



MeachamPark NIA <meachamparknia@gmail.com>

---

## Rikki Franks Meacham Park Scholars Award Essay

---

Rikki Franks <rikkifranks213@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 11, 2016 at 9:21 AM

To: meachamparknia@gmail.com

When asking a person who their hero might be the typical answer would be some sort of family member or a close relative. This is not true in my case. Growing up I have always admired ambitious peopled and enjoyed stories where a person is faced with many odds and that person still comes out on top, to be specific, Roberta McWoods.

I was introduced to Mrs. McWoods through my first season of track and field. I had never seen her before and after the first day; I knew I was in for it. Mrs. McWoods is the type of woman to push and push you but not necessarily to the point to where you don't want it anymore, but more of to the point where you then start to want it for yourself. Her encouragement was one that I had never witness before nor ever got the chance to receive. Every Monday she would have us meet in the choir room and we would spend about 30 minutes going over a key word that would help us succeed in both life and track and field. Examples of words would be respect, motivation and teamwork. One of the most valuable lessons she taught me was mind over body. A person may be physically able to do anything, but their mindset is what makes or breaks the challenge. When you're all lined up behind that starting line, and it's just you and your conscience, you have to make sure that it's on your side. I will say this now and I will continue to stand by it: If your mind is not in it, it will not go far.

Not only was she inspirational on the field, but off the field as well. She always made it clear that school came first, that sports was just an activity to enjoy after you've handled your business in school. Later in the year it was bought to my attention on why she felt so strongly about school. Every year my school's holds a ceremony consisting of African Americans and its objective goal is to recognize those students for maintaining outstanding GPAs through their cumulative grade. My principal had announced that a very important role player in both organizing the ceremony and encouraging students to do so well in school would like to say a few words. And surprisingly, it was Mrs. McWoods. As she went on with her spiel she mentioned that he had also been a teacher at the elementary school nearby. Not having a clue as to what she did as her career I was very pleased to hear this. Not only was she an African American teacher in a predominantly Caucasian area (you don't see much of that), but she taught one of the hardest subjects in my opinion to teach and learn: English. This realization distinguished her from any other adult I had met and heightened my respect for her. I am truly blessed to have been a part of the experiences she has given me and receive her one of a kind encouragement. Thank you, Mrs. McWoods.