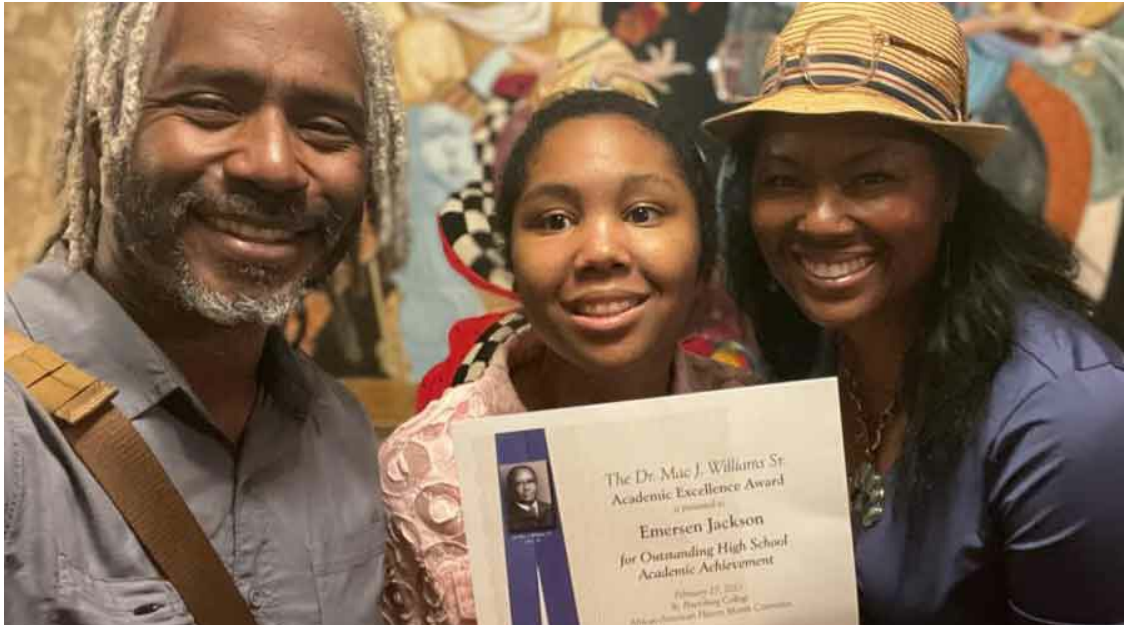




Proud Aspy Mom Newsletter
February 2023



Faith, Hope-Trust

The day did not start the way I wanted it to. Does it ever when you over plan? It was actually Dejavux. I was anxious and I did not know why. My mind was racing all day and I experienced significant exhaustion. Same day- three years later but not???

Our daughter received the Dr. Mac J. Williams, Sr. Academic Excellence Award three years after my aunt, Dr. Patricia Ann Harvey passed away while I was honoring her on the same stage. SURREAL does not even begin to describe what it feels like to be here right now.

Three years ago, COVID began, we were in significant pain from my aunt's loss, we home schooled our daughter and tried to begin this NEW NORMAL! In THREE years our daughter transitioned from home school to a college prep program. In THREE years despite tremendous obstacles - we are healthy and she is IN the room. BUT this time instead of her watching me on stage I am watching her as an honoree.

Trust, Faith - HOPE!

Award Ceremony

[Watch Video](#)



Breaking Barriers

I continue to smile every time I receive a love-tap from a friend who knows my journey. One my best friends, Jeannine Williams, Assistant City Attorney for the City of St. Petersburg sent an article of a young man who truly exceeds expectations.

The warmth is unreal- every time I read a story of an autistic person who rises despite odds. Prof Jason Arday not only exceeded expectations he is setting the bar high.

Prof Arday, an autistic person who could not speak before age 11, an autistic person who was EXPECTED to live in assisted living, an autistic person who was told by community actions that he did not matter is **NOW** a scholar and sociologist on race, inequality and education at Cambridge University.

The **FIRST** of many **FIRSTS**.

Prof. Arday is yet another example of what it means to SEE someone and not under estimate their value.

I have no idea where our journey will end but I certainly am grateful to the many families like ours who **BREAK BARRIERS** and give hope to others- who need to hear that voice.



Jason Arday Was Diagnosed With Autism As A Child And Will Now Be The Youngest Black Professor At The University Of Cambridge

[Read Full Article](#)

Pause

I rarely discuss the challenges of autistic persons outside the realm of education, access and ability, but this article, once again shared by someone I

value, reminds that there is still so much work to be done.

At first glance it is hard to make a judgement. A young, handsome African American male at the White House sharing his story, what is different. Then you dig deeper and learn that this vibrant human being, Neli Latson, an autistic person was a victim of our criminal justice system. As an attorney I am always mindful that the system is not perfect- no system is, but I did not fully grasp the layers of bias until really listening to Mr. Latson's story.

At the age of 18, like many young men he was misunderstood.

- Like many young African Americans he was minding his business, going to the library.
- Like many young men he had absolutely no agenda.
- Like many young men he was accused of an act of existing

Someone said he was acting strange, police arrived and as a result of his disability he reacted. That was not taken into account.

Mr. Latson spent many years misunderstood and now confined. He is an example of perseverance and strength.

At some point in our journey I hope we each take PAUSE to examine our actions and reflect on why we ALL deserve grace.

Thank you for being a shining example of fortitude Mr. Latson.



For a long while, it seemed no one in power wanted to listen to Reginald "Neli" Latson

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Autistic in the Legal System

The story of Matthew Rushin, a 20-year-old Black autistic man from Virginia Beach and his experience in the justice system.

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