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**To honor his grandmother**

*Summary: Douglas Williams is headed to the Democratic National Convention in part to honor his grandmother. In fact, the University of Minnesota, Morris student said, he can go to Denver in part because of what his grandmother did.*

(August 18, 2008)-By Don Davis  
St. Paul Capitol Bureau

Douglas Williams is headed to the Democratic National Convention in part to honor his grandmother.

In fact, the University of Minnesota, Morris student said, he can go to Denver in part because of what his grandmother did.

"My grandmother led the fight to integrate schools in Suffolk, Va.," the first-time convention delegate said. "I am kind of dedicating this trip to her."

Without his grandmother, who died in 1997, and others fighting for equal rights, African-Americans like Williams would not be welcome at political conventions, he said.

"It was only through struggles of people like my grandmother that we no longer have to worry about such issues at the 2008 Democratic National Convention."

For Williams, being able to represent fellow students and minority Americans is important.

"I am very excited about it," said the student who graduates from the Morris campus with a political science degree in December. "It is a good opportunity to represent young people. Not only that, but to represent my family."

Influenced by his grandmother's work, Williams hopes to eventually earn a doctorate in public policy and work on issues dealing with poverty and welfare.

Williams wants to put information he gains at the Denver convention to use right away.

"I hope I can take the knowledge that I can learn from the convention not only to come back to Minnesota and do what I can to help the DFL candidates, but also to put it to use in my community," he said.

His family's struggles for equal rights parallels what he reads in history textbooks.

"In the course of my studies, I have learned about the 1964 freedom summer," he said, a struggle that included efforts by minority Democrats to become convention delegates.

Photo: Douglas Williams speaks during the 2008 Support the U Day.

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