

*Cameron Thomas-Shah:* I moved here when I was about 9 from Detroit. Every day after school I'd come to the library. You know, the library's everything you need if you're a kid, you know, uh, depending on your interests, you know, books, movies, space to do your work, sometimes your friends are there. It's a community place, and in a place like West Bloomfield, there, there aren't a lot of places where, you know, 11 and 12 year olds can really come together and congregate and do things. So, I would come. I would, I read a lot, you know, during that time, you know, you're just curious about everything, intellectually, just thirsty, so I did a lot of reading, I did a lot of community service, I volunteered a lot at the library, uh, sometimes you know, I was a little rambunctious with my friends, but for the most part I learned a lot of great lessons being here. Uh, there was this one computer page, his name was Chad, and I thought Chad was one of the coolest guys ever, I felt like Chad knew everything, and I used to come to the library after school. I used to wait because Chad was in high school, so I used to wait until high school got out, and I used to wait for Chad. I'd say, "Hey Chad, man, can you come help me with this paper?" And he'd sit down and we'd just talk about the world, we'd talk about everything. Chad's family is Indian, so he always gave me a sense of cultural understanding, and that was one of the reasons I actually became a staff member, was because, you know, Chad. Later, when I started to realize that younger students were doing that with me, I'd become someone else's Chad, and so they'd come, they'd wait for me to get out of class, and they'd say, "Cameron, I have a paper" or, you know, "Let me tell you about this book" and they asked my opinion and I'd say, "Oh, that's neat!" And it hit me at one point, I said, "You know, I'm this kid's Chad. This place is a factory of knowledge, and it doesn't just come in a book or in a multimedia form, but it comes in interpersonal connections. As I matriculated into college, I really started to understand the importance of service. I, uh, started the first NAACP youth council for southern Oakland county, and I brought that with me to college. You know, I was able to get the Bonner scholarship, which was a community service scholarship. It was stuff I really enjoyed doing, soup kitchens, helping out with kids in urban Atlanta, and as I go forward, uh, graduating from Morehouse, all those ideals have really culminated. I'm able to put it together in, in public service, so I want to go into the foreign service, the diplomatic corp, if you will, and in the fall, I will be enrolling in the, uh, Johns Hopkins University Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, studying American foreign policy and international economics. I love to travel, so far in college I've been to about 27 countries, been to Vietnam, I've slept in the Mekong Delta with people who lived off the land and didn't have anything. I've met C. H. Tung, the first governor of Hong Kong, who has everything and he's privy to things in a government that doesn't see eye to eye with mainland China or that of the United States. I've talked to child soldiers who, you know, were taught to kill first, ask questions later. I've played soccer with kids in Fivelas, in Brazil, kids in townships in South Africa, and I met with, you know, dignitaries at The Hague in Holland. And, no matter what someone's narrative is, we're all in, in this together. A raindrop will hit my head just like it hits theirs. And I think one of the most important things that when people realize that, that's when the world starts becoming a better place. My career goal is to be Secretary of State, if that could happen, you

know, it's not an unelected position, but it's definitely a position that I keep doing what I'm doing, I'd be effective at, because I care about America, I care about, you know, our politics abroad, our people who are abroad, basically just making the world a safer place. Benjamin Mayes, who's a major tenant in Morehouse College history, said, "Failure's not sin, but low aim is." And I know as long as I, I aim high and I try my best, and even if I do fail, I can't count myself out because I tried. I'm blessed. I'm really happy to have grown up here. I told my mother that yesterday when we visited, uh, the high school. I just looked at her, I said, "Mom, thanks! Good call. West Bloomfield is, is the move." <laughter> It was great. And West Bloomfield library does a fantastic job of assessing the needs to the community. I'm a product of this institution, I'm a product of this innovation, I'm a product of these people coming together saying, "You know what, we have a community to serve, and that's what we're going to do."