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ODYSSEY ORACLE

PROFILES OF WOMEN OF COURAGE



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A Special Shero **By Michelle Whitman**

I lost my niece Shavon to pancreatic cancer three years ago on July 27. Shavon gave true meaning to live, love, and laugh. She was living proof that no matter what obstacles we may encounter, we can deal with them courageously.

My niece and inspiration believed that living should have no limits, and live she did. She danced, sang, bowled, volunteered, worked at Pet Smart, babysat her nephew, helped her mom at home, and encouraged everyone else to do the same. She even taught herself to catch a bus. She got into Special Olympics. She wanted to do and be a part of everything.

Then there was Love. Oh, how Shavon loved, and I mean everyone she met. It didn't matter your ethnicity, your weight, your education. All you had to do was just be you. It never mattered whether you were young or old. She just loved everyone. She had a way of making everyone who came in contact with her feel very special. No matter where she went, you could just feel the love radiate from her. It never seemed to matter if you were male or female, in a good or bad mood; she'd want to give you a hug. She loved people just the way they were.

As to laughter, it seems just yesterday that I heard her laughing. Shavon had that type of laugh that was contagious. You would hear it, and you'd begin laughing, not because you knew what was funny but because she had a special joy about her that just spread to anyone around. I'd do almost anything to hear her laugh again.

My beautiful niece was born in 1978 with Downs Syndrome. She was raised no differently than her



cousins; therefore, she acted no different and in some cases was more mature. My niece was a very courageous young woman who never complained of pain. I remember her saying to me at the hospital, "Auntie, I'm not ready to go because my mom will be mad if I leave her." In reply I told her, "No, Vonn, but she will be very sad. We all will be, but no one will be mad at you." Even to the bitter end she spared her mom from seeing her take her last breath.

My niece was and will always be my shero and one of the most courageous women I've ever known. Her biggest challenge was the one she lost to cancer.



Head Held High **By Brandon Williams**

The courageous woman in my life is my mother. She has inspired me in a lot of ways with many of her words.

Growing up, we had tough struggles, but she held on and did her best to teach me and my siblings well. In the present, my mom continuously shares the same words she once shared with me in high school. Bringing gifts that her ancestors gave her, she has helped me set goals and slowly work on accomplishing them.

In our Odyssey class we discussed courage to write, sampling early women and novelists. While I was doing my homework, I remembered analyzing Maya Angelou's "I Rise." The first two parts of the poem meant to me that no matter what is said about me, it won't upset me and I will keep my head up. The fourth part meant that I won't allow my past to break me. These are things my mom told me while I was growing up.



Our past was not great. We lost my grandmother, moved away to a new state where I didn't have many friends or any family. We moved a lot and stayed with two other people. Down the road we saw more struggles, but no matter what

obstacle got in my mom's way, she had faith. My mom taught a few lessons to me while I was growing up. Students would often harass me in school for being myself. My mom told me not to let it bother me because my pain from my past should not bring me down. I should always hold my head high.

Present day is a little bit easier because now I feel a little more humble, but I have a long way to go. My mom still gives me the advice of holding my head up because she knows I am in good hands with the Odyssey Project. I tell her about my stress, and she encourages me to do homework and be thankful for what I have now.

From age 14 to 21 I have grown a lot because of my mother and her inspiration. I know that she is proud of me and knows that I am still holding my head high. The last thing I would love to say about my mother is I am so truly appreciative of her now, seeing how hard growing to an adult is. Change can be growth.



A Brave Sister **By Akilah Freeman**

The woman of courage in my life is my oldest sister, Zakiya. She not only is a woman of courage in her own life but also gives me my

courage to succeed. She has been my backbone and my support net since day one, and I thank my mother for that each and every day. We are only two of six sisters who love and appreciate our sisterhood. We all have a bond so close as a result of a hardworking big sister and mother who have molded and taught us to stay close and never stop loving our sisters, for we are all we've got; our sisters are our keepers.

My big Sis has been the push and drive that keeps me wanting to accomplish my dreams and holding on to my hope. I thank her for setting the best example a young woman could have. When I was growing up, she was the first to set the best example of education by graduating from college. Mother taught us that school was a top priority. She said finishing would help us as well as show us that we can be more than what statistics and history think of us.

From birth, older siblings are usually the first influential person in their younger sibling's life. Zakiya has taught me how to do many things. When I was younger it was how to ride a bike, roller skate, and how to be a big sister myself. Now that I am older, it's how to be an educator, an artist, a philosopher, and a woman of virtue. My best mentor has been the best friend a mother could give her other daughter(s): a big sister. A true best friend she has been; never have I had



more from anyone else in my life. She has helped me through the difficult times with words of encouragement worth much more than money itself. Even though I didn't always lead by example as a child, my sister has taught me to learn from her mistakes and make

the right decisions as I grow into a woman. Lead by example and lead to an example. I will forever be aware that she and my mother will always have my best interests at heart and will never lead me into wrong.

I am blessed to have wise people in my life that can and have taught me to be wise myself and listen. I wouldn't be putting my best foot forward and looking forward to fulfilling my short term goals so soon if it weren't for this woman. I live each day to make Zakiya, my mother, and my child proud. Through thick and thin, I will always have my sister. She will love me from the heart, and no matter how much we argue, we will never let the bond part. She's a joy in my life that will stay until death and the afterlife. I will forever thank her for giving me more than enough courage in this world.



A God-loving Sister By Dominique Haskins

The courageous woman I am writing about is my sister, Barri Varee Haskins. When you first meet her, the thing you notice

about her immediately is her smile. She has a strong love for God. She is the best sister anyone could have and my best friend.

I weep as I write this about my sister because she loves God so much and tries to do His will. She's always praying for others and helping others.

She was the main caretaker for our mother. I have two other sisters also. Barri watched our mother battle cancer, and she watched her deteriorate daily. I just am truly thankful and blessed that God chose my sister Barri to be the one to be there with our mother. Even though at times Barri grew tired of being with our mother all the time, her faith in God helped her through. It wasn't easy for this younger sister of mine. She trusted God and her faith. I have to say that I



thank God it was my sister Barri whom God chose to be the caretaker of our mother.



A Phenomenal Woman By Munroe Whitlock

On December 1, 1977, she was born two months premature. Was that a defect in the pregnancy, or was she just eager to see the world? She was born with jaundice, and her first few days were spent without human touch, living in an incubator.

Once out of the incubator, she hit the world running, with her eyes asking the question, "What's going on?" She learned how to walk, talk, use the potty, and engage in the family dynamics without a disruption in the flow of that family. She could do everything herself.

But when her family itself became disrupted, she set forth to accomplish the goals and the dreams that her family had for her. From her inception in education she set a standard of an above average G.P.A.

