

Micah Thomas

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Hezekiah Brady, JR. Scholarship Essay

I grew up in the small town of Kankakee, IL loved and cared for by my mother Dawn Thomas. From K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade I attended LCC Montessori where I learned independence and how much I enjoyed learning. From there I attended Kankakee High School to become a leader in the classroom which transpired to who I am today. As of now I am a rising junior at Spelman College, where I study computer science and try to stay active with school and social life. I was not always a computer science major; I had a passion for medicine, but my passion slowly died as I knew God had a better plan for me. I was always a computer whiz, from fixing my uncle and grandfather's computers, to coding and playing video games at home. Even taking my first coding class at Spelman, I knew computer science was for me. After a lot of research, I knew I did not want to be involved with working for Google and Microsoft, especially with all the layoffs. That is when I got invited to take my first trip to NYC to visit CitiBank, this opened my eyes to the immense possibilities of computer science and how I can grow in my career. Here, I found my passion for financial technology as well as leadership in corporate spaces. The number of black leaders that came and spoke life into me changed me forever.

I have always had this gut feeling about making the right decisions. When I first stepped onto Spelman's campus, this warm embrace took over and I just knew this is where I had to be, I got this same feeling with Citi and after a lot of challenging work. I got offered an internship working with them in a leadership role for 2024 and after the completion of that internship I will

have a full-time job offer. Now of course getting the job was the main goal but for me it was more than that, during my time here at Spelman and going into my career I realized the financial burden us black Americans go through daily. Not receiving any money from Spelman has been heartbreaking for me. The idea is that I must get student loans, and I do not even understand financial literacy yet. So now I have decided to make a change. Through working with Citi, I plan to create initiatives solely based on the black community, to learn about economic sustainability, investing and loans. With these programs I want to give back to the community to learn how to use their money and the assets that we have properly, whether that be making a loan program for the black community where they can actually qualify plus be able to pay it back, and also getting paired with mentors to help them manage their money, and cut out wasteful spending. There have been so many barriers put in the way of Black Americans when it comes to buying houses, cars and even just trying to get a job. I want to make a change and I plan to do that.

I have been quite active on my campus and intend to do much more in the upcoming year. I am doing volunteer work this summer with the NAACP and the Metro Atlanta Urban Farms. Due to the widespread food insecurity in Atlanta, particularly near my school where most grocery stores are closed, I decided to get involved with the farm to provide fresh and accessible food. My interest stems from when I worked as an intern with The Federation of Southern Cooperatives, a nonprofit that provides money and financing to black farmers across the nation, during the previous semester. I had been a member of the NAACP since I was a child, and I wanted to get more active while I was in college, especially with the way the elections were going. In addition, I am going to lead groups at my school next year. I will be a New Student Orientation Leader in August, assisting first-year students as they navigate their first year at

Spelman. We have three major groups on campus, and I am honored to be a leader for one of those groups, the Miss Spelman Advisory Board, where I will coordinate activities for the Miss Spelman Court and carry out the queen's directives. In addition, I intend to serve on the Executive Board of our Resident Hall Association, where I aspire to serve as president and organize most of the first-year activities, including the pageant and stroll off. Additionally, I assist the Spelman MASTERS and Spel-Reads programs, which visits Atlanta Public Schools to educate children in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and assist them with reading. Lastly, I will be a member of the Peer-assist organization and assist first-year Spelman students in computer science.

With CRAFT continuing to fund my education, I plan to give back in many ways. Since I plan to create initiatives through Citi, I want to bring those to the Kankakee Area and host workshops and fundraisers to spread the word about financial literacy and I know CRAFT can assist me with that. Also, with my career I want to donate to CRAFT as well as start my own scholarship/ fund organization in my area. As I continue my career, I would love to come back and talk to the next recipients of this scholarship or students of the assistance fund and give them advice and be a mentor/ friend as they go through these years of college. If I am awarded this scholarship, I will continue to serve the Lord and preserve the CRAFT purpose.