



EXCLUSIVE

NEWS

## 'Can Kindness Change a Nation': Haitian-American 11-Year-Old's Efforts to Help Others Earn Him Time Magazine's Kid of the Year

By Kavontae Smalls | February 18, 2022 Comments (0)

At the height of the pandemic, amid coronavirus fears and a racial reckoning dominating the news in the summer of 2020, Orion Jean, now 11, posed a simple question: "How can kindness change a nation?"

'How Can Kindness Change a Nation': Haitian-American 11-...

With encouragement from his teacher at the time, Jean entered a speech contest where he spoke about kindness, he not only challenged himself to deliver such a passionate message, but he also challenged his community of

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"The w... wanted  
to do something to spread a little joy and brighten someone's day," Jean said.

Jean won the speech contest on kindness, which earned him the top prize of \$500. He donated the money to a children's hospital, but little did Jean's parents know he was just beginning.

"Almost two years ago when he started out with the race to kindness, this was never something that was on our radar," Kherri Jean said of her son.

Jean said after helping the local children's hospital, he felt like he was able to make a difference which led to him launching his Race to Kindness **initiative**. Jean managed to collect 500,000 books for kids who lack access to quality reading materials, he also helped secure 100,000 meals through donations for people in need.

"Those 100,000 meals were 100,000 people who are hopefully able to get a meal they might not have had otherwise, and knowing that might have put a smile on their face and brightened up their day is what matters to me," Jean said.

Over the last couple years, Jean's charitable efforts have only gain momentum. He was featured in the **Haitian Times**, and was an invited guest on "The Ellen Show" in October, where his Race to Kindness initiative was awarded \$10,000 by Katy Perry.

Jean's parents have accompanied their son on his journey from a short speech on kindness to the cover of Time magazine. His mother says supporting your kids no matter what is key. ✖

"Every child will lead in their own way. For Orion it was wanting to lead with kindness. Supporting your child when they have an idea in their head, but when they just don't quite know how it all comes together and remind them of the why; when you always go back to the core of why you're doing something, it helps them stay focused and on the right track," Kherri Jean said of her son's ambitions.

Despite all the public accolades, the sixth grader says he is constantly working to become a better version of himself, with the hope of inspiring others to do one thing:

"If they see a problem in their community, go out and fix it and do the same thing I and many other kids and adults and organizations are doing across the world," Jean said.

Jean is featured on the cover of the Feb. 28/March 7 issue of Time.

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