She became pregnant at age fourteen, developed a plan, gave birth, and flowed back into school without missing an assignment, quiz, test, or exam. She graduated high school at age seventeen with an above average G.P.A.

She has obtained a Master's Degree in Business or an MBA. She owns three homes, and she is one step below a Manager's Position with a major financial institution in Wisconsin. She has four children and one step-son, and she will deliver her fifth child in May of 2013. She was newly married on August 17, 2012.



This is my daughter.

Yes, she is a Woman of Courage, but I see her as a "Phenomenal Woman."



Strength to the End **By Jasmine Banks**

Courage is the ability to do something that frightens one, to display strength in the face of pain or grief.

I was on my way to do something that I had never done before: overcoming the fear of having dinner all by myself at a table for one. My night of courage turned into what would become a five-month journey of courage for my mom. When I was leaving the restaurant and checked my phone, I was surprised to find a voicemail from my mom. I asked if everything was OK, to which she replied she was in need of maxi pads. My 77-year-old mother was calling in need of Maxi pads because that night her period had started. I couldn't believe my ears, but I did what I was told without question.

Tests were run, and it was found that my mom had cancerous cells in her uterus. The decision was made to schedule her for a hysterectomy.

Never, ever have I known my mom to be weak in the face of adversity. Never in my mind has she not stood ten feet tall, even at four feet eleven inches. With the surgery completed and recovery starting, my mom continued to be a true champion and a woman of courage, never crying like a baby like I and many others would have done. When we were informed that her cancer was not only rare but aggressive and that she would need chemotherapy and radiation, she continued on like an officer preparing to win a battle.

Days turned into weeks and weeks into months, with hours of chemotherapy and radiation and the loss of weight, appetite, and hair. I never saw the courage in my mom's eyes fade. It was

her courage and strength that kept me hopeful. I remember journaling about her strength as she was getting poked and prodded as we traveled back and forth to the emergency room. I remember seeing the determination on her face and in her eyes in pictures I took of her.

I stayed with her the second to last weekend of her life because she had gotten so very weak that she needed me. As I bathed and dressed her and rubbed lotion on her skin that was shedding like a snake from the results of the chemotherapy, never did she cry or make me feel as if she were afraid. I only saw the same strength I've known my mom to have all of my life in the face of her pain.

The night before she passed away, she was transferred from the hospital to a rehabilitation center in order to regain her physical strength. We watched TV and talked a bit. When the time came, I kissed her good night, told her I would see her the next day, said I loved her, and told her to call me if she needed me. She replied for me to do the same.

The next morning while getting ready for work, I received a call from my sister notifying me that my



mom was being transported to the emergency room. With the strength and courage passed on to me from my mother during my entire 43 years on earth, I drove to the emergency room, only to find out that my mom had passed away.

I again remind you of the definition of courage: the ability to do something that frightens one and to display strength in the face of pain and grief.



A Positive Thinking Friend By Tanatnan Chaipang

44-year-old Justina is a close friend of mine who is a single mom with three boys. She is the most fun and positive thinking woman that I ever met.

Sadly at the beginning of 2012 she had to have brain surgery.

Four years earlier, I had gotten a phone call from a woman whose voice was unfamiliar to me. She asked if I remembered her from three days ago at the restaurant. She asked if I would mind meeting up and having coffee with her. I was surprised but went to meet her anyway. We had so much fun sharing our life story. She told me she came from Indonesia with her husband to finish her Master's Degree, and her husband also was getting his Master's Degree in Business. She told me her husband had a very good job and made enough money for them to live comfortably. She has three kids, so she said she spent most of her time taking care of them. Her lifestyle was different than that of

her husband. She told me he often called her "Dumb ass" and "a stupid woman that's not working."

Now she's a single mom who is trying to live happily and to enjoy her life with her kids. In 2009 she had to file for bankruptcy because her apartment building caught on fire and they thought it started from her apartment. In 2011 I went to Thailand, and in that time if I needed anything from the U.S., Justina never said no. She was always busy being my good friend. In April 2012 I got a phone call from her boyfriend saying that Justina is in the hospital and unable to move. Justina had to have brain surgery.

Every day I prayed for her. I had trouble realizing that she had something serious. I still kept thinking I would have a coffee or lunch with her soon. For three months, Justina couldn't talk or walk. I felt really sad, as if I lost my friend. I missed her very much!

Last month I heard from her boyfriend that Justina is walking and is learning how to bike and type. She never gives up and is a positive thinking person. She is passionate and wants to live so badly. I can't wait to have lunch with her again soon.



A Mother as Best Friend By Tracey Cherry

My mother is sweet on the inside and the outside. She is a very kind and caring person. She was born in Woodland, North Carolina, and moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she graduated from high school. She raised me as a



single mother and taught me right from wrong.

An illustration of her sweetness on the inside and outside is how she cared for her mother, father, and

sister when they were ill. She was at the hospital attending to them until their deaths. My mother has been very supportive of me, even when I had children at a young age, didn't go to college, or had abusive situations. She always told me she loved me no matter what, and she accepted me for who I am because I'm her only daughter and child. She has given me so much love and strength over the years. She has given me a lot of encouragement not to worry about kids and grandkids.

She taught me how to grow up as a beautiful young black woman and mother at a young age. She taught me to be proud of myself and always keep my head up. She said not to worry about what others think of me. Today I thank God I have a mother still living. She is like my best friend and big sister. I will call her even though we're 1,000 miles apart. I let her know I love her and thank her.



An Epic Mother **By China Moon Crowell**

From Bed-Stuy to the beaten paths of State Street, she's walked more than a few miles. Robin emerges onto the living room floor in her famous glitter-clad T-shirt boppin' to her 70s music. She notates her lesson plans for the week and still manages to now have time for herself.

My mother grew up in Brooklyn, NY, in an area called Bedford-Stuyvesant. The middle child of five,

she played games and was successful in school. She lost her childhood at the age of 13 when she lost her mother to a heart attack. Her stress and responsibilities increased as she became responsible for her younger brother, who was/is deaf, and asthmatic sister while being raised by her stern West Indian stepfather. After graduating from Clara Barton Vocational High School, she moved to Chicago to help her grandparents and get away from N.Y. She had a vivacious, outspoken girlfriend by the name of Fleeta.

One day Robin and Fleeta were sitting on the stoop waiting for Fleeta's boyfriend, Johnny, to show up. Fleeta said, "Robin, you should meet Johnny's brother Warren." The four of them decided to double date that week. Two years later, before Warren went to Boot Camp at Camp Pendleton in California, he discussed with Robin's grandfather his intentions and asked her for her hand in marriage. They were wed on October 4, 1975. On December 31, 1976, their daughter, China Moon, was born in San Diego on Camp Pendleton Marine Base.

