 7, at which seniors checked in and shared their plans. Austin James spoke on the topic "Potential Is Not Enough." Our young men received stoles (thanks, Matt Holzer, for the idea!) with a special Young Man with a Plan patch. They were encouraged to wear their stoles at their high school and *college* graduations.



We will be writing a final, more comprehensive report on the results of our 2017-18 program year, what we learned, and what we hope to improve upon and introduce next year with 9th and 11th grade students and mentors. In the meantime, here on the following pages here are some of our senior's own words.

Participating in YMWAP meant a lot. Not only was I communicating and interacting with brothers the same color as me with different backgrounds, but it also helped me expand who I was as a young man of color. YMWAP helped me realize that the color of our skin is just an obstacle society wants us to trip over. It's like a pothole that everyone gets nervous and offensive about when really all you have to do is either drive over it or swerve around it. It's good to experience the journey, but it's even better getting to your destination successfully, that's all we're trying to do. Get to where we want to be in life successfully. I salute, respect, and honor Jaykyri and Des for planting the knowledge I need to not just survive in this world, but to live happily and comfortably in this world. They taught that nothing good comes easy; it's all about hard work.

Participating in Young Man With A Plan has given me a place where I feel like I can communicate with men who really care about my future, I didn't really have that at home for much of my life since my biological father is divorced from my mother. This program has allowed me to understand what it means to be a man and what it means to get your life in order and the value mentors have in aiding a person in doing so. YMWAP has been an invaluable influence on my life and has helped me achieve things I never thought I would be capable of when I was just a boy.

As I did the road work myself, through reading books on self-development, beginning to work out, and trying to sort myself out, having YMWAP's mentors really helped me sharpen the blade that is my very Being. Through being there for us, taking time to talk, imparting their advice onto us while respecting our opinions and always trying to see where we were coming from, it really felt like a second home and I really looked forward to hanging out with the guys.

Most young people don't really care about the issues I tend to think about on a day to day basis. I have gone through a series of existential crises in my young life and it has caused me to always be analyzing and trying to sort things out to the point of overthinking. Mentors like Mr. Desmond, Mr. Simpson and Mr. James really helped me out in becoming more concise in my thinking and my speech while also being people who wanted to talk to me about the complex issues I have been facing. They always challenge us to be better and give us the tools to do exactly that. It's more often than not that adults challenge youth to be the best they can be without really giving them a clear path, if any, to get there. I am eternally grateful for all YMWAP has done for me and I look forward to supporting the program more in the future.

What Young Man with a Plan means to me is an opportunity to grow with my fellow brothers. It's a place where we all feel connected and safe because we all have each other's backs. That type of relationship and connection is what I personally believe will help Blacks and Latinos get in college because they teach us how to work together rather than fight among each other. This program helped me realize that I wasn't alone and that others were facing the same problems as me. Because of this program I'm not the same little kid I once was when I first entered YMWAP. At first I only came for the food because who would say no to free food. But later after I heard the others' highs and lows I started making connections and with my brothers. We help each other when someone is failing and are always supporting each other. YMWAP helped me achieve Cum Laude (an award that is given when you have a gpa of 85) and without Jaykyri and Des always pushing me to do my work I wouldn't have graduated with a 85.

I am so grateful to Des and Jaykyri for the small talk. Those small acts are what can change someone's life. This whole operation wouldn't be possible without the help of the supporters and leader of this group. Without them we wouldn't have been able to go to New Hampshire and enjoy nature and the beauty of the simple life. With this program I believe we can really make a huge difference in the lives of black and Latino students by giving them the opportunity they should all have.

What participating in Young Man with a Plan meant to me was growth. It helped me grow as a man and as a human. Never did I ever think that I could have the confidence that I have now and for the rest of my life if I had not joined Young Man with a Plan. Throughout the four years that I have participated in this program the confidence that I have now only grew and grew. However I also grew as a young man of color. I now know how to carry myself and how to do act in a certain way that represents me in a true sense. I have matured so much.

I haven't always been confident. I actually suffered with low self-esteem growing up. Eventually, I got to a point where I was just like, 'OK, this is taking too much energy.' After that, I started accepting myself for who I was, and I was like, whoever is not going to accept it, they weren't really meant to be in my life in that way. That is what Young Man with a Plan made me realize and it made me discover that maturity has many different forms and it is all about how you use that different kind of maturity.

Mentorship is an incredibly huge responsibility. And you need to choose your mentors carefully, just like mentors choose their apprentices carefully. There has to be trust there, on a very deep level. I always listened to the advice from my mentors, Jaykyri and Des, because they always have valuable advice. No matter what, they are true mentors that I'm glad that I have them in my life.

Participating in YMWAP meant a lot to me. I felt like I have brothers that I never had considering I'm the only boy in my family. I grew more mature and wiser with YMWAP because this program gave me more opportunities in high school that I did not have before. YMWAP helped me achieve the ability to graduate and move on to the next stage. YMWAP also made me realize that you can be anything you want in life. A value of having a mentor like Jaykyri and Des is great. They look out for us like we are their little brothers and make sure we do the right thing to have better opportunities in our life time.

Participating in this group has been one of my biggest achievements as a scholar and as a young man. The leadership and guidance from my mentors has helped mold me into who I am socially and mentally. Participating in YMWAP surrounds me with people who not only look like me but share similar goals as me and for that I'm grateful of this program.

I grew a lot mentally in this program, before coming into this program I had a whirlwind of problems emotional or physical. This group helped me learn how to think more on my actions and learn how to stop being so impulsive at times and really sit and concentrate. My wisdom grew a lot more although I had some of my own coming in. Thanks to this group I feel a lot more confident in my abilities and my words as a young man.

Young Man with a Plan helped me realize that in order for me to succeed I have to be willing to accept any and all challenges. Never shy away from a challenge because whether I win or lose there's always another opportunity for the taking. It also helped me realize how strong the word brotherhood really is and what it can do when it's surrounded by positive people.

Des and Jaykyri as mentors has been a fun but also serious experience. They're always willing to help but also always reassuring us that we still have to help ourselves because we are men. They know what we're about to experience growing up because they've gone through it in a different variation. They know all the young men they've helped and seen prosper throughout these years will eventually become something. I respect and honor all that Des and Jaykyri have done for me. They're more than mentors to me. They are my older brothers.

When I joined YMWAP I knew I was getting into something big. My life was going to be opened up mentally. The support I heard it offered just made want to use that to my advantage. I thought "who knows what I learn from the group that might be applied to my future career(s)?"

I grew more thoughtful and comfortable. The real me I knew I could be finally came to light because I realized that in order to do something you love and have a passion for, you'll first need to accept it as a main priority and master it to the best of your ability. Not every plan will work but as long as you have plans you'll go somewhere in life.

YMWAP made me realize that the younger generation is really full of people that look up to kids like us. The group labeled us as the role models of the school and made sure we were held at high expectations for the benefit of others. Being young it's kind of hard to understand that role at first but once you take leadership it becomes easy.

Mentoring gives people the idea that no matter what, Jaykyri and Desmond will always be there to listen and give feedback as best as they could. They might not have all the answers but they are experienced enough to know when something needs to change or when we need that extra push to keep from slacking. It's hard to not have the upmost love and respect for them because they keep it legit with us regardless of what the situation is. All of my mentors are the realest people I've ever met in my life. Building of trusting brotherhood with them just lets me know that they are young black men who still want to see other young black men succeed in any way shape or form.

***The hardest part of being in the program
was knowing I was going to have to leave it one day.***