



*Going Down
Memory Lane*

By: Desiree' M. Slaughter

GOING DOWN MEMORY LANE

BY: DESIREE' M. SLAUGHTER

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This book is dedicated to my family, and me.

Mom, you are my shining star and my inspiration in everything that I do. Hank, Heleshia and Ashley, with ya'll, my life is never boring. Dontez, I may not see much of you, but I do love you. Dad, you have had a very different influence on my life, you have guided me towards what to look for when I set my goals. To my grandparent, aunts, uncles, cousins and other family members, you all have had your own special impacts in my life and in shaping this beautiful, college bound young lady before you all today. Finally, to my step-father, Anthony, you have truly had an impact on my life as well. You have done so much good in my life, and I thank you for that.

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WARNING:

**THIS BOOK IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE; GOOD AND BAD. I HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO POUR
OUT THE HIDDEN SECRETS AND MY UNFORGETTABLE PAST. WHEN READING THIS BOOK
TAKE HEED TO THE FACT THAT WITHOUT ANY OF THESE EVENTS
IN MY LIFE, I WOULD NOT BE THE WONDERFUL, HIGH-SPIRITED, SUCCESSFUL PERSON, AND
YOUNG WOMAN THAT IS HERE BEFORE YOU TODAY!**

THANK YOU,

DESIREE' MONIQUE SLAUGHTER

PHASE 1: BUDDING

“Childhood is a promise that is never kept.”

~Ken Hill

Time Warp: Hit and Run

My mom, Angelesia Thorington, and my dad, Henry Slaughter Jr., met in August of 1987. They were both over my Auntie Henrietta's house for dinner. My mother was coming out of the basement, and my dad was standing in the hallway, talking to his brother, and when he saw my mom, the first thing he said was, "Ay, Wayne, who is that bitch?" (*Thank God that my mom didn't hear him.*)

"Oh, dat's Mrs. Henrietta's niece," my Uncle Duane replied.

"Damn," my dad replied at the time.

They both attended Highland Park High School. When they met, my mom was entering her junior year in high school, and my dad was entering his senior year in high school. Like any other high school sweethearts, they had their teenage drama, from the girls on dad to the guys on mom, fights, and the usual parent interference, and that drama was a major part of their relationship. Through all of the drama, my mom and dad stuck it out for over seven years. They dated from 1987 to 1994. Throughout the course of time that they were together, they had me and the twins. They had me in 1990, and they had the twins in 1993.

They separated in 1994 because they were having problems, and my mom found out that my dad was cheating on her with another woman named DonNika, so she called it quits. After that, my dad was never the same. Once my mom and dad separated, my dad married DonNika. DonNika wasn't all bad, she was actually pretty nice to us, especially when we visited. Once we went to live with them that is where the real problems began. They had a son together in 2000. Once we moved back with my mom though, things got better.

Birth

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.*

- William Wordsworth

My Birth

“Waaaaa,” I cry out loudly; a cry that let everyone around me know that I have arrived. I had put my mother, Angelesia M. Thorington, through nineteen hours and thirty minutes of labor and so much more. Most of this was confusion, because during her pregnancy she prepared to have a baby boy. When she got her ultrasound, the doctor told her that she was having a boy. He made this error because my umbilical cord was wrapped between my legs. So, everyone took the doctor’s word for it, all accept my cousin Donna.

“Lesa, you ain’t havin no boy, you havin a girl, I promise you that!” she would always tell my mother.

“He is the doctor; he is trained in this stuff Donna. How you know she ain’t havin’ a boy anyway?” Everyone would say to her, but no matter what no one told her, she stuck to her opinion. She believed that with all of her heart. She even brought me a pink Easter dress with a lace ruffle pattern around the bottom. When I was finally born, everyone was shocked. No one could believe that Donna was right. Once I was able to go home, I had to wear that pink, frilly dress home to let everyone know that I was a girl. The worst part was that when my mom and everyone finally found out she was having a girl it was too late, because all of the welcome home signs and decorations were blue and had “Welcome home, baby boy”, my cake read, “Welcome home Henry Lee,” even all of my gifts were for a boy.

~

In my younger years, I can remember several people in my family telling me that, because I was mistakenly identified as a boy, they thought that I would be the biggest tomboy

that they would know, but that wasn't all true. When I was little, in my toddler years, I was a very prissy girl. I hated to get dirty. I would literally dress up to go outside and sit on the porch and watch the other kids play, and when they would ask me to play with them, I would turn my nose to the air and reply, "I don't want to play with ya'll dirty kids." then I would cross my legs and just sit there until I was ready to go back inside. That phase quickly came to an end. The older that I got, the more boyish that I became; especially when I started playing sports. I was very rough in all aspects, but as people say, 'everything in life repeats itself; it's called the circle of life'. That is the story of my life, because now, I am once again that prissy, sassy girl that can be boyish when I play sports.

Origin of My Name

“Mom, why did you name me Desiree’, where did you get that from?” I ask my mom in curiosity.

“I didn’t. Your dad m=named you Desiree’, I wanted to name you Delecia Monay.”

“Oh,” I say, beginning to wonder, “Delecia Monay,” I mumble to myself. “Hey Ma, so why didn’t you name me that?”

“Because yo daddy didn’t like that name, because it was after a really good friend of mine, and he thought that you should have you ‘own’ name.”

“Oh,” I say as I turn to walk away and go to call my dad to question him as well.

~

The phone rings at least two to three times before he answers. “Hello, Hank speaking,” he says in a blank tone.

“Hey, Dad, this is Desi. I just wanted to know why you named me Desiree’.”

“Um, I named you Desiree’ because I desired you. You are my desire, so, I had to name you something that would symbolize that, and Desiree’ means desire, so I named you Desiree’.

Plus, yo mama wanted to name you some stupid shit after one of her friends, I think Delecia or some shit, and I told her when she get her own child she can name them that!”

“Oh,” I said, pondering my name. “Well, okay, imma call you right back, I gotta go n look somethin’ up, okay.”

“Alright, well you can call me back, imma be at work for a minute.”

“Yep,” I said, hanging up the phone.

~

Once I hung up the phone, I went over to the computer and looked up my name. In my search, I surfed several different websites. According to all of these sites, my name comes from Greek and Latin roots. It states that the boy's and girl's name Desiree \d(e)-si-rée\ is pronounced *DEZ-a-ray*. It is of French origin, and its meaning is "much desired" or "the one desired". The Puritans used **Desire** as a given name. Desiree is a name most common among African-Americans and Christians in English speaking countries. A Desiree is a red-skinned potato. It is bred from the cross (Urgenta x Depesche) made by ZPC in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, in 1951. Desiree has been one of the 1,000 most popular names in the United States for 6 decades since 1880, with an outstanding 1,196 per million births in 1990.

~

My quest to learn more about my name was successful. I learned about the origin of my name, but even in doing that, I know how to define "this" Desiree! This Desiree' is: Outgoing, educated, beautiful, athletic, prosperous, destined, black, cared for, loved, and so much more.

MOST VIVID MEMORY

I'm sitting in the hospital, playing with the beads in the waiting room. This small, crowded room is stuffy, hot and smelly. I'm just sitting and waiting for that moment when the doctor or someone come and tell me I can see my brand new baby brother and sister. I am so anxious I can hardly think straight. I can't believe I wasn't the only child anymore. Thinking of this moment brings back the memory of my mother telling me about the time I was born, when my Uncle Dre told her to take me back to the hospital because he was her baby, not me. Oh my God, I can't believe there's gonna be some new babies in the house.... I wonder how noisy it's gonna be or how many presents I'll get on Christmas now, I'm thinking to myself.

When they finally let me see my new baby brother and sister, something was wrong. We were all standing behind this huge plexi-glass window watching the doctors cut a small incision right above her belly button, all the while wondering, what are they doing, are they hurting her? The operation wasn't very long, and then when they were done they let us know that we could take them home now. Time passed by very quickly. Before I knew it the twins were getting huge, but they were still only months old. "*Soumo Wrestlers*" is how they were described, compared to me.

On this hot summer day, my mother is in the kitchen fixing food for two babies, two adults, and a two-year-old. The twins are in the next room sitting in their matching baby swings, the room is a pale, chipped away blue with a dark brown wooden dining table set sitting dead smack in the middle. Among other things, there are some toys scattered around, chairs that don't belong, and a lot of baby stuff from the shower. My room is a washed out white room

with many blue toys, blankets, sheets and clothes, a tiny white TV, and a small tea table sitting three of my favorite teddy bears. I'm sitting in my room playing with my toys when my momma calls me into the kitchen, "Desi, take these juices to the twins, and hold it for Heleshia," she said.

Instantly, I caught an attitude. It feels like one of those "I'm a spoiled brat and I want my way" kind of attitudes. The reason I am mad is because even though I am older, I wanted a juice to, and my mom forgot about mine at that moment, and on top of that Heleshia just won't stop spitting her juice back on me as I'm feeding it to her. So, after a few minutes, I decide to pull up a chair and sit in front of her swing and try to feed her the juice again. She was making me so mad spitting the juice back on me that I hit the bottom of her bottle, making her cry. I smirked, and I went to get my mom.

"What happened Desiree', why is she crying?" my mom asked with a confused look on her face.

"She tried to grab the bottle, and I didn't let her and accidentally hit it", I answered.

As my mom soothed Tootie, I proceeded to get me a juice from the fridge, and watch her feeling both guilty and satisfied.

A SCENT THAT TAKES ME BACK...

The scent that I smelled reminded me of peanut butter and jelly. When I was little, my grandma, aunts, and cousins would always say to me, "Desiree', you just ain't normal girl." They would frequently tell me this because out of all of the kids, I never ate Hot Cheetos, Hot Sauce, or Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwiches. I would only eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches if they were separated. If the peanut butter and jelly touched, I wouldn't eat it. To everyone else, eating peanut butter and jelly separate was weird, as well as not eating Hot Sauce and Hot Cheetos, so I was considered the awkward one. I guess the taste of peanut butter and jelly together smelled funny, and if something didn't smell right, then I wouldn't eat it (I guess I'm a picky eater!). I remember snack time at my Grandma Lois's house, we always had fun. One time, at my Grandma's house, at snack time, everybody wanted peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and she didn't have any bread. Since she didn't feel like going to the store, she went looking for something else for us to eat. In her cabinets, she saw some Ritz and Saltine crackers, along with the peanut butter and jelly, and since that's what everybody wanted, that's what she gave us. On the plate, there were three different sets of peanut Butter and Jelly Crackers. One third of the crackers were just peanut butter, one third was just jelly, and the majority of the entire plate, the last third, was peanut butter and jelly. Once we all tasted her "new snack" we just couldn't get enough of them. We wanted them all of the time. I can remember being in the house, just me and my cousin on this occasion, and its rainy outside, dark, cold, and boring. So my cousin goes into the basement to grab a couple of our favorite movies (three to be exact), whilst I go into the kitchen and fix our snack (peanut butter

and jelly cracker sandwiches) and make two huge glasses of Kool-Aid. That night was great! We stayed up late, ate snacks, laughed, and when it was all over, we slept, we were dead to the world, in the middle of the floor in my Auntie Weena's house. It was great! I will never forget that night. I guess peanut butter and jelly cracker sandwiches can also make snack time a happy time!!!