When China Moon was four, they moved to Platteville, Wisconsin, and Robin began teaching elementary school. Her sister-in-law helped out with childrearing and the house. Robin loved to blast her music while cleaning the house. She always made time to dance with her daughter, point out things of importance, and actually listen



to China when she had questions. The two took long walks together, cooked and baked together, laughed, crunched leaves, did art projects, played games, and read all types of books together while Warren worked as a mason and on construction during the day.

. . . When Robin and Warren separated, Robin and China Moon moved back east to New York. She worked a few jobs but nothing as meaningful as working with children. Hard times fell upon Robin and her daughter. It seemed she always had to start over from scratch. . . . As her younger sister died suddenly of an asthma attack, Robin was left with another younger child to raise. She got all her plans together, packed their things, and moved China and her niece Nicole to Madison with the help of her sister-in-law. She saw she needed a new beginning and started over yet again.

My mother is Ms. Robin Crowell. I love her deeply. As a mother myself, I see her in me and have the utmost respect for her, her life strains, and her now-breathable lifestyle. My mother has always stressed that "it's very important for children to have a childhood. You only have access to that precious time for mere moments in your life. Everything that can be done to nurture youth and allow them to ask questions about their surroundings and imagination before the fun and curiosity is sucked out of them is a positive and needed experience." My mother Robin has helped me so much over my 36 years and continues to be my rock, my confidante, and my inspiration. She is an esteemed early childhood teacher and has worked and instilled much hope in the lives of myself, her granddaughter Dylilah, her students, their parents, and her co-workers. She has taught at University Avenue Discovery Center for over 25 years and

is still going.

Her love, her life, and her experiences are to me the epitome of the word "epic."



A Friend and Fellow Immigrant By Angelica Cuahuey

Six decades separate us in years, but the circumstances of our lives bring us closer. I have known a courageous woman who is a good friend of mine. Alice enjoys being a social person. She likes to be around friends, so it is always fun to visit her. I consider her accomplished, grateful, and a role model.

For one thing, I admire her because she has accomplished many things since she arrived in the United States. After she lost her family in Poland in 1945 due to the Holocaust, she started a new life in New York City. At first she struggled to learn English, but that struggle did not stop her from learning this new language. Ultimately she attended Manhattan University in New York and earned a Master's Degree in Chemistry. Following this accomplishment, she wrote a book called *Next Year God Will*. She is proud of herself and thankful to have moved to the States.



We have had talks about how thankful she is. Since she arrived in the U.S.A., her life has changed in many ways. For example, she has met new friends and enjoyed living in a big city. On the other hand, the loss of her family affected her so deeply she wrote her book about her memories. She published her book in the 1990s and gave several speeches in

Washington, D.C. Also she is thankful for her freedom in the United States.

I consider Alice as a role model because having her as a friend encouraged me to continue my education. Her example encouraged me also to keep pursuing my dreams. One of the things I like about her is that we have things in common. For instance, as immigrants we struggled to learn a new language and culture and to learn our rights in the U.S.A.

To sum up, I am glad to have Alice as a good friend. I admire her because she is a successful woman who has been a role model and taught me many things.



The Strongest Woman I Know By Sharisse Hancock

When I think of the word courageous, I think of my mother. That is one of my mother's characteristics. My mother came

from a difficult background. She had the courage to find her way out of her mother's home at the age of 13. As a young girl, she dealt with some of the most unfortunate life circumstances. However, she visited local churches and met a pastor who got her out of her mother's household; he was able to get her placed with a church family who cared for her until she turned 18. My mother is also the strongest woman I know—not just physically but mentally as well. My mother is also loving. She's given a love to my family that no one else can display—a true unconditional love that never ends. I'm blessed to be able to call Linda Hancock "Mom."

My mom showed courage in leaving her house and visiting countless churches to find an understanding of God and love Him despite her home situation. I've never seen anyone else with this much courage to believe that God would bring her through the trials and tribulations of her

childhood and also to believe He would show her another way. She has instilled in me as her child the love of God. She also has shown me through these actions she took that you always have a choice. Many of those experiencing her similar situation did not seek another way. This included her two sisters, who did not want to leave their mother's home. My mother simply wanted more for herself. She wants the same presently for her children and grandchildren.

My mom is stronger than any person I know. She is strong not only physically but mentally as well. My mom exercises her body and mind daily. She has been active working out, whether basketball, aerobics, or playing tackle football with my brother when he was young. My mom has been working at WPS Health Insurance since the age of 19. She is presently 51 years old and still working at WPS. She went to Edgewood weekend degree program for nine years to go back to college and get her four-year baccalaureate in Business and Marketing. At the same time, she was working full time at WPS and had two children.

My mother has an unconditional love that never ends. I've hurt her many times with my words throughout the years. However, she still loves me the same today as she did yesterday. She loves my daughter and my brother's children the same exact way. I always say to my mother, "If I can be half the mother you are, I'll be doing OK." My mother loves with no end. When I started experiencing the effects of manic depression, my mother stuck by me. She protected me and loved me through all the hardship. I was in psychosis three months, and she home-schooled me those three months without question. My mother is the reason I



graduated from high school on time. I'm so thankful to have a mother who was willing to give up any personal life of her own to care for me.

In reading this paper, you have only learned half of the courageous woman that my mother is. Her courage, strength, and love will last all of eternity in me and my daughter. I'm thankful and blessed to have Linda L. Hancock as my mother. I'm not just saying this because she's my mother. I'm stating this because it's a true reality.



An Inspiring Mother **By Shalonda Hilliard-Jones**

The sun shines even when it's cloudy around Donzala Morgan. My mother, Donzala, is a self-motivated, free-spirited, talented

inspiration to everyone who knows her.

Born in 1969 in Gary, Indiana, my mother had to learn to be self-motivated. She motivated herself to get out here in the world and do what she had to do just to get by and survive. She never depended on anybody for anything. If there was something she wanted or needed, she worked very hard to make sure that she had it.

Growing up in Gary, Indiana was challenging,



and at the age of 18 she relocated to Madison seeking greener pastures. Upon arriving, she knew her dream ever since she was a little girl was to be a hairstylist. She enrolled at MATC in the Cosmetology

program and became a renowned hairstylist in Madison. In 1998 she opened her first hair salon, called Sheer Elegance.

Donzala was so talented, and she inspired a lot of people. She had hair stylists and barbers working at Sheer Elegance. She was giving them chances and motivating them to be young entrepreneurs like herself. She had patience and dedicated her time and energy to make out stylists get out in the world and eventually open their own salons. She also partnered up with MATC to create an apprenticeship program that taught the basic fundamentals of Cosmetology.

