

Leah Hill

Biology major and Political Science minor, Loyola Class of 2017



The night of the “Baltimore Riots,” after Freddie Gray’s death, I forced myself to sleep. I was filled with pain and fear; I wanted God to take away my pain while I slept. The morning after, my eyes were filled with tears. I woke up with a more intense pain in my heart. Instead of dreaming of a better future, my mind explored the possibility of a future where my brother, my hero, would be perceived as a threat. As Gray’s death hardened my heart, I imagined my brother, DePaul, dying an unjust murder just as Gray had. In my dream, I was haunted by the vision of my brother’s death, who is similar in age, complexion, and height to Freddie Gray: They are both black men. I remember the sounds of the bullets that pierced my brother’s chest. I remember the tears that I cried, as I discovered that my brother was murdered and left on the street for hours. I remember the fear that my brother felt as he was pulled over by police officers. I remember the outrage that I felt when the justice system stated that his death was justified. I remember my family’s pain when strangers called my hero a thug. In that moment, my heart was filled with outrage. I dreamt that I led a revolution with my voice, and that I stood in front of millions to force a change. I dreamt that my voice prevented other senseless deaths. In that night, my nightmare

became my fear and my fear became my determination.

My nightmare became my realization that I can no longer stay silent. As a Loyola student and a citizen, I choose to use my voice for justice. I speak against racial injustices because my silence means that I am complacent with modern-day slavery. I make an effort to inform myself of the issues that surround minority communities and to share them with my peers. I make the decision to listen to my peers, the Loyola community, and others who I am connected to through social media. I listen and digest what is being said; then, I respond. I do not force my opinion down another person's throat. Instead, I try to educate and persuade them to understand a situation through a different point of view. Specifically, when I discuss an issue regarding African Americans, I tend to share my own personal experience and to make sure that other people understand what it feels like to walk in my shoes. I implore them to feel compassion for others by allowing them to experience my story.

God has given me a voice so that my nightmare will not become my brother's reality. My determination to speak for the vulnerable shows my commitment to justice. God gives me strength and courage to stand up in front of anyone to speak my truth.