A Bittersweet Moment

When I think of bittersweet moments, my dad is the very first thing that comes to mind. I experienced a tremendous amount of stress with him; more than I could imagine possible. My dad was great at one point, but then he just turned on us. He hasn't been the same. I can honestly say that I do love my father with all of my heart, but I will never learn to trust him with anything. It's just not possible. No matter what the situation is, he always would fail us. I can't rely on him at all. I will always hope that one day, I could look at this and say that it was just a phase, but this phase has been occurring for way too long. Sometimes I really wish that I was lying, but I know that I'm not. I know that the Lord wouldn't put me in any situation that he knew that I couldn't handle, I just wish that he didn't trust me so much, because I know that for the time being, I will not have the relationship that I desire with my father.

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON

“Stay strong for your sister and brother”, she would always say. “You have to show them that everything is going to be okay, soon.” Those words gave me chills, with a surge of confidence and responsibility. At that moment, I realized that this is what I needed to do. Right now, times are hard. Sometimes I just don’t know what to do. We are going through so much, especially with us moving ‘n all.

When it all happened, it was so sudden that this was the only alternative. No one ever thought that it would lead to this. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was a regular day, and we all decided to walk to the corner store. There, we just brought a couple of snacks and headed back home. As soon as we returned, I remember the look on everyone’s faces. Their looks had a mixture of anger, curiosity, relief and fear. I was shocked!

“The house is on fire, Lesa”, my grandmother screamed followed by a huge gasp.

“Did you leave anything on?”

“No, why would I do that, Momma”, she yelled with anger and fear in her voice.

“I’m just asking girl, don’t yell at me. Desi, keep them here, ya’ll don’t go nowhere,” my grandma said in a hurry to get in the house.

“Okay,” I said while cooing the twins. I just couldn’t believe this was happening to us.

My mom and grandma walked in the house and walked around, checking everything for a few minutes, then they returned and told me to bring them in and sit on the couch. As we walked in, looking around, we noticed the terrible mess. It was dirty, burnt, and chalky smelling. After a while of waiting, my mom gathered up some clothes, and we left for Grandma’s house.

We didn't stay there long before getting dropped off at my Dad's house.

Before she left, my mom said, "Desi, ya'll are gonna stay here for a while until I get things together. I will call ya'll everyday. If anything goes wrong, tell me, 'n I will come 'n get ya'll, cuz I ain't gonna let nothing bad happen to ya'll. Okay?" she said in her Alabama accent.

From that moment on, I knew that I had to grow up. I have never been a real "child", but it was worth it to protect and watch over my siblings.

Now, just thinking back on when my Dad was the "Best Dad Ever" is crazy cuz now, he's just not the same since he got remarried. I used to love coming to visit my Daddy, but now, since we live with him, all I want to do is go to my room or outside for some fresh air, to be away from him. We aren't his first priority anymore, so now it's just terrible. What would make him do this to us? Why would he hurt us the way he did? I wonder to myself quite often why he takes all of his anger from work out on us.

LOST & FOUND

I am sitting in the car with my mom, sisters, and brother, slowly fading in and out of my sleep. We hit a bump in the road and the car made a quick jolt before returning to its original stride. "Ma, where are we going?" I ask drowsily.

"We are going to your dad's house." she says in a sense of sorrow.

"Why?" I ask in confusion.

"Because ya'll gonna stay the night."

"Oh," I say, "Where are you gonna go?" I say looking at her with sleepy eyes.

"I'm gonna go over your grandma house for tonight. Don't worry Desi, I'm gonna come back and get ya'll, okay?"

"Yeah," I sigh, ending the conversation, wanting to say more, but ignoring the urge, I sit back in the seat, still fighting my sleep.

~

When we arrived at my dad's house, my mom woke everyone up and got our bags out of the trunk of the car as we began to walk towards the back door, up the slightly inclined, dark driveway lit by the headlights on the car. We rang the doorbell... there was a short pause. As I reached up to ring the bell once more, my dad appeared. I saw his head through the tiny, rectangular window, high upon the door. He dragged sleepily about opening the door for us to enter. Once we stepped into the house, Hank and Heleshia went into the basement to put up their coats and shoes. (That was one of the many rules that my dad had in his house. We couldn't walk on his oft-white carpet with our shoes, and we must wear house shoes at all

times.) My mom placed the three of our bags on the floor as Hand and Heleshia head on down the creaky, grey painted, wooden steps leading to the basement. As I turned to follow suit, my mom put her hand on my shoulder and said, "Hey Ray, come here for a second."

"Huh." I said, turning to face her.

"Ya'll gonna stay here and live with your dad for a little while, okay." she said in a hurtful tone, "and as soon as I get myself together and get the new house, ya'll gonna come and live with me in the new house, alright?" she asked in approval.

"Okay," I said with a puzzled look on my face. With that, she hugged all three of us and turned to walk out of the desert sardine lights on the car fading away as the car pulled out of the driveway. I just stood there. At that moment, I knew in my heart that nothing in my life would ever be the same.

~

It is 8:29 am, on a Saturday morning. I am asleep in bed, on the top of me and Tootie's bunked beds. "Bleep, Bleep, Bleep" the alarm clock disturbs the room as it strikes 8:30am. I jump up; nearly falling off of the ladder that is connected to both bunks as I drowsily climb down to silence the loud bleeping noise. Once I am down, I walk over to the alarm clock and move the switch to the off position. After the room was back to its original, undisturbed state, I turned to go back to bed. As I walk towards the bed, a sense of excitement takes me over. *I can't go back to sleep now I think to myself. I might as well get ready now so that when momma comes to pick us up, I can be ready to go.* So, I start to get ready. I get my clothes packed and ironed; I shower, wash my face, and brush my teeth; and I clean up my chores. "Now there is no reason that I won't be ready to go when it's time," I say as I m walking back

upstairs to the room where me and my sister sleep at night. Right before I make it to the room door, I hear my dad and DonNika moving around the room. They're up now. Now that I know that they are up, I go to wake up the twins.

~

We lived with my dad for about 3-4 years. There were many hardships during those years too. Nothing was ever totally bad, but it was also never totally good. With us only being toddlers, we really thought that everything was good and that it would be much better. Our remedy in our times of sorrow was our mother. Whenever we felt sad, hurt, or down, we knew that we could write, call, or visit our mom and feel tons better. The major problem that arose while we were with our father was child abuse. The problem was that he would whip us with extension cords. I know, I know, for some people, that may seem like nothing, because other parents used to do just the same back in the day, but it is considered child abuse when 2-4 year olds are getting whippings with extension cords. Those whippings caused me several bruises and scares; ones that I will probably have and remember for a life time. Once it started, it became a constant affair; one which required me to reach out to other outside people to get help, along with the guidance and help of my mother. The reason that only I went to the counselor on a regular basis, is because I got the most whippings; not because I was bad or anything, but because I was the oldest, and most of the time I took up for my little sister and brother. It hurt me to see him whip them with the extension cord, so if they were about to get in trouble, I would just say that it was me and I would take the whipping for them. They were only asked to show up to the counselor's office with me when it was really necessary, otherwise I tried my best to leave them out of it and handle the situation on my own.

~

“Go to your counselor, and tell her exactly what’s going on. Make sure that she knows everything. Keep a journal with all of the events, even if you have to write an entry every time you talk to her.”

“Okay, I will, but will that get us to come and live with you?”

“Yes, it will, but only if you do exactly as I say, but don’t tell your dad, okay?”

“Okay.”

So, I did just that. Whatever she said do, I did. I went to the counselors’ office, every single time we got hit. Because I listened well, we were able to document every event, and if it got really bad, the school would call Child Protective Services to come and pick us up from school, so that we could be handled. Child Protective Services picked us up only twice, but it only took those two times to help build a case. I remember one time that we were in a lady’s office at Child Protective Services, we all got teddy bears, and they called my grandma Linda to come and get us, after my dad hadn’t showed up on time. When she got there she was furious, but no sooner than she got there, my dad showed up too. They went into another room to talk, and all I can really remember from the conversation was that they yelled very loudly, and I saw her slap my dad across the face. That was a shocker to me.

~

The court date was a very big day for us. We were all very scared of having to go back and live with my dad. I had to once again, be the strong one, for my sister and brother. By the time it was time for the court hearing, it was over. “Ma, what happened, where are we gonna go?” I asked her.

“Ya’ll are gonna go with me, your dad didn’t want to proceed with the hearing, so the judge ruled in my favor.”

“So, we get to go home with you?”

“Yep,”

“So, he just gave up on us,”

“Yep, he said that he didn’t want to go through with the hearing.” She said with a blank expression, “Come on, let’s go home now.” With that, we left, and we have been living with my mother ever since.

Living With Mom

I was relieved being able to go home with my mom. That was the greatest feeling that I had experienced. The whole while that we have been living with her has truly made an impact on all of our lives. At times, when we're in really big trouble, living with dad always pops up. I know that, in a sense, we had at one point taken my mom's kindness for granted, because she let us do and get away with so much trying to give us back the childhood that we never had with my dad, but I can truly say that I Love her, and I wouldn't even think twice about leaving her. There is nowhere else that I would rather be than with my mom, because I know that no one loves me the way she does, and no one will take care of me the way that she does, and that will never change, not one bit!

When I Grow Up, I Wanna Be...

When I think of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) the most dominant aspects are Math and Engineering; I am an aspiring engineer, and I really love math. Math is, and has been, my favorite subject all throughout school, and I have aspired to be an Engineer since a very early age, since about fifth grade. I was first introduced to computers around that time, and since then, I have always known that I wanted to be an Engineer. No matter how many times I have changed the type of Engineer that I want to be, that would best fit all of my interests, it has always remained constant that I want to be an Engineer. I've researched several different fields of engineering from Architectural to Graphic Design and CADD until I found my current interest of Civil Engineering.