Now living in Charlotte, North Carolina, she has a salon called Divinely Beautiful. My mother is my biggest inspiration. Without her, I wouldn't be the strong, independent mother/woman I am today.



My Brave Sister **By Fantasia House**

I spent nine months witnessing weight gain, emotional breakdowns, swollen feet, and physical, mental, and spiritual

changes. God couldn't have assigned this task of motherhood to a better candidate. This woman is not only courageous: she is brave, bold, and simply amazing. This woman is my little sister, Dezarae Marie House. My sister gave birth to a beautiful baby girl on September 13, 2012. She named her Sahaliah Chanel Marie House. My sister may be a statistic in society's eyes, but she is my hero. Dezarae has risen above the stereotypical person that she is supposed to become, according to today's society, and I am extremely proud.

My sister Dezarae had a rough childhood—not as bad as it could have been, but she did have a hard time in school. Being the youngest of two,

Dezarae would sometimes lash out for attention, and this affected her in and out of school. My sister is extremely intelligent and one of the best chefs I know. She can cook anything you can think of. She is so good that she even was paid at the age of 16 to bake a three-tier wedding cake from scratch for some random person's wedding. It turned out amazing. Every day you will find my sister reading into a recipe book or watching the Food Network Channel, writing things down and making it as if she had been cooking for years. Just the other day she whipped up homemade beignets (French doughnuts) for the family. They were really tasty. My sister may have had a child at a young age, but the skills that she has acquired over the years will take her far if she applies herself. I know that she will take the necessary steps to get into Culinary Skills so that she can secure the future for herself and my niece.

Although teen pregnancy is looked down upon, every child that enters the world is a blessing. God makes no mistakes. I believe that my niece was brought into this world to change the disconnect that my family members and I have. Sahaliah has made us all come together as one and realize that we need to be successful in life so that she can have a fair shot at her future. My niece turned



three months on December 13. Sahaliah is the smartest baby I have witnessed with my own eyes. All of her doctors have stated that she is really advanced for her age. She talks (baby talk), she laughs, and she even tries to crawl. Sahaliah is definitely a motivation to become all that we can be because she deserves the entire world. The delivery process was extremely difficult for my sister, and I watched her suffer. With all that suffering, my sister barely shed a tear. Dezarae's water had broken, and after hours of it being broken without her dilating, they had to give her an emergency C-section. This in itself would have put an immense amount of pressure on anyone else, but my sister stayed calm and cooperated with all the nurses and doctors so that they could deliver Sahaliah safely. Once my niece arrived, she was immediately taken off into the NICU. She ingested some fluid, so they had to make sure that it was out of her lungs. While my niece was in the NICU, my sister was suffering from fever and pain from the surgery. They kept her in the hospital for eight days while my niece stayed for 14. I watched my sister seek strength from God, knowing that He would see her and my niece through. Once they released my sister, she never came home except maybe to grab more clothes for the baby. Dezarae never left her side. I saw a side of my sister that I had never seen. This showed me that she truly is a courageous woman. She has turned her life around for the better.

All in all I am proud to say that I know this woman. Not only is she courageous but she is brave, bold, and simply amazing. I love her. Her name is Dezarae Marie House.



My Woman of Courage By LoLita Phillips

I know a woman who is honest, faithful, and dedicated to family. I know a woman who always has her door open for me no matter what time it is and will get angry if I come to her town



and not visit her. I know a woman who has become a mother when she never thought that she would ever be able

to be a mother. I know a woman who is smart, fun to be with, and a strong woman of faith. I also know a woman who has wisdom, who loves whole heartedly, and is a woman of courage. I know a woman who is sometimes called "The Tin Woman" because she can be a woman of steel.

I know a woman who works very hard and does not mind going to work every day to have something. I know a woman who has pretended to be my mother with short notice. I know a woman who is brave and does not mind going into battle for her family. I know a woman who is one of the best mothers ever, next to me, of course.

I know a woman who is strong, passionate, and fierce. I know a woman who is wonderful, who is heroic, and who loves music. I know a woman who has strong faith and loves to listen to church music on Sundays.

I know a woman who is not interested in gossip. I know a woman who is not interested in small talk and loves to stay on track in her life. I know a woman who can be happy whatever state of mind that she is in. I know a woman that can boss you around on the telephone and you won't mind because she does it with nothing but pure love. I know a woman that will encourage me wherever I am at in my life. All I have to do is call. She is real, she is genuine, she is always beautiful, and she is always courageous. I know a woman who is the best sister in the whole world. I know a woman of courage! She is my oldest sister: RHONDA ELAINE WESLEY.



She Walks and Lives in Faith **By Angela Jordan-Jackson**

There was a day that came and, as I was told, her yellow sun one morning became gray. In a drunken stupor, he fell off a three-story building to his death. They say a screw of some sort penetrated his skull, and that was the killing blow. She says, "Lord, I'm expecting a child in a month or two. My husband has died, leaving me with five babies and one on the way. Please keep us safe, Lord. Protect me and my babies."

My mother prayed this prayer then and for the next year. After managing to survive years working and keeping up with six babies, back and forth to school, keeping up with schedules, keeping us in after school gym, she saw us all successfully grow up all safe and intact, with no jail time, I might add. We still have great respect for elders.

As she continues to lead by example, she adds to her credit a host of grandchildren and great-grandchildren that meet every Sunday at church. She's still giving off great guidance to her family from the oldest to the youngest. She just won a great battle with cancer. The doctors are amazed at how she coasted through the process.

Momma always remembered that prayer she prayed, and she has always walked in faith that God would take care of her and her family. Till this day, I can see the favor of the Lord still resting

upon her. She smiles not only for herself but always to bring a brightness to your day. To this day I



call her my sunshine. She has been mother and father to me and my brother and sisters, and her heavenly father has kept us all. She is my hero. She is my mom. No greater love will I ever know outside of God.



An Angel on Earth By Derrick McCann

I feel deeply that Wanda McCann-Smith, my mother, is a woman of courage. She has the heart to help and love all people from all backgrounds. She is my inspiration for life today. Despite the many roles she plays in life and things on her plate, she still keeps the faith and stays inspired.

Wanda McCann-Smith is a woman of courage with the heart to help and inspire everyone she comes across. The world is a better place because of her. Wanda is a mental health specialist in Madison. She runs a support group for many young kids of all ages, giving them inspiration and hope for life. It's called Peace Network Inc. Wanda runs the group out of her own pocket. She offers unconditional love and helps others see a way when they can't themselves. Her dream is to make this world a better place. Wanda is always there when you need someone to talk to. She also has a word of wisdom and encouragement that will brighten up your day.

