

# The Architect of My Own Soul:

People often look for the moment a girl becomes a woman. They look for a ceremony, a grand debut, or a clear line drawn in the sand. But for me, there was no announcement. There were no elders whispering secrets into my ear or a ritual to mark the change. My transformation came in fragments—sharp, quiet, unfinished pieces of a life that demanded I grow up before I even had the chance to dream.

I am Cecilia Taylor, and this is how I built myself from the fire. I was a Black girl whose childhood was a brief, flickering candle, left unshielded by the hands of protection. I grew up in a house heavy with history—my grandfather's weight, my mother's difficult journey—and I realized early on that survival is a language you have to teach yourself. I learned from what happened in the shadows and what slipped through the cracks of adult supervision. Without a guide to redirect me, I had to become my own North Star.

When the school system failed to see my brilliance, I had to see it for myself. By fifteen, I was trapped in a confusing loop—tossed between special education

and advanced classes where no one seemed to understand how my mind worked. I didn't just drop out; I made an entrance into a different kind of life.

I chose movement over stagnation. I chose the workforce over a classroom that didn't know my name. I stepped into a world that demanded far more of me than it should have, but I met it with a straight back and a focused mind. Life became my most relentless teacher. I navigated relationships that bruised my spirit and a system that tried to define me by a jail cell rather than my heart. But I kept moving—navigating the dawn, guarding my peace, and perfecting the silent art of self-preservation.

My shift didn't come with a roar; it started with a whisper. A woman once looked me in the eye and said, "That's not right. You don't have to accept that."

Something inside me clicked. It wasn't loud, and it wasn't all at once, but it was enough. I started collecting those little truths like survival tools, tucking them away for the day I would finally claim what I deserved. At nineteen, I decided that "delayed" was not "denied." I went back for my GED. I

## My Quiet Becoming



stepped into early childhood education. I sat in those front rows—not as the girl who struggled, but as the woman who had already outrun the world.

Then, I did something even I hadn't imagined: I chose math. I didn't choose it because it was easy; I chose it because it was the mountain they told me I couldn't climb. In lecture halls where faces like mine were rare, I stayed. When others left, I stayed. When life interrupted my rhythm—again and again—I paused, I reset, and I returned. I refused to be defined by what I "couldn't" do.

My "becoming" wasn't just about a degree; it was about finding a space that was truly mine. Even in a shelter—a place no one dreams of going—I found my independence. I found a kitchen where I cooked my own meals, a clock that moved on my own time, and a life that was no longer anchored to fear.

I became the aunt who showed up, the woman who stayed present, and the healer who started with her own wounds. I built a life out of nothing, proving to myself that safety isn't just a place—it's a decision.

I didn't just "crossover" into womanhood. I built it, piece by piece, from the ground up. I built it from survival. I built it from silence. I built it from second chances.

My titles include: Mayor, City Councilmember, Mother, Step-mother, Aunt, Sister, Mentor, Leader, Friend, Wife, and Cat Whisperer.

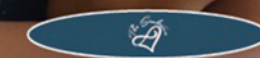
Even now, I am still becoming. For me, womanhood isn't a destination I've reached; it is the relentless, beautiful decision to keep going. I negotiate every day between who I was taught to be and who I know I am. I am the architect, and I am far from finished.

*I am Cecilia Taylor TS#22 of 52 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! 🙌*



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