

# Courage, Choice, & Chicago: Creating a Culture of Abundance



TS#32

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There are moments in life that are supposed to make a girl a woman. You would think becoming a mother at sixteen was mine. It wasn't.

My daughter was especially precious to my mother—the first child of her own daughter—and she embraced her with a love and protectiveness that gave me room to remain, in many ways, her child. I was a mother, yes, but I still moved through the world beneath the shelter of my mother's wisdom, protection, and care. Her presence gave me a freedom I didn't fully recognize then, the freedom to be still carefree, to still move through life as a girl.

My real transition—the true spiritual and cultural shift from a Black girl to a Black woman—didn't happen until I was twenty-two. By then, I had two children.

That was the year I gambled on love, still so young that I didn't realize just how blind love could be.

I left everything I had ever known, everything familiar, and the people I knew for certain loved me, and moved to Chicago with the father of my son, who would later become my husband.

Growing up with both of my parents battling addiction, my entire childhood had been defined by uncertainty. I knew deep in my spirit that I was determined to give my own children something entirely different: stability, consistency, and a mother who could stand firm as their foundation. For the first time in my life, I chose to carry the full weight myself. I had to step into the fire and become the provider, the protector, and the anchor my family needed.

Then, Chicago opened my eyes.

Walking through those streets, I saw Black women in their full, radiant power. I saw us building corporate careers, leading thriving businesses, and creating rich, abundant lives I had never even imagined for myself back home.

Seeing Black women move with that kind of authority, elegance, and purpose didn't just inspire me—it awakened something deep in my soul. It challenged everything I thought I knew about my own potential.

I realized in that moment that I did not want to spend my life merely surviving. I wanted to achieve.

I wanted to build. I wanted to create a legacy and show my children what was truly possible when a Black woman owns her power. Leaving safety behind wasn't just a move to a new city; it was the birth of the woman I was always meant to be.

I am Deanna Hodges-Walker TS#32 of 52 of The Soutown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! 🌟

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