My mother is my inspiration for life. She has always been a good role model in my life: a strong black woman with morals, values, love, and strength. Born in Chicago's west side, she moved me and my two sisters to Wisconsin for a better life. I never understood why, but it all makes sense now. She saw some things in me and wanted me to be a better person with great direction

in my life that was not given to her and her peers. I always look at my mom as a mother and father because she played both roles. She showed me how to be a man of respect, love, and morals and how to be a good husband to my future wife. We struggled growing up and we moved a lot, but my mom always made me feel rich. I have been blessed to have such an angel from God in my life that has looked over me in my good and bad times.

Wanda McCann-Smith is a grandmother, mother, sister, daughter, mental health specialist, friend, counselor, evangelist, and dedicated church member. She also has to work a part-time job until her business gets the full funding it deserves. She is a positive role model in the Madison community. With so many roles, she always has a humble spirit and the desire to help. Wanda McCann-Smith has a heart for family and friends to stay together through thick and thin. With every role she has on her hands, you will wonder, how does she find time to do all this in the 24 hours we have in a day? Wanda McCann-Smith is a blessed woman of God, an angel on earth that has been sent to put smiles on our faces when we feel down and hopeless.

In conclusion, you can see Wanda McCann-Smith as a woman of courage. Her big heart makes this world a better place. With so much bad and evil we see portrayed in the news and media, it is



good to have someone like Wanda McCann-Smith to teach another person to love. She teaches you to not just think about yourself. Your wisdom and knowledge is for helping others get through their hard times and ups and downs. When you are looking for someone

who cares and is not afraid to stand up for what she believes in, look for her: a woman of courage, Wanda McCann-Smith.



A Woman of Strength **By Mary Millon**

The woman of courage in my life is one of my best friends, Marlo Mielke. We have been friends for over 25 years. She is independent, strong, and caring.

Marlo decided she wanted to leave Madison shortly after her marriage. She had five children to care for but was ready for a change. She married a ginseng farmer handyman. When the ginseng trade slowed in Wisconsin, they decided to move to Tulsa, Oklahoma, a place she had never been. Having one set of twins and three other children, she knew it would be difficult.

She made a life for herself in Tulsa, becoming very involved in church and making new friends. She decided after being gone almost ten years to come back. She decided to come alone, without her husband, as she had come to the decision to divorce.

Coming back to Madison was bittersweet. In one sense, she felt free as a bird. In another sense, she felt scared of the future. Taking her five kids out of school and away from their friends did not prove to be an easy task.



She left her husband behind, but months later he followed. They were not back together, though. He slept in the basement, and they raised their children together while looking for jobs and housing. Her soon-to-be ex-husband took on odd jobs.

One fateful day as the months grew closer to a divorce agreement, the husband got an odd job tree trimming. As the girls were planning an evening out with all our children and no husbands, the conversation back and forth with emails and texts turned from funny laughter and what we were going to wear to, "My husband just took a 30-foot fall out of a tree. On my way to the hospital. Please pray."

Many thoughts went through my head. Even though I had heard many stories of why her marriage was breaking up, I felt so much pain for her as well as him.

The accident changed him forever. He was paralyzed from the neck down.

All of a sudden, my friend went from bitter and scorned to compassionate and loving. She is a strong woman. She had to take the daily task of explaining to her children, "Dad may never walk again." She wiped many tears from their eyes as well as her own.

To this day, although they decided to continue with divorce, she still engages herself and her children in his daily life as a man who was forever changed.



BiBi, an Exceptional Woman **By James Morgan**

Brenda Harris, or "BiBi," was born July 30, 1953 in River Rouge, Michigan. She died at the age of 50 on March 23, 2003. She was to many an exceptional woman.

BiBi grew up in San Francisco. She attended Poly Tech High School and, like most other young



people, adopted the religion traditionally practiced by their parents. She was of the Pentecostal faith in her later years.

She was the mother of Tawana and Jason

Carrington Morgan; their father, James 'Satchel' Morgan, was also my father. Though she was not my birth mother, BiBi never showed any favoritism in her dispersal of love to any of us.

She led a difficult life. Prostitution, drugs, and alcohol all at one time or another kept her bound, yet she always possessed the ability to be a compassionate soul.

BiBi was known to many as "Auntie," "Mama B.," and to myself simply a "Beautiful Soul." She was open-hearted, loving, caring, non-judgmental, and supportive of everyone. She would say, "Everyone is a diamond in the rough," and she would see the good (potential) in everyone.

Brenda Harris, or "BiBi" or "My Beautiful Soul," remains one of the most exceptional women to ever grace my life. My love for her remains unconditional.



A Beautiful Gift By Jovenus Price Pierce

My daughter is a woman of courage. I saw that she had a good upbringing. We lived on public assistance until she was seven years old. She is my only child. I had my daughter when I was 27 years old. She was my joy. I lost my dad when I was 24. I

despaired. I had lost the father and role model of my life. I was a daddy's girl who loved my daddy with all my heart. I was so saddened that it felt as if my whole being was lost. . . . The sadness was so heavy on me. My father was only 56 years old. . . . My life seemed so empty. My daughter's birth brought so much life into my life. I was attending Edgewood College. I worked so hard at getting the money ready to have for my baby. I worked third shift at Swiss Colony. I went home in the morning to get ready for school. At school I worked in the cafeteria at lunch time washing dishes, pots, and trays.

I had a hard pregnancy. I was overworked having so many jobs that the doctor put me on bed rest. I was having a baby in March. The baby was my new job for the spring semester. I knew having a baby would be a hard job. I really wanted to get my Business degree. I thought I would be in school until I attained my goal.

Being a mother changed my journey. I'm thankful for my daughter. She has given me five grandchildren. She is my woman of courage. She had a hard life when she was a pre-teen and teenager. She started rebelling, doing a lot of resisting authority. She was a teenager out of control. She was defiant to school and family members. She was hanging out with the wrong crowd. She was misused by people who played her youthful innocence. She had a baby at 15 years old.

Joy has a rebellious attitude, but she has come a long way. Joy's my first baby girl, and I have five little babies from my daughter. Joy is a strong woman of courage. She brought my life out



of sadness into gladness. Thank God for a beautiful gift that brought me back to life. I would not change anything. I believed in fate from our heavenly father. I'm truly blessed to be here in life and to be in the Odyssey Project, with its ten years of changing the lives of 300 students and their families. God bless Emily and everyone who's involved with the Odyssey Project. My woman of courage is my daughter, Joy Chanel Price, born March 1, 1985. She deserves a merry Christmas 2012. She has been through so much, and she is a woman of courage.