Something Done Right the Second Time: Softball MVP

Softball is a very important part of my life. For me, softball is more than just a sport, or a game. If I could, I would play softball everyday, all day. Now, don't get me wrong, I do love the other sports that I play, but softball means so much more, although each sport does have its perks. I first started playing softball when I was ten years old, for a team called The Lady Blue Jays. I didn't know anything about softball; I really didn't even know what softball was. When I first asked about softball, I was a camper at a summer day camp that I went to for about two summers straight, called Boysville PAL. One day, while we were in the gym for free time, my friend Jasmine Sharp and I were talking about what we would be doing later on that day.

"I'm not going to really be doing anything because I have softball practice today and tomorrow." Jasmine said.

"Oh, what is softball? How do you play?" I asked in curiosity.

"It's just like baseball, but it has a bigger ball and some of the rules are a little different."

"Oh, that sounds fun, I wanna play!"

"Just go to Coach Mac and Coach Wanda for all the information."

"Oh okay, imma ask my momma too." So, off to their office we went.

~

"Coach Mac, Coach Wanda, I wanna play softball too."

"You do?"

“Yeah, what do I have to do?”

“Um okay, well you’ll need to tell your mom to see me before ya’ll leave, okay?”

“Okay I will,” I said turning to walk back over to Jasmine.

“Hey Jaz, they said tell my momma to see them before we leave so that we can get me together.” I explained in excitement.”

~

“Hey Ma, can I play softball with Jasmine?” I ask hurriedly.

“Huh, Ray you wanna play softball?” she asked with a look of confusion.

“Yeah, I already asked Coach Wanda and Coach Mac, and they said to just have you to come see them before we leave and they’ll get me situated.” I explained, rarely stopping to breathe.

“Slow down, Desiree’.”

“Ma, I really wanna play, p-l-eeeeeeeeaaa-se, say yes!”

“Um, okay... I guess, come on let’s go and see.”

“Okay!” I shrieked in excitement. That’s when softball became everything to me.

~

My very first game was both fun and awkward all at the same time. It was the fourth inning, and I was on second base. Although I had been doing really well in practices, I was still very naïve and lost in certain aspects of the game. Cassandra was up to bat, and she was one ball away from a full count. Her next swing would determine my next move; either back to the dugout to start fielding, or straight to third base, and being one step closer to home. The pitcher threw the ball, Cassandra swung, and the ball made it to the second baseman.

Cassandra ran all the way to first. The second baseman held the ball to hold the play. Once she got ready to throw the ball, she dropped it (in any other situation, this would be my cue to run, but not then), and me, being very naïve and nice at the wrong time, stepped off of my base and handed her the ball. She looked at me like I was retarded. I didn't know I was doing anything wrong until I heard my coach yell, "Desiree', what are you doing?" I was shocked. "Girl get on yo base." She yelled to me, so, I quickly jumped back on my base. Although we won that game, the next practice was really intense, because they wanted to make sure everything was clear before our next game. It all had to be done right because we had a few more games until the championships.

~

It's our championship game. We've all been working really hard to get to this point. Coach Wanda has lined everyone up in the dugout to let everyone know our fielding positions and our batting order. This game, I would be playing center field.

As the game went on, we kept the lead off and on, but once it got to the very last inning and our team was fielding was when the game got really intense. The last batter from the other team stepped up to the plate. She got in position. Jasmine threw the ball. The batter got ready to swing. "Ball, full count," the umpire yelled. It was all down to that next pitch. Jasmine threw the ball again, and the batter swung. She hit it really far. It came out towards me. I wasn't paying any attention; I was talking to another teammate with my glove open on my shoulder. "Desiree', heads up." the entire infield was screaming; I wasn't really listening. *Thud*, the ball fell right in my glove. We had won the championship game, but, because I was talking, I was confused. While everyone else was jumping up and down screaming, I was trying

to figure out where they were telling me to throw the ball. "Bring it in, bring it in," Coach Wanda called. As soon as I got to the dugout, every one of my teammates jumped on me screaming. Then, Coach Wanda and Coach Mac made the announcement, "Desiree' made the winning catch, everyone, congratulate your new MVP." she said patting me on the back, "everyone sign the game ball for her." Right then, everyone signed the ball, and we took our team photo. That was my clumsy moment gone right.

PHASE 2: SALAD DAYS

“To an adolescent, there is nothing
More embarrassing than a parent.”

~Dave Barry

MILESTONES: FAMILY

MOTHER

Sumita Datta

Mother is the one who spends sleepless nights to make you sleep

Mother is she who understands you from the very deep...

Mother is she who will laugh and cry along with you...

Mother is she who teaches how to drink, eat and how to chew...

Mother is she who scolds you for your good

Mother is she who will support you in any mood...

Mother is she who accepts you in any situation...

Mother is she who motivates you for your every little creation...

Mother is she who gives you blessings at every step...

Mother is she who is always worried for your fate...

Mother is she who can catch you if at any moment you lie...

Mother is she who never wants to see her baby cry...

Mother is she who is different from all other...

Mother is she who is never comparable to any other...

FATHER

F is for firm.

A is for absent.

T is for time.

H is for hurt.

E is for even.

R is for repeat.

SIBLINGS

Ying Yang Twins

My Brother's Keeper feat. Anwar

U.S.A., UNITED STATES OF ATLANTA

[CHORUS]

They don't know how far back that we go (we go)

From riding skates, to riding on 24s

From off the block hustling, to rockin shows

We done seen many bumps in the road

But we still remain, still in the game

Never worry bout them haters, that will never change

And I put this on everything babe

I am my brother's keeper

[VERSE: KAIN]

Listen D-roc, I know you think I don't care for ya,

but at the drop of a dime I'll be there for ya,

and anybody want to see us apart we need to get rid of they ass man and that's from the
heart....

D-roc is the ying,

Kain is the yang,
but without the both of us we ain't got a damn thang.

Its me and my brother,
my brother and me,
all that you see on TV.

FIRST BOYFRIEND/CRUSH

Although mom doesn't know, I have had many "boyfriends" in my day, but my first real boyfriend, and also my first love, was in 7th grade at Chandler Park Academy Philip. His name was Darvize Rutherford. The first time we went together there was a huge commotion. I can see it now as if I were reliving the whole thing.....

As I'm sitting at the table, in a lunch room filled with chattering, bustling, and restless teens just like me, waiting on the scheduled assembly to begin, I'm getting restless really quick, so I decide to move to another table and chill with my friends, who are mainly boys. While I'm sitting and making conversation, out of nowhere, a fist lunges around for the side of me and pounds me on the arm. "Ouch!" I scream in pain. "Stop hitting me like I'm a nigga, Brian." I say with a crazy look on my face.

"Awl girl, shut up. You can take it." he says with laughter in his voice. "For you to be a girl, you are too cocky anyway. You hit like a nigga, so I can't go too easy on you."

"You know what," I say with a smirk on my face, "forget dat, I just ain't gonna play with you no more."

"light man, what eva you say." he says as I agree with an "okay let's get it over with" type of attitude.

"So, Darvize, why are you sitting over there all quiet and what not?" I ask

"Huh, oh man nothin', just sitting here bored ass hell." He says nonchalantly.

Even though he wasn't saying much the whole conversation, there is just something attractive about him. So, I get up and move next to him and continue to talk. For some reason, at that

moment, he had a lot to say while I was closer to him. Maybe he likes me to, I'm thinking to myself. Guess I'll find out sooner or later!

"Hey, Desi, can you come here for a minute?" Gail, my best friend, yells out across the room to me.

"Yep, hold that thought Darvize, I'll be right back." I say, cutting him off. I get up, and walk over to the deserted side of the lunchroom where she stands. "Hey, what's up?" I ask

"Nothing much, I just need you to do me a favor." she takes a deep breath and continues on," I like one of the boys that you are over there with and I want you to stop playing with him so much, because I have had a crush on him for a while and I trying to get with him, alright."

"Oh, but that's cool, which one?"

"I can't tell you." she says with an embarrassing look on her face.

"Gail, come on now, be fo real here. You can't ask me to stop messing around with a guy and not tell me which one it is when I'm sitting at a table with six other niggas." I say in confusion.

"Man, alright," she says with a deep sigh, "it's Darvize."

"Okay dats cool." I say as I walk away.

When I get to the table, I get put into the most awkward position. I sit down and continue to talk to Darvize, and he suddenly comes out and asks me to be his girlfriend. "Huh!" I say in shock.

"Do you want to go with me?" he says again.

"You know what, hold that thought. I'll be right back." After saying that I get up and run a couple of tables down to where Gail is sitting, with the school N.A.G.s (Nosy Ass Girls, that's

what we call them). “Gail, can you come over here, I need to talk to you for a minute?” I ask tiredly.

“Just tell me here.” she says.

“This don’t concern nobody over here so can we move away?”

“Yeah man, what ever.” she sasses.

Right then, we walk back to the little empty corner. I broke down what had happen in full detail to her. “... and then he asked me to go with him, so I came over here to let you know cuz you are my best friend, and ain’t no nigga coming between that.” I finally say. “So, what do you have to say?”

“Nothing, I don’t care. If you wanna go with him, go ahead. I don’t care.”

“Are you sure, because I can just say no (even though I really don’t want to).” I say with pity.

“Naw, I’m tight, go ahead, really I’m fine.”

“Okay” I say with relief.

I walk away and go back to the table and tell Darvize that I will go with him. Then here comes one of the NAGs saying that Toddlyn wants me. Once again, I get up to go and see what she wants. When I walk over there, Gail is crying on Toddlyn’s shoulder. Toddlyn turns around and tries to tell me off about how I’m not a good friend, because a real friend would have known that she really meant no don’t go with him, even though she said yes or she doesn’t care.

“Hold on a minute, whatever me and Gail is going through is our business, and Gail I asked you straight up, so if you had a problem you could have told me something right then and there.

You didn’t have to come over here and tell them nothing. That was the point of me pulling you to the side.” I say in disgust.

“Yeah” someone agrees from behind me. When I turn to look, I see my fake sister, Daerelle Bowens. Then she continues on to say, “and ya’ll ain’t gonna sit over here and try to check her ‘bout something that doesn’t concern you.”

“So,” I continue, “when you want to tell me what’s up, then come and talk to me.” I walk away.

That was a huge thing, but in the end, Gail and I weren’t ever cool again, and Darvize and I ended up breaking up because he felt like he was coming between me and Gail’s friendship.

