

Sink or Swim:

How a Tough Parental Lesson Forged a Strong Black Woman

I am proud to be a Black Woman! While there are a number of moments that sealed my foundation as a Black woman, the defining moment when my transition from being a Black girl to who I am today occurred after my first year in college.

I grew up with parents that had been together since high school. They were strong advocates for education, pursuing the most that life has to offer, and remaining true to myself. The confidence, love for GOD and care for others that they instilled in me remains today.

I vividly remember that they called me one day in the midst of my second year in college and shared that they had decided to let me continue my educational journey without their financial assistance. I was stunned! My retort was “But I am your only child! And I’m a girl!” To which my mother exclaimed “Your father and I made it on our own, now it’s your turn. Sink or swim!” I was devastated and with tears rolling down my face, I thought “What now?” After a brief pity party, I remembered what they taught me throughout the years; how to be resourceful, advocate for myself, and pursue what I want with strength and determination. So, I did just that.

I was able to complete that year in college, then I took off two and a half years to work to pay for my housing, necessities and establish a plan to get back in school to finish what I started. Giving up was not an option.

Thankfully, I knew how to genuinely connect with others, had a strong work ethic and was gainfully employed during those two and a half years. I occasionally shared my experience to encourage those needing to be reminded that they can make it. I would also unabashedly share with those who could help me by pointing me in the direction I needed. Once things aligned that allowed me to re-enroll, I did so with a plan. I not only completed my undergraduate degree, but I immediately applied and was accepted into the Master of Social Work (MSW) program so that my options after college would be greater.

I remember my parents being so proud of my accomplishments and how I chose to swim. Honestly, there was no other option for me. I wanted to do what was needed for me to be a strong Black woman.

Years later, as I experienced the final moments with each parent I realized how precious it was that the two people who were there as I took my first breath, I was able to embrace and share my feelings of gratitude for them as they took their last. Mom passed when I was 32, and Pops passed when I was 42. Although the pain of each of their losses was deep, it was replaced with power, particularly after my dad’s passing. What initially felt like emptiness gave way to empowerment. I used the tools, confidence, and love they raised me with to stand firmly as the woman that I am. Fearless, purposeful, loving, and kind. A Black woman who knows who she is, unapologetically.

Our past does not always dictate our future. Still, I am thankful that mine has helped me navigate this journey called life with grace.



TS#44

https://thesoultownmagazine.com/ts52-13-24

I am Kim McJunkins. TS#44 of 52 of The Soultown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL!