

Wisdom Over Willpower

It Was the Point of No Return

I didn't become a Black woman the day I turned eighteen, or the day I earned a degree, or the day people started calling me "strong." Those moments came with applause, expectations, and survival. I have endured many trials in my life, but the day I crossed the point of no return came quietly, wrapped in pain, loss of control, and the unlearning of everything I thought strength was supposed to look like.

It happened the day my body stopped cooperating.

I remember sitting in a sterile room, fluorescent lights humming, listening to a diagnosis I had never heard before: Complex Regional Pain Syndrome. The words felt clinical, distant, like they belonged to someone else's life. But my body already knew the truth. It had been screaming for years. Pain that didn't make sense. Sensations that felt like fire under the skin. A body that no longer responded to willpower or grit. I had spent years mastering the art of pushing through. That day, pushing through was no longer an option. Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) is a chronic condition caused by the nervous system misfiring, often after an injury or trauma, that leads to pain that is far greater than expected. It causes debilitating pain, swelling, sensitivity, changes in skin color or temperature, and so much more, making everyday tasks difficult. CRPS is rated the highest of all chronic pain syndromes on the McGill Pain Scale 46/50 and significantly impacts a person's physical, emotional, mental, and overall well-being.

What happened wasn't just a diagnosis—it was a reckoning.

Up until that moment, I had lived as a Black girl

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taught to endure. Taught to be resilient before being rested. Taught that softness was earned after success, after sacrifice, after everyone else was taken care of. I was good at holding it together. I was excellent at being strong. But lying there, faced with a condition that would not be bullied or outworked, I realized that girlhood, defined by survival and performance, had run its course.

This happened in a season when I was already questioning everything. My faith. My pace. My purpose. I had been aligning my mind, body, and soul, but this was the final demand for integrity. My body was no longer willing to carry what my spirit had outgrown. Pain forced me to have the conversation I had been postponing.

Why did it happen? Because I had mistaken endurance for wholeness. Because I had been strong for so long that I forgot how to be gentle with myself. Because becoming a Black woman—a whole one—requires more than grit. It requires permission to soften without guilt.

The shift came when I stopped fighting my body and started listening to her.

I stopped apologizing for resting. I stopped explaining why I needed boundaries. I stopped measuring my worth by productivity or pain tolerance. I began choosing care as an act of resistance. Gentleness became my new strength. And in that choice, something irreversible happened: I claimed myself.

That's when I knew I was no longer a Black girl navigating survival—but a Black woman rooted in sovereignty.

This moment changed how I move through the world. I no longer rush my healing. I no longer betray my body to meet expectations. I lead with alignment, not urgency. I understand now that Black womanhood is not about carrying everything; it's about choosing what is mine to carry.

There was no celebration. No announcement. Just a quiet knowing: I could not go back to who I was before pain taught me how to listen. Before softness taught me how to live.

And still—my fight is not done. I have a long way to go.

But now I fight differently. With wisdom instead of willpower. With gentleness instead of guilt. With a body I honor, not override.

That is the difference between who I was... and the Black woman I continue to evolve to become.

I am Destiney Hearn TS#19 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! 🌿



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