Later on, after school had ended, during the summer, I and Darvize kept in touch. We even started going back together. We went together for a full three years, up until we went to different schools and not seeing each other as much, he started liking another girl and broke up with me. Even then, after that break up, we still talked and to this day, even though we don’t go together anymore, we still talk frequently. He was my first “real” boyfriend and my first love.

MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT

I am sitting at my desk, when I hear Ms. White, the administrative assistant over the loud speaker stating the announcements. "Good morning students and start of CPA-P," she greets, "today, as some of you may know we are having the Scholastic book fair. If any of you are interested in purchasing anything, notify your teacher at your class's scheduled time, after your fifth hour class, and you will be allowed to leave and go to the book fair, but you must return before the next scheduled class. If you have any other questions, you may ask your teacher." she stated as she continued on with the other announcements. Once Ms. White was completely done making all of her announcements for the day, Ms. Hurt, my science and homeroom teacher, called attention to the class ; 'Everyone quiet down and listen up, "she started," today's lesson will be about volcanoes." With that, my school day started.

~

My fifth hour class is finally here. I have been waiting all day for this time, because now, I get to go to the book fair to buy some cool books and stuff. "Who all is interested in going to the book fair to make a purchase?" Ms. Hurt asks.

"I do!" several people sing in the air.

"Okay, okay quiet down, I'm going to rephrase that. Raise your hand if you would like to go and buy something from the book fair upstairs."

"Me, me, me," echoes around the room.

"Quietly," she says. "Okay," she pauses, "Desiree, Delniece, Mariah..." she calls out the names of everyone with their hand in the air, "You all may go to the book fair, but you have

only thirty minutes before the next scheduled class comes up. Okay?" and with that, everyone went on their way to the book fair. "What are you gonna get Desiree'?" Delniece asks me as we are on our way up to the book fair.

"I really don't know. My momma gave me some money this morning, so whatever I want that is in my budget I guess."

"Oh, okay," she says, ending the conversation.

~

Once we arrived upstairs, I walked into the cafeteria to say hello to my Grandma Lois. My Grandma Lois is my mother's mother, and she works at my middle school as the first lunch assistant. The school cafeteria has brick walls that were painted an aquamarine color and about two and a half times my height. There were over two dozen lunch tables set up in two rows with a long aisle, straight down the middle of the room. The tables were an off-white color with black trim around the edges of the seats and tables. After I spoke to my Grandma, I walked straight across the cafeteria and into the area that the book fair was set up. Before I was completely through the door, I sat my books down by the doors to prevent any potential issues. I walked around the room at least three times before I actually made up my mind on what I wanted to buy, but I wasn't the only one scoping out the merchandise. There were also a couple of other girls there, walking in circles. Right then, I knew something was up, because they kept on staring me and the scholastic representatives down. After a few minutes of doing their scoping, they began to leave, but they didn't leave empty handed. They were stealing! I picked up two books, one on how to write in hieroglyphics, and the other showed different creative writing and designing techniques. Once they were really gone, I brought my two

books and I started to head downstairs. When I got downstairs, I was so afraid. There was a blue and purple, dragonfly journal with a matching, silver dragonfly charm. I remember it amongst my other notebooks. It was actually a book that I had wanted, so, because I didn't have enough money, I put it back. When I realized that I had the book, the first thing I did was ask Ms. Hurt to let me go back upstairs to return it; she said no. Once she said no, I asked to go to the bathroom a few minutes later and put the book in my locker.

~

After walking the halls for a few minutes, I turned to head back to class. As I am walking back to class, I see one of the scholastic representatives walking in my direction. She walks beside me at a rapid pace, as we are approaching Ms. Hurt's class. "Excuse me," she says as she walks past me.

"Mmm huh," I mumble, politely.

"Hello didn't your class just returned from the book fair?" she says in Ms. Hurt's direction.

"Yes," Ms. Hurt says in confusion.

"Well, I saw one of your girls steal a creative writing and design book, and we would like it to be returned now, or we will make sure that there are some consequences." she says in a calm, but aggressive manner. A silence sweeps over the room directly preceding her statement. "I don't want to have to call you out." she says with a 'last chance' look in her eye. After a few minutes of waiting, she walks over to the table that Delniece Williams, Latice Sheffield, Ashley Brooks, and I are sitting. Our table is four school desks facing each other in a

square, right in front of the TV that we had used earlier to watch a very dull movie. "Where is the book?" she asks Ashley.

"I don't know," she says back with a devious look in her eye. "Okay, you had your chance, so I am taking this to Mr. Foxworth," she says as she walks out of the room. She looks at me and we exchange looks as she turns to leave the room. Ashley starts to laugh, and the representative turns to face the door, and starts to make her way back towards us with a slight smirk on her face. She enters the classroom and she pushes back the TV stand. Everyone in the room gasps shock. "What do we have here?" she says, eying Ashley. "Come with me." she says, moving her finger. Ashley stands up and walks out of the door with a smirk across her face.

~

"Please excuse the interruption. Desiree' Slaughter, Delniece Williams, and Latice Sheffield, you are to report to the principal's office, immediately." Ms. White announces over the loudspeaker. My heart starts to race at a rapid pace. At this point, I have no clue what I'm going to do, as I get out of my chairperson items and start down the hall. It looks longer than usual to me; almost never-ending. I finally arrive at the office. Without knowing what to expect, I knock on the door. Once I hear Mr. Foxworth's deep voice project, "Come in," I enter the room. I see everyone else lined up along the wall. "Okay, now that everyone is here," he starts, "Ashley says that all of you took something also." We all look around the room at each other, "Is that true?" he asks.

"Nope," I say.

"Yeah," Latice mumbles.

Delniece says.

"Well, we are gonna go one at a time okay." he says in assurance.

"Um huh," we all say in unison.

"Well Latice why don't you go first," he says as Latice begins to explain to him and us what she stole and why. Once she was finished, he spoke again. "Okay, well you are still going to get in some trouble. You have detention for an hour and thirty minutes after school today, and you will also get call home. You may go back to class, and Desiree', you can go next." he ends.

"When I went up to the book fair to buy some stuff, I sat my books down by the door before I went in. When I got back downstairs, I had a dragonfly journal mixed in with my other books, so when Ms. Hurt told me that I couldn't go back upstairs, but she didn't know why because I didn't tell her why, so, I put the book in my locker after getting it out of Delniece's desk so I could take it back at lunch, and that's when that lady came askin' for whatever was took and I didn't say nothing because she wasn't talkin' bout what I had and because I didn't want to get in trouble."

"Well," he said, taking a deep breath, "I am really disappointed that you would tell me a story like that, but you cleared Delniece, so Delniece, you can go back to class, and next time, you will be suspended for being an accomplice."

"Okay," Delniece says as she gets up to leave.

"Ashley, you can go to Ms. White and call home, you are suspended for three days." he says with a head nod towards the door. I hear my grandma's voice outside, laughing with Ms. White. My grandma catches the door and she comes in as Ashley leaves out. "Desi, I can't believe you."

"But I didn't do it grandma," I say, cutting her off.

"Now you know yo mamma on her way here."

"Oh my God," I say as I begin to cry.

~

My mom showed up about twenty minutes later. "So you up here showin' yo ass in this school, while I'm at work trying to make money to keep a roof over yo head and clothes on your back?" she says taking off her belt.

"No," I say stepping back, with tears in my eyes.

"Yes the fuck you are. Didn't I give you money this morning for you to buy something, and you gonna steal some shit, when you already had money?" she says, yelling. She swings the belt at me, but I move out of the way. **POW!** The back of the belt catches me straight across the face. I shriek at the pain. I feel my blood start to boil. It feels like I am outside on a hot, ninety degree, summer's day in the middle of June. My nose starts to bleed instantly; pouring into my hands. "Lesá," my grandma yelps, stepping in the way, "stop, her nose is bleeding."

"I don't care, she should have thought about that when she was putting her hands on shit that didn't belong to her."

"Come on Desi. Here, put this up to your face." she says handing me some paper towel, pushing me in the direction other door. I follow her out of the door. Outside, everyone is changing classes. When I walk out of the office, everyone sees me. Instantly, I feel embarrassed, so I hold the blood soaked paper towel tighter on my nose and mouth with my left hand, and I cover my forehead with my right hand as I walk towards the women's staff

bathroom. As soon as I make it in the bathroom, I throw the soaked paper towel in the trash and put my head low over the sink and turn on the cold water. I look up into the mirror at myself. There is a swollen, red whip across my face.

~

Being accused of stealing is one of the worst things ever. I got taken off of the Starlight Galaxy All-stars cheer and dance team and I was on punishment for a little over three months because everyone thought I stole that journal from the book fair. That was truly one of the most embarrassing moments that I have experienced, because, even five years later, my friends still remember that day, in Chandler Park Academy-Philip, that I got a whopping in school.

PHASE 3: STILL HIKING

“The principle of life is that life responds by corresponding; your life becomes the thing that you have decided it shall be.”

~Raymond Charles Barker

SCHOOL MEMORIES 2: DSA AUDITION

August 20, 2004

Dear Diary,

Today was very, very... well it was challenging. I had to go to DSA for an art audition. I got nervous and I had a really, really hard time on it...to me, I just couldn't think straight. Drawing a pot of flowers was even hard for me. Even drawing a vase and a plant was hard. The easiest thing for me to draw was a very complicated statue of a man with glasses, playing a guitar, with his foot on a stool. Then at the time of me struggling, it got so frustrating that I just broke down in tears. I really hope that I still can go there.

I'm Nervous!

Desi

~

Hmm...Detroit High School for the Fine and Performing Arts, it just might be the school for me, I think to myself, after my mom had told me about it earlier. "Hey Ray, I signed you up for an art audition at DSA on Friday, so make sure you have your portfolio together and you are ready to draw, on the spot."

"Ma," I whine, "I draw cartoons, and other stuff that I see, I ain't that good to be going to no audition at DSA."

"Stop saying ain't, and yes you are, all they gonna have you do is draw a picture of something that they give you, it ain't that hard if you practice." she said.

“Man,” I complain, “alright.”

“Umm, hm, now go and finish your chores and start getting your portfolio together, so that I can look over it before Friday, you got three days.”

“Yep,” I say, running up the stairs.

~

As I make my way to the car, that nervous feeling just takes over. I just don't know what to do. My mom gets in the car with me, and she starts the car. For some odd reason, as soon as the car revs up, I feel my heart fall into my stomach; I am so nervous. As we drive towards DSA, and I am looking at my portfolio, I start to feel slightly ashamed of my work; cartoons, designs, caricatures, patterns, rough sketches of objects around the house and a test drawing application from Art Instruction Schools. *Man, I ain't gonna be able to get into no art school with this type of work, I gotta be way better than this to even step foot in one of they classrooms.* “Calm down Ray, just relax, and you'll be okay.” my mom says, reading the looks of panic all over my face.

