

Good Evening

It is such a pleasure and a privilege to be here.

Giles, thank you so much for your very kind introduction.

I want to express my appreciation to the International Athletic Association, to the Owens family, to Manny Gonzalez, Herb Douglas and to Moët-Hennessy for inviting my family and I to be part of this special tribute.

I am accompanied tonight by my mother Joyce, my brother Dallas and my cousin LaVonne. We are all so happy to share in this very special occasion.

I have visited the Smithsonian museums numerous times over the years, in fact, two of my Uncles spent most of their careers working at the Smithsonian Museum of American History right across the street.

However, this is my very first visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It is quite simply, amazing!

My family and I arrived a little early to do a bit of exploring. There were two specific exhibits that we wanted to see.

One, was the exhibit on African American Athletes where we saw the plaque dedicated to Major Taylor. The other was the exhibit on African American General Officers and Admirals from the United States Military.

One name and image jumped right out at us.

Brigadier General Dallas Coverdale Brown, Jr.

You see, in a very happy coincidence, General Brown was Major Taylor's only grandchild.

He was also my Dad, and he passed away a little over a year ago.

It makes my brother and I so proud to know that this museum, that is the epitome of excellence, honors two members of our family. It makes this night, all the more significant.

I never knew Major Taylor, but felt like I did because I knew his only child very well. She was my Grandmother-Sydney Taylor Brown.

She was a remarkable woman and lived to be 101. Her memory was long and exacting. Throughout her lifetime, she faithfully kept and cared for her father's journals, scrapbooks, letters, photographs and trophies from his extraordinary

career. And, she repeated his story and her own memories in vivid detail over and over until I knew it cold. Thanks to her, there are many cyclists, cycling historians, and authors who know Major's story. There are books about him, as well as cycling clubs that share his name. Indianapolis has a Velodrome and there is a Major Taylor Association and a statue in Worcester, MA.

What was missing though was the ability to bring Major's story mainstream to a worldwide audience. But, all of that has changed with the documentary you have just watched. My Grandmother would be thrilled. It was always her wish that his life and legacy would be remembered.

I'd like to tell you a little about him.

Major Taylor was a boy whose dreams began in Indiana and he took those dreams all the way to becoming a World Champion. My father used to say that Major did it by fighting the odds, facing the challenges and striving for excellence. Major also had truly good people who helped him along a difficult journey to success. They saw beyond color, beyond hate, beyond ignorance, and they believed in him. He took this inspiration, believed in himself, and he triumphed. **HE NEVER STOPPED AND HE NEVER SETTLED!**

The Six-Day race was a snapshot in life of Major Taylor when he went from amateur cyclist to professional. I often like to imagine how he must have felt entering the arena on that December day in 1896. He had been 18 years old for exactly 10 days. Most of his competitors were a decade older. He was thin/they were brawny, he was a sprinter and they were distance riders. But, the most obvious difference was that he was the only black cyclist on the track. The crowds flocked in to see him. Major was more of a curiosity than a contender at the start of the race. But, he hung in through injury, crashes, and exhaustion and by the last day, as one reporter put it, "The Major has earned many friends here today"

This documentary was a collaborative effort. Moet-Hennessy was searching to recognize someone who had made contributions to history through achievement. To my delight, they chose Major Taylor. As such, I'd like to offer my sincere gratitude to Giles Woodyer, Manny Gonzalez, Jacqueline Long and the incredible team at Moet-Hennessy for giving Major another chance to live on. I'd like to thank Jake Stopper and the team at the Droga 5 ad agency in NY for creating this beautiful and lasting tribute, and I want to particularly thank my friend Jonathan Faber and Pete Enfield, both of Luminary Group in Indianapolis. Luminary, Jonathan and Pete believed in this story, never gave up on it, and know it almost as well as I do.

To all of you who worked to make this documentary a reality, as they would say in Hawaii, “Mahalo Nui Loa” or Thank you so very much. You treated my Great-grandfather’s story with dignity, class and respect...and most importantly, you treated it like it was your own story.

Thank you and Good night.