

My journey into womanhood didn't begin when I left South Carolina, it began long before that, rooted deep in a home where love stretched further than any lack ever could.

I was raised among siblings, two brothers, one sister, and the memory of a brother we lost too soon. Even in grief, we stood together. Ours was a family shaped by resilience. My father, often battling illness, was the heart of our home, and my mother was strong, steady, and sacred in her duty. She worked as both a housekeeper and a field worker. Together, we learned what it meant to care, to sacrifice, and to hold onto faith when life pressed hard against us.

We didn't have much in material things, but our home overflowed with what truly mattered. Each evening, we gathered together, prayed together, read scripture, and listened as my father poured wisdom passed down through generations into our spirits. Those weren't just moments, they were seeds. Seeds of purpose, seeds of identity, and seeds of knowing who we were, even before the world tried to tell us otherwise.

As Book of Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us, "For I know the plans I have for you..." even as a child, I believed my life was guided by something greater.

When my father passed, the weight of that loss could have broken me, but instead, it built me. My grief became fuel. My vision became sharper. And my commitment to education became unshakable. My mother affirmed this daily, but not just with words, but through her walk. She showed me what strength looked like, what dignity looked like and what purpose looked like.

I dreamed of studying psychology; of helping others heal, grow, and find their way. At Benedict College, that dream began to take form. Then life placed a choice in front of me. While working a summer job in New Jersey, I received two letters: one offering me a teaching position, the other an acceptance into graduate school at the University of Northern Iowa.

I stood at a crossroads.

Comfort whispered, stay.

Faith said, go. So I chose faith.



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FAITH SAID, GO. SO I CHOSE FAITH.

“Because when you are rooted in faith, grounded in love, and walking in purpose, you are already rich!”

I packed up everything I knew and moved far from home to Iowa; stepping into unfamiliar territory as a Black woman armed with nothing but belief, determination, and my mother's prayers covering me.

Her words still live in me: "You are rich, rich in love, rich in faith, rich in purpose." And she was right.

My mother didn't just raise children, she built legacy. She may not have carried a formal title, but she was a teacher in every sense. She taught us how to endure. How to believe beyond what we could see. How to walk in purpose before we fully understood it.

As Book of Proverbs 22:6 declares, "Train up a child in the way he should go..." my life is living proof of that truth.

Today, I walk boldly in my calling, not just as an educator, but as a reflection of a praying Black mother whose reach extended far beyond her circumstances. She worked in fields. She cleaned homes. But in all that she did, she was building something far greater than survival.

She was building legacy, purpose and she was building me.

And now, I carry that torch, pouring into others, leading with love, and reminding every person I serve that where you start does not determine where you're destined to go.

Because when you are rooted in faith, grounded in love, and walking in purpose, you are already rich!

I am Viola Cody TS#20 of 52 of The Soul Town Magazine. I want to thank you all for having SOUL! ☺