As we pull up to DSA, I am thinking about how hard I was going to be grilled, and how bad I would mess up, I couldn't think of anything good, everything that popped into my mind was bad. As we walk through the door to the main office, quickly, I slightly tame my nervousness so that I can make it through the door. “How may I help you,” the receptionist at the desk says.

“Um, Hi, I am here for an art audition with Dr. Cotton.”

“Um, okay, can I have your name please?”

“Desiree' Slaughter”

“Okay, just have a seat over there, and she’ll be with you in just a minute.” she says pointing to some chairs lined up against the wall by the office door. We each sat in a chair quietly, to wait on someone to come out and tell us that it was time for us to come in.

Ten minutes have passed, and we have been sitting and waiting for my audition to start. I look up at my mom, and ask, “What do you think they are going to ask me to do, Ma?”

“I don’t know Ray, just relax.”

“Okay,” I say, taking a deep breath. Then, all of a sudden, the door opens. A woman, with big, poofy hair and a suit set with a skirt, and thick heeled pumps, steps out of the room.

“Are you Desiree’ Slaughter?”

“Yes”

“Okay, I’m Dr. Cotton, and I am the principal at DSA, and I will be interviewing you for your audition today...are you ready?”

“Yeah, I mean yes,” I said correcting my slang as my mother clearing her throat at me.

“Okay, come on.” she says as we enter her office, and the doors close behind us.

~

While I was in my audition, I felt relieved at on point, because it wasn’t as challenging as I thought it would be. All she did was ask me how long had I been interested in visual arts, what did I like to do, what are my future plans, and to show her my portfolio. When I showed her my portfolio, she said that because I mostly did cartoons, and I rarely did any still life drawings, that for my audition, I would have to draw something on the spot.

I cried during my audition, because I felt like I just couldn’t draw the stuff that she was asking me to draw; I felt incapable of meeting her expectations. In the end, after my audition, I felt

dumb for crying; when all I really had to do was show her that I was interested and that I would at least try. I got into DSA, after all.

CHANGING BAD HABITS

"Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried."

Author Unknown

Honestly, I don't ever remember making a New Year's Resolution to keep. I only remember several of my teachers all through school saying, "What is your New Year's Resolution for the year of... how do you plan to keep it." When lessons like these came around, I would just do something totally different. Like I would ask an out of the way question or just skip when my turn comes around for me to announce my New Year's Resolution. I guess this was some sort of "Bad Habit" that I was introduced to in Elementary School. This habit can be described as procrastination. To me, procrastination means to avoid the important things or put them aside for the less important things. I don't procrastinate often, but I do find myself doing that occasionally. Instead of doing work, chores, or any thing else important right away, I would push it aside and sometimes find myself doing it at the last minute. Sometimes my procrastination isn't bad, because half of the time I work better under pressure, other times, I don't work so well. Occasionally, I have been told that my work wasn't up to par with previous work, so I have learned that procrastination only sets me back in life, not put me forward. So, if I've never set a New Year's Resolution until now, my New Year's Resolution for 2007 is to hold back on procrastination and be more proactive rather than reactive.

SOLITARY MOMENT: UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

Fire & Death

Some see it as calming and peaceful, others see it as dangerous and harmful. It can be either one. The fire of death never dies, it is an eternal flame. When she died, my flame dimmed slightly, it was very low. It hurt to go on or to even try. My tears never seemed to dry as quickly as I wanted or even expected them to. My fire no longer burned with distress from demise. Confusion and a longing for answers were two amongst few which kept me afloat in that 'Sea of Flames'. They burned everywhere, every different place a different reason. Just as the fire to the candle of cold, hard wax, put that to me, and like that candle I will melt. I will either melt shedding the outer layers filled with hurt, confusion, animosity, hate, grief, and anger, or I will melt shedding inner layers of vulnerability, emotional and physical disasters, emotional and physical wounds, and a sense of weakness. It is so hard to let go, but may GOD rest her soul; she will truly be missed. The simple little and unforgettable memories are the ones that I will truly cherish; from arguments to fights, boys to secrets, and so many more, the memories that seemed not to matter as much when we were together are the ones that I can look back on and smile, a wonder to myself, "What if she was still here? How would everything be different? Would we have changed for the better or the worst?" These questions are still embedded in that section of my heart and mind where she resides, and the answers will someday be simplified enough for me to move past them, and as I keep this in my mind and

stay true to my heart, I know that the 'Sea of Flames' will burn no more, and I will be able to safely climb out with a knowing heart that you were never really gone. I was swimming in a "Sea of Memories' that took you away from me for a while, but I got you back, and I will use you as my muse to inspire me to be as great as we dreamed to be together, because I learned that if I live in the now, and not in the memories of the "old days", I can be even more excited of the day that will come that we reunite and reminisce on how we were 'Lost and Found'.

MEMORIES

Louise Bailey

I feel a warmth around me
like your presence is so near,
And I close my eyes to visualize
your face when you were here,
I endure the times we spent together
and they are locked inside my heart,
For as long as I have those memories
we will never be apart,
Even though we cannot speak no more
my voice is always there,
Because every night before I sleep
I have you in my prayer.

I'm asleep in my bed, when all of a sudden the phone rings. I roll around in my bed a few times, hoping that someone would answer the phone or that the person calling would just hang up, but to my disappointment they didn't. I sit up in the bed, and answer the phone.

"Hello," I said drowsily.

"Desi, this is Grandma Lois, where is yo mamma?" she asks.

"She sleep," I said, rubbing my eyes.

"Wake her up and give her the phone," she said in a hurried tone.

"Mmm, okay," I moan not wanting to get up out of bed. "Maaaaa, telephone," I speak into the hall. "It's Grandma Lois," I continue.

"I got it Ray," she replies.

"Hello," she says.

"Lesa, Meshia stopped breathing, I don't know what's wrong, the ambulance just left going to St. John's Hospital, come quick," she said in a frightened, choppy, tear filled voice.

"Ma, what's wrong?" I say, "What's going on?" I asked, still going unanswered.

"Okay, I'm on my way," she said as she scurried around the room getting on clothes.

"Ma, where are you going?"

"Something's wrong with Meshia and I gotta go and find out," she says in a blank tone.

As my mom continues to go about getting dressed, the phone rings again, interrupting the questions that I am asking, trying to find out the problem. "Hello," I answer.

"Desi, this is your Auntie Ne-Ne, let me speak to yo mamma," she says.

"Here Ma, it is Auntie Ne-Ne," I say as I hand her the phone with a lazy gesture.

"Hey Ne-Ne, where you at," my mom says as she is putting on her shoes.

"I'm on my way to the hospital, I'm just leaving work," she replied.

"Well, stop by and pick me up on the way," my mom says with a slight sense of relief.

Honk, Honk the horn sounds from my aunt's car. "Ya'll know the routine, right?"

"Yeah," I say in an annoyed tone.

"Desi, imma call u later to let you know what's up, okay."

"Alright, don't forget"

"I won't," she says as she steps out of our seemingly small town house.

~

They arrive at St. John's Hospital on Dequindre Road, in Warren, Michigan right after the ambulance had already arrived and taken Ameshia to the back and strapped her to several machines. They pronounced her brain dead upon arrival. Everyone stood around in a slump. No one could believe that they had lost their baby. The doctors came in and said that there was nothing else that could be done, and if everyone would like a minute, or two, they would disconnect her from the machines afterwards. The doctor told them that she could understand, but she just couldn't reply. They took their time talking to her while my mom went to pick up Ameshia's younger brother DeMarkus, who we called Man-Man. After her father had spoken his last words, Man-Man came in. He was distraught. He spoke to his sister teary eyed, and heart broken. He had never been in this type of situation. Once he felt like he was done, the doctors confirmed that it was okay to disconnect her breathing machine. She was disconnected from her breathing machine at 11:12 pm., and everyone sat around, whilst my Auntie Weena (her mother) and my Uncle Mark (her father) both held one of her hands, weeping over her body. They told her they loved her, and that they would miss her, and when

they looked at her face, a single tear rolled down her cheek. She had officially died. She took her last breath at 11:14 pm. It was devastating. Everyone retreated to their cars in grief. All except my mother. She had to be the strong one of the bunch in order to make sure that everything got planned accordingly and ran swiftly.

~

“Man, I’ve been calling her for hours,” I yell in an empty room, talking to no one but myself. “Why won’t she answer the phone?” I said as I start to dial her number again.

“Hello,” my mom answers,

“Ma,” I say in excitement. “I’ve been calling you for ever. What’s going on is Meshia okay?” I ask in suspense.

“She’s gonna be fine, are ya’ll okay?”

“Yeah, we just all sittin’ around watchin’ TV, been callin’ you, dat’s it,” I respond.

“Well, alright, I’ll see ya’ll in a few, make sure ya’ll dressed when I come, okay?”

“Alright,” I end. “Ya’ll, momma said get dressed and be ready when she gets here,” I yell into the hallway.

“Okay,” the kids yell back at me, all in unison.

The phone rings again, “Hello,” I answer.

“Hey, Desiree’, this is Jasmine Nash, I’m really sorry about your cousin, I heard what happened, are you okay?”

“Huh,” I say in confusion, “I’m okay, and ain’t nothing wrong with Ameshia, I just talked to them and they told me that she was gonna be fine, what did you hear?”

“Oh, I heard that she died like a half an hour ago, everyone been calling me asking me did I hear about it”

“Oh, I don’t know, I’ll call you back; imma bout to call my mom again to see wat’s really up.”

“Okay, bye.”

The phone rings again, this time it’s Ms. Parker, my old math teacher, with the same conversation. I gotta call my momma, I think to myself. When I called her, she gave me the exact conversation; that nothing was wrong and Ameshia was fine; so, I called Ms. Parker back, and told her what I was told. She said okay, she’ll find out and call me back, and when she called back, she asked were we ready to go, and to be ready because she was gonna come and pick us up and take us over my Auntie Weena’s house.

~

I walk through the front door of my Auntie Weena’s house. A silence swept across the room, and everyone stopped and looked up at me with eyes of sorrow. Then, my Grandma Lois comes walking over to me, Ms. Parker, my sisters, and my brother. “Ya’ll come to the back, I gotta talk to ya’ll.” she says escorting us back to Ameshia’s room. “What’s going on?” I ask in confusion, heading into the room and taking a seat on a purple seated stool next to the dresser, deepest into the room.

