

*Adeolu Adetayo, recipient of the 2018 Beat the Odds® scholarship, wrote the following speech to read out loud at the Beat the Odds® celebration in March of this year. Due to COVID-19, we were unable to hear his words in person, but a copy of his powerful speech is provided below. We are pleased to share that Adeolu will be attending Cornell University to study urban and regional studies beginning fall of this year.*

“I would like to start by thanking a lot of people who have guided me to become the person I am today. Thank you to my mom who loves me for me, who is one of the strongest people I know and is always there for me. Thank you to my sisters. Thank you to the Beat the Odds program – Yasmin , Emily, Crystal, Joshua, Bridget, Austin, Mrs. Edelman and many more – for showing me that I can achieve my dreams if I work hard and never give up. This program showed me I am not alone and gave me hope when hope was hard to find. Thank you to Miss Brooke who works with me every day with the kids. Thank you to Miss Amie for the opportunity to work with the children. Last but not least, thank you to the wonderful kids who I work with almost every day who fill my heart with joy every day I am there.

The people around you have stories and have all had to persevere through something to be who they are today. I know this because I have my own story. A story that I am glad to have shared with you all today.

In my life, I've had the wonderful opportunity of working with kids. Youth are our future and I am reminded of that Monday through Friday. I look at Kimora, Angelo, Miley and D'Jore and I see kids who have promising futures. If we do not look out for the next

generation, what will become of the society we live in? Graca Machel once said, "Preventing the conflicts of tomorrow means changing the mindset of youth today." Every child has the potential to succeed if someone is in their corner and I've seen this firsthand. We must invest in our children, be there for them when they need us, and treat them how we would want to be treated in order to ensure each child has a fair chance at a bright future.

My story is not finished and I assure you there are many more great things ahead. My community will forever hold a place in my heart and the lessons I've learned from there are engraved in my mind. I am a young adult who is proud of the person I've become and I am confident that I will indeed beat the odds.

Thank you!"

*Adeolu*

*2020 Beat the Odds Honoree*