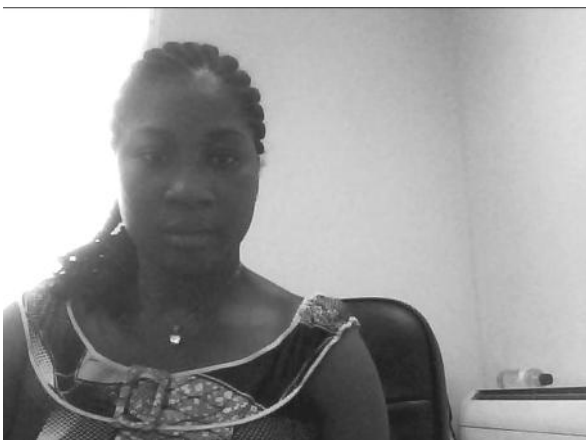
From Poverty to Prosperity
By Jovite Rayaisse

The woman that I want to describe is one of my best friends, Honorine. From a poor little girl who desired to go forward, she became a manager of one of the banks in my country,

Burkina Faso.

I met Honorine in high school. She lost her mother in middle school, so she lived with her father and three brothers and one sister. She was a hard worker at school and ambitious. She lost her father a few years after I met her. He was the one who was supporting her and paying her tuition, so she was depressed. I was with her all the time to make her feel better and encourage her to continue her studies. A few months later, she lost her little sister, and that was a disaster.

She told herself that she has to take all the chances she can to succeed. She started to knock at any door where she can obtain help for her tuition and



help caring for her siblings.

At the university, she worked so hard to obtain her bachelor's degree. Now she is a manager in the bank. She has her own place and is taking care of her brothers.



Forgetting the Handicap
By Britney Sinclair

My mother would be considered a courageous woman to me. A while ago, I would not say this simply because our relationship has never been the greatest, though I wish it would be. Being handicapped, my mother had to step it up when she became a mother. My grandmother did not believe in her because she was handicapped. My mother made the decision to keep me and learned everything on her own. My mother can only use one hand, so everything that is simple for everyone else wasn't easy for her. She had to learn how to do my hair, work, and drive. These things were challenging to her, but oddly enough to this day I constantly forget she is handicapped.

My mother also was in a very abusive relationship. I think any woman who is able to escape an abusive relationship is courageous. It took her over ten years to finally remove herself from that situation, but she managed and fought her way through it.

I have seen her work several jobs and come home to cook and clean. I have seen her get abused one day and the next day praise God. I have seen her so exhausted but still managing to make me soup when I was sick.

To be honest, I never actually saw my mother as courageous until I wrote this paper. I appreciate this



woman and am grateful for everything she has done. She has made me the strong, independent woman I am today. As my mother would tell me, "Never rely on any MAN; look to God."



The Forever "Thank You"
By Amber Turner

Right now the only woman I can think of that's most important to me who has the strength of an ox, love of God, and success is my mother. She is a wonderful woman, and through anything I know she will be there for her family, whatever the tribulation may be. Sometimes she may not want to do things to teach us a lesson, but as a mother she gives what she should and shouldn't. After a fight, after an argument, after sadness, she is there to be the mom that she has always been. I can't say what I would be if my mom wasn't in my life because every time I think about it, it scares me more than anything. My mother is an important vessel in my life and is a strong and powerful woman. Without her, I don't know where I would be. I feel very privileged to have my mother in my life because some people don't even know how it feels to have a mom.

My mother, Lynn Brown, has an interesting personality. Through my childhood I have seen my mom go through a lot, and I watched it as I grew up into a young woman. The strength she had to get through the trials and tribulations that she went through was astounding and unforgettable. My mom was a single mom doing everything on her own for a while, and whatever she needed to do to keep a roof over our head she did. My mom would go from one job to the next just to make ends meet. Those times were stressful for our entire

family because a lot was going on, but being the woman she is she held on, stayed strong, and never gave up. Tears were shed, pain was growing, but the sacrifice made it all worth it in the end. I am persistent, and I see that my persistence came from the one woman that means the world to me. I believe that if she can do it, so can I because through the struggle in the end light will shine. Day by day I think and say, "You can't get put through anything you can't handle." That motivation is what I go by, and my mom is why I believe that.

Love is unconditional and powerful; the word Love is a bond you never want to lose. My family has had our ups and downs. We argue and get angry, but it's a part of life, and we know that through thick and thin we will be there for each other. At times when our family was at our weak point my mother kept the glue together. Even when it was peeling apart, she would find a way to patch it up so that we can stay strong and look past the pain. All the times my mom would tell me this and that, put punishment on me and yell at me, I would always say in my head, "Blah, blah, blah." But as a teenager, who wouldn't? Everyone goes through their teenager times, and I know that's the most stressful for parents, especially when you're a single parent. I know I probably gave her a lot of burdens, but she loved me unconditionally, no matter what. We could make her cry, and we could hurt her with our words, yet she would always be there in the end.

That's the love that you can never replace. My mom's love is unconditional, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.



Furthermore, at the end of the road after all the growth, the change, the pain, the good and bad times, my mom made it to the end. She has grown as a person in so many ways. She went from being a single mom working two jobs to getting married, being happy again, and getting promoted to a

better position at her job. One thing I can say about her is she works hard to get where she needs. I am so happy that I was lucky enough to have a mom that fights for what she needs and wants because it has taught me as a woman to never give up on anything. Giving up doesn't get you anywhere, and through the success of my mother I know that. She persuades me to do better and shows me that anything is possible, even at your lowest. She teaches me to never give up and to keep pushing on because it won't be like this forever. Success is an extravagant thing, and with it you can do so many things.

I am a young woman who will be strong, will love unconditionally, and will succeed in everything I do because I know if she can do it, I can. I will not stop until I reach my point. This I can say because my mom was there. I love her always and forever. All I can really say is THANK YOU for eternity. I'm happy to have you as my mom because without you I would be lost! Thanks, Mom.



Nothing Short of a Hero
By Patrice Smith

Like a breath of fresh air, this woman brings relief to my life. She leads by example, standing firm in her beliefs.

My mother is nothing short of a hero in my eyes, if only for the essence of her virtue. Her strength is not her own but of faith in God. I've always admired the force that keeps her moving through trials and tribulations.

Being the eldest girl in her family and the third born of seven, she fought to make her place known. In a family so large, responsibility was placed upon her shoulders at the age of five; as Grandma would tell it, she did as told. But even in a family so overwhelming, doubts crowded her future, and mama made a decision to leave and embark on a journey of her own . . . life for herself. Giving birth at 19, she made her way to employment, refusing to rely on government benefits. Mama fought for her education. Bound by a little one, one on the way, and an unappreciative man, she stood firm on

her dreams. Mama charged full force ahead into her future with a career in Human Services because she desired so greatly to help people; a desire born from her own struggles. Just when things seemed to be evening out for her, tragedy struck when she endured the death of her little girl. The loss of a child leaves the womb aching, a heart shattered, a mind exhausted with grief, anger, and regret. Mama found it in her heart to forgive her daughter's perpetrator, moving on to raise her two remaining children. Forced to face adversity and continue in everyday life is what Mama does best.

