

D211 POST: CONANT'S NEW BLACK LEADER ACHIEVERS HOSTS BLACK HISTORY EVENT



Conant High School junior Faith Massey (left) and senior Desia Holmes introduce the Black Leader Achievers' first ever Black History Month event.

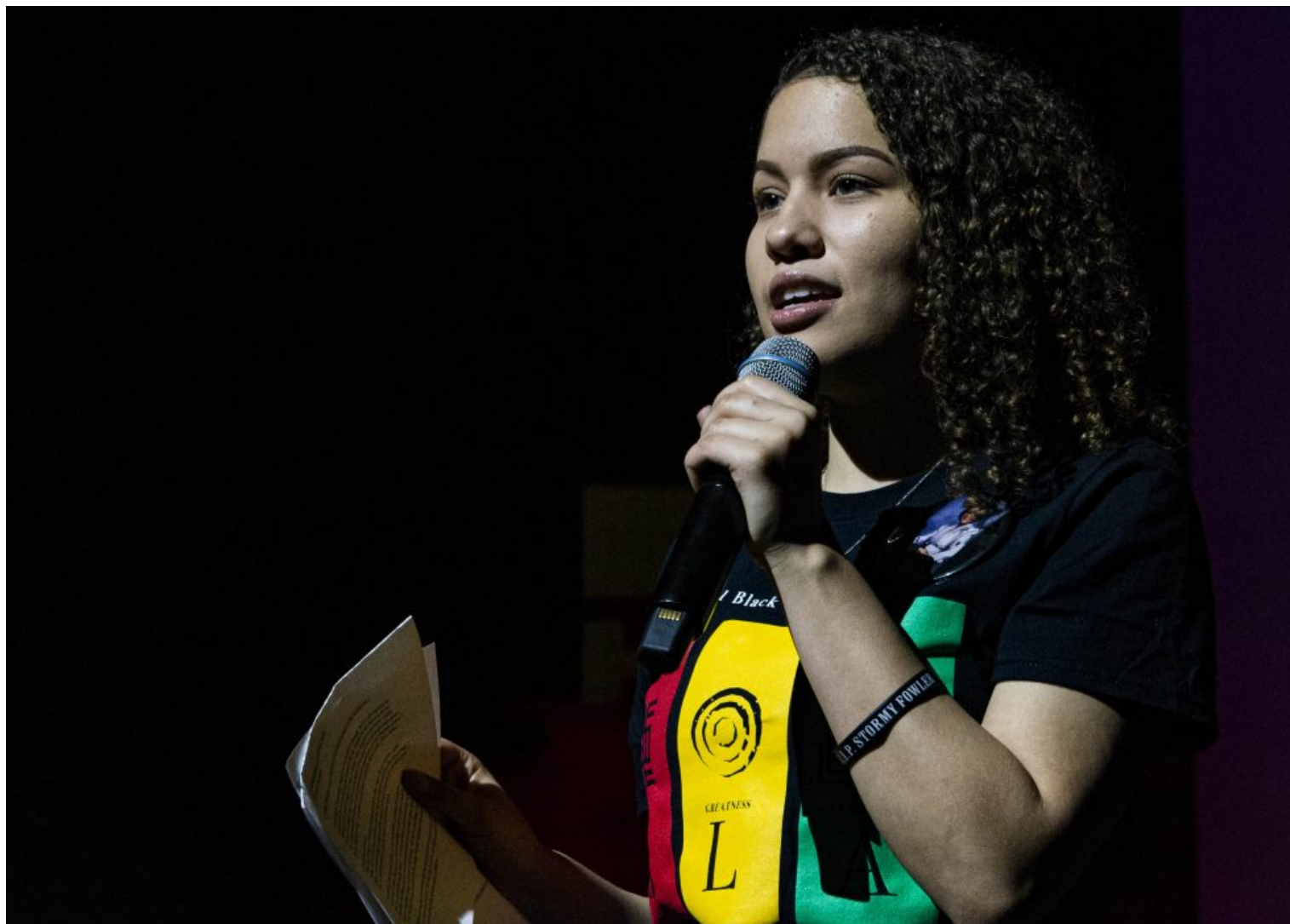
When James B. Conant High School junior Faith Massey moved from Nashville, Tenn., she was surprised to see that her new school did not have an Afro-centric organization. She decided to work the school to create one.

“My mom paved the way for me by giving me advice,” Massey said. “She told me ‘you can do this, Faith.’ So I did, because there was a need.”

Massey and Senior Desia Holmes met with English Teacher Heather Munao and created the school’s new Black Leader Achievers. Munao said the choice of the name was deliberate.

“The students want to showcase leadership, not only among black people, but among students in general,” Munao said. “They want to celebrate the achievements of black history in American culture. Through that desire, the name Black Leader

Achievers was born. It is to emphasize positivity, and be uplifting.”



Conant High School junior and BLA founder Faith Massey reads her letter to the students of Conant High School.

Following the creation of the BLA, Massey and her fellow BLA members began working on an interactive assembly in coordination with Black History Month. Massey said the intention of the assembly was to help students break down barriers and build a greater understanding of each other.

During the assembly, Holmes read an original piece she wrote expressing the inspiration she draws from strong and prosperous ancestors. She was followed by English teacher Martell Halloran who read a poem he and written called “The Dog Who Was Raised by Cats,” which dealt with the difficulties he faced growing up as an African-American man raised by white parents.

At one point in the assembly, a team of students asked the audience to stand up in response to questions about being addressed based on a variety of stereotypes ranging from race to age and even hair color. Massey said the point of this was for everyone to see how they are more alike than different.



Conant High School English Teacher Martell Halloran reads his poem "The Dog Who Was Raised by Cats."

She added that the reception by the students at Conant High School was very inspiring.

"I'm very astonished and proud of this," she said. "I didn't just go with what I thought would be best, but rather I talked to all different kinds of people. All different kinds of people were receptive to this."

Massey's mother, Celia, attended the assembly. She said was impressed by presentation that her daughter organized.

"It was a beautiful moment," Celia Massey said. "The atmosphere here is awesome in its acceptance of diversity. They brought up great points everyone having their own unique diversity."

Reactions to the assembly continued for days after the event. Munao said, in one case, a student in attendance reached out to Halloran and expressed relief and acceptance simply from hearing of Halloran's own experiences.

Following the conclusion of a successful assembly, BLA has stated they plan to make the event an annual tradition at Conant High School and hopes it serves as an inspiration for other schools.

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