

*“All great achievements require time”- Maya Angelou*



Dear Woman of Deliberation,

After thirteen years of marriage and two children, I found myself getting divorced, unemployed, and on the verge of losing my house. So many things happened, and things went downhill so fast that it had my head spinning. My main and primary concern was my children, my son who was six, and my daughter who was fourteen at that time.

I made a lot of bad decisions, but I thank God every day for His grace and mercy that protected me and my children during that time. I knew I had to make some changes and I prayed for God's wisdom and direction. When the time was right, I quit my job, gave notice at the apartment where we lived, bought three one-way tickets to Virginia, gave my car back to the bank, packed our bags, and made my "Great Escape."

I arrived in Virginia with my two children and five suitcases and stayed with family until I saved enough money to buy a car, something that would get me from point A to B and a deposit for an apartment. To do this I worked a full-time job and two part-time jobs. Thank God for my village who supported me so I could work the three jobs. I did what I had to do to take care of my children and provide a safe and happy home for them. I was devoted and committed to providing a good life for my children.

My first car was a little, red hoop-de that provided transportation for me to get to my jobs. Once I got a car my goal was to get an apartment, which thanks to God's favor that was accomplished. See, the apartment I wanted required you to have a salary three times the rent. Clearly, I was not making that much money, but God put the right person in the rental office, and she gave me a chance for a fresh start.

Although I had an apartment, I did not have a piece of furniture. Again, I must give God thanks for intervening in this situation. People where I worked heard I needed furniture for my apartment. Just like that, I had a bed for my son and daughter, dresser draws for both, a kitchen table and chairs, dishes, silverware, and a microwave. I went to a used store and bought a cheap, but decent looking couch, coffee table, television, and stand.

With everything that happened in my life, I didn't give up on my goal to get my bachelor's degree. I knew if I wanted to provide a good life for my children I needed my degree so I can get a good job with benefits. I was determined to finish.

Once my son was older, I went back to school. Fortunately, I'd received some raises and didn't need to work the two part-time jobs, but working full time, going to school part-time at nights, and raising two children by myself, was not an easy task but I was determined to get it done, and I did! I graduated a year and a half later with my Bachelor Science in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management.

*“All great achievements require time”- Maya Angelou*

Having my degree opened more doors for me. I was able to find better job opportunities allowing me to earn more money with good benefits for my family. This also allowed me to purchase a home for my family and again, God blessed me with favor to get an affordable home in a safe and nice neighborhood for my children.

I eventually went back to school and got my Master of Science in Accounting and Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management and Leadership. My degrees allowed me to have a good career.

My children are grown now and are doing well. I know everything I did was for my kids. My son graduated from William & Mary with a degree in Finance and his MBA from Columbia University. My daughter has her bachelor's degree in Healthcare Management from Saint Leo and master's degree in Health Care Services Administration from Strayer University. I am very proud of my children and what they have accomplished.

Looking back at everything that led up to me moving to Virginia, those were some dark and difficult times. There were many nights I cried not knowing how I was going to make it out of the situation I was in. I know I'm here today because of God's grace, mercy, and protection. I've been able to accomplish my goals and provide a good life for my children because of God's favor. No matter how hard things got, not having the money to pay bills, to able to do many things I wanted to do for my children, I never gave up and found a way to take care of my family.

I'm now retired and enjoying my retirement and grandchildren. I want other single mothers to know, no matter what, no matter how bad things may look, no matter the difficulties or struggles you may have, don't give up, you can do it! You can make it through because we as women are resilient and strong. We are *Deliberate, Determined, Devoted, and Disciplined!*

Love,

Eileen