

Lanisha Hannah: A Principal's Principles and Current Principal at Washington Writers' Academy

By Michael Wilder, Reporter

Growing up in Saginaw, Michigan, Lanisha Hannah was the baby of three children; two of whom lived in the home. She has two older brothers, and a younger brother would be welcomed into the family twenty-two years later. Being the youngest growing up and only daughter to hard working parents, Lanisha was instilled with the desire to achieve. Yet, she, as we all do, had some decisions to make along the way.

Ms. Hannah's mother was the nurturer. A native of Chicago's west side, she was raised by old fashioned parents. Her mother, "MaDea", did not work outside of the home nor did she drive a car. She was a stay-at-home mother of eight.

Being a stay-at-home mom was a necessary thing for the norm back in those days. However, Lanisha's mother noticed some things about her parents' lifestyle that did not sit well with her. Therefore, she decided to be a take care of home mom and to be a "bring home the bacon" mom! Immediately following high school, she completed and passed the Civil Service test and began working for the Veterans Administration (VA) in Chicago. She instilled in young Lanisha that nothing in life comes for free. She said, "it's doable to have a family but always make your own money". Those words, she never forgot. She was also taught by her mother to give and that there was "more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." Lanisha and her mother are very close to this day and are mother and daughter besties.

Ms. Hannah's father was the disciplinarian. A native of Osceola, Arkansas, he was also raised by old fashioned parents with deep southern roots and spiritual values. He is the oldest boy of twelve with fourteen siblings total. None of them being strangers to hard work! Leaving the south was his goal with the intention of creating a different life away from the country. Immediately following high school, he relocated to Chicago, IL with his sister and brother-in-law who happens to be one of his best friends. This is where he met Lanisha's mother. They were married a couple of years later and they relocated to Saginaw, MI where he had found work at General Motors. Her mother transferred from the VA in Chicago to the VA in Saginaw.

Ms. Hannah recalls as a very young child how her mother enjoyed cooking for her family, spending time with the kids and shopping. Lanisha would very quickly learn to appreciate and share that enjoyment. She would assist her mother with cooking and loved to watch her mother prepare



*Lanisha and her family at the Kalamazoo Promise.
(Left to right) Front row: Athena (granddaughter)
Second row: Maria (daughter in love), Lanisha, Aliya (daughter),
Anaia (daughter), Third row: Tycen (son), Tavius (son)*

for work and pull out her nice work clothes. She also liked to see her father decide on which tie he would wear with his suits. Additionally, she recalls how her father, an avid sports fan, would take her along sometimes when he went to "play ball". She always loved to go and watch her father and uncle "put a whooping" on their competitors. As she grew up, they would attend basketball games and watch football together as father "Da" and daughter "Babydoll". This is something they still enjoy doing together today, along with playing cards and sporting a nice hat.

As a child Lanisha learned how to play alone. Although she loved to play football in the snow with her brother and basketball with a hanger and a sock. Like most older siblings, this was only when he felt like it or was bored. In turn, she developed a vivid imagination, and she had a strong personality to go with it.

Very early in her life she was aware of her intelligence. She also knew what she wanted to be when she grew up. A teacher! She would set up her many dolls and stuffed animals as if they were in a classroom and she would pretend to teach them all the things that she had learned. She also noticed a huge problem that would also later shape her. She noticed that her oldest brother did not read as well as she did although he was eight years her senior. This was actually a