“Close the door Lesa,” she says to my mom. “I just wanted to let ya’ll know that Meshia has now moved on to a better place. The Lord called her home, and now she is gone. She died a few hours ago...” I just couldn’t believe it. I was in shock; I couldn’t move or show any feeling. Then, all of a sudden it hit me. This was real. All I could do was look. I felt like someone

had just told me that I was dead. I turned and pulled my hood over my face and cried. I boo-hoo cried. At that moment, my whole world came crashing down. Nothing would ever be the same to me, but one question still remained. "How did she die?" I asked.

"She had a brain aneurysm. That is the swelling of the brain that triggers a lot of little clots to bleed onto the brain." I was lost. That was the day that my cousin died and I felt the deepest hurt of my life.

~

Later on that day, once I was caught up on everything that had happened, while I was at home, I wrote this diary entry:

February 21, 2005

Dear Diary,

Everything in my little world is just caving in on me. Ameshia, my only girl cousin, died at 11:14 this morning. That's too hard on me only because she and I grew up together, and we've been through too much. I've only known her for 14 years, but that's okay for right now cuz no matter wat nobody tells me, my cousin is gonna come back to me, no matter what shape or form, and I'm gonna accept that.

P. I. P., Mz. Meshia

MOST IMPORTANT DIALOGUE

“Why did it have to be her?” I cry to my mother. “I understand that God has a time for everyone, but it was just too soon. She was only 15, mommy. She didn’t even get to enjoy the major parts of life that were just now coming up.”

“Well Desi,” she takes a deep breath the continues on to say, “you know just as well as I do that God put all of us here for a certain amount of time to do specific jobs, and evidently it was just her time.”

“I just want her back though,” I say in grief.

“Desi, it was nothin that anyone could have done to stop it, and there wasn’t anything done wrong, but it was just her time.” she said, rubbing my back and drying my tears.

“I know, but I needed her here with me. How am I going to be able to do all of the stuff that we were supposed to be doing together by myself; I can’t even think of trying to replace her with anyone.”

“You won’t have to try to replace her. He just wanted his angel to return home to him to be up there with him Grandma Annie Ruth, Tina, and the rest of our family to look down on the rest of us, and to protect us just like she did when she was here.”

“He got tired of her being in that pain all of the time, so he brought her home, and when she passed, she was right where she wanted to be; with her Grandma Lois.” she said staring straight ahead with a look of passion. “So, when you go to the funeral, make sure that you are not sad that she is leaving, but glad that she is not hurting anymore.”

I AM FREE

Don't grieve for me, for now I am free;

I am following the path God laid for me.

I took his hand when I heard him call,

I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day,

to laugh, to love, to work, or play.

Tasks left undone must stay that way,

I've found that peace at the close of the day.

If my passing has left a void,

Then still it will remember joy.

A friendship shared, and loved ones loved so dear;

A laugh, a kiss...ah yes things I too will miss.

Be not burdened with times of sorrow,

I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.

My life in full I've savored most;

Good friends, good family, loved ones, and good times.

Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,

Don't lengthen it with undo grief.

Lift up your hearts and share with me;

God wanted me now, and he set me free.

A TRIBUTE TO AMESHIA

By: Desiree' Slaughter

Meshia, sometimes I get to missing you so much that I just have to stop and let you know that I am thinking about you. How wonderful it would be to see you right now... We could get together over a cup of Kool-Aid and a card game and talk about old times and new stuff... We could get caught up on all that's been happening in our lives, and, like always, we would be a little amazed that, no matter how much time had passed, the same old comfortable feeling would remain-that feeling of total understanding, like no one else knows me like you know me, that only the best of friends could share... You were not just my cousin, you were my best friend, and no matter what, one thing still remains clear, "Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart"(Eleanor Roosevelt). That is exactly the type of friend and cousin that you were.

March 1, 2005

Dear Diary,

Today is the day of Ameshia's funeral. I just have a really bad feeling that no matter how many times I say I'm gonna be alright I'm not. But I'll tell you how it goes!!!

