

PERFECTION EXPECTED

My mother was always an early riser, and bright and early on

Saturday mornings my father would get up and work in the yard and I would accompany him. We would always start in the backyard, and we always had a garden we didn't have much space but we had enough space for a little garden. My parents were from the south my father loved collard greens so we grew collard greens and tomatoes and a few other things the garden was my father's love. The first thing that he would do would go out and till the garden. Even though it was not on our yard, there was a beautiful apple tree and we would always go and pick the low hanging apples or the apples that fell to the ground. My father had a shed in the back that he kept his tools and so he would rake and mow lawn and we would eventually work ourselves around to the front yard. We

would work in the yard all day mowing the lawn, racking up the compost, putting down seeds and fertilizer.

I remember distinctively how my father would position the sprinklers just right in the front yard. We had a walkway leading up to our house and on each side of the walkway there was two beautiful patches of grass, my father would strategically position the sprinklers just right so that each side would get watered evenly creating a beautiful landscape for people to admire as they drove or walked by our home. Then he would yell out to me to turn on the facet which was on the side of the house. I would turn the facet on and run to my father's side where I would see him put both his hands on his hips and marvel at the wonderful work he and I did on that day.

One thing I can say is that the people from the five boroughs always look to live on Long Island. There was an unwritten standard, that everybody's lawn must be kept up and manicured to a standard. So, my father took great pride in the fact we owned a home on Long Island and made it look as beautiful as he could by spending precious time on that house my parents had worked so hard for. Even unto this present day, my mother will still go outside and plant Flowers making sure it looks beautiful outside. It's funny because now that I own my own home, I have the same expectation for my house.

When society looks at a person, the first thing they noticed is how they look on the outside. Mother always had me wearing girdles from the age of 10. I didn't like wearing them at all Its uncomfortable to fit someone else's perceptions of us. She instilled in me to look presentable. My mother was dressing me as a mini her. My mother was also a plus size

woman. Back when I was growing up, there was no clothing stores for plus size kids. So, my mother would have to buy me adult clothes and take them in a little bit, but I still had to wear a girdle the kind that go under an up making it very uncomfortable. My mother and I would always argue because it felt in my heart that she was trying to make me just like she was.

There's always a girdle within society where we must be perfect but most men don't want us to be strong women. My father, would look at me, smile and say, "always remember, if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat". My father was referencing, "For even when we were with you, this we declared unto you, that if anyone desires not to work neither should he eat." - 2 Thessalonians 3:10

He was always imparting wisdom into me, and I was gleaning the pieces of wisdom that my dad would drop within his words and how even today when I am faced with difficult situations his words still resonate within my mind always

emphasizing the need to be brave and courageous in all I do, especially when I was scared.

My father was in the Navy around the time when being in the Navy was tough for black men but he toughed it out and made it through. He always made me

feel as though there was nothing I couldn't do if I put my all into it and believed in myself. I asked him, what does it mean to believe in yourself?

He said it meant to know without doubting that God has given you the tools

and ability to do whatever it is you want to do, even if you don't know how

to do it. He said, someone would always come along and teach me how to do it when they saw my drive, determination and commitment. As a

kid, he never told me or alluded to the fact that I couldn't do something. He always encouraged me to try and keep trying until I got what I wanted. This principle I still follow to this very day.

I remember this one time he had this radio he loved to listen to. He would listen to his ball games on it and of course 1010 Wins which was a news station he was always tuned into he was a big Yankee baseball fan and he liked the Mets as well. My father would just sit there listening with a battery-operated radio. Sometimes he was sitting in the backyard and listen to the baseball games with his friends.

I have always been an inquisitive child so I asked my father how a radio worked. He said he didn't know and challenged me to take it apart and see for myself. Being a child, I took my father at his word. I took the radio apart and when my Mother saw what I had done she tore my hide up. In the eyes of my mother I was being destructive in my parents worked very

hard for the things that we had. After she saw that I had took the radio part she wouldn't yell at me to put it back together and emphasize that it better work too! She used to that device on Sunday mornings but thankfully I could put it back together. She was the disciplinarian and she did not play around with it either. After disciplining me she told me to put the radio back together just as it was. She challenged me by saying "and it better work

too". As she prepared to tell my father what I had done, I frantically went about putting the radio back together before he got him. I was so very scared, felt like the world was going to end because I knew my father might be mad at me and that was more frightening to me than the tail whooping I

got from my mother earlier that day. I remember always being with him and being around his buddies. I was always so very well loved and respected around my father and his

friends. They were my extended uncles and loved me beyond all I could ever imagine.

As much as I loved my father and I loved him dearly, to be transparent there was an area where I felt a bit of distrust, even as a child. As stated, my father was very loving, caring and very much willing to invest in me. It was just something I felt in the pit of my belly as a child that he would one day disappoint me. I know now that's just life and everyone you love in your life will disappoint you and you will disappoint them but I was just too young at that time to know and realize that. Even with that bit of distrust, my father was still teaching me life's lessons. I was just too young to know it at the time.

What did you think?

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