



## Julian Harrell '04

Cathedral Fund Dinner speaker 2014  
Shamrock Scholars recipient

In the spirit of diversity, I found this an opportune time to briefly share how I have been influenced by Thomas Shapiro's scholastic work, and how his thoughtful, yet potent, analysis of social inequality has impacted my perspective. I have experienced the power of transformative assets first hand – through the generosity of people like those of us who have assembled today. My ultimate goal is to convey how my life has been transformed and to leave you with a simple rubric for positively influencing someone's life in a permanent way. It's a simple formula. Investment plus initiative equals opportunity. Which over time equals transformation. The outcome may not always be the same given life's variables; however, this is the simple, yet impactful, formula for transformative change.

With that in mind, I have divided my experience into three categories

My life before Cathedral – absolute poverty, welfare, father's alcoholism and abuse in the home, lived in shelters and halfway homes, a very difficult time growing up, had ambition but wasn't sure what to do with it. I call it ambition without direction. Overall uncertainty guided my life. Hardships in his life prepared him to either deteriorate or dedicate. He chose to dedicate. He never actually finished 8th grade. We didn't have the resources to actually finish sending me to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. One day my dad came home and told me about Cathedral, a place I had never heard of. It sat up on a hill behind a winding road and it sounded like an amazing place. I had no idea how I would apply or afford it, but I told my dad to make sure I was signed up for the entrance exam and lets just see what happens. Took entrance exam and came to Open House and went through all the steps to begin enrollment. Cost was a persistent factor. Was told that there were lots of scholarships and financial aid but that no one ever gets a free ride. Everyone has to contribute something. A buy-in motto. My family simply had zero resources, so even making a small contribution was impossible. Came home one day. Parents were excited. They showed me an envelope that said the family's expected contribution was \$0. Someone had created an opportunity for me to come to Cathedral. Her investment was one of the single most defining moments of my life.

My life during Cathedral

Life at Cathedral was an amazing thing. This place I had never heard of was almost like a dream. The magnificent campus and the great group of people here made an impact. It was totally different than where I came from. While I was attending Cathedral I was still living on welfare. Had a new sense of inspirational hope. Had a new set of experiences that began defining how I saw life and what could be possible. Spanned from student organizations, faculty, staff, classmates—it was just an amazing experience that wouldn't have been possible without that initial investment. Most importantly, I began a relationship with the person who created this opportunity for me. That really bolstered the sense responsibility to honor the investment that she made. From the beginning I saw it as an investment and not a gift. Somebody looked at me and said I'm going to help this kid out and create an opportunity for him. That began to fuel my ambition and make my drive more intense. During my time at Cathedral, I went from not knowing where I would go to high school to not knowing where I would go to college. During my junior year, college became a reality because I was awarded a scholarship. I call Cathedral my launch pad. And I mean that in every sense of the term. My life since coming to Cathedral has been worlds different and I'm not sure what it would have been if I hadn't come here and formed these relationships. Life after Cathedral was singlehandedly impacted by my experience here and the relationships that were formed here.



### My life "after" Cathedral

Went to DePauw for undergrad. Went to law school, had several internships, passed the bar, became an attorney, and got a great job. Over that time I always had a sense that I wanted to do something more. To give back and to make an impact in a similar way that had impacted me. That's why I am so passionate about community involvement and sharing my story. The investment and the return on that investment are real. My relationship with the person who made that investment and her family has become a meaningful relationship. It has turned into a true friendship. We go to dinner, sporting events, concerts, etc. My life will never be the same. That's true transformation. Her investment plus my initiative equaled opportunity and then transformation. In 14 years I have changed from a boy who lived in shelters and halfway houses to a married man with a family, home, and career to call my own. True transformation. I am happy to call Cathedral my home and am privileged to share my story with you. I hope that you remain dedicated to transforming the lives of future scholars who have the opportunity to join the Cathedral family.