

# The JP Bulletin

*"A newspaper  
dedicated to the  
community of  
Jamaica Plain"*

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*On Monday, Jan. 16, JP native Shari Davis, a member of the Mayor's Youth Council and a student at English High School, spoke at the annual MLK celebration at Faneuil Hall. The event featured several local politicians, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Senator Edward Kennedy and keynote speaker Dr. Joseph Lowery. Pictured, left to right, are her mother, Lili Davis, Shari Davis, Mayor Menino, and Shari's sister Ashli.*

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Amid a stage of dignitaries and respected statesmen, it was a young girl from Jamaica Plain who brought down the house at Monday's celebration of Martin Luther King Day at Faneuil Hall.

Shari Davis, a member of the Mayor's Youth Council, the Boston Police Athletic League and a student at English High School, held her own with such notables as U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy and keynote speaker Dr. Joseph Lowery, a contemporary of King's during the civil rights movement. So much so, that Kennedy singled her out during his own remarks.

"This is going to be the greatest compliment you ever get in your life," he said to her with a beaming grin. "When you finished, Dr. Lowery turned to me and said, 'she said it all.'"

Davis' animated speech told of how her mixed heritage, despite the teachings of her parents, had led to tension throughout her life and a feeling that she was singled-out and resented based solely on the color of her skin. Her parents may have instilled "pride, respect

and compassion," but she nevertheless scrutinized every nuance of what was said to her with a critical eye for the racial slight she expected to exist.

"At work, even a request for a blue pen might trigger her to shout out, 'What's wrong with black?' An innocent invitation by a co-worker to join her for a fried chicken lunch, led to a self-righteous tirade that assumed it was a racially-motivated comment.

Time cooled her temper and a cooler head allowed her to see that the invitation was an innocent gesture of friendship, far removed from undertones she imagined.

She apologized and, to her surprise and relief, the co-worker was more than understanding.

That misunderstood lunch invitation led Davis to reflect on the inner turmoil she was experiencing due to her lineage.

"I was so afraid of being hurt, that I didn't realize I was hurting everyone around me," she said.

Now, in her work with the Mayor's Youth Council, Davis is pleased to acknowledge that she is "able to see the student and not be blinded by their race."

"I could do this, but I had to

change my mindset," she said.

Extending her personal experience to its broader implication, she added that "as long as there is a slight feeling of racial tension, there is more work to be done."

She also admitted that living up to Dr. King's warning that the battle for equality would be a "continuous struggle" is very real. By putting yourself in "a situation that is at first uncomfortable," can be a means to discover inner truths about not only how other perceive race, but how you view it internally.

"I have made a change in myself," she said before receiving a standing ovation. "I challenge you all to do the same."

Other speakers at the event included Mayor Thomas Menino, City Councilor Michael Ross (who spoke of how his father, a survivor of 10 concentration camps, later wished his people had someone like Dr. King to fight for them), State Sen. Diane Wilkerson, State Rep. Linda Dorceana Forry and State Rep. Marie St. Fleur.

In his remarks, Lowery urged his audience to never relent in their fight to ensure equality for all, regardless of race, religion or orientation.