

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Olajide Araromi. I was born to Nigerian immigrants who came to the United States seeking a better life for their children, and to live the ever so elusive “American Dream”. Upon my parents’ arrival to the States in the early 80’s, it quickly became apparent that the streets of Newark were neither paved with gold, nor flowing with milk and honey. This did not deter my parents, who did their best to raise my five siblings and me to believe that we can achieve any goal in life; as long as we had a strong enough desire to do so. Although my parents did not have much money, they invested in our lives and instilled in us many important values such as, understanding the importance of community service, perseverance, and education. My parents, just like many other immigrants, struggled to make ends meet; however, they always made sure my siblings and I were on track with our education and involved in constructive activities.

I was fortunately given the opportunity to attend Link Community School. At the time, I had no clue that attending Link would be such a pivotal experience in my life. Many people believe “men are born great” or that there is a natural order of things, or a predetermined destiny—fate if you will, that dictates who will or shall be successful. I wholeheartedly disagree. Men (and women) are rarely ever born great. Instead, we must be groomed and nurtured into greatness. Although admittedly, some of us need more grooming than others (me, being one of those people).

As a Linkster, I was a far cry from the well-mannered and well-behaved young man you see before you today. I often found myself in detention, and even in in-school suspension, due to my disobedience. On one or two occasions, I was the reason for a “double bell.” A double bell is essentially where the entire school is held for detention, usually for the actions of just a few students. Initially, I did not understand the purpose behind the double bell. I just believed it was a ploy to get classmates to turn on each other, or to turn on me, more specifically. However, it was just one of the many valuable lessons I learned at Link—EVERYTHING WE DO, WHETHER BAD OR GOOD, HAS AN EFFECT ON OUR COMMUNITY. You see that is the beauty of Link, not only does Link tend to its students scholastic needs, but it also develop its students as citizens, with the emphasis that each student is an integral part of his or her community. Link provides a unique, holistic approach to developing its students, many of whom require much more than just academic support. Poverty is real. It is no big secret. Contrary to popular belief, money does NOT cure poverty—education, a strong commitment to core values, and the belief in one’s ability to succeed, are the necessary tools to combat poverty. Link provides these pertinent tools for success and so much more to its students. My parents saw the great work Link was and is currently doing, and therefore enrolled each of my four younger siblings into Link.

After Link, I went on to attend Seton Hall Preparatory High School. My admission into the Seton Hall would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of Link administrators and teachers. Upon graduation from Seton Hall Prep, I chose to attend Rutgers University, where I received a Bachelor’s in Psychology and Criminology Certificate in 2006. In May of 2010, I received my law degree from Rutgers School of Law– Camden. Today, I am currently serving my community as an Assistant Prosecutor for Essex County. I honestly do not believe that I would have been able to achieve as much as

I have without Link. Link has truly been the launching pad to my success. For they instilled in me that I am someone special, and gave me the encouragement to believe that I could be the catalyst for change.

With that being said, I would like to take this moment to say thank you to Link for what it has done for me. I would like to also take this moment to thank all those who have and continue to donate to the school as well. As I understand it, Link is almost entirely funded by donations. In this time of economic downturn, I know it has become increasingly difficult for any organization to raise funds. However, I would like the donors to think of what Link has done for me and my family, when the time comes to open your wallets and write those checks. As I previously mentioned, all four of my younger siblings attended Link after I had graduated. Yetunde, my sister, is a 2004 graduate of Chapel Hill Chauncey Hall a prestigious boarding school in Boston, MA., a 2008 graduate of The College of New Jersey and currently teaching at Trenton High School; Victoria is a 2008 graduate of Lawrenceville Prep and currently in her senior year at Stanford University; Gloria, my other sister, is a 2010 graduate of Mother Seton Regional High School and currently a sophomore at The College of New Jersey; and my youngest sibling Victor, is an Honors Student at Christ The King Prep, right here in Newark, and aspires to attend the University of Pennsylvania for college. If that is not a return on your investment, I don't know what is. Believe me there's a lot more where we came from. By that, I don't mean my brothers and sisters but Link success stories. Thank you once again for your support. I hope you all enjoy the rest of your evening.

Once again, my name is Olajide, and I am a proud alumnus of Link Community School, where apathy is not accepted, your responsibilities are never allowed to be neglected, and nothing less than success is expected.