



The Jimmy Brazell Community Impact Scholarship Award

2012 First Place Winning Essay by Alouette Greenidge (CO)

It is my desire to follow Jimmy as he followed Christ. Jimmy lived with selfless, passionate love as he impacted his community for God's glory. So many of my peers talk about changing the world, impacting lives for Christ and other worthy goals—but Jimmy followed through and made a difference where God gave him the opportunity to minister. I never met him personally, yet he has inspired me to love those in my community and beyond with the pure, true, selfless love of Christ.

Last year, I was appointed to serve as one of two youth commissioners on my city's Human Services Commission. The Commission distributes several thousand dollars to various nonprofits around the city, through a process involving written grants, live presentations, and grant scoring. During these presentations, I see the hidden faces of my community—drug addicts, domestic violence victims, disabilities, mental illness, alcoholism, neglected elderly, immigrants, homelessness, extreme poverty. They are unseen, unwanted, a small sample of humanity desperately in need of a Savior. This is my second season on the commission, but it has been radically different from my first. Last year I saw statistics, people that were merely numbers on a page.

This year, because of Jimmy's passion to hear and understand each person's story, I see hurting people with immortal souls. During one of our last presentations, a young woman walked into the room—she was my age, maybe slightly younger. The daycare that was presenting the grant helped her look after her baby boy. She began to share her statistics, pregnant at 15, boyfriend serving in the military, working 30 hours a week and trying to finish high school and start college. After the meeting, I had an opportunity to talk to her, just us two kids sharing stories. She had a name, she wanted to go to business school, she adores her five-month-old son, and she wanted to get to know me. I told her I would pray for her, she said thank you. After I heard her story, I thought of her in a radically different light. She wasn't just another part of the percentage of pregnant teens in my city; she was an immortal soul, made in God's image. C.S. Lewis writes:

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal... our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner, no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to [God Himself], your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses."

Why did Jimmy listen? Why should I listen? Because these men, women and children are created imago Dei, in the image of God, and He cares deeply about each one of them. They are immortals with a future either of heaven or hell, therefore it is my responsibility as a Christian to care about their stories. By God's grace alone I can live a life like that of Jimmy Brazell—with enough Christ-like compassion to see, to love, and to bring hope to these people who are so desperately needy.

"I believe that all purpose begins and is carried out in love! Everything good, everything beautiful is rooted in love!"—Jimmy Brazell. I volunteer weekly at a program for developmentally disabled children. These kids are mocked, stared at, called freaks and misfits. Jimmy has transformed the way I see "my" kids at Respite Care. As I have invested in their lives, my eyes are opened to the power of Christ-like love. I spend week after week with Kyle, trying to help him overcome his challenges and live with joy, loving him unconditionally through the behavioral challenges of Autism and a genetic disorder. One week, I saw a huge smile split his four year-old face and heard, "Hey come here!" as he kissed my cheek. He overcame a behavioral challenge and learned how to positively express what he was feeling! That is the power of love. Then there is Blake, childhood leukemia and chemotherapy leaving him with a severe seizure disorder. Blake struggles with finding joy and peace in the midst of his trials. One day he tells me, "Jesus loves you. And I am praying for you." That is the power of love. Maybe it's Reily, suffering from a traumatic brain injury, laughing and glowing when I tell her she's beautiful, or Jake, born with Down's Syndrome running over to give me a huge hug. That is the power of love. I can truly say with Jimmy that everything good, everything beautiful is rooted in love.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."— 1 John 4: 12. Thank you, Jimmy—I never met you, but you have changed the way I view people, and you have encouraged me to show Christ's love in all that I think, do and say. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Jesus Christ "the Man for others". Jimmy, you also were a man for others. It is my desire to carry your legacy into my community, and show the face of Christ to all I meet there.