

RESPONSIBILITIES

between

ITY & RISING

My name is Tyrice. I was born and raised in East Palo Alto, California—a place the world once labeled by its violence, but a place I knew for its people, its rhythm, and its resilience.

I was born in 1992, when East Palo Alto carried the weight of being called the “murder capital.” But even in that reality, there was life. Kids still played outside. Families still gathered. Music still filled the air. We found joy where we could. Still, underneath it all, survival was always present.

And from the beginning, survival was part of my story.

My childhood was layered—love mixed with instability, questions without answers. My mother struggled with addiction, and there were moments when life felt uncertain, even unsafe. I learned early how to adapt, how to read a room, how to endure. When my siblings and I were taken in by family, I thought things would get easier—but that home came with its own heaviness. Childhood didn't feel soft. It felt like something I had to get through.

And all the while, one question stayed with me: Who is my father?

I didn't get that answer until I was thirteen years old, when a simple phone call shifted everything I thought I knew about myself. In that moment, I realized my story wasn't what I believed it to be. I had a different father than my siblings—and he was incarcerated.

At thirteen, I held onto hope. I imagined that one day, meeting him would fill something in me.

But when I finally met him at nineteen, I came face to face with a different truth: sometimes what you long for doesn't become what you need. That meeting didn't complete me—it clarified me. It showed me that my identity was never meant to be

rooted in someone else's presence or absence.

Still, nothing prepared me for the moment that would truly change me. In 2014, my older brother Tyrone was murdered.

The call didn't feel real. The drive to the hospital felt like a blur. And the moment we learned he was gone, it broke something open inside of me that could never be closed the same way again. But it was at his funeral... standing in that church... that my life shifted.

When my siblings and I walked up to his casket, everything slowed down. My heart pounded. My body felt heavy. And when we saw him—still, silent, gone—something inside all of us collapsed.

My younger brother fell first.

And in that instant, my sister and I fell with him.

Right there on the floor, in front of our brother, we broke. Not just in grief—but in truth. In that moment, I wasn't just a sister mourning a loss. I became someone my family would need. Someone who had to stand, even when it felt impossible.

As I looked at my younger brother—seeing his pain, his shock, his heartbreak—I felt something shift in me.

That was the moment.

Not when I turned a certain age. Not when I got answers about my father. But in that space between grief and responsibility... between breaking and rising... I transitioned.

That was the moment I became a Black woman. Because I understood, in a way I never had before, that life is fragile. That strength isn't optional. That sometimes you don't get to fall apart for long—because someone else needs you to stand. I stood up that day differently.

Not whole. Not healed. But aware.

Aware that my story was bigger than my pain.

Aware that I carried resilience in my bloodline.

Aware that even in loss, I had a responsibility to keep going.

I am not just a product of where I come from.

I am not just the sum of what I've lost.

I am a Black woman—shaped by survival, strengthened by truth, and still standing.

I am Tyrice Cisco TS#16 of 52 of The Soutltown Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ☺

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