

“Greetings from London, Elyria!” by Tianna Bartoletta

A letter to Mayor Brinda of Elyria, Ohio July 18, 2012

I'd like to thank Mayor Brinda for her support and all of you for this marvelous send-off celebration! I remember my very first 100m race at a high school track in Lorain. I didn't have any spikes, I was intimidated by the starting blocks, and from about five meters into the race I ran into the next lane and remained there while an irate competitor tried desperately to chase me down. I should have been disqualified but I imagine the officials try not to shatter young athletes' hearts so early in their careers!

The last time we were gathered here in this square for a track related endeavor it was in honor of our Elyria high school relay team breaking the state record and bringing home the state championship trophy! I remember standing on this very stage with my teammates, each of us with matching shirts and our gold medals around our necks.

Now, this evening, we gather again for another momentous occasion! I've made my first Olympic Team!

I have to tell you, this was probably the hardest thing I've ever done. The last several years have been disappointing to say the least and I quietly accepted that my career was over and I shifted my focus back to school. Track and field had become nothing more than a part-time like job that would pay my tuition.

Everything changed when I met my husband last year. What he had to say literally changed my mind. Of course, hearing the truth hurt a little bit but he was absolutely right. My mistreatment of the talent God has gifted me with was a sin but there was still a chance I could turn my life and career around if I would do just one thing. All I had to do was turn any weakness I've ever had, into my greatest strength.

Believe me, when you take the time to do everything the right way, to do that extra rep. go that extra mile, do the work, never cut corners, and never cheat yourself there are no limits to what you can do.

It builds immense character, discipline, and self-esteem. I am now a woman of integrity, honor, and self-respect who gives credit when it's earned and stands up for herself and what she believes in.

I share all of this with you because I'm not so much unlike any of you. I am a member of the 2012 Olympic Team because I set a goal and decided that I would do everything in my power to reach it. I challenge you to do the same, do the hard things, do the right thing, do the work.

Again, I am honored that you all gathered here this evening to wish me luck. I want to encourage all of you just the same. Anything you desire to do, do. Do it wholeheartedly, with people who truly love and support you and watch what happens.

Make sure you continue to follow me to the Olympics and beyond at tiannamadison.com, unation.com, or via Twitter or Facebook by searching “Team Tianna”. There are amazing things ahead.