Not only does she show forgiveness but an unconditional love that is everlasting. Although she struggled with her loss, she provided shelter, food, and emotional support for her remaining two children. Even when the last two would get on her last nerve, she always responded with love. Five years ago, she lost two children to the judicial system and endured slander, court, TV news, newspapers, and the Internet. Even through all the public and emotional pain, my mother stood strong. Her strength came from the God she served, from the God she taught me how to serve. Even in my weakest time, she held on tight to her faith with one hand and to me with another; my mother laid praying hands on me. Through personal attacks, she stood strong and firm, never denying me of my wrong and never disowning her children. Instead of anger she walked in love. When harsh words of judgment came crashing on her beloved, she kept her poise. Her patience with a hateful world helped me through my struggles. Slow to dwell on what no



longer can be changed, her encouragement pushes forward to a new day.

My mama is a woman of a sound mind and a courageous soul, never one to be easily persuaded into a mind frame other than her own. Although she was told not to voice her opinion as much, she did. She refused to allow the beliefs of another to be planted in her head; her ideas are her own. If she should be proven wrong, there wouldn't be an issue of admitting it. Truth has always stood tall in her world, be it ugly or not. The courage to be who she is today inspires me to push past my incompetency. Failure is a lesson in what not to do the next time around. She forcefully fights for her rights as a woman and a mother. She leads by example in all aspects of her life. Perfection is never her goal, but improvement is a constant.

I call her my hero because of the obstacles I've watched her overcome as a child. Whenever adversity weighs on her, a resilient muscle flexes as she makes her way through. She never stops just because "no" is an answer from one source. Her ambition to survive is ever present. She is my muse, my drive, my one and only mother.



An Amazing Woman **By Tosumba Welch**

My mother was an amazing woman, and I could never figure out where she got so much strength, courage, and will to do what needed to be done regardless of the efforts and sacrifices it took. My mother worked at Sears Roebucks for 25 years. She was working there ten years before I was born. As a teenager I wondered how she would work all those hours and manage to come home and take care of us.

My mother and father were a very popular couple in our neighborhood, always getting together with



others, planning trips, cookouts, and parties. I remember Mama going to get all my friends and taking us all out to Great America. It's crazy that I can't even think of a time that my mom was even sick or in pain unless she was just good at hiding those kind of things from us.

In her younger days, my mom would walk everywhere she needed to get to just so she could run into her friends and family. In other words, she kept an eye out, making sure everyone was OK.

My parents were married 42 years. I stand really proud of that. According to my memory, I was the only one out of 16 friends of mine to have a mother and father under the same roof. My mom took pride in being married and raising us up well. She always said that she had done her best and that we will still make our own decisions one day.

I'm the baby of the family, and my mama spoiled me from day one. I remember Mom and Dad would dispute about how she spoiled me, and she would say in her defense, "You can't spoil a baby." My dad never had a response to that. I saw my mom grow in age over the years. I remember a lot about this great lady that I will never forget. Above all, she loved her family, and she loved her friends and neighbors. Even though she had flaws, like everyone else, inside her heart was pure strength, courage, will power, and lots and lots of love.



The Foundation of My Family **By El-Rasheedah Wilson**

I want to say that I have a lot of women in my life that I could write about that are courageous, but I'll take this time to



...speak about my grandmother. My grandmother is the foundation of my family. She is the only grandparent that I have still living. My grandma is courageous to me because she has been through so much in her life but is still strong. She is the most beautiful person inside and out. Since the first time I laid eyes on her, I saw strength and power and felt love. She has some skills, that lady.

My grandmother is a very family-oriented person who believes family comes first. She takes care of us all and gets into us what she needs to. I used to tell my friends stories about my grandmother, and they didn't believe me until they met her. Now they know the same things I was taught and talked about.

My grandmother still lives in Chicago so I don't see her as much as I would like, but I try to instill her teaching into my daughter.

My grandmother is a Muslim and has been an active member for as long as I can remember. She was a teacher at an Islamic school for girls in Chicago and took her children as well. She was and is still a very dedicated person to her peers. My grandma sat with a lot of famous people who were with the Nation of Islam. She taught her grandchildren early on about our religion and instilled in us great values.

My grandmother faced a lot of controversy in her life because she was her own person. She had her own beliefs and goals. She faced her problems and made sure her family was OK. She always stood strong in whatever she did and fought for her rights. My grandma is 86 years old, still taking care of her family and still a member of the Islamic Society. She is very courageous in my eyes.



The Family's Glue **By Lewis Black**

My great grandmother is the woman that I think was the strongest that I ever met in my life. She was a great cook, the glue to our family, and an advocate to her church who made sure everybody around was too.

She fully believed in her religion, felt that God knows all and sees all, and felt that faith and prayers will help guide the way to the light of good. When I was a child, I saw what she felt then felt what she believed. But I didn't understand what it was that I was feeling until I got much older, about in my twenties. I think that without her and her guidance, I wouldn't be the person that I turned out to be. I loved my grandmother to no end.

She would do anything for me no matter how late it was because she knew I loved to eat. Don't even get me started on the grub. Oh, my lord, sweet heavens! The food was so good that I can taste things that she made for me years ago. She made it with that southern love. I've even picked up some of her skills when in the kitchen. My favorite is her dressing from Thanksgiving and Christmas. She rolls her sleeves up and gets into it.

Georgia Thomas was her name; she was born in Greenville, Mississippi on March 10, 1911 in the midst of the transition of slavery to liberty. I think the condition of the South in those times made her into the strong woman my family and I have witnessed. That energy had circulated down to all of us even if you weren't related to her by DNA. She had something like a gravitational pull to her that just brought people around. That's why she was the glue. All family events were because of her, not because of holidays but because we knew time was



getting close. We knew then we wouldn't have that guidance, so we cherished it. It's been harder without her, but still we stay together strong and still get together because of Mrs. Georgia Thomas.



A Fighter for Education
By Nancy Wambua

In older generations in Africa, men had the power to control everyone and everything in their marriage. The women were supposed to listen and follow their instructions without complaint, whether good or bad. My grandmother succeeded through her marriage and through hard work by making sure that all her four kids had what they needed and were able to go to school.

When my grandmother was married, society accepted that women were supposed to do all the household chores, take care of their kids and farm animals, and take good care of their own husbands. My grandmother worked so hard with determination of taking her kids to school because her husband did not care whether they would be able to go to school or not.

