

# History-making moment



**Kasual Marley is proud to be the first-ever black valedictorian at Eastern Randolph High and looks forward to future accomplishments.** PHOTOS BY PETRUCJE JEAN-CHARLES | THE COURIER-TRIBUNE

## Kasual Marley is first black valedictorian at Eastern Randolph High

**Petrucje Jean-Charles**

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Kasual Marley remembers the last-minute announcement from Eastern Randolph High School officials that she was the valedictorian. The decision was between her and another student. She was told three days before to prepare a speech, but she didn't find out until her name was called at graduation.

It was a special moment for her and her family since she achieved a high GPA score and will continue her studies in college. It was also special because she is the first African American to receive the valedictorian award for that school.

The look of surprise ran through her face but was later replaced with a huge smile as she walked to the front. She looked at her fellow peers and took a glance to find her family.

Her speech catered to the many high school students in front of her and others at local schools. She spoke of her high school experience and how she was going to navigate her future. She made sure to give her peers words of encouragement and advice to push for opportunities they are passionate about.

Although she will attend the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, she let her peers know that college is not for everyone, but as long as they put work into what they love, they will succeed.

The 18-year-old applied to 42 schools and got accepted into 17. However, the university was her top choice due to a full-ride scholarship and the closeness to home.

Kasual Marley is passionate about studying neuroscience at the university to be a neurosurgeon in the future. After her four years of undergrad, she wants to apply for medical school to develop her knowledge as a neurosurgeon, a



**Marley holds this award close to her heart as motivation to continue.**

physician specializing in diagnosing and surgical treatment of disorders in the nervous system.

Not only does she have high hopes for her future, but her mother, Layota Marley, is proud of her accomplishment.

**See MARLEY, Page 6A**

# Marley

Continued from Page 1A

ments. So, when she heard of the possibility of her daughter being valedictorian, she screamed so loud that her daughter thought the house would shake. But, when the school called her daughter's name during graduation, her heart stopped.

"I was so excited because I knew this is what she badly wanted," Latoya Marley said. "She's always worked hard for this, and it was something she talked about over the year. So when she got it, it was the best feeling in the world."

Thinking back to the long hours her daughter worked at her part-time job while completing assignments at night, she believes the award was deserved. The many times that her daughter came home late to quickly make a deadline.

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According to the Marleys, the high school has never had an African American valedictorian. They want to show other African Americans and youth of color that they can also obtain a high honor.

Data shows that over 50 percent of students are white. Over 20 percent are Hispanic, 10 percent are African American, and 6 percent are multiracial.

"I want them to know that you can do it. My daughter's GPA is what got her there," Latoya said. "Working hard in school and those sleepless nights, those long days of doing work and never giving up. At the

end of the day, it pays off."

Kasual Marley agrees with her mother and wants other students to have a positive mindset.

"Never give up" is a phrase that she tries to follow as she progresses one day at a time. "As long as you put your mind to it, it will all work out when it's supposed to."

*Petrucce Jean-Charles is a Government Watchdog Reporter. They are interested in what's going on in the community and are open to tips on people, businesses and issues. Contact Petrucce at [pjeancharles@gannett.com](mailto:pjeancharles@gannett.com) and follow @PetrucceKetsia on Twitter.*