

# Brandon Jackson's Story

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2011. It was a Saturday evening in Altadena. A group of high school friends had gathered in a home near the corner of Palm and Altadena Drive to party. It was February so everyone was inside to guard against the chill. Food, teasing, laughter...it was a typical party.

A red Dodge Neon pulled up to the house. There was no click and slam of car doors or tap of shoes going up the walk to join the party. Minutes passed and the door to the house opened. A young man strolled out on his way home. Someone called to him from the red Dodge Neon. He turned toward the car. A bullet exploded into his chest and the car screeched away.

The door of the house opened. There was a slice of heavy stunned silence and then an eruption of crying, yelling, calling, and screaming. Sirens distantly wailing quickly grew earsplitting as ambulances and sheriff cars roared up. Brandon Jackson was pronounced dead 15 minutes later at Huntington Memorial Hospital.

He had recently been awarded the Mustangs Achievement Award from John Muir High School for students with a 3.0 and above GPA and for being an outstanding athlete. He had been selected as part of a local student group to attend President Obama's inauguration. He had a big smile. He cheered people on no matter what the challenge was. He wanted to help his big sister.

The outrage and sorrow of the community overflowed. It overflowed for Brandon and all the young men and women whose futures had been cut way too short. There had just been too many.

People arrived hours early for the funeral. There were people in the sanctuary, in the church overflow room, on the lawn and out on the sidewalk. Police and sheriffs were present to guard against any further violence. Tears and testimony flowed like a river swollen by storm after storm after storm.

During the weeks after the funeral, David Williams, Brandon's basketball coach when he was in junior high, could not rest. The period on Brandon's life could not be the funeral. There had to be something else.

That something else was the beginning of an annual basketball tournament for the Brandon Jackson Memorial Scholarship. Initiated in the summer of 2011, these scholarships are awarded to young men and women graduating from high school and attending a college or university the following fall. The scholarship funds are raised through the tournament.

Brandon never graduated from high school, attended college or was able to offer all that he had as an adult. That future died. But in that death, other young men and women have been helped to move forward in their lives with the awarding of college scholarships in Brandon's name. The funeral is not the period.