



**Baptist Hill Middle High
School**

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Media Release

Baptist Hill Students Named James Otis Scholars

Hollywood, SC - Baptist Hill Middle High School (BHMHS) juniors Ajani Brooks and Marbella Campos Ochoa participated in a special celebration of Constitution Day earlier this month. They were part of the 9th Annual James Otis Lecture Series at the South Carolina State House in Columbia on September 15, 2017.

Brooks and Campos Ochoa were two of 95 students from the Palmetto State (and the only ones from Charleston County School District) to spend the afternoon in the chamber of the State House of Representatives and listen to U.S. District Court Judge for the District of South Carolina Richard M. Gergel speak about the separation of powers and judges' roles in the federal government. Judge Gergel presided over the recent trial where Dylann Roof was convicted of murder for his role in the massacre at Mother Emanuel AME Church on June 17, 2015. State Court of Appeals Judge Aphrodite Konduros spoke as part of the Lecture Series as well.

Brooks and Campos Ochoa, both juniors at BHMHS, are cadets in the school's JROTC program. They were nominated by Col. John McLeod (who oversees JROTC at Baptist Hill), and were selected as 2017 James Otis Scholars by the South Carolina Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) and the ABOTA Foundation for their academic excellence and character. The lecture series is designed to provide educational programs each year around the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution about the history and value of the right to trial by jury.

"Having our students selected as James Otis Scholars is an example of our mission to inspire our students to become great citizens through education and overall excellence," said Baptist Hill Principal Vanessa Brown. "The opportunity to participate in such an event allows our students to gain insight into new possibilities for their future."

Brown added Brooks and Campos Ochoa were commended on their attire and appearance by other teachers, parents, and students who attended the conference. They enjoyed the field trip, and gained insightful information.

The ABOTA Foundation created the James Otis Lecture Series to provide scholars with a more in-depth study about how the Constitution affects them and our country's legal system. The lecture program helps schools comply with the requirements of the federal statute creating Constitution Day. This law requires all federally-assisted schools, both public and private, to provide educational programs each year around the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution.

James Otis, Jr. was one of the most influential lawyers in early American history. According to John Adams (the second president of the United States), Otis's eloquent argument presented in a Boston court room in 1761 challenging the British laws, known as the Writs of Assistance, lit the spark which led to the American Revolution. The quote "A man's home is his castle," is attributed to Otis; he challenged oppressive laws which permitted warrantless searches of homes and businesses.

For more information about the Baptist Hill students that participated in 2017 James Otis Lecture Series, contact Principal Brown at (843) 899-2276. To learn more about the James Otis Lecture Series, contact the ABOTA Foundation's Civics Education Director, Tamara Franco, at (214) 239-0226.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.