{Tears}

Desi

~~~~~

March 1, 2005

Dear Diary,

Well, like I said I wasn't alright. I cried my heart out. Me and Daerelle both. It's like it wasn't really a problem for me until I had to walk down the aisle to her cascade. I was laughing and everything, but I was using everything as an excuse not to cry but as soon as I got up there it was over

P. I. P., Mz. Meshia

Two neighborhoods, one girl, both different...I want to go back!

Before I moved, I lived in the Elijah McCoy Townhouses. Right now, I live on Dexter. I can't tell you much about living over here, because I don't go outside, but the couple of times that I have gone out they weren't something nice. I mean, even though McCoy was bad, it was fun to be out. We all knew each other really well, so nothing was ever that bad. Over here, there are pit-bull dog fights every weekend, and the majority of the kids aren't in school. When we first moved here, we felt a presence that we were not wanted. One day, at 5:00 a.m. the people directly across the street from us put a three foot speaker on the front porch and blasted the music for hours. They did that at least three times that week, and each time it got worse and worse. So bad to the point that we had to report a neighborhood disturbance to the police. In McCoy, although there are occasional mishaps, it was better than this. Everyone knew everyone, and we had a lot of fun, even with the occasional fight or arguments. That neighborhood wasn't great, but even the rivals got along at some point. We always had a great time outside, great parties and great holidays. I kind of miss that now. If I had the choice I would trade this for that, because at least if I went outside, I would have a friend or two to chill with. Here I don't have anyone. Two neighborhoods, one girl, both different...I want to go back!

Blister: Internet Issues

I am sitting at the computer, checking my daily e-mail. As I scroll down the list, an e-mail catches my attention. Once I opened the e-mail, it read:

Date: Tue, 25 Jul 2006 15:27:26 -0700 (PDT)

From: la keisha smith

Subject: Fwd: I ADMIT I SUCKED HIS DICK LAST NIGHT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To: desiree' monique slaughter

Note: forwarded message attached.

ITS PRETTY FUNNY THAT YOU OPENED this because in the next seven days you will:

**have someone fall in love with you*

**find a \$20.00 bill on the ground*

**make-out with the person you like*

**your best friend will get you a really nice gift*

But... first you will have to forward this with one of these titles:

"ANY BODY WANNA FUCK ME?"

"FUCK YOU BITCH..... AND I HOPE YOU READ THIS!"

"I admit I sucked his dick last night!"

"I need help losing my virginity."

"BEST WAY TO LOSE YOUR VIRGINITY"

"I FUCKING GOT ARRESTED AGAIN."

BEWARE IF U DONT REPOST THIS SOMETHIN BAD WILL..... HAPPEN!

"This is one the most stupidest chain letters that I have ever received." I say to the computer while skipping over the message to continue checking my other emails. I didn't send the email out as soon as I got it; I waited a few days.

~

One day while bored, and going through my emails, I saw la keisha's message again. I read over it once more. Atlee reading the email, I started to think it would be funny to send it back out, I thought as I am moving the mouse pointer towards the *'forward message'* button. I type an *f* in the *'send to'* box, and a drop down box appears that lists all contacts in my address book with an *'f'*. I click on friends, a list with all of my friends' contacts. Then I send the e-mail. *"E-MAIL SENT SUCCESSFULLY!"* the screen reads. I had forwarded the message. Afterwards, I continue to check the rest of my e-mails.

~

A few days later, as I am checking my emails, the words 'you have 1 new mail message' pops up in the bottom right hand corner of my computer screen "Man, who is emailin me now?" I say to the computer. I click on the "new message" text, and I notice that the email is

from my mom and dad. First, I click on the email from my mom. "Oh my God!" I say out loud I had accidentally sent them that stupid chain letter. My mom's message reads:

From: Angelesia Thorington

Subject: Fwd: I need help losing my virginity.

To: desiree' monique slaughter

Desiree we need to talk when I get home.

Mom

The words "Oh my God" replay over and over in my head. *How did I do that*, I think to myself. I knew that I was in some trouble.

~

A few days later, as I am checking my email, once again, I see three new messages. Amongst those messages, I see the title of that stupid chain letter again. It's from my dad. Uh oh I think to myself. "Let me see what my sperm donor has to say," I say as I click on new message two, from my dad. This message reads:

From: Henry Slaughter

Subject: Fwd: I need help losing my virginity.

To: desiree' monique slaughter

DESIREE', WHAT IN THE HELL IS THIS? CALL ME IN REGARDS TO THIS

EMAIL

A.S.A.P. AND I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO REMIND YOU EITHER.

DAD

"I don't know who he think he is, tryna tell me that I better call him A.S.A.P.," I say to myself in disgust. So, I click on the tab that reads "Compose Message" and I begin to type.

Dad, haven't you ever noticed that the only time you ever pay me any attention is until something like this happens or im in trouble. Anything i say doesn't matter. Right now i bet you don't even know how i see you. in my mind you might as well be dead, that's the only way that you will really be of some use to me, because you are never there. You always have time to take carrot other pplz kids but your own. you thought of taking z and her kids out of town and everywhere else with you but you could never even pick up the phone and call your kids and say hey im going here or there do you want to go. I bet you still haven't noticed that i, your oldest child, never even thinks to pick up the phone and ask you for nothing, i wouldn't even care if you were on your deathbed, cuz you wouldn't for me. I didn't even ask you to go outgrown when the twins went because i didn't want to put myself through anymore hurt just by looking at you. When do we become first in your life.

DESI

oh and i won't pickup the phone and call you cuz you won't so i guess you are gonna have to remind me then!!!!!!!!!!

Typing this email made me even more upset. I jus) could not believe that he emailed me trying to play "daddy" after all of the times that he just puts us off. That night, I didn't get a

reply from him, and although I was really angry, I regretted expressing myself in such a crude way to him.

~

A few days later, as I am cleaning up, I get in the mood to hear some music. So, as I am pulling up the Internet and beginning to type in the web address www.imeem.com, the words 'you have 1 new mail message' pops up in the bottom right hand corner of my computer screen again. It's another message from my dad "hmmm," I huff. "Let's hear his excuse." I say clicking the message. Man, this message is long I think to myself, looking at the filled computer screen in all CAPS. I guess he must've really had something good to say.

Date: Weds 9 Aug 2006 17:25:36 -0400

From: la keisha smith

Subject: Fwd: I need help losing my virginity.

To: desiree' monique slaughter

WAZZUP DESI? I HAVE A FEW MINTUES SO UMMA TRY TO RESPOND TO YOUR EMAIL MESSAGE TO ME. FIRST OF ALL THIS ISN'T THE ONLY TIME THAT I PAY YOU ANY ATTENTION IS WHEN YOU DO STUFF LIKE THIS. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE KNOWN YOU TO BE INVOLVED IN STUFF LIKE THIS. THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT ME IS PRETTY MUCH COOL WITH ME. THAT IS YOUR RIGHT AND I HAVE RESPECT FOR YOU COMING OUT AND SAYING WHATS ON YOUR MIND, REGARDLESS OF WHAT IT IS AND WHETHER I AGREE WITH IT OR NOT. YOU WILL LEARN AS LIFE GOES ON THAT YOU HAVE TO VOICE YOUR OPINION SO PEOPLE WILL KNOW WHERE YOU STAND AS A INDIVIDUAL. BUT AS FAR AS THE EMAIL GOES I WAS MORE SHOCKED THAN DISAPPOINTED THAT YOU WERE THAT WEAK TO BE INVOLVED IN THESE TYPE

OF ACTIVITIES AND BEING A FOLLOWER. I THOUGHT YOU ACTUALLY KNEW THAT YOU ARE STRONGER THAN THAT AND HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CARRY YOURSELF IN A RESPECTABLE MANNER AND NOT GET INVOLVED IN ACTIVITY THAT IS DEMEANING TO YOU OR DISRESPECTFUL AS A YOUNG GIRL. BUT THIS IS YOUR RIGHT IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE A FOLLOWER OR BE DISRESPECTED, IT IS YOUR BODY, YOUR BEING, AND YOUR CHARACTER. YOU WILL LEARN THAT YOU MAKE YOUR BED AND THUS WILL HAVE TO LIE IN IT. YOU ARE A TEENAGER IN THE 11TH GRADE, YOU KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG AND YOU ARE A BRIGHT YOUNG GIRL, IF YOU CHOOSE TO PUT IT ALL INCLUDING YOUR FUTURE POTENTIAL DOWN THE DRAIN IT IS YOUR DECISION. I AM NOT GONNA POLICE OVER YOU AND WATCH OVER YOU LIKE YOU ARE A BABY. YOU ARE GONNA MAKE MISTAKES IN LIFE AND THUS YOU WILL SEE THE OUTCOME FROM THEM AND I JUST HOPE THAT YOU ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THEM, AND LEARN FROM THEM AND BOUNCE BACK STRONGER THAN EVER. YOU HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DO THAT. I KNOW YOUR MAKEUP, YOU FORGOT I WAS A TEENAGER ONCE BEFORE TOO. AND I AM NOT AS DUMB AS YOU THINK I AM BY FAR. DON'T THINK THAT I AM NOT TIRED OF YOUR ACTIVITIES AND THE PRESSURES THAT YOU FACE, BECAUSE I AM NOT. I DEAL WITH TEENAGERS ALL OF THE TIME AS WELL AS ANY AND ALL AGE GROUPS. SO THE WAY YOU FEEL ABOUT ME, DON'T LET THAT DETERMINE WHAT YOU DO AS AN INDIVIDUAL, BECAUSE I WILL NOT LET YOU OR ANYONE ELSE DETERMINE WHAT YOU CAN DO OR BE OR ACCOMPLISH. I LOVE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER AND I CAN'T HELP THAT AND I ALWAYS WILL. BUT AS FAR AS YOUR ATTITUDE GOES, AND YOUR SNEAKY AND CONIVING WAYS I DESPISE THEM AND WILL NOT CONDONE THEM AT ALL. LAST YEAR WE HUNG OUT AND I HAD AN IN-DEPTH TALK WITH YOU ABOUT HOW YOU SHOULD CARRY YOURSELF AND WHAT I EXPECT

FORM YOU AND YOU AGREED, ACTUALLY WE AGREED AND WE HAD A GREAT TIME. I TOLD YOU THAT WHAT GOES ON WITH US IS OUR BUSINESS AND NOT ANYONE ELSE YAND I TOLD YOU I WILL TRUST YOU UNTIL YOU BREAK THAT TRUST. WELL YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO BREAK THAT TRUST, AND I DON'T HAVE TO BE IN FIRE TO KNOW THAT ITS HOT. I EVEN HAD A TALK WITH YOU ON DAY IN MY KITCHEN AND YOU BROKE THAT AGGREEMENT ALSO, IN MY EYES. SO I WON'T ASK YOU TO AGREE WITH ME ANYMORE BECAUSE I ALREADY KNOW FROM PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE THAT YOU ARE NOT MATURE ENOUGH TO STICK WITH SOMETHING SO I WON'T PUT THAT PRESSURE ON YOU. I WILL ONLY CONFIDE IN THOSE I FEEL ARE CAPABLE AND HAVE THE LOYALTY AND RESPECT TO BE A PERSON OF THEIR WORD AND NOT DECIEVING. I DONT ASK YOU TO COME OVER MY HOUSE OR GO PLACES WITH ME BECAUSE I DONT CONDONE OF YOUR BEHAVIOR. I DONT LOOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT AND WONT, I DONT STOP DOING WHAT UMMA DO IN THIS WORLD OR FOR MYSELF, MY FAMILY AND OTHERS BECAUSE YOU (DESIREE') HAVE A BAD ATTITUDE. THUS, YOU DONT WANNA BE BOTHERED WITH ME AGAIN THATS YOU CHOICE, I DONT PRESSURE YOU TO TALK WITH ME AND I WONT. THAT WAY YOU SHOULD BE CONTENT AND I WILL ALWAYS BE CONTENT. AND IF YOU NEED ANYTHING FROM ME I WILL GO TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH TO PROVIDE THE NECESSITIES FOR YOU AS WELL AS YOUR SIBLINGS AND MY FAMILY AND ANYONE ELSE DESERVING. BUT DO I HAVE TO, NO, I DONT. I AM OBLIGATED MAYBE, BUT AGAIN I DICTATE MY LIFE AND MY LIFESTYLE AND NOONE ELSE. I STAND ON MY OWN TWO FEET AND DONT BEG OR AS ANYONE FOR ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD AND I HAVE BEEN THAT WAY SINCE I WAS SIXTEEN. IF I SEE MY MOTHER THEN THAT COOL, BUT I DONT AGREE WITH HER ALL OF THE TIME EITHER, SO I FULLY UNDERSTAND YOU. BUT DO I GO OVER HER HOUSE AND HANG OUT WITH HER, NO. I DO MY OWN THANG. I

DONT ASK HER FOR ANYTHING AND IF SHE NEED SOMETHING SHE WILL CALL ME. NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. I DO LOVE HER BECAUSE SHE IS MY MOTHER. BUT THE SAME GOES FOR ANYONE, IF I DONT AGREE WITH THEM I JUST DONT MESS WITH THEM I CAN STILL BE CORDIAL TO THEM BUT FEED THEM WITH A LONG HANDLED SPOON CAUSE I KNOW THEY HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BITE ME, SO I KEEP THE INTERACTION AT A MINIMUM. AND IF YOU THINK THAT I WILL HURT YOU IN ANY TYPE OF WAY IT IS BEST THAT YOU KEEP THE INTERACTING AT A MINIMUM AND THUS I WOULD DO THE SAME. AND I JUST HOPE THAT ONE DAY YOU WILL BLOSSOM INTO A LOVELY PERSON/ANGEL THAT YOU ARE MEANT TO BE AND BE RESPONSIBLE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THE DECISIONS YOU WILL HAVE AND ARE GOING TO MAKE THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE. I WONT BOTHER YOU, BUT I WILL CONTINUE TO ASK ABOUT YOU THROUGH YOU SIBLINGS. AND I JUST HOPE THAT YOUR ATTITUDE WONT RUB OFF ONTO THEM. ALWAYS INSPIRE THEM TO DO THEIR BEST IN WHATEVER ENDEAVOR THEY EXPERIENCE, DONT INSTILL NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR IN THEM, IF THEY CHOOSE TO BE NEGATIVE IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO BE POSITIVE, AND IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOU COULD DO THAT BY EXAMPLE. BUT REGARDLESS IT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TO CONFRONT YOU ABOUT ANYTHING THAT WILL CAUSE A NEGATIVE EFFECT UPON YOUR WELL BEING, AND THUS IS THE REASON I ASKED YOU TO CALL ME IN REGARDS TO THAT EMAIL THAT I RECEIVED FROM YOU. NOT TO GO INTO THIS TOPIC HERE, BUT YOU DECIDED TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT AND BRING UP WHAT YOU WANNA INSTEAD OF ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF THE EMAIL. I USUALLY DONT DETER FROM WHAT I WANNA ADDRESS BUT UMMA DO THIS ONE AND ONLY TIME BECAUSE YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER AND I FIGURE THAT EITHER YOU REALLY WANNA ADDRESS THIS ISSUE OR THATS JUST YOUR WAY OF BEING SNEAKY AND TRYING TO RUN AWAY FROM A

