

**I'm a woman. Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman,
that's me.**

Good evening everyone. My name is Raven Whitehead and I am a senior, a soon to-be graduate, of North Atlanta High School. Saying that out loud, for the millionth time, feels surreal but makes me so happy that I don't think I'll ever get tired of saying it. However, I know that without the role that Agape has played in my life for the past 10 years, there's a chance that I may not have been able to utter those words. Only a small chance though, because my mom doesn't play that (Lol) but still a chance.

I first walked through Agape's doors as a chubby 8 year old little girl, a borderline diabetic. Agape's Go Girl Go program helped whip me into shape and was the first of many Agape programs that have helped mold me into the young woman you see today. From the after-school programs that provided me with a safe haven to do my homework and eat a

hot meal, to the Great Backpack giveaway that provided me with a cute book bag filled with essential school supplies so that I could start each school year off right. Agape has been there every step of the way for more than half of my life.

Agape's Ginger Kaney Mentoring Institute, has met me at the point of my needs, from small to large tasks, since the first day of high school. Whether proofreading my International Baccalaureate Theory of Knowledge class essay, assisting me with my Grady Hospital Peer Health Educator application, or even just being a listening ear to discuss boy problems (lol). And of course the amazing overnight spring break college tours broadened my horizons and exposed me to options that I probably would not have considered otherwise.

I stand before you today, as a successful International Baccalaureate scholar with a 4.0 grade point average. I aspire to become a pediatrician and serving as a Grady Hospital Peer Health Educator has only fueled that desire more. I have been

accepted to my dream school, Agnes Scott College! I have also been accepted to the University of Georgia and Georgia State University! Additionally, I am still awaiting decisions from Georgia Southern University and Kennesaw State University, of which, I am hopeful. I am humbled and thankful to have options because receiving my college acceptance letters has been greater than I could have ever imagined.

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Agape has many great programs and events that benefit myself and the entire community. However, the actual seeds sown into my life, whether, academically, financial, spiritual, or emotional, were planted there by people, many of whom are right here in this room tonight.

Mrs. Nell Benn, thank you! Your executive leadership has guided Agape to grow and serve many more kids during my

time here at Agape. I know that with your leadership all of the programs I have been a part of were made possible.

Donors here tonight, thank you! Your investment in Agape's vision does not go unnoticed, even for a teenager like me. To hear about people lining up before dawn and the lines wrapping around the parking lot for the backpack giveaway and the thanksgiving turkey giveaway are just two examples of your good works. *[Make Flow]* Although, I am thankful every year I managed to snag one of the cute book bags without having to wait in those lines – thanks Mrs. Tiffany! (lol). The 3 day overnight spring break college tours that I was blessed to attend three years in a row is another example of how you have touched my life personally. I'm a little sad that I won't be going on this year's trip, but only a little because I'm graduating in 2 short months!!

Volunteers present tonight, thank you! Your tireless devotion to helping kids like me is amazing. I am unable to

remember every single volunteer that has helped me over the years because I swear it is like an army of you (lol)! But I'm sure some of you in this room helped me with my homework or helped prepare a delicious hot meal I ate for dinner on more than one occasion. If you remember tutoring a chubby 8 year old little girl with an angelic smile about 10 years ago, that was probably me (lol)!

Agape staff here tonight, thank you! There just aren't enough words to truly express my gratitude for all of you. Your ability and desire to help myself and other kids that come from low-income communities speaks to your character. You see who we are beyond our circumstances and love us whole. You push us, when we feel like giving up and care for us when we feel broken.

- Ms. Lilli Howell, thank you for being there for me during my senior year at North Atlanta High School.

- Mr. Lydell Smith, is former Agape staff, but his presence in my life is one I will never forget. He was always there for me whenever I needed something and kept me laughing. He brought light and joy into any room he entered. He welcomed me with open arms and helped me grow as a person. And if any of you see him over at Lovett tell him I'm still waiting on my Chick-Fil-A (lol)!
- Mrs. Crystal Arnette, is also former Agape staff, but she is still my mentor and has taught me most of what I know. Mrs. Crystal prepared me for real world situations and coached me through any obstacles I had. All of the love that she has given me has helped me grow into the mature young woman I am today and I will always love her for that.
- And finally, Mrs. Tiffany Lloyd, who most of you probably already know, is the first person I formed a deep bond with here at Agape. Mrs. Tiffany is so down-to-earth and cracks me up laughing every time I talk to her. She has been my mentor

for many years but is more like a second mother to me. She loves me like I'm her own child and I love her!

♥ My mom, Ms. Maria Brown, who is here tonight, will you please stand, thank you for your Love! There aren't enough words to truly express all of the love I have for you. The dedication I have towards being a stellar student comes from you believing in me and pushing me towards excellence. I can always count on you to be my biggest cheerleader and your work ethic inspires me. For those of you that don't know, my mom works two jobs, taking the bus and train to and from one job to the next, to ensure all of our needs are met. I share that with you all here tonight with a tremendous amount of **pride** because my mom, a single mom of three, has always done what it takes to provide for our family. And for those few times where she might falter, Agape has always been there to fill in the gaps. Mom, I am thankful for you! You are a woman of Grace, Strength, Intelligence, Beauty, and Love. I couldn't

have prayed for a better Mom and I hope that I can at least be half of the woman you are as I get older. I love you!

I wanted to highlight all of you because out of everything that Agape has ever done or been to me and my family, what stands out most to me are the relationships that I have built through my participation in Agape. There have been plenty of times when I have been unable to see the greatest potential within myself. But in those moments I have been able to look to each of you for support, encouragement, motivation, and kindness to give me that extra push to keep pressing forward towards my dreams. I am who I am and have achieved all that I have because of each of you. I haven't quite finalized my college decision yet, but to all of the Scotties, Bulldogs and Panthers in the room tonight – I may be joining you and I can't wait! My journey has only just begun but thank you Agape for helping me get this far.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
The palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Thank you.