

**Each day I live  
I want to be  
A day to give  
The best of Me  
I'm only one, but not alone  
My finest day is yet unknown  
-Whitney Houston  
*One Moment in Time!***

Eighteen years old, senior in high school, on track to graduate and it felt like life was just beginning for me for this was a day I would always cherish. One hundred and one of the best and brightest foster youth in all of L.A. County were brought together to participate in what has become somewhat of a tradition in this Department, Celebration I.

We spent a good month rehearsing and preparing for Celebration I. On the day of the Celebration there was certain buzz amongst the participants. We knew that we were participating in something big, something unforgettable. There were rumors floating around that M.C. Hammer, Henry Winkler and Whitney Houston would be there. We were very excited with anticipation to see Whitney Houston!

That same afternoon, hours before the Celebration took place, we took a chartered bus down to LAX to see the 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States, George H.W. Bush. We were able to see his entire motorcade and the President's aircraft "Air Force One". Mr. Bush stopped by that day for an awards ceremony and on his way back to Washington D.C. He stopped by before boarding Air Force One, congratulated us on our accomplishments and took a group picture with us! The energy and feelings that were felt from that moment was just the beginning of what was going to be an incredible and extraordinary evening.

We arrived at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion where we had our dinner and soon after we dressed for the evening activities. There were barbers, hair stylists and makeup artists there to ensure everyone was looking their best. At 6pm everyone was dressed and ready. The program started off with a bang as MC Hammer was introduced as the evening's Master of Ceremony. M.C. Hammer was at the very height of his popularity but there he was and he was very excited to be there.

Before long, the live orchestra began playing "One Moment in Time" as we were called down the stairs in pairs. All eyes were on us as we walked through the center aisle and to our seats. There were some people in the audience crying tears of joy for us for this was truly "One Moment in Time".

After the last two student names sat in their seats we received a thunderous standing ovation. I cannot begin to describe how happy I was that very moment. Then, the unthinkable happened...

**"Ladies and Gentlemen, all the way from New York City...Miss. Whitney Houston"**

The big rumor that had been buzzing around that entire day was true! Miss Houston came down the very same staircase singing, of course, "One Moment in Time". There was not a dry eye in the place as she sang live and no mistake about it, she brought the house down! Miss Houston received a stirring standing ovation as she finished the song. Miss Houston also took some time to congratulate and give us words of encouragement.

It is good to know Celebration I continues on. Although many of the Celebration I's have changed over the years, the one thing that has not changed is the euphoric feelings of accomplishment rising above hardships and setbacks.

I have been honored to participate and assist in other Graduation Celebrations since the inaugural program as an employee of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services.

Derrick D.