SITUATION. AND SINCE YOU FORGOT OR WILL FORGET TO CALL ME IN REGARD TO THAT I WILL DEAL WITH THAT ISSUE WHEN WE COLLAB. NOW DONT LET ANYONE PUMP YOUR HEAD WITH GARBAGE ABOUT NOT LISTENING TO ME, YOUR FATHER CAUSE NOT ONLY WILL YOU GET ADDRESSED, IF ANYONE DARES TO CONFRONT ME ABOUT ANYTHING THAT INVOLVES MY KIDS, THAT WOULD UGLY, AND YOU CAN TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THAT AND I GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO RESPECT MY DECISION. NOW I WILL REMEMBER THE FACT THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE THE COURAGE TO FESS UP TO YOUR MISCONDUCT ABOUT THE EMAIL NOR ADDRESS IT LIKE A MATURE PERSON WOULD BUT RATHER RUN AWAY FROM THE SIUATION LIKE A COWARD. BUT AGAIN ITS YOUR DECISION, AND THUS YOU WILL JUST HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE REPRECUSSIONS. AND I DONT KNOW WHERE YOU GET SUCH JEALOUSY IN YOUR HEART, ITS TRULY SAD, IF THERE IS ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU OVERCOME LET ME KNOW, BUT IF THATS THE WAY YOU CHOOSE TO BE, THEN SO BE IT, AND CARRY ON WITH YOUR PERCEPTIONS OR MAYBE YOU CAN GET ADVICE FROM THE FOLKZ WHOM YOU FOLLOW BEHIND, INSTEAD OF BEING MATURE AND CONFRONTIN SITUATIONS THAT COME YOUR WAY HEAD ON. BUT ITS ALL GOOD, I WONT EMAIL YOU OR BOTHER YOU AND YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY THEN, THATS ALL I WANT FOR ANY OF MY KIDS IS TO BE HAPPY, BUT WHEN DEALING WITH ME THERE ARE RULES AND REGULATIONS THAT WILL BE ADHERED TO AND THUS EVERYONE GETS REWARDS, AND WHEN THEY ARE NOT ADHERED TO THEN SOMEONE IS GONNA SUFFER REPRECUSSIONS. THATS THROUGHOUT LIFE, AND THE WAY THAT LIFE GOES. ANYWAY I WILL HOLLA BACK LATER AND YOU HAVE A GREAT DAY.

DAD

~

Reading that email brought a tear to my eye; I was hurt. I couldn't believe that he would say such things about me. Reading that email, although I was hurt, I was even angrier because nothing he said made any sense to me. It was totally off topic. Even to this day, I am not too close to my father, but there will always be a place in my heart for him only because he is my father.

Making A Difference: My Senior Thesis Project

A Senior Thesis Project is the opportunity for students to take on a large-scale independent project and produce a substantial product that makes an impact on the community. Through the senior thesis, students will learn how to manage a large project, solve problems, work with outside adults, and delve deeper into the Learning Goals. Students will also have a quality project that makes a difference in their community, in some way, which they can be extremely proud of. Because the senior thesis is a very in-depth project, it is a two-year project; it is planned during junior year, and takes action in senior year.

When you choose a senior thesis project, you can pick any project with an issue of local concern that you think you can make a difference in the community; school or local; by taking action. A big issue of local concern to me is the number of African-American students in Detroit receiving scholarships. African-American students in Detroit do not have many scholarship opportunities because, for one, we are the minority and for two, Detroit is amongst the nation's lowest graduating school districts. Therefore, there aren't many opportunities for the students even being supplied. Scholarships are rarely awarded to as many African-American students as they are to Whites, especially in a situation whereas we are in one of the nation's lowest graduating cities, and in a state that is amongst the nation's middle statistical percentages. To me, that is humiliating to even be subject to possibly being labeled as being a citizen of one of the cities with the lowest graduation rates in the nation, but that should also make young people want to strive to be a part of those very few 42% of

students that do graduate, but with the Affirmative Action proposal being dismissed in Michigan, that is beginning to become even more challenging to accomplish.

Although there are several organizations now that are putting forth the effort to improve this issue, I think that if more African American families tried to change or improve these problems by being apart of the solution instead of waiting in the background for a miracle that there could be even the tiniest difference. Parents could encourage their students to apply for scholarships, show them what to look for, and help them with the application process. Some of the students have actually stated that their parents didn't actually tell them to much of anything about scholarships, and some students know next to nothing about scholarships and what they could do to help them at all. This issue alone, along with knowing that I could possibly be subject to not receiving as much money as I possibly could for college, led me to my Senior Thesis Project. For my project, I am starting a scholarship education program for the University Preparatory High School students. I plan to host workshops, fundraisers, seminars, and other informational and engaging activities at my high school to give the students a better knowledge of the importance of scholarships and how effective they can be in the college application process.

I believe that an effective way to handle or address this issue would be if more schools had a scholarship education program for their students. With the scholarship education program, I believe that the rate of students applying for scholarships would possibly increase, along with the rates for the amounts of scholarship monies going to waste of being recycled each year

would decrease, and maybe the graduation rates would increase, due to a better interest in college seeing that financial issues have some sort of solution. Ways like these being implemented could drastically help with the solution of this issue.

A Lesson Learned Just In Time: Dual Enrollment

My Dual Enrollment experience at Henry Ford Community College was truly an eye opener. Unfortunately, I did not pass the classes that I took up due to the difficulty, but that leads to my experience. When I was first told about Dual Enrollment, I was ecstatic to have the opportunity; I just knew that I would do great. When I was completely signed up for the classes, I got my schedule. I had Composition and Beginner's Algebra. When it was time for my first class, I was completely bummed out, because I was tired from high school work, but I went, because I knew that it was a great opportunity for me. My first class was math with Seniorita Gupta, at 11:15 am, and, including me, there were about six UPREP students in the class. As the days went on in the class, I became very bored; I had already had this type of math, so, along with another classmate, I went to change my class to the next level up; Intermediate Algebra. In this class, I was one of the only two high school students in a class full of college students. The teacher's spoken words seemed like a totally different language, I couldn't understand anything that she was explaining. When I raised my hand to ask a question about the complex math problem on the board, everyone turned and looked my way. I felt like I was put in the spotlight. After that, I rarely raised my hand; I only raised my hand to answer a question, not to ask one. I guess I felt as though with me being in a class full of college students, that if I raised my hand again to stop the teacher for a question, someone would criticize me. Through this experience, I have developed an entirely new relationship with my college peers, because I know that in order for them to have gotten to the point that

they are at now, they had to go through the exact same experiences of intimidation around those above them at some point.

My second class was Composition/ENG 131 at 2:00 pm with Dr. M. Johnson. In this class, I was once again one of the only two high school students in a class with college students. As the days went on in this class, I became bored with this class also. This teacher was horrible, and I knew that in order for me to pass this class, I would have to find a way to pay attention long enough to take notes and remember what he was talking about. He let everyone know in the beginning of the class that in order to pass this class, we would have to turn in four mandatory paper assignments, and I knew then that I would have to focus solely on getting on those papers in order to pass this class. To me, that class wasn't challenging at all, it was just boring, and it seemed that not one of the papers that I turned in were ever good enough for him, I never completely failed a paper assignment, but I could never get over a middle 'C'; that was truly nerve wrecking.

These classes went on for a full semester, and around the end of the classes, we had a final in math, and a fourth paper due in composition. I just knew that I would fail the math class, because, no matter how many tutors I went to, or how many hours I stayed after, I could never quite grasp those math concepts. Little did I know, I failed both classes. I failed math because I didn't quite understand the work, and I never put aside my fear to ask questions during class to make sure that I understood. I failed composition because, due to technical and power problems, my professor didn't receive my final paper assignment until after he had already turned in his grades. Although that was not a failure on my part, because I had the opportunity to hand it in printed, I have to take some of that blame.

Out of all of that, I learned that once I get to college, my professors aren't going to care about my problems as to why my work isn't turned in and on time, so I'll have to commit to discipline myself to meet all deadlines, or either turn the work in early. I also learned that the classes in college are a lot more difficult than the high school classes that I take now, and that I will have to gain some serious study habits in order to make it through my college years. Finally, I learned that I cannot be afraid to raise my hand and ask a question, many if needed, to ensure that I know what the professor is talking about as far as my work, because that can result in my failure, and that is not an option for me.

Influential Person: Part 2

My dad hasn't been very active in my life academically, personally, or financially. He barely even knows me. He is one person who has tried to outwardly give advice and direction in my life, however, the way he has most effectively influenced my life was subconsciously. The main reason that I say that my father has subconsciously had a big influence on my personal development is because although the meager words of advice that he has tried to provide haven't had much of an impact on me at all, viewing him as an example of what not to do, has helped me tremendously. I know, from him, how I want to set my life goals, what I want to look for in a man, and what I seek academically. However my dad fell short as a father, I am in a way unintentionally making up for it by accomplishing the things he didn't. He dropped out of college, did mediocre work, and was not a responsible person.

As much as try to I deny it, I am very much like my father, from his dreams and aspirations to his stubbornness. It seems as though everything that I want out of life is similar to the exact things that he wanted out of life when he was my age. Instead, he let his irresponsibility get in the way of his goals and dreams, and that is something that I do not plan to do. When he was in college, he wanted to be an architect; I am on my way to college, and I aspire to be a civil engineer or a computer scientist, which are very similar to architecture. He never took responsibility for anything important in my life, but as long as I am doing well, and he is getting praises for such a wonderful daughter, he wanted to take ownership. He loves to claim me in my achievements, but never really seemed to want to provide for me or help in the nurturing of my life. I don't want to speak of the negative aspects of my father because I can truly say

that I have modeled my life in a manner to avoid any of the hurt he may have intentionally, or unintentionally, caused me. So, I've learned from this life experience that by striving harder to succeed in life, despite the obstacles and trials that are put before me, and living my life according to my dreams, rather than trying to prove him wrong, I can get more out of my life.

REFLECTION: BEST FRIENDS

This poem is dedicated to my very best friends. All throughout my life, my 'real' Best Friends have always been there, and I can look back now, at any point in my life, and see that the friends that I have now are the same friends that I had then. So, to Ameshia Thorington, Daerelle Bowens, Amber Guererro, Cierra Shawver, Brittany Willis, Cree Peterson, Brittani Forehand, and Britney Martin, I love you all, and you all will truly be missed. We all need to make sure that, no matter what, we always keep in touch over the future years.

HAVE A SEAT UPON A CLOUD

Danielle Rosenblatt

Have a seat upon a cloud and make yourself at home
You are now inside my dreams, inside a book, inside a poem.

Where everything can happen if you only make it real
Plunge into my waters if you're not afraid to feel.

Take off your shoes and close your eyes, relax upon my sand
Join me in my land of dreams, reach out and take my hand.

Let me share my dreams with you until you find your own
I'll take you there if you believe, take mine out on a loan.

Where birds are words so gracefully, they glide across the sky
Leave behind your worries, here the rules do not apply.

Pick my flowers if you like and plant a seed or two
Paint the sky in polka dots if you do not like it blue.

Climb my trees, face your fears; erase them one by one

See the world from up above and don't stop at the sun.

When the world starts raining down and the sun is out of sight
Let your dreams control your mind and help you through the night.

There's a place inside my dreams for all who care to roam
So have a seat upon a cloud and make yourself at home.

EPILOGUE:

Senior Year...So Far

So far, my senior year has been great. I have truly made some memories; good and bad. It is now the time that senior work is due, and prom and graduation are rapidly approaching; I just can't wait!

For the future, I am planning on going to Howard University in Washington, D.C. in the Fall of 2008, to major in Civil Engineering. I am going to stay in school until I get my Master's Degree in my field. In the duration of my years at college, I will also take up a few minors, so that I can be as well rounded as possible.

Be looking out for me...I am going to make the rest of my life as meaningful as possible.

"When you go to prom this year, have as much fucking fun as you possible could because you will never get that opportunity ever again, and when you go to college, do the same...live everyday like its your last because they all go by fast as hell!"

~Andre Thorington

Thursday, May 8, 2008