

THE COURAGEOUS ASK THAT TOOK ME FROM GIRLHOOD TO WOMANHOOD

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It was a blistering 90-degree summer morning. I had walked a mile in a cute, uncomfortable pair of high-heeled shoes from my apartment in the projects to Malcolm X Community College with my glossy résumé folder tucked under my arm and a quiet, fierce determination lodged in my chest.

That morning, I was not just going to a job fair. I was going to prove something to the world, but more urgently to myself. Chicago Public Schools was hosting their Teacher Job Fair, and I had shown up fully: pressed, prepared, and ready. The time had come for this eager young lady, partly protected by her wise mother, and just released by her protective college community, to spread her wings and fly – not because I so desperately wanted to, but because life and poverty left me no choice. After graduation, there was no time to celebrate, relax, or enjoy being the 1st to graduate from college. No. There was only time for quickly becoming a woman with full responsibilities to help my mother care for our family.

And finally escape poverty.

Every line I stood in that day was an act of faith. Every administrator I approached was another chance to say, I am here. I am worthy. I belong in front of your students.

But the day did not unfold the way I had imagined.

By late afternoon, my feet throbbed, my throat was raw, and my spirit - that eager spirit that had carried me out of the projects and into that building - was beginning to fracture under the weight of rejection. No offers. No second interviews. That forced a fierce inner struggle between the jittery girl and the emerging woman within me.

The jittery girl made me turn toward the back of the hall, looking for the bathroom - not to freshen up, but to find a stall where I could fall apart and cry without anyone bearing witness to my defeat. As I cried, I heard my mother's voice demanding asking, "Who are you? Why are you in here crying like a baby?" I dried my eyes. I stood tall. I strutted out of that bathroom.

Then something shifted.

I saw a woman - sophisticated, composed, unhurried - packing up her materials at a table I almost

walked past. Her school's vacancy list didn't include English. But something deeper than logic stopped me. Was it instinct? Was it the last ember of that morning's confidence refusing to go out? No. It was the moment the girl stepped aside, and the woman in me emerged unafraid.

I confidently walked up to Mrs. Dobbins. I asked if her school needed an English teacher.

She said, "Yes. My Principal, Dr. Audrey Donaldson, sent me here to find my replacement." We both found Me. I vowed to make her proud for choosing me - to be the woman responsible for continuing her legacy as an impactful, well-respected English teacher.

That day, I shed girlhood skin that waits for permission and put on womanhood that prompts the creation of openings and the charting of paths.

My experience was marked by divine intervention underscored by the lively inspiration and relentless empowerment of the ultimate, model woman and mentor - Dr. Brenda L. Peterson - my late, great Mother.

I am Dr. Sabrena Davis TS#21 of 52 of The SoulTown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ✨

MALCOLM X COLLEGE