

I wanted to write to express my support for the nomination of James Bethea for the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame.

As a long time Fort Collins resident, and person of color, I can say unequivocally that my passion for cycling, racing, and community outreach would not be in the same place without James Bethea. From first expressing interest in cycling, being bit by the competitive bug, and going on to race and become a sponsored athlete James played an integral role in all of it. I cannot express how comforting and encouraging it was to meet James at Road 34 where he was a bike mechanic. For me to simply see someone who looked like me, let alone someone who loved cycling AND looked like me in Fort Collins at the time provided immense encouragement and hope.

Whether he knows it or not he has been someone I have looked up to from that day forward. At the time I knew nothing about his cycling career, but as my passion for the sport grew, and I spent more time interacting with him at local races and the shop it became clear to me that he was more than a friendly face at races, but someone who truly gave everything to the sport of cycling. He provided advice, encouragement, and coaching, as I bumped up against challenge after challenge that was more difficult than the last. He encouraged me to join the First City Cycling Team, and because of James I have gone on to ride for FCCT for 5 seasons on their elite team. I spent my 2021 season working with Ride For Racial Justice to further inclusion in the sport, as well as provide more visibility for underrepresented peoples in cycling because of my experience with James. I went on to represent RFRJ at SBT Gravel in 2021 placing 28th in my category. I have gone from gaining the courage to ride across town, over Bingham Hill, the Dams, Towers, Cameron Pass, FOCO Fondo, Firecracker 50, SBT GRVL and so on, and in every one of those rides or events have some credit due to James Bethea. His words of encouragement, smile on his face, pat on the back, is always there when I'm riding my bike.

As far as his career qualifications they more than speak for themselves. He is a tremendous athlete with countless high profile wins under his belt, and having represented some of the top brands in mountain biking including Nukeproof and NINER he is truly THE face of mountain biking for several generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

-Jared Hanson