In those days, there was no free education, even at the lower level. My grandmother started to save the money little by little so when the time came for them to go to school, she did not have much problem even though her husband did not



pay a cent or support her decision to send them to school.

With the money that she had saved, she was able to take them to school. She continued working even harder to be able to take good care

of them so they could complete their studies. They were so bright at school that they all made my grandmother proud. They had succeeded in their lives through education and the help of my grandmother. She set a good example to many.



Remarkable Courage
By Carrie Llerena Sesma

My woman of courage is my mother, Linda Sue Morgan. She was born in Madison, Wisconsin, on August 1, 1950 to Arleen Stalheim of Norway and George Morgan of England.

My mom's parents divorced when she was younger. Her abusive, alcoholic father did not approve of her relationship with a black man, my father, so he disowned her and didn't support her when she had me. My father died two months before I was born, so my mother was pretty much on her own. My father's mother took her in until she got a place with a girlfriend. My mother always made sure I spent time with my father's family.

My mother had me at 18 years old. Then at 20 she had my sister, and finally she had my other sister at 23. Being a single parent was not easy for her. She had to work all the time, find babysitters, or rely on an abusive boyfriend, pay all bills, and take care of us no matter what was going on. Mom made it look so easy because we rarely knew she struggled. We celebrated everything: birthdays, holidays, weekends, achievements, and company visits. We children had everything we wanted: bikes, toys, pets, clothes, support with our hobbies, and all the hugs and kisses. My mother was giving her last over and over, despite how many times someone tried to break her spirit. Her energy never died. She always helped people, and she always laughed and played.

My mother had hard times that we've had to endure with her: physical and mental abuse by her father, and later bad relationship after bad relationship, having to suddenly pack us up and

leave our own home in the middle of the night in fear for our lives. Even through broken bones and black eyes, she still loved. She loved us, her family, our friends,

taking us on vacations she saved up for, helping out when bills needed to be paid, or opening her house to anyone in need.

At age 59 my mother got breast cancer, which scared the life out of me and everyone else. We couldn't believe how such a remarkable woman could have such luck. Not once did she show fear. She worried for our feelings and helped us through her illness. She went through two surgeries and four years of chemo, lost her beautiful long, thick hair, yet she still continued to be there for us, giving us gifts and laughter.

Now she is cancer free, just bought her first home, bought a new car, and is getting married.

I thank God for my mother, Linda Sue Morgan. She has the courage to love even if she's been hurt, laugh until she wets herself, dance like nobody's watching, sing karaoke like her life depends on it, and never give up on her children.



discovered she had some hearing loss. She graduated high school, junior college, and the university with a degree in teaching with certification in special education. She accomplished all of that without any assistance for disabled people.

Beverly substitute taught for several years. She finally landed a kindergarten class, the grade when children begin to learn the fundamentals of reading. Beverly was diagnosed with MS after many years of teaching. She went on to get married, have a baby, and get her Master's degree while working as a full-time teacher. The MS finally forced her to retire after 33 years of teaching kindergarten.

The principal said such nice things about Beverly at her retirement party. She spoke about her dedication how she showed up to work every day dragging her leg down the hall. She came prepared, and she got results. The principal told us that when parents came to enroll their child in school, they would request that their child be placed in Ms. Beverly King's class because kids coming out of her class can read. Beverly also received several awards: Teacher of Excellence, Best Teacher of the Year, and Perfect Attendance. Beverly was strong and persistent. She pushed to accomplish everything she set out to do and never complained.



An Award-Winning Aunt By Michelle Reams

My father's sister Beverly is a woman whose will to succeed helped her to overcome many obstacles. My aunt had a hard time learning to read. She tried to get help from her brothers and sisters, but they didn't have time. She went to her father every day to bug him (his words) to help her read. My grandfather did help but under protest. When Beverly was around eight years old, the family



Never Stop Striving By Eunice Conley

Everybody loves Dorothy! Mrs. Dorothy Elizabeth Bell Conley is my granny. She is an extremely gifted as well as benevolent woman of courage who overcame obstacles like racial injustice, gender inequality, and the demands of being the young wife of a soldier at a very hard time to be a Negro in this nation.

Dorothy is the eldest of two children from the

union of James and Marguerite (Larkin) Bell. Her mother died early on in her youth, and she and her younger sister were then raised by their father. Music was one of the ways of dealing with the loss of her mother. Because of the racial climate at that time, being a Negro taking music lessons was a hardship. Not to be deterred because it was her dream, Dorothy and her little sister had to walk to the teacher's home after chores and cross a "whites only" section of the park along the way to piano lessons. The white children would chase them, beat and spit on them, and call them names. On their return trip their father would accompany them to protect them along the way home after work. At that time they had a word of mouth rule for any type of gathering, especially for any type of learning other than schools, which at that time were segregated in Montgomery. Dorothy lived in the most prejudiced city, but she would make it out through her perseverance, determination, and education! At the age of five she started her public school education, and then at 16 years she graduated and started college at Tuskegee Institute University, where she met Booker Conley. Still working on her talents with music, at age 20 she graduated with her Bachelors of Science Degree in Education. At 21 she married Booker Conley, and he was off to fight in WWII.

Originally a stay-at-home mother of four children, she as an oldest child was responsible for most of the cooking and child rearing so she was no stranger to domestic work. Now with four small children and a husband off to war, she had to make it work with very little for money. She made meals, sewed all the family's clothing, and learned to drive for her family. Since Booker was drafted after he had started at college, when the war was over he returned to school. Dorothy decided that she wanted to get out and become active in her community, to make a difference in the lives of the people in her community. Because she had no teaching job offers, she took typing lessons and tried secretarial work. In 1958, she then applied at the Veterans hospital and wasn't chosen, so upon

applying at the college she got a job working for one of the University Deans as a secretary of student records. She continued at the university, where she later retired as the Registrar after more than 35 years.

Family relationships are very important to Dorothy. She continues to sacrifice and encourage her growing family. She has 13 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. We range in age from 41 years to three years of age. As the eldest grandchild, I have been around for a lot of this encouragement and nurturing. At her heart my grandmother has been involved in my upbringing and fostered the importance of education in life and to never stop striving for your dreams. She motivates me to keep persevering through adversity. "Dot," as she is known to those who have gotten to know her, has been in many social organizations as well as civic organizations portraying the traits that are most valuable to her: honesty, integrity, and love of self. She is most courageous for her quest in attaining her Master's degree. She was in her fifties, and she graduated at the same commencement ceremony as her eldest son. She reminds me of Emily's mother in her profound love for her husband of 65 years. Theirs is a love that transcends time.





