Roots in the CITY, SOUL in the Work

Quilla Vaughn's Journey from Family Anchor to Chicago Legacy

Stepping into womanhood isn't always marked by a single, cinematic epiphany.

For me, that transition from a young girl to a Black woman wasn't wrapped in a grand, glowing ceremony. It was forged in the quiet, steady weight of responsibility, self-sufficiency, and an unwavering love for my family.

Growing up as the middle child and the oldest of the girls, I didn't wait for permission to be strong. While my younger days involved simple joys—like being responsible for my little sisters by modeling behavior and keeping a job by working at several McDonald's—life quickly asked more of me. When hard times hit our household, I made a conscious, grounded choice: I wanted to be a solution, not a burden. I wanted to lift the weight straight off my mother's shoulders and make life just a little bit easier for her. That exact moment of choosing to carry the load was when the girl inside me stepped up, and the woman took root.

That instinct to protect and provide didn't fade when I grew up; it only expanded. When my sisters later welcomed children, I stepped right into a co-parenting rhythm, feeling a deep, unshakeable obligation to help guide the next generation. With our family being so close-knit, I became a pillar of reliability, stepping in because I knew someone had to be there to hold the line.

It's that same fierce independence that carried me out of the struggles of my youth and straight into a decades-long career with the Board of Education, where I built a life entirely on my own terms. Whether I was navigating the bustling, vibrant streets of my beloved Chicago—where the city hums with life 24/7 and nothing is ever truly too far away—or holding down the fort for the people I love, I learned what it truly means to be a woman who knows her foundation.

My transition wasn't about a sudden change of heart; it was the steady, beautiful realization that I was the keeper of my family's peace.

Born and raised right in the heart of that very city, I found my rhythm in the unyielding heartbeat of Chicago. It was a place where people moved with purpose, where the streets stayed alive long after dark, and where you learned how to stand tall against whatever came your way. That metropolitan pulse became part of my bloodline, matching the strength I had cultivated since childhood. After decades of early mornings, a steady work ethic, and quiet dedication, I am now preparing to retire from the Board of Education, closing out an incredible chapter of professional service spanning over thirty years.

Looking back at the little girl who once worried about lightening her mother's load, I see a woman who built an entire empire of security, love, and unwavering dependability. I didn't just survive the concrete; I flourished in it, creating a legacy rooted in community, resilience, and the deep, abiding comfort of knowing exactly where I belong.

I am Quilla Vaughn, TS#45 of 52 of The Soultown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ✌

