



PRESS RELEASE

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## **From Gang Violence to Smart-Shaming, Past Challenges Inspire Winners of 2017 Lowery Institute “Change Agent Tank” Social Innovation Competition**



**Atlanta, GA - Raphael Richardson** was 14 the first time a gun was held to his head. When his father was incarcerated Philadelphia street gangs became his family; violence and anger were his friends. Today, the Morehouse College junior received start-up funds for a business to help students and families impacted by incarceration from the **Joseph and Evelyn Lowery Institute for Justice & Human Rights** second annual **Change Agent Tank** held at Clark Atlanta University (CAU).

Modeled after the popular TV show, Shark Tank, **Change Agent Tank** encourages Lowery Institute student change agents that have a social entrepreneurial mindset to combine their social justice interests with critical business skills to create transformational initiatives and movements.

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“Change agents are thought leaders--- the innovators, creators and problem solvers of this generation,” said **Cheryl Lowery**, executive director of the Lowery Institute. “Bringing together prominent business and civil rights leaders to create an environment that encourages and supports social entrepreneurship is our modern-day approach

to passing the torch to Millennials,” Lowery adds.

Clark Atlanta University junior, **Jessie Scott** won funding for her project that addresses the duplicity of being both black and scholarly.. Scott was placed in the gifted program in high school, which would be a proud accomplishment for many however, due to the anti-intellectual climate prevalent in many black communities, Scott was often humiliated and bullied. The Maple Grove, Minnesota native plans to make studying cool in a newsletter promoting black excellence.

The final project funded was that of CAU senior **Alysha Conner**, who reminded the judges of the importance of the arts as a way to disseminate social justice messages. Conner was supported to create an after-school program teaching teens how to use the arts to send powerful messages. The Los Angeles, CA native aims to add the “a” to STEM to give it STEAM.

“These young people are our future,” said legendary civil rights leader, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery. “They were able to reflect upon their life challenges and create viable solutions to help others. By studying the philosophy of the civil rights movement and getting direction from our distinguished business leaders, these change agents are finding ways to create businesses that do good, or integrate good into the business they do.”

The business proposals were judged on how the initiative supports the mission of the Lowery Institute, clarity in the business objectives, and sustainability.

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Last year's winner, **Malika Flowers**, was present when the Lowery Institute was presented a check by **Brenda Reid** of Publix Super Markets for continued support of her initiative, **Mimi's Pantry**. The Atlanta native's proposal received funds in 2016 to establish the pantry in response to the growing number of her fellow CAU students who often go without food. Currently **Mimi's Pantry** serves over 100 students weekly throughout the Atlanta University Center.



"Publix loves to feed people," declared Reid. She said the \$5000 gift was collected from Publix customers to support the great job Mimi's Pantry is doing.

Notable local business leaders joining **Dr. Lowery** to judge the pitches were: **Gail Nutt**, GNutt Consulting, **Aaron Turpeau**, 3 T Unlimited; Harriette Watkins, Watkins Group; **Kent Matlock**, Matlock Advertising & Public Relations; **Scott Satterwhite**, William-Josef Foundation; and **Mack Wilbourn**, Mack II, Inc. Atlanta Municipal Court **Judge Terrinee L. Gundy** and **Jared Reed of Question Mark to Period** served as MCs for the evening.

Also selected from 71 Lowery Institute Change Agents to compete for funding were **Noah McQueen**, a sophomore at Morehouse College from Washington DC, and **Idil Hussein**, a junior at Agnes Scott College from Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

The **Joseph and Evelyn Lowery Institute for Justice & Human Rights** is a 501 C 3 non-profit organization established to ensure the continuity of the advocacy of Dr. Joseph E. Lowery and his late wife Evelyn Gibson Lowery's lifelong commitment to non-violent advocacy, and the moral, ethical, and theological imperative of justice and human rights for all people. Change Agent Tank is currently in development for television. For more information visit [www.loweryinstitute.org](http://www.loweryinstitute.org).

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**PHOTO CREDIT: Damon Thomas PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**#1:** Students competing in the Lowery Institute Change Agent Tank tackle tough questions from the panel of leaders judging their pitches. Pictured (L-R) **Idil Hussein**, Agnes Scott College; **Jessie Scott**, CAU; **Raphael Richardson**, Morehouse College; and **Alysha Conner**, CAU. Not pictured: **Noah McQueen**, Morehouse College.

**#2:** Participants of the Lowery Institute Change Agent Tank pause for a photo. Pictured (L-R) Atlanta Municipal Court Judge Terrinee L. Gundy; Harriette Watkins, Watkins Group; civil rights leader, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery; and Gail Nutt, GNutt Consulting. Standing: Aaron Turpeau, 3 T Unlimited; Kent Matlock, Matlock Advertising & Public Relations; Scott Satterwhite, William-Josef Foundation; Jared Reed, Question Mark to Period; Cheryl Lowery, Lowery Institute.

**#3:** Lowery Institute Change Agent Mike Watson volunteers at Mimi's Pantry for food drive at Atlanta University Center.

**NOTE TO MEDIA:** Winners and other participants available for interview. Contact [edmedia@dogonvillage.com](mailto:edmedia